

KAMALA HARRIS

HOW OUR NEW VP IS IMPACTING THE FASHION INDUSTRY

From pantsuits, to pearls, to Timberland boots, rainbow Levi's jackets, and Chuck Taylors, Kamala Harris has made quite the fashion statement during the presidential primaries and through her ascendancy to becoming the first Black and South Asian Vice President of the United States.

Her trademark pearls have always caught the eyes of many and led to the creation of independently-launched Facebook groups called Wear Pearls on Jan 20th 2021 and United By Pearls, calling on women to show off their pearls on Inauguration Day and beyond. In less than two short months leading up to the inauguration, both groups surpassed 450,000 members. On that momentous day, Kamala became the first VP to wear clothing from Black American designers such as Pyer Moss, Christopher John Rogers and Sergio Hudson.

Kamala Harris' distinct and intentional style has already made waves and her choices have not gone unnoticed. We've mentioned in our past [presidential fashion and psychology report](#) how Kamala balances relatability with a sharp, modern fashion sense, leveraging formal wear and pantsuits without the stuffiness. Her pearls add a touch of elegance to even the most classic, DC-approved outfits, and women have noticed. In just a few short months, there has been a "Kamala Effect" when it comes to pearls, with scores of women purchasing new pearls or dusting off their old ones. Designers and the fashion world have also made pearls a hot commodity once again and general interest in all kinds of pearls has surged. The idea of pearls as a timeless item has never rang more true, thanks to Harris.

Depending on where she's headed and who she's meeting, Kamala might also rock a more casual look, pairing a blazer and pearls with Chuck Taylors or Timberland boots. To get a better sense of how Kamala's fashion choices are received and how they may be shaping the jewelry and fashion world of today, we asked some experts to speak to Kamala's signature style in her own regard.



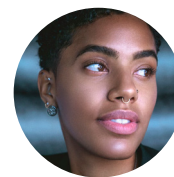
THE PEARL SOURCE



MEET OUR EXPERTS



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JESSENIA LANDRUM

Founder, Jevela Jewelry

Jessenia Landrum is a jewelry designer with over 6 years working in the creative industry. Beginning with handbag and footwear design, Jessenia graduated from the Fashion Institute of Technology and began working as an accessories designer, eventually transitioning into jewelry after moving through the fashion industry. In 2018, she founded her company, Jevela Jewelry, with designs inspired by world travels. Jevela is a fashion jewelry company inspired by people, places, and purpose. Jessenia continues to focus on growing her brand and reaching wider markets.



LEON RBIBO

President, The Pearl Source

Leon Rbibo is the President of The Pearl Source, one of the largest online pearl jewelry retailers, wholesalers, and distributors in the United States. Rbibo was one of the first jewelers to move operations entirely online in the late 90s and is considered a seasoned expert on the distribution and pricing of jewelry internationally, frequently lending his expertise to JCK, National Jeweler, Forbes, Harper's Bazaar, Real Simple, Retail TouchPoints, Internet Retailer, The Cut, Cosmopolitan, and more. The Pearl Source is a member of Jewelers of America, which requires its members – jewelry retailers and suppliers across the jewelry supply chain – to commit annually to professional practices for their day-to-day business operations to help consumers shop with confidence.



VITTORIA VIGNONE

Author and Founder of Kamala's Closet

Vittoria Vignone is the author and founder of Kamala's Closet, a site dedicated to highlighting the VP's fashion. Vignone has written about fashion for over 10 years for various blogs and social media accounts. She has a BA and MA in Art History, and wrote her Master's thesis on the way 16th century women used fashion to codify their identities and how this subsequently affected their depictions in private and public art.



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The KAMALA EFFECT

HOW THE VP'S SIGNATURE PEARLS ARE SHAPING NEW TRENDS



You can't talk Kamala and fashion without mentioning her pearls. Kamala has worn all kinds of pearls throughout her tenure as a politician.



