



Local News



'Maybe the future president went to our high school': Cheers for Kamala Harris in Westmount

Students at Harris's alma mater say they're inspired by her journey from their own halls to the world stage.

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United States Vice-President Kamala Harris went to Westmount High School. Aminata Diallo, 14, Kadiatou Barrie, 14, Ofelia Reinoso Valcourt, 16, Olivia Schnurbach, 14, and Marouli Karidogiannis, 15, point out Harris in her graduating class photo in the school yearbook at Westmount High on Thursday October 31, 2024. PHOTO BY DAVE SIDAWAY /Montreal Gazette

As the United States readies for the presidential election next week, the excitement of the race has reached Westmount. One of Westmount High's own, Kamala Harris, is vying for the highest office down south.

"I think it's really cool that, like, maybe the future president went to our high school," says Westmount High School student Olivia Schnurbach, 14.

"There hasn't been a woman president before," says Kadiatou Barrie, also 14. "And as a Black woman, the first president — that's such a big accomplishment. It's very inspiring."

Harris, the California-born daughter of an Indian mother and Jamaican father, moved to Montreal in 1976. She spent her teenage years here, though she has [downplayed her Canadian roots](#) on the campaign trail for this election. For students at her alma mater, however, Harris represents possibility.

"It gives us hope for the future ahead," says Westmount High student Marouli Karidogiannis.



United States Vice-President Kamala Harris in the 1981 Westmount High School yearbook. PHOTO BY DAVE SIDAWAY /Montreal Gazette

Aminata Diallo, 14, feels a connection with Harris. "I heard she was on the dance team, and I am on the dance team, so I feel like I can relate to her in some way."

While vice-principal Matthew Shapiro says Westmount High avoids political endorsements, he adds that he hopes Harris's leadership roles in high office inspire the students. "We're proud to add her to our list of notable alumni — [alongside Leonard Cohen](#)," he says.

Beyond the school grounds, however, not everyone feels the same personal connection to the U.S. election.

"She's in America, and I'm in Montreal," quips a passerby.



United States Vice-President Kamala Harris graduated from Westmount High School in 1981. PHOTO BY DAVE SIDAWAY /Montreal Gazette

But others in Westmount are excited.

"It shows the students that they can be anything in the world, even the president of the United States," says local Maria Corinthios.

Denis d'Etcheverry, co-owner of the flower shop Flore just off Grosvenor Ave. — the street Harris lived on — says: "We Canadians are more than ready for Kamala Harris. It would be an honour for Westmount."

When d'Etcheverry opened his shop 30 years ago, local politics were preoccupied with Quebec independence. Now, he marvels that we're talking about a Westmount High grad running for U.S. president.

Like Harris, the students at Westmount High have their own ambitious dreams, with many hoping to become doctors, lawyers and world travellers.

But 16-year-old student Ofelia Reinoso Valcourt's aspirations are focused close to home.

"I strive to make a change in my province," she says, referencing recent legislation she finds increasingly hostile to anglophones.

"There's no way I'm going to be complicit to that."