

You and Me Both with Hillary Clinton, Bonus Episode – Our Next VP

HRC: Hi, I'm Hillary Clinton, and this is You and Me Both. You and Me Both comes out every Tuesday, but I couldn't wait to share this special bonus episode with you because today I'm talking to U.S. Senator and Democratic nominee for Vice President, Kamala Harris. I first met Kamala, oh, back when she was running to be the D.A. in San Francisco. I knew her over the years when she was D.A., once she was attorney general, and I got very close to her sister, Maya Harris, who was one of the senior advisors on my 2016 campaign. And of course, I'm thrilled that she is on the ticket with Joe Biden. I know a little something about the slings and arrows that have come her way in this role because it's hard to be first. Hard to be first, anything. There's also, let's be honest, some sexism combined with racism. But one thing I know is that Kamala is tough and she can handle it all. And she will be a vice president for all the people of our country. It's an absolute delight to have her on the podcast.

HARRIS: Hi, hi, hi!

HRC: Welcome to my brand new podcast!

HARRIS: I know-- this is so exciting!

HRC: Well, I'm thrilled. I know how busy you are. So we're going to get right into it. I've been watching you out on the trail. I love the fact that you're out there and you're not only going to events, you're, you know, dancing with bands. You're really having a good time, Kamala. And, you know, that's to me half the battle, you know, get out there and be that happy warrior that you've always been. I'm going to start by talking about the experiences that led you to be where you are today. Obviously, your experiences in public service, in the public eye. But let's start before that. Tell me and tell our listeners about, you know, your childhood and especially your formidable mother. I love reading about her, but I want to hear about her directly from you.

HARRIS: Well, first, let me say I'm just thrilled to be with you, Hillary, and thank you for everything you are. Everything you do. Everything about you inspires me in so many ways. I can't begin to describe. So thank you. So my mother — I mean, let me start by saying that I've only known incredible and strong women my whole life. There's like a whole collection of them who helped raise me, and as you have often said, a village does it right. And so my mother, she was the eldest of my grandparents' children — four children — and, you know, she grew up at a time where she was expected that her accomplishments would be to get married and have children. But she wanted to study science and she wanted to cure cancer.

HRC: Oh, that's great.

HARRIS: Well, you know, no lack of ambition there. [Laughs]

HRC: [Laughs]

HARRIS: She convinced my grandfather that one of the best schools to learn was UC Berkeley. Without my grandfather knowing, actually, she applied [Laughs] and got accepted...

HRC: Good for her.

HARRIS: And then informed my grandfather that this had happened. This was in the 1950s, and he said to his daughter, who at the time was 19, "If this is what you want to do, then I will not stand in your way." And so having never been to the United States, my mother got on a plane at the age of 19 by herself and arrived in Berkeley, California. And immediately because of how she was raised and who she was, she just became attracted to the Civil Rights Movement that was starting to really evolve in a very passionate way in Berkeley and Oakland, California. And, you know, my mother was all of five feet. I joke that if you ever met her, you would have thought she was, you know, seven feet tall. But I don't actually don't know if she was exactly five feet. [Laughs]

HRC: [Laughs] She stood on her toes.

HARRIS: Oh, yeah. She had a huge presence, and she raised us, my sister, Maya, and me. She raised us with, you know, certain principles. And one was that it is your duty. Not — you know, not - you're not being charitable or benevolent. It is your duty to concern yourself with the condition of other people and to help them, and so it was never a debatable point. It was literally, you know, because duty is, you know, for those of us who feel strongly about duty, it's not a choice.

HRC: Right.

HARRIS: It is the price you pay if you want to think of it as a price, but your responsibility for this place on Earth that you occupy.

HRC: Right. Right. You know, there's a great line from one of my mentors in life and work, Marian Wright Edelman, who always would say, "Service is the rent you pay for being on this earth," and I sense that from you talking about your mom and when you think about her being 19 in the 50s, she lived through the big transition in India. She saw the impact of the non-violent Gandhian movement, and so coming to Berkeley and being attracted to, you know, the Civil Rights Movement would just be a continuation for her.

HARRIS: That's exactly right. There are so many stories I could tell about her that have influenced who I am. My mother was a fighter for women her entire life. Her specialty was

breast cancer, and, you know, before I was probably aware of it, I was hearing her passion for the importance of women receiving dignity in the health care system.

HRC: Mm-hmm. And, you know, it's hard to think now, Kamala, but your mother had to have been aware as she was doing her research into breast cancer that until the 1980s, experiments for breast cancer were not even performed on women. So, she had to fight for the rights of the people that she was really advocating on behalf of.