"There's a great deal of variety in the kinds of pearls she wears. She's worn white south sea pearls, Tahitian Black Pearls and Akoya Pearls—it's a mainstay of her fashion and really speaks to her classic sense of fashion."

- LEON RBIBO from The Pearl Source

"She clearly gets new pearl necklaces for important moments in her life," says Vittoria Vignone, creator of Kamala's Closet. "People can relate to this sort of sentimentality — everyone owns some piece of jewelry that means something to them."

According to Who What Wear, Kamala was [first seen wearing pearls as far back as 1986](#) when she graduated from college. Jessenia Landrum, of Javela Jewelry, notes how Kamala's wearing of Pearls is an homage to Alpha Kappa Alpha, the first African American Greek-letter sorority. The moniker the sorority's founders went by? **TwentyPearls**.



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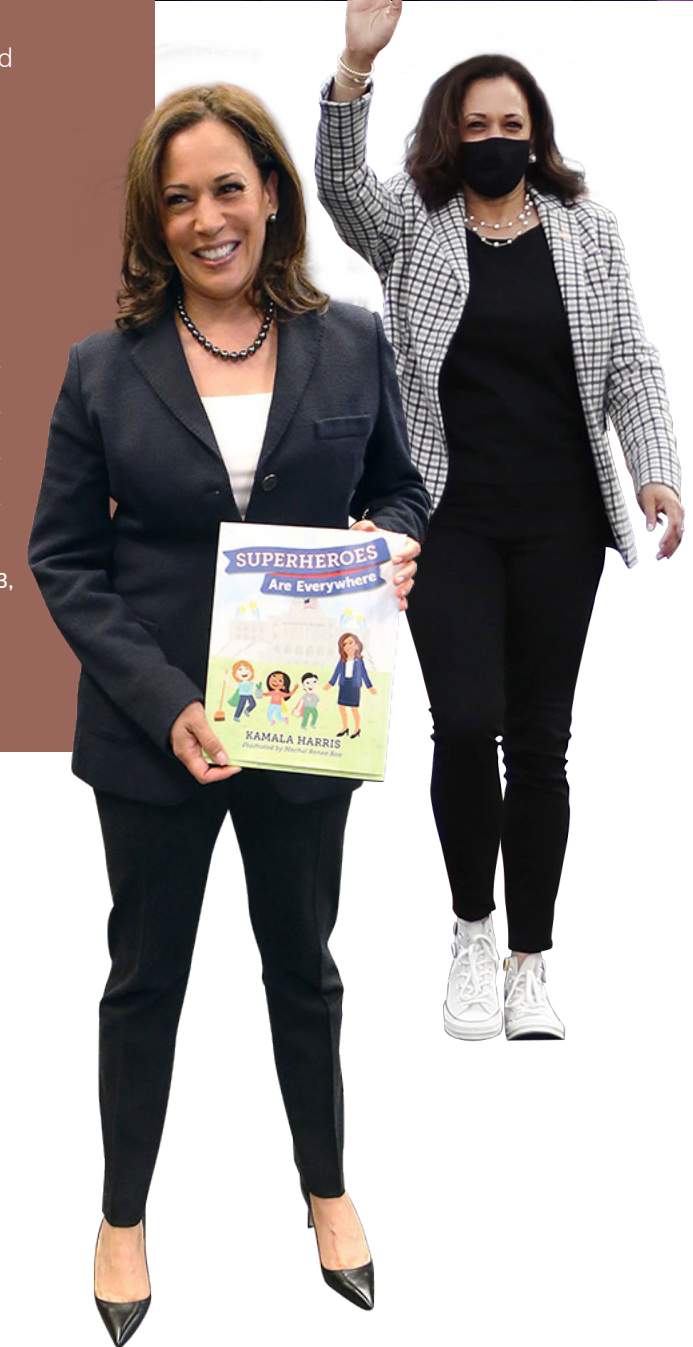
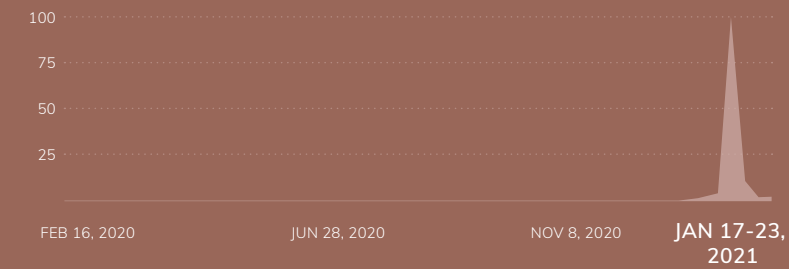
THE KAMALA EFFECT:
HOW THE VP'S SIGNATURE PEARLS ARE SHAPING NEW TRENDS



