



JOHNETTA PAYE ESQUIRE

NEWS/PRESS

FEBRUARY 7, 2017

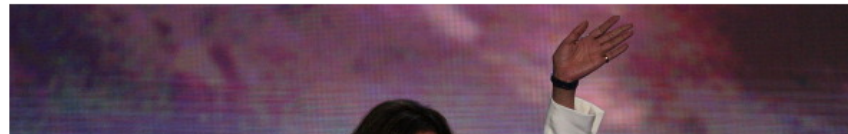
Black History Month legal tribute: Kamala Harris



JPAYE

From first impression while listening to the confirmation hearings for President Donald Trump's Cabinet choices, one of the most memorable moments so far has been the back-and-forth between California Senator Kamala Harris and then-CIA nominee Mike Pompeo. Two topics she discussed with Pompeo were his views on the LGBT community and climate control. Generally one would wonder what do these topics have to do with working in the CIA. The answer: Inclusion.

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From curiosity to complaints via social media, there was a method to Harris’ questions. On the topic of the LGBT community to Pompeo, she pointed out that there is a “recruitment or retention of patriotic LGBT women and men in the CIA, some of whom have of course taken great risks to their lives for our country.” She followed up by asking him: “Can you commit to me that your personal views on this issue will remain your *personal* views and will not impact internal policies that you put in place at the CIA?”

On the topic of climate change to Pompeo: “CIA Director Brennan, who spent a 25-year career at the CIA as an analyst, a senior manager and station chief in the field, has said that when ‘CIA analysts look for deeper causes of rising instability in the world, one of the causes those CIA analysts see as the, is the impact of climate change.’ Do you have any reason to doubt the assessment of these CIA analysts?”

She then went into NASA findings about climate change knowing already that the Tea Party politician was already a climate change denier. His response was that working in the CIA would be “different and unique from that.” Harris pointed out that her larger view, according to [Think Progress](#), was this: “I want a CIA director who is willing to accept the overwhelming weight of evidence when presented, even if it turns out to be politically inconvenient or require you to change a previously held position.”

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She never backed down during the hearings nor has she backed down in plenty more of her social and legal goals, including attending the [Women's March in Washington DC](#).

Behind the legal scene

In J. Payne in Brief's 2017 Black History Month series, we went behind the legal scene to learn 10 more facts about Harris for those who may not know the woman behind the senatorial seat.

1. She is the child of an Indian mother, Shyamala, and a Jamaican father, Donald.

(Source: [KamalaHarris.org](https://www.kamalaharris.org))

2. She said she had a “stroller’s-eye view of the civil rights movement” from her parents and other adults who were involved in service and community involvement. At the Women’s March in D.C., she also ran into a woman who was best friends with her mother at UC Berkeley during the civil rights movement of the 1960s. (Source:

[KamalaHarris.org](https://www.kamalaharris.org), [Los Angeles Times](https://www.losangeles.com))

3. Her views on health and science are deeper than reading NASA reports. Her mother came to the United States to study endocrinology and the mechanisms of cancer. (Source:

[KamalaHarris.org](https://www.kamalaharris.org))

4. She’s kept close ties with some of her educators, including her first-grade teacher Mrs. Wilson (Thousand Oaks Elementary School in Berkeley) who watched Harris walk across the stage as a law school graduate. (Source: [KamalaHarris.org](https://www.kamalaharris.org))

5. Thurgood Marshall, Charles Hamilton Houston and Constance Baker Motley influenced her to become a lawyer. (Source: [KamalaHarris.org](https://www.kamalaharris.org))

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6. She has stood up for domestic violence survivors, including pointing out that repealing ~~the Affordable Care Act aka Obamacare would categorize survivors into a "preexisting~~

6. She has stood up for domestic violence survivors, including pointing out that repealing the Affordable Care Act aka Obamacare would categorize survivors into a “preexisting condition” category. In the past, domestic violence survivors in eight jurisdictions could be denied health insurance for that reason alone. Those states were Idaho, Mississippi, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota and Wyoming. (Source: [@KamalaHarris](#), [McClatchy DC](#), [National Women’s Law Center](#), [Politifact](#))

Recommended Reading: “[Illinois beauticians trained in domestic violence support: How clients will be affected](#)”

7. Back on Track, a recidivism reduction pilot program “has proven over the course of four-and-a-half years to reduce the recidivism or re-offense rate for that population from 54 percent to less than 10 percent,” according to a 2009 “TODAY” show quote from Harris, who is the creator of the Division of Recidivism Reduction & Re-Entry (DR3) program. In its first year, 46 of the 57 Back on Track participants were released to the community with only eight of the 46 being re-arrested. Currently the program is run in collaboration with DR3, the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department and the Los Angeles County Probation Department. (Source: [Back on Track infographic](#), [DR3](#),

Angeles County Probation Department. (Source: [Back on Track infographic](#), [DR3](#), [NewsBusters](#), [State of California Department of Justice](#), [State of California Department of Justice press release](#))

8. Harris received her undergraduate bachelor of arts degree from HBCU Howard University and her law degree from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law. (Source: [Howard University](#), [KamalaHarris.org](#))

9. Harris is the author of “Smart on Crime: A Career Prosecutor’s Plan to Make Us Safer,” which was published in 2009. (Source: [Barnes & Noble](#))

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10. She's not quite sure how to answer questions related to how she feels about being the first female attorney general in California and the first woman district attorney of San Francisco. Her reasoning: "I don't know how to answer that because I've always been a woman." Of course that didn't stop one of her "old friends and good friends" former President Barack H. Obama from referring to her as "the best-looking attorney general in the country." During the 2013 White House Correspondents Association dinner, Obama joked that he "got trouble when I got back home" for saying this. He followed up by saying "Who knew Eric Holder was so sensitive?" and the camera zoomed in on then-FLOTUS Michelle Obama bursting into laughter and clapping. (Source: [C-SPAN](#), [Los Angeles Sentinel](#), [Vanity Fair](#), [Washington Post](#))

Please visit [J. Paye in Brief's News](#) to read the entire six-part Black History Month legal series tribute, honoring [former President Barack H. Obama](#), [former first lady Michelle Obama](#), [Nelson Mandela](#), [Loretta Lynch](#), [Kamala Harris](#) and [Charlotte E. Ray](#).

Shamontiel L. Vaughn compiled this blog. Find out more about her at [Shamontiel.com](#).