HARRIS: Oh, it was profound. I'll never forget one night she came home — Maya and I were what you call latchkey kids, right? We'd come home after school and my mother would come home hours later. But when we came home after school, there were always fresh baked cookies. [Laughs]

HRC: Oh, my Gosh. Wow.

HARRIS: But we were never allowed to eat dinner until after Walter Cronkite. [Laughs]

HRC: [Laughs] That's a pretty good rule.

HARRIS: Oh, it all worked. But I remember one night my mother came home and she was, oh raging mad. Raging, raging. Because you see, and to your point, a full mastectomy had been performed on a woman. And this person I don't know if it was a doctor; I don't know who it was but someone — now, this is going to be very vivid, so this maybe should be the disclaimer for the audience. But on a metal tray, someone was just walking around with this woman's breast. My mother was raging mad because it gets to the point about the dignity of women.

HRC: Right.

HARRIS: And what she said — now this is gonna get even more vivid, [laughs] but I'm going to give it to you.

HRC: Go, go, go.

HARRIS: She said, "Do you think that they would have walked around with a man's — you know what—" [laughs] "without at least giving it the dignity of putting something over it or doing..." Right?

HRC: Right. Oh, I love your mom. Oh, I loved your mother. I mean, as you know, I spent two years with your sister.

HARRIS: [Laughs] I know.

HRC: Because Maya was one of my senior advisers, and, you know, I loved her and loved you. Now I love your mother. You know, all part of the family. Do you think about how your mother

mothered you when you think about your step kids, do you think about Cole and Ella, do you think about your nieces, do you hear sometimes, your voice sounding like your mother?

HARRIS: [Laughs] Often. Often. And it's— I'm now at a point in my life where I have fully embraced the fact that I've become my mother. [Laughs]

HRC: [Laughs]

HARRIS: [Laughing] I'm not rejecting it. It's not surprising me any longer. It's just what has happened.

HRC: Well, you certainly inherited her love of cooking.

HARRIS: I have, and it really is one of my joys. And it's, you know, each of us has a way that we express our love. For me, cooking is one of those things, and I love cooking with the kids. Sunday family dinner, it's like, Sunday family dinner, there's no question, that's what happens. You know, whoever's in town comes over. You know, the kids help me cook, and it's, you know, sometimes depending on what's happening in my life, I'll start working on Sunday family dinner on Friday, you know.

HRC: Yeah. You also did tell me in a phone conversation recently you've been teaching your husband, Doug, to cook.

HARRIS: Yes. So let's talk about that. So I remember our conversation just right after the pandemic hit, and I was ironing and folding during our conversation. I'll never forget that because we started having chores. One of the things I realized about my husband that I had not realized before the pandemic hit is that clearly his mother never required him to clean his bedroom. [Laughs]

HRC: [Laughs]

HARRIS: So we had to have a conversation about that, including me, asking my mother in law, "why?" [Laughs]

HRC: [Laughs]

HARRIS: And so then I realized as much as I love to cook, cooking lunch and dinner seven days a week, it's a lot.

HRC: Right.

HARRIS: And so, we just had a conversation. I was like, "Honey, I need you to— we've got to figure this out." So he pulled the straws "Wednesday" and "Saturday" — those will be his days. And then he was trying different things because, you know, he was trying, kind of, to impress me

and be a bit ambitious. But it kind of reached a head when he was making something in the cast iron skillet, and we were in the apartment and the fire alarm just started raging.

HRC: Oh, the smoke.

HARRIS: The smoke was, just, I could smell — I started to smell it. I was reading my briefing book. [Laughs]

HRC: [Laughs] I remember those days.

HARRIS: Right. And I started to smell it, and then I started to see it. Then there I am with my briefing book under the smoke detector, waving it back and forth saying to him, "Honey, turn off this stove!" [Laughs]

HRC: [Laughs]

HARRIS: And so we got to the point where now he agrees that he should just have three things that he perfects and does well, and we don't need to experiment with everything else.

HRC: I think that makes perfect sense. You know, during these pandemic days, you know, people are discovering all sorts of things about their family members. And, you know, I think about you going to college, going to Howard, then going to law school. What was your first job out of law school?

HARRIS: My first job out of law school was in the Alameda County District Attorney's Office.

HRC: And why did you decide to become an Assistant District Attorney?