"From social media interactions and observations," Vignone says, "people are reconsidering pearls they already own or looking to buy cheaper strands in order to get her look for less." A Google Trends report also shows that the search term

“Pearls” spiked around Inauguration Day, as did “Chucks and Pearls” and “Kamala Pearls”

Google Trends “Chucks & Pearls” Search



According to Rbibo, there has been a lot of interest in pearls since 2020 and much of that can be attributed to the amount of coverage dedicated to Kamala Harris' fashion choices, especially her pearls. "Pearls have long been a symbol of beauty, resilience, career mobility, and female empowerment and Kamala Harris embodies that," says Rbibo. "There's a historic importance with having a woman of color taking the office of the Vice Presidency for the first time and Kamala Harris is very much owning that beyond her role as the VP."



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TRADITIONALLY MODERN

Pantsuits have always been a mainstay of politicians' wardrobe, but Harris is able to leverage high-profile designers in a subtle way that evades accusations of elitism. "Harris' style hasn't drastically evolved but she's modernized her look for sure," says Vignone, "gravitating to pant suits instead of skirt sets. It's clear she's built a good collection over the years and she's incredibly sentimental about it."

"She re-wears almost everything she owns—there's no disposable fashion element at play, which is responsible and admirable," says Vignone. "Every consumer needs to strive for this at every price point, because it's better for the environment and our wallets."

One of her stand out pieces is a bold white pantsuit she famously wore while giving her acceptance speech in November 2020. Eschewing her traditional color choices of dark blues, browns and blacks, this suit followed in the footsteps of Hillary Clinton when she accepted the Democratic nomination last election season and made a nod to the women's suffrage movement, while cementing Harris' own place in history.

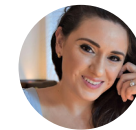




KAMALA HARRIS' OTHER SIGNATURE STYLES

RELATABLY CASUAL

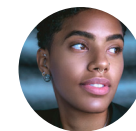
It's not all business with Harris—she's happy to bust out a casual sweater, jeans, and sneakers combo, especially during the campaign trail where she had to meet with people all across the country and have conversations with them, rather than dictate speeches from a podium. Fans picked up on Harris' propensity for Converse sneakers, either as a way to dress down a more formal outfit, or just stay comfortably casual on the road.



"Her look can be distilled into a few key, identifiable things—namely structured blazers, Chucks, and pearl necklaces—all of which are incredibly relatable pieces that most people have versions of in their wardrobes."

- VITTORIA VIGNONE

Harris was also lauded for her choice to wear Timberland boots when visiting California after its devastating wildfires. These boots were made popular by 90's hip hop rappers and the style still endures today. It's this casual appeal that makes Harris incredibly relatable and allows people to engage and share in these cultural moments like the aforementioned Facebook group.



"She'll get a little funky with the design, such as wearing a two-layered pearl necklace or using goldwires, which is interesting. But she never wears something that overshadows the pearls—the pearls are always the main attraction."

- JESSENIA LANDRUM

