

# Madame President

Project Sound Off

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Project News

SPECIAL EDITION  
002



**The Political Winds of Change: “Madam President”**

**Mrs. Darlene Veal  
Project Sound Off,  
Board Treasurer**

We at Project Sound Off salute the women in politics and the strength they have maintained over the decades to run for the highest office in the country. We do not overlook the many women in different professional fields who strive to succeed at the highest level possible in their profession. The power of women can never be overlooked or taken for granted in our society today. Their achievements and impact have helped shape our nation’s policies in America from day one.

Today, we ask our ladies of choice to focus on the 19th Amendment, which granted women in the United States the right to vote in 1920. However, it is important to remember that women of color and Native American women were not allowed to vote until 45 years later. **The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a landmark decision that propelled women into politics and all areas of the workforce, boardrooms, and government. Their dreams and hopes were not limited.**

History is not just a footnote in time, but it marks a milestone of accomplishments and firsts. Writing this article gave me a better perspective on all the females who have run for the presidency. Starting with Victoria Woodhull in 1872 under the Equal Rights Party. There have been over fifty women who have either been nominated or run for the presidency but never succeeded. We salute the amazing journey of these powerful women in history who set out to achieve the impossible in modern times. Here are a few notable mentions, though this is not a complete list.

- **Shirley Chisholm, 1972**
- **Geraldine Ferraro, 1984**
- **Carol Moseley Braum, 2004**
- **Cynthia McKinney, 2008**
- **Hillary Rodham Clinton, 2008 and 2016**
- **Jill Stein, 2012 and 2016**
- **Elizabeth Warren, 2020**
- **Carly Fiorina’s, 2016**
- **Sara Palin, 2008**
- **Nikki Haley, 2024**
- **Kamala Harris, 2024**



In the spirit of the 19th Amendment, we invited our female contributors to share their journeys, achievements, and personal enlightenments with our readers on the theme of “Madam President.” As a woman, my perspective on the term “Madam President” acknowledges the countless sacrifices and compromises that extraordinary women have made in every aspect of their lives to excel in their professional fields. This is perhaps why Lady Justice wears a blindfold, symbolizing impartiality and fairness.

The Project Sound Off family hopes you find inspiration in the stories of these remarkable women. Their journeys are testament to resilience and determination, encouraging the next generation of young women to always keep their eyes on the prize. We extend much overdue POWER AND RESPECT to these trailblazers.

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**Precious Bonner**  
**The Bonner Foundation**

As the Founder/Director of The Bonner Foundation, It is my sincerest hope that with all of her experience and exposure within the criminal justice system, that she will be more expeditions and inclusive in the implementation of “restorative justice” programs and planning.

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## MADAME PRESIDENT

**Josephine Horace**  
**WIN Recovery and Resilience Center**  
**Family Reunification Coordinator**

When I think of the term, two television shows are directly suggested: Madam President and Madam Secretary, which both have similar storylines. What Madame President means to me is that I am living in an age where the glass ceiling is not cracked, but it has been shattered. The fragments are all over the floor and the possible future Madame President must skillfully walk over without harming herself! One might wonder what I mean by such a bold statement, well, it is not complicated. What I am inferring is that for centuries and years upon years, women were deemed less than and seen as property. It has only been here recently that we have gained the right to be seen and heard, and quite honestly, we still have more work to do in that area. VP Harris will be placed under the microscope and scrutinized more than her male counterpart if he were in that same position. She is going to have to be more strategic in every step as it relates to the glass ceiling that she is now walking upon. If the narrative changes, all eyes will be upon her. Sad to say, many will be anxiously waiting for her to fail. I will be cheering her on.

Knowing that VP Harris has a chance to become the first woman president, I think, has given hope to countless little girls across this Nation, no matter their ethnicity. I believe that VP Harris stood the test of time, all the name calling, the doubts, misunderstanding and the lack of truly knowing what her past work has been about, has made her stand just that much taller and even more qualified to be called Madame President. I expect her to stand on the principles that she laid out pre-election to remain solid and consistent once she is elected. I want the people who helped her get elected to hold her accountable to everything that she said. I expect integrity, ethics and overall moral codes to prevail that will be a win-win for the good of all Americans under her leadership.

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**Edith L. Crigler**  
**Adjunct Professor**  
**Retired**

The Words MADAME PRESIDENT means to me the following:

Madame is a term of respect and reverence depicting knowledge and experience. President is a term that represents responsibility for others and leadership.