HARRIS: You know, I was born in Oakland, California, which is, you know, at the heartbeat, I think, of Alameda County, which is a very large county. And, you know, Hillary, there is not a Black man I know — be it a relative or a friend — who has not been the subject of some form of racial profiling, unreasonable stop or excessive force. I grew up understanding the impact of law enforcement on the community in which I was raised, and I knew that it needed to be fixed. I experienced it and it was a lived experience, and I said to my family, I said, "you know, why is it that we traditionally," you know, "when we want to change these systems, we were on the outside? Shouldn't we also try and go on the inside?" And that's what I decided to do. And, you know, one could say I decided to go up the rough side of the mountain, but [laughs] it was about saying, "Look, from the inside, we can have an impact." And the impact was, you know, it was varied. The impact included that I specialized for a long time in child sexual assault cases.

HRC: That is so hard, Kamala. I mean, I did some cases. I ran a legal aid clinic. I was very active in legal services. I would be appointed to cases by judges, and those cases were so difficult.

HARRIS: It's honestly, it's the worst of human behavior because you are talking about children and, in the vast majority of the cases, we're talking about someone who is in a position of trust with that child. Right? And for me, it was always about trying to figure out a way to make the point that everyone deserves dignity in the system, but also justice. And justice takes on many forms depending on the injustice. And I for a long time, you know, I worked on what we also needed to do around what I called "sexually exploited youth," but the system called "teenage prostitutes."

HRC: Right.

HARRIS: Which is that these girls mostly, and boys, would be arrested and put in juvenile hall. Meanwhile, they're being trafficked and we treat, you know, johns and all of that as though, you know, it's not a big deal. So I actually, during my years, you know, early years, created a safe house in California, in San Francisco, so that if these kids were picked up, that they would go to the safe house, not to juvenile hall.

HRC: Good for you. Because so many of them were runaways, they were often thrown out of their homes, or fleeing abuse in their own home.

HARRIS: Right, exactly. All of that. And we're calling them teenage prostitutes? You know, so it was that work. It was the work of— I created one of the first environmental justice units of a D.A.'s office in the country because, you know, I saw that the community— you will not be surprised— that had an annual per capita income of families of 15 thousand dollars, was also the community where all the dumping was happening.

HRC: That's exactly right.

HARRIS: And so taking on those polluters-- it was the work of saying that we need to also, you know, appreciate that. You'll appreciate this more than many— I think that we have to incorporate the concept of redemption in what we do in the criminal justice system, and it's an age-old concept, right? It means essentially, you know, we all will make mistakes. And for some, perhaps that rises to the level of being a crime, but isn't it the sign of a just and a civil society that we allow people a way back? And so I created one of the first re-entry initiatives in the country focused on predominantly young men who were arrested for drug sales and getting them jobs and counseling, and a lot of them were young fathers and getting the parenting support and then dismissing the charges against them. But, you know, these were challenging days. This was in the early 2000s. People literally called my program a "hug a thug program", but it ended up being a model and a model for the country.

HRC: Well, you were really ahead of your time in so many ways, Kamala, both in Alameda County, then when you went on to be the district attorney for San Francisco. I think that's the first time I met you.

HARRIS: Yes.

HRC: And you brought the same level of positive energy to what you wanted to see done in the D.A.'s office. And then obviously, you went on to be elected statewide in California to be the Attorney General. And, you know, you've always, in my observation, tried to be on the side of the underdog. You've always tried to literally stand up for dignity, and with the story that you just told about your mother, I see the through-line and I so much appreciate that. And in the criminal justice system, you're right, that's hard. We've learned a lot of tough lessons. I mean, obviously, you know, there are bad guys and they've got to be punished and you have to make sure that happens, but for the vast majority of people caught up in the criminal justice system, there are other and better and more dignified ways to handle them. So when you started your campaign for president, I remember you and I sat down in L.A. shortly before you made your decision. Now I'm thrilled that you're the party's vice presidential nominee. I'm so excited for you. And I think we've heard a little bit about your getting the call from former Vice President Biden, but maybe you could take us behind the scenes about what happened when you did get the call.

HARRIS: Well, you know, we'd all been hearing that he was close to making a decision and I'd gone through a process. So I knew I was on the list. And then my team said, "well, he's gonna call you today. They set up a call. They'd like to set it up for today." So I said, "OK." And then shortly thereafter, my team said he wants to do a Zoom. And, you know, I have Zoom days and you have those days that are not Zoom days? [Laughs]

HRC: I do. You know, for Zoom days, you gotta do your hair.

