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Kamala Harris as VP Choice Electrifies Industry Supporters

Joe Biden's selection of the California senator as his running mate sparks joy in the entertainment world, which will be a key source of campaign dollars: 'Hollywood knows a star when we see one' By Kirsten Chuba

History was made Aug. 11 when **Joe Biden** announced California Sen. **Kamala Harris** as his 2020 running mate, making her both the first Black woman and the first Asian American woman selected as vice president on a major party ticket, as well as the first Californian on a Democratic ticket.

Hollywood was quickly on board, with her many A-list supporters — including **Spike Lee**, **Viola Davis**, **John Legend**, **Elizabeth Banks** and **Jennifer Garner** — celebrating the choice on social media. **Ava DuVernay** Instagrammed: “there is no debate anymore ... we either make this happen or literally, more of us perish.”

Pose star **Angelica Ross** posted that Harris is “the right choice for this moment” and recounted personal conversations she'd had with the politician over her record with trans people and nonviolent offenders during her tenure as California attorney general. “She recognized where she could do better, and I feel like anytime we have politicians who are able to listen, receive critiques and vow to do better, those are people that we should be working with,” Ross tells *THR*. She hopes Hollywood shows Harris the same support: “I believe that we are entering into a time that is

going to use every tool possible to try to tear this Black woman down.”

The Gotham Group CEO **Ellen Goldsmith-Vein**, a longtime supporter with husband **Jon Vein**, tells *THR*, “There should be no doubt that women of color, Black women in particular, are the foundation of the Democratic Party and the future of leadership.”

Matt Johnson, a talent lawyer at Ziffren Brittenham, has been Team Harris since 2010, when he and his wife, **Yasmine**, hosted the first L.A. fundraiser for her attorney general run. A decade later, they plan to be just as active.

“We will host fundraisers, recruit surrogates, make calls and get out the vote,” Johnson says. “Over the years we've had many private conversations and thoughtful debates



Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden and Sen. Harris at their first press conference Aug. 12.

1 Kamala Harris — who has long-standing ties to the entertainment industry — with Jeffrey Katzenberg, at a Children's Defense Fund benefit in 2011. **2** With Sean Penn at a Haiti fundraiser in 2013. **3** From left: Sen. Cory Booker, Harris and Anthony Anderson at the 2019 NAACP Image Awards. **4** Cooking masala dosa with Mindy Kaling at the actress' home last year.

with Kamala. We have witnessed just how spot-on her instincts are for where our country is headed and what needs to happen.”

The Contender director **Rod Lurie**, whose 2000 film featured a fictional first female veep, feels there are parallels to the role **Joan Allen** played in the movie. “It is essential,” he explains, “for there to be no chinks in the armor, because otherwise people just fall all over the female politicians in a way that's kind of grotesque.” He also looks forward to her facing off with current Vice President **Mike Pence**, like “**Sigourney Weaver** or a tough **Halle Berry** from *John Wick*, going up against the bad guy from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.”

As the Biden-Harris campaign picks up steam in the coming weeks — it raised \$48 million in the 48 hours after the vp announcement alone — Hollywood will be a likely point of focus.

During her presidential run, Harris, who owns a home in Brentwood, was the candidate most favored by top entertainment power

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players, accounting for 48 percent of donations made by members of *THR*'s Top 100 list as of July 2019. Harris' husband, **Doug Emhoff**, is an entertainment lawyer with DLA Piper. And in L.A., her inner circle of confidants includes a who's who of powerful women.

Longtime friend **Chrisette Hudlin**, wife of producer **Reginald Hudlin**, introduced Harris to Emhoff, and the senator is godmother to one of the couple's children. Other close supporters are **Laura Shell**, wife of NBCUniversal CEO **Jeff Shell**; **Katie Abrams**, co-head of Bad Robot; former U.S. Ambassador **Nicole Avant**, wife of Netflix boss **Ted Sarandos**; Universal Filmed Entertainment Group chair **Donna Langley**; producer **Julia Franz**, wife of ICM Partners managing director **Chris Silberman**; Disney TV Studios and ABC Entertainment chairman **Dana Walden** (who was a donor to Harris' first race for San Francisco district attorney in 2003); Amazon Studios head **Jen Salke**; and Chuck Lorre Family Foundation president **Trisha Cardoso**.