I have served in a variety of Human Service and Community Based Organizations in Chicago for over 40 years. I was appointed to the Illinois Prisoner Review Board in 2010 by Governor Quinn and served as a board member for eleven years and in January of 2023 I was appointed as the first African American/Female board chair. I continue to function as an advocate for marginalized disenfranchised citizens of Chicago and Illinois.

In 1982, the Illinois Domestic Violence Act was passed into law. I was the first advocate in the Domestic Violence court. I continue to be an advocate for victims of domestic violence and all people of color, with special emphasis for the rights and protection of women and children. I have designed and conducted workshops that focused on low-income issues and Restorative Justice Practices for human service professionals and law enforcement professionals, i.e., police, probation officers, and public defenders. I am a certified paralegal and policy specialist and I have experience in analyzing policy targeted at the disenfranchised and poor of Chicago and throughout Illinois. I have a strong expertise in translating bureaucratic language into user-friendly language for advocates.

I hold a BA in Political Science from Roosevelt University; a Para Legal Certificate from Roosevelt University; and an MA degree in Administration and Social Policy from the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration. I have also been certified as a Balance and Restorative Justice trainer and is an adjunct instructor for Chicago State University and Governor State University where I have taught an Introduction to Restorative Justice class and Direct Practices in Social Work.

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## What the Words "Madam President" Mean to Me

by Peggy Ann Griffin  
PUSH Jesse "Ma" Houston Prison Ministry

As with many others in our nation, I await with great enthusiasm the election of the first woman president. My mind returns to an account of my great-grandmother, who was a slave. She was beaten by the master because she was on her knees praying. He told her that she did not have a soul. He pointed to a cow in the field and told her that she had no more soul than that cow had. Her great-granddaughter has already cast a vote for a woman of color to be president. How far God has brought us.

I believe that God has a divine plan, in which we have a role. I do not think it is a coincidence that Vice President Kamala Harris is a woman of mixed human races. She has the combination of all human blood types, as did President Barack Obama, and as did Jesus Christ. She will have a sensitivity and understanding of the different cultures in the world. She helps to erase the myth of many centuries that Black skin is inferior.

"Madam President" is more than the elevation of women and girls. It is the advancement of humanity. It is an acclamation that democracy is for the people, of the people, and by the people. I can recall, as a child, watching my father drive off in his 1935 Chevrolet to vote in a town where he was the only Black person present. In order to vote, he had to pass through Cracker's Neck, Virginia, which was the location of the last lynching in the area and not an area where people of dark skins were welcome. That taught me the value of voting. Each time I mark a ballot, I think of the chances that my father was taking on his life and the restrictions to voting in our country. With a grateful heart to God and with pride, I say --- Madam President!

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**Davina J. Jones**  
**CEO, Hand Up Resource Center, Inc.**

The term Madame President resonates deeply as it signifies not only a groundbreaking achievement but also a powerful symbol of transformation. It's a reminder that leadership is evolving to embrace the voices and visions of women—especially Black women—who have long fought for a seat at the table in spaces that didn't always welcome them. For me, having started my professional journey at 18 in corporate America, the barriers and glass ceilings were almost immediate and unmistakable. I felt the discomfort and isolation of being the only Black individual in many of my roles. Though often the most qualified, I still felt the weight of having to excel far beyond my counterparts to merely be seen.

Witnessing the historic ascent of Kamala Harris as both the first woman and first Black woman with a genuine chance at the presidency is affirming, not just for me but for countless women. She represents a dual breakthrough—shattering gender and racial ceilings simultaneously—that shows us all that perseverance is not in vain. It's a catalyst for future generations, reaffirming that we can aspire to these heights without being held back by societal limits.

As the CEO of Hand Up Resource Center, Inc., I am both humbled and thrilled by the path that leaders like Kamala Harris pave. My hope is that her example will inspire young Black women, fostering an era where ambition, authenticity, and resilience are valued without the caveats of race or gender. Kamala Harris's journey stands as an invitation for all of us to dream bigger, work harder, and continue pushing past boundaries that once felt insurmountable.

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## **Ms. Brenda Morris** **LGBT Community activist**

I want to thank the Project Sound Off family for considering me for this historic event in my lifetime to comment on the theme “Madam President.” As a transgender woman, my fight has always been two-fold: for acceptance in society and for equality. As a community activist, my focus has been on equality, inclusion, and educating communities about our human existence. I salute those who came before me in the LGBT community, fighting for acceptance and living with purpose. These trailblazers are honored in the Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in Chicago.

