

Alyssa Pasquette: \$1,000 Scholarship Winner

As a young female student of bi-racial ethnicity, the last few years of our history have been very disheartening. I have witnessed the need for the “Me Too” movement, the need for the “Blacks Lives Matter” movement, and countless other threatening and suppressive, racially and misogynistically motivated hate crimes and actions that have gone unpunished, creating a need for public outcry. Despite these outcries, change appears slow to come, and change has been politically stunted to say the least. This goes against everything I have been told as a young American student. America is for “the land of the free, home of the brave”. “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free”. “If you can dream it, you can do it”. But as I grow and mature to learn how society, politics, and financial greed play a role in our country, the reality of our culture paints a different, although very real, picture of our country today.

The election of 2020 was a pivotal and important time in our country’s history. As so many Americans were exasperated at the lack of ethics and course of current affairs, Americans voted in record numbers, despite the pandemic, as this election stood for so many important intolerances. Kamala Harris, being a multi-racial woman of color, on the democratic ticket as Vice President, represented a public leader that could make change for so many of us who have felt unheard throughout American history. Harris represents an answer to our outcries; she epitomizes the identity and experience women of color have been craving to look up to, leading our country into a new era, away from bigotry, misogyny, suppression, and systemic and cultural racism.

Kamala’s rise to vice presidency came at a crucial time lacking people of color and female representation. When I was younger, myself along with my fellow female classmates, had thoughts about becoming president. However, as I learned more about the nature of politics and the complexities and prejudices of society, I grew to realize how slim those chances were. Kamala’s position in the White House not only represents the dreams and dedication of women, but she also is a symbol of hope and change for many. I am pursuing a career that is predominantly male and to see a woman reach such a high and meaningful position in the United States Government is inspiring. Her hard work is reflected in the budding confidence in little girls around the world. She is the voice of minority women. She is the voice of the underprivileged, the under-appreciated, and the unheard women. Kamala can reach the hearts and minds of many because of her greater understanding of the disparities found in our society.

Being bi-racial is confusing at times for me. Not being considered by other minorities as an equal, yet not having the privilege that my full white counterparts do, I feel lost in moments of my life. I do not feel that my “American” culture is supportive enough, and it is felt with social media, comments in school, and hate crimes witnessed on TV. I face questions like “Am I Asian enough?” “Am I white enough?” and “Do I have to be afraid like other women of color do?”. As a multiracial woman herself, Kamala can understand what I feel, support and represent others who are like me, and fight for rights women deserve. Vice President Harris, being a person of color, can speak her truth. While white women and men can use their voices as a microphone to amplify the struggles that people of color face, their voices do not echo the same, as they have not lived the same disparity. Having personal experience allows for a more accurate perception of the problems and how they are truly integrated into our society. The magnitude and size of the platform that Kamala has allows her to reach wider audiences and be heard by millions not only in America but also all around the world to make a national and global impact for all minorities.

Kamala knows through life experience the difference between equity and equality. With equity comes the customization of opportunities and representation to fit the needs of certain groups of people. Not only will Kamala fight for the equity of minority groups, but she will also work to repair the complex problem that is the root of injustice and inequality. In addition, Harris recognizes the impact that white supremacy and superiority has on our country today. Young women of color hope to see Kamala open opportunities for people like ourselves, but also anyone who has been damaged by the harmful narratives that are set up by our society. She will use her knowledge and firsthand experiences to serve the people. Some politicians will only use their

knowledge of inequality and injustices to defend themselves when they are called out on their own personal biases and mistakes. Kamala, through personal understanding of inequities, will be able to recognize this, call for correction, and advocate for equity so that we can move forward as a united, fair, and equitable society.

Working to fix current day complex problems now will give future generations a head start on the changes that will still need to be made to forge ahead. Now is the time to show children and young adults (our future leaders) equality, representation, and community. It is also the time to call out biases and give compassion to all those around us. These kids will grow up to fight for themselves and others, serve others, and grow positively while educating themselves on how our society works. Finally, having a female multiracial vice president, Kamala Harris allows the future generations of minority women to be braver, bolder, and true to themselves. This new generation of women will be the leaders of a brighter tomorrow, spreading even more hope and dreams to those around them. What Kamala embodies and will embark on will have a definitively lasting impact on many generations to come.