

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

A Civics In Real Life Series

FEMALE FIRSTS

KAMALA HARRIS



Beginning with [Victoria Woodhull](#) in 1872, many women have run for president and vice president. However, for over 100 years, these women only represented third-parties and never saw success. Barriers began to break in 1984 when the Democratic presidential nominee Walter Mondale chose U.S. Representative [Geraldine Ferraro](#) as his vice presidential running mate, making her the first woman to be nominated by a major party for vice president. In 2008, the Republican Party would nominate its first female nominee for vice president with Alaska Governor [Sarah Palin](#). Former U.S. Senator and U.S. Secretary of State [Hillary Clinton](#) broke another barrier in 2016 when she became the first woman to be nominated to seek the presidency by a major party (Democratic Party). While all of these women helped shape the course of women's history, none of them were elected to the positions they sought. That brings us to U.S. Senator [Kamala Harris](#). In 2020, with the [victory](#) of the Biden-Harris ticket, Harris became the first female vice president of the United States. In addition to being the first woman, she is also the first Black American and South Asian American to hold the office. Vice President Harris was born in Oakland California to highly-educated immigrant parents. Inspired by an upbringing that focused on diversity and activism, VP Harris grew up during the [civil rights movement](#), where she attended marches and rallies and was bussed a long way to school as part of a desegregation effort. After graduating from [Howard University](#) and the University of California, Hastings College of Law, she began her career as a prosecuting attorney. In 2003, Harris was elected District Attorney for San Francisco and then in 2010 elected California's Attorney General. During these times, she fought and won major settlements for the people of California as well as established [multiple reform projects](#). In 2016, Attorney General Harris [defeated](#) Loretta Sanchez for a seat in the United States Senate. Harris would become the second Black woman to be elected to the U.S. Senate and the first South Asian. During her tenure in the Senate, she continued her fight for reform in areas such as taxes, assault weapons, immigration and healthcare. She served on four different Senate committees and was known for her tough questions and willingness to be vocal on matters important to her. Harris sought the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination but withdrew. She would later accept the invitation to become former vice president Joe Biden's running mate. As part of her only constitutional role as vice president, she has been the tie breaking vote in the evenly divided U.S. Senate. In November 2021, she set a record by casting 13 [tie-breaking votes](#) in one year, surpassing [John Adams](#) who had held the record at 12 since 1790. As Vice President Harris navigates her role as a "female first" she says she always remembers these important words from her mom: "Kamala, you may be the first to do many things, but make sure you are not the last."

Civics Challenge: Search & Learn

First Woman Elected To Your State Executive:	
Position Held:	
Years Served:	
Party:	
Platform:	



Lou Frey
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