The 19th Amendment holds profound significance for a transgender woman like me. It acknowledges my existence as a woman and grants me a voice to be heard and to change the world.

The LGBT community has a rich history of resilience and activism. From the early days of the Stonewall Riots in 1969, which marked a pivotal moment in the fight for LGBT rights, to the ongoing struggles for marriage equality and anti-discrimination protections, our community has continually pushed for progress. Notable figures such as Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, who were instrumental in the Stonewall uprising, paved the way for future generations.

In the decades that followed, the LGBT community has achieved significant milestones. The declassification of homosexuality as a mental disorder by the American Psychiatric Association in 1973 was a crucial step towards acceptance. The legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States in 2015 was another monumental victory. These achievements were the result of tireless advocacy and the unwavering courage of countless individuals.

Today, the fight continues as we address issues such as transgender rights, healthcare access, and the ongoing battle against discrimination. Organizations like the Human Rights Campaign and GLAAD work tirelessly to promote equality and visibility for all members of the LGBT community.

As we reflect on these accomplishments, it is essential to remember that our fight is far from over. We must continue to advocate for policies that protect our rights and ensure that future generations can live openly and authentically. The 19th Amendment is a reminder of the progress we have made and the work that still lies ahead. It acknowledges my existence as a woman and grants me a voice to be heard and to change the world.

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**Zubaydah Madyun**  
**International League of Muslim Women**  
**Chicago Chapter**

As a Muslim woman, my journey in life has always been filled with purpose and value. By remaining true to Allah’s teachings, I have continuously supported women around the world in their achievements and endeavors. I am a grandmother, a wife, and a voice for the voiceless in my community. Moreover, our family has been justice-impacted for over 56 years.

Reflecting on the 19th Amendment and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, I was given the voice to vote and be heard. Today, for the first time, I can envision a woman becoming the President of the United States. “Madam President” is a title long overdue for women across the country, especially for women of color and the young girls who are trailblazers in politics, viewing the glass ceiling not as a stop sign but as a challenge to overcome. Women have truly arrived on the world stage, ready to make a positive change.



**Kathrynn DiTommaso**  
**Professor**  
**Bronx Community College,**  
**City University of New York (CUNY)**

“Madam President” means to me that despite all the setbacks and the sexism that still exists in America, there have been significant improvements in the fight for gender equality and equal opportunity for women. It makes me incredibly grateful to all the women who came before me who stood up against gender discrimination and demanded to be treated with respect and dignity. It makes me proud of what our generation of women has accomplished to further that cause through sustained effort, solidarity, and the demand for accountability. Most importantly for me, it makes me hopeful that my young daughters and their generation of women may experience a more equal society where their contributions are valued, their voices are heard, and their true potential can be reached.



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## **Minister Ellawee McWilliams**

### **President, Jesse Ma Houston Prison Outpost Ministry**

I have lived a life marked by profound transformation, from the cotton fields and plantations to the privilege of voting for a woman of color to be in the White House. At the age of 18, I left my hometown of Drew, Mississippi, and moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where I married Alvin Smith. During my three years in Memphis, I experienced the harsh realities of segregation, with separate bathrooms and water fountains for “colored” and “white” individuals. I also witnessed the indignity of being forced to move from the front to the back of the Greyhound bus when crossing the state line from Missouri to Tennessee.

Throughout history, God has used women to bring about mighty changes on earth. Kamala Harris is a perfect example of this divine movement. She has been a trailblazer, breaking numerous barriers. Kamala was the first Black woman to be elected district attorney in California and the first woman to serve as California’s attorney general. She was also the first Indian American senator and the first Black woman and Asian American to be chosen as a vice-presidential running mate on a major-party ticket. Today, she serves as the first woman Vice President of the United States, and she has the perfect résumé to become Madam President of the United States of America.

## **ABOUT PROJECT NEWS**

Project News is the newsletter for the Project Sound Off organization. This paper, founded by Josie Jackson and Jazmine Salas, amplifies news about the criminal justice system and stories from individuals affected by mass incarceration. We are seeking writers, photographers, and content creators to submit pieces for Project News. Email [j.salas@projectsoundoff.org](mailto:j.salas@projectsoundoff.org) to get involved!