For Hollywood supporters, two of the top points of contact inside the Biden campaign are political consultant **Ryan Baukol**, the Southern California and Nevada regional finance director, and **Michelle Kwan**, the Olympic silver and bronze medalist figure skater turned political operative, who directs appearances by surrogates.

Philanthropist Laura Wasserman with Harris at LACMA's 2014 Art + Film Gala.



Harris appeared with actress Yara Shahidi at the United State of Women Summit in 2018 in Los Angeles.

Highlighting Hollywood's importance in the election, Harris will hold her first solo vp event of the campaign with a fundraiser co-chaired by Avant and former U.S. Ambassador **Colleen Bell**, director of the California Film Commission, along with **Mindy Kaling**, **Reese Witherspoon**, **Shonda Rhimes**, **Mai Lassiter** (wife of producer **James Lassiter**) and **Shannon Rotenberg**, executive director of **Matthew McConaughey's** Just Keep Livin Foundation. The event, which has a top ticket price of \$100,000, benefits the Biden Victory Fund, a joint fundraising effort of the Biden campaign, the Democratic National Committee and state parties.

"Whoever the nominee, we were prepared to gather people from all over the country to show our enthusiastic support. Now the vp candidate is Kamala — who [Nicole Avant and I] have both known for many years — so this is very exciting," Bell says.

Adds Johnson, "Hollywood knows a star when we see one. This town trades in story arcs all day. We know the power of heroism and adversity. The world knows who the good guys — and women — are in this story, and we will work together to celebrate a Biden-Harris victory in November." **THR**

Make Note: Hollywood's Political Calendar

Hollywood Is Raising Arizona

Aug. 21, fieldteam6.org

Co-hosted by **Vin Di Bona** and **Nigel Lythgoe**, the Zoom game show event benefits Democratic group Field Team 6 to register Arizona students and purged voters.

Conversation on the Value of Women Voters and Leaders

Aug. 26, secure.jobebiden.com/a/0826-women-voters

An official Biden event moderated by **Debra Messing** and **Eric McCormack**.



Messing

Has America Jumped the Shark?

Aug. 27, fieldteam6.org

The event — a "writers' panel discussing how if 2020 was a [political] TV show, the writers would have been fired for making it unrealistic," says Field Team 6's **Jason Berlin** — features *Veep*'s **Dave Mandel**, *Samantha Bee*'s **Ashley Nicole Black** and *The Simpsons*' **Al Jean**.

Black National Convention

Aug. 28, m4bl.org

"Oftentimes, I feel the DNC has taken the Black vote, especially Black women, for granted," says **Angelica Ross**, who will host the BNC, a partnership with the Movement for Black Lives to focus on ratifying a Black political agenda.

Blue Momentum PAC

Aug. 31, secure.actblue.com/donate/po?refcode=8.11

A Zoom conversation between **Patton Oswalt** and Rep. **Ted Lieu**.

A PRIVATE CLUB'S PANDEMIC PIVOTS

L.A.'s Griffin Club reopened with outdoor exercise equipment and dining and has just unveiled a new pool: 'We have a lot of outdoor space' By Degen Pener

The Griffin Club, which debuted in Cheviot Hills in 2015, reopened June 1 with more than a few changes in response to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Originally founded in 1926 as the Westside Tennis Club, the 4-acre club — whose ranks throughout its history have included everyone from **Errol Flynn** and **Humphrey Bogart** to **Ty Burrell** and **Josh Gad** — has launched a new app so that members

can book dedicated and socially distanced time slots for swimming and tennis. Exercise equipment has been moved outside. Masks are required on the property.

While indoor dining at its clubhouse is shut down, meal service is offered on a 5,000-square-foot terrace. One of the most in-demand facilities is the pool, which is being booked at half-capacity for two-hour slots. With about 1,700 members, the Griffin charges initiation fees

FIRST
LOOK!



The new junior Olympic-size pool at the Griffin Club in Cheviot Hills.

ranging from \$2,000 to \$14,000.

Now, responding to increased interest in swimming, the club (originally founded by **Milton Berle's** uncle, **Elmer**) has rushed to open a second pool, with an emphasis on

lap swimming. "It's primarily focused for adults and will be more of a quiet place," says the Griffin's director of membership, **John Myers**, who adds, "As opposed to like a Soho House, we have a lot of outdoor space." **THR**