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# Kamala Harris' inspiring best friend is from Montreal. Here's who Wanda Kagan is

*Harris 'rescued' Kagan in a time of need, a pivotal moment that helped Harris realize what she wanted to do*

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Wanda Kagan at a charity event. Kagan was best friends with U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris while they attended high school in Montreal. Years later, they rekindled their friendship. PHOTO BY CELIA ETCETERA PHOTOGRAPHY

**Warning: This article discusses the topic of sexual and physical abuse.**



U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris took the stage Thursday evening on the [fourth and final night of the Democratic National Convention](#) in Chicago.

She spoke about her upbringing, before going into more detail about her plans if she was elected and why she was a better choice than [Republican candidate former president Donald Trump](#).

She told the crowd about her parents, how they met at a civil rights gathering, and instilled in her the value of helping others. She clung to one lesson her mother taught her, which was to “never complain about injustice, but to do something about it.”

She took that advice to heart while [attending Westmount High School in Montreal](#) in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Her best friend at the time, Wanda Kagan, told Harris she was being sexually abused by her stepfather. Harris immediately insisted that Kagan stay with her and her parents.

In her speech Thursday night, Harris called it a pivotal moment in her life.

“This is one of the reasons I became a prosecutor, to protect people like Wanda, because I believe everyone has a right to safety, to dignity and to justice,” said Harris.

Harris previously posted a video discussing the story on social media before she became vice president.



## Who is Wanda Kagan?

Kagan is a healthcare professional and philanthropist who was best friends with Harris in high school.

Kagan and Harris gravitated toward one another in their adolescence in part because of their similar backgrounds, health care publication [JGH News reported](#) in 2020. They are both biracial: Harris is Jamaican and Indian, while Kagan’s father was Black and her mother was a white Jewish woman.

Together, the [two founded a dance troupe called Midnight Magic](#), according to the Associated Press. They took part in the school’s fashion and variety shows, working on the committees, per JGH News.

After Kagan told Harris about the abuse she was facing, they ended up sharing a room at Harris’ home.

“Her mother and sister embraced me. I’m still so grateful,” Kagan told JGH News.

Harris ended up going to university in the United States and the two high school friends lost touch. It wasn’t until Harris appeared on [The Oprah Winfrey Show in 2005](#) that Kagan decided to reach out. They’ve stayed in contact ever since.

Before making the details of Kagan’s abuse public, Harris’ campaign staff at the time consulted with her.

“I had no idea I had an impact on her life,” Kagan said.



## How does Wanda Kagan feel about Harris now?

Kagan shared her thoughts about her high school best friend [in an MSNBC segment](#) ahead of Harris’ speech at the DNC (which Kagan attended).

She said Harris rescued her from “a very physical and sexually abusive situation at home” and gave her stability and structure. Harris helped her believe that she could continue her education. Watching Harris speak about the situation, Kagan said it felt like they’ve come full circle.

“I did end up having a successful health care career,” said Kagan.

“To watch her now going to fight for the American people just like she fought for me over 40 years ago, and fought for my rights...to do what I wanted with my body, it’s an emotional and chilling ride.”

Kagan said she was overwhelmed with happiness for Harris.

“I’m happy to be alive to witness her now fighting for the people of America,” she said.