HARRIS: Right. You got to go the whole—

HRC: You got to put your make-up on. [Laughs]

HARRIS: Exactly. Exactly. It's like it's another two hours. It could be, right? [Laughs] So, and this particular day it was not a Zoom day. [Laughs]

HRC: [Laughs] "Couldn't we just do a call, you know?"

HARRIS: Exactly, exactly. And so I had to do some really quick fancy footwork. And Doug was home because, of course, we're all working from home, and so we were pretty much nonfunctional until, you know, the allotted time for the call. So I went into our makeshift Zoom room and I thought Doug was in the kitchen. So then I took the call. And, you know, you have to hand it to Joe. And it's really— it's part of what I love about his character and his nature. He immediately at the beginning of the call, Hillary, he went right in there and said, "Let's do this together." You know, he didn't build up to it. He didn't write the tension in it. He didn't, you know, talk for a while and then say, he literally just right away... And obviously, I was deeply humbled and honored. He got Jill on his cell phone. She was at an event, and so then she was on

speaker as he and I were on the Zoom. She and Doug had bonded during the campaign, during the primary.

HRC: I love seeing them together.

HARRIS: They're really— I've been traveling together —they've been traveling together. And so she said, "Well, where is Doug?" and I shouted out his name. But of course, Doug was actually ear planted on the other side of the door.

HRC: [Laughs]

HARRIS: So he was well aware it was time for him to come in. [Laughs]

HRC: Well, I'd expect nothing less. [Laughs]

HARRIS: He came in and we had the best conversation, just the four of us.

HRC: That makes me so happy.

HARRIS: You know, immediately thereafter we started packing and went to Delaware the next morning.

HRC: Oh, I love the scene of, you know, Doug and Jill out there and you and Joe.

HARRIS: And they're really- they're having a good time.

HRC: It just looked right. So you have a debate coming up.

HARRIS: Yes, I do!

HRC: October 7th.

HARRIS: Yeah.

HRC: Where you're facing off against Vice President Mike Pence. How are you preparing? What's that feeling like?

HARRIS: You know, it's - The difference between this debate and the debates in the primary are, you know, many and in particular that then it was mostly about speaking up about my position on various issues as compared to my colleagues on the stage. This time it will be about, you know, requiring some level of knowledge, if not mastery, of Joe's record, the vice president, Mike Pence's record, Trump's record and then, of course, defending my own record. So that's different in terms of the process. But I guess the biggest thing, just to be candid with you, is to be prepared for what is, I think, very likely to be a series of untruths.

HRC: I think you should be preparing.

HARRIS: Yes.

HRC: And I think you should also be prepared for, you know, the slights, the efforts to diminish you, you personally, you as a woman who's about to be our next vice president. So I do think that there will be a lot of maneuvering on the other side to try to put you in a box.

HARRIS: It's, on some levels, surreal in terms of it all. And I don't necessarily want to be the fact checker at the same time, you know, depending on how far he goes with whatever he does. You know, he's going to have to be accountable for what he says.

HRC: Well, and, you know, he and Trump will say anything and assert anything. Like, "What a great job we did on the coronavirus." And, you know, people are sitting there going, what is he talking about? But you will be well-prepared. And I don't know exactly the timing, but I think even before the debate, you may have a chance to be on the Judiciary Committee examining this latest nominee to replace Ruth Bader Ginsburg. So you are really in an unusual historic position. The candidate for vice president, who's a sitting Senator on the Senate Judiciary Committee questioning Judge Amy Coney Barrett. How does that feel to you? And do you have any thoughts about losing Ruth Bader Ginsburg and watching this president and the Republicans under McConnell trying to force through a confirmation in the face of an election just weeks away?

HARRIS: You know, I was seated while she laid in State just a few days ago, and it's something. I know you knew her, and your story and her story are very intertwined. I looked at that casket, Hillary. And, you know, she was in size, small. And I looked at that casket and there was, without any question, an inverse relationship between her size and her stature.

HRC: Oh, that's great. That's a great way to describe it.

HARRIS: Right? I mean, I just couldn't help but think about the life that she lived. And, you know, I think it does a disservice to suggest that she just gained popularity after the Notorious RBG moniker because it was her whole life.

HRC: Right.

HARRIS: Her whole life. And she did what you and I know is required of lawyers who are fighting for civil rights. She built up a pathway for so many women and she did it brick by brick. Case by case. She had the patience and the foresight and the fortitude to build it up and see it through.

HRC: That's exactly right. Right. That's exactly right.

HARRIS: What a life well lived. It was interesting. The rabbi, in speaking that day, as she lay in state, said something along the lines of, she earned the right to rest in peace. Right.

HRC: Well, Bill and I went to the Supreme Court to pay our respects there. And we had a lot of time to talk before we got there about the impact that she made. And your description is so on point, because when she started, there was no guarantee. She saw wrongs that she wanted to help rectify. And she was in pursuit of justice and equality, plain and simple, under the Constitution. And she wanted to make sure that under the 14th Amendment disadvantage, discrimination based on sex would also be part of the scrutiny that courts were supposed to give to any discrimination of any kind based on race, right?

HARRIS: Yeah.

HRC: And so when I think of her, I think of her as a mighty warrior, even though she was, as you rightly say, you know, a petite woman, but a woman with enormous energy and conviction that carried her through. She's now well-known for her dissents, which means that she lost a lot of important cases. But I remember her saying once that she hoped that her dissents would serve as, you know, a guiding light to future courts when they saw the injustice that had remained because of the majority opinion. So I really like the way you've described her. And I know you've got to get back on the campaign trail, so I can't keep you much longer.

HARRIS: I want to stay and talk to you forever! [Laughter]

HRC: Well, that would be fine with me! But I know what it's like to have nervous--

HARRIS: Listen, I could just listen to you talk forever.

HRC: Nervous people, you know, are standing there pacing, you know, their heart beating!

HARRIS: I'm just ignoring that part! [Laughter].

HRC: Let's end on by wrapping up Justice Ginsburg and your journey. You know, she broke a lot of barriers for women. And we have a lot of barriers, as you know so well, that are still before us. But, hey, I believe you're on the brink of putting, you know, one of the biggest cracks in that glass ceiling. How does it feel for you, Kamala? Because I was thinking about Ruth Bader Ginsburg when she used to say, what's the difference between an accountant in Brooklyn and a Supreme Court justice? One generation.

HARRIS: Right.

HRC: You know, what's the difference between a committed young scientist and the next vice president? One generation. Reflect on that for me. You know, both the responsibility but also the pure joy of going where no one's gone before.

HARRIS: I mean, you can speak volumes about this in terms of your personal experience.

HRC: Sure. But it's building on it. It's like what you're saying with Ruth. It's like one brick at a time. And, you know, my experience, I think, has paved the way for others.

HARRIS: Without any question, without any question. Your experience has paved the way for me and so many others without any question.

HRC: And I think we have to keep going.

HARRIS: Yeah. And we have to keep going. But, you know, one of the things that you do among the many things, is you have always -- I will speak for myself -- encouraged me. And just been so supportive with advice, with just -- with warmth. And as you know, none of us achieve these moments and none of us achieve our success without people who believe in us. And so in that way, that's very humbling because there are a lot of folks who are a part of this moment. A lot of us.

HRC: There is that village.

HARRIS: Yes, it is true. And it continues throughout your life. I do also feel the weight of responsibility. You know, as my mother would say, you may be the first to do many things. Make sure you're not the last.

HRC: I love that. Keep those doors open!

HARRIS: I mean, and that's what you do, Hillary. You really do. You have earned the right to just say "I'm done!" [Laughter] "Have fun with it, everyone. I've got beautiful grandbabies. I'm good!"

HRC: That's true. I do.

HARRIS: You keep giving, you keep giving. And I just can't not say that because it needs to be said and I want to say it. It's among the many things that are very special about you. That is one of them.

HRC: Well, thank you, my friend. And I'm looking forward to the debate. I'm looking forward to the Judiciary Committee. I'm looking forward to the rest of the campaign. And I am really looking forward to seeing you stand up there and get sworn in as the next vice president of the United States. So, thank you for taking some time to join me on "You and Me Both" today and take good care of yourself. We really need you, my friend.

HARRIS: Thank you, Hillary. It's great to be with you. Bye bye bye.

HRC: You and Me Both is a production of iHeart Radio, and we'll be back with our regular episode on Tuesday. We're produced by Julie Subrin and Kathleen Russo, with help from Huma Abedin, Nikki Ettore, Oscar Flores, Brianna Johnson, Nick Merrill, Lauren Peterson, Rob Russo, and Lona Valmoro. Our engineer is Zach McNees. Original music is by Forrest Gray.

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Come back next Tuesday when I'll be talking with two other phenomenal leaders, Gloria Steinem and Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha. Don't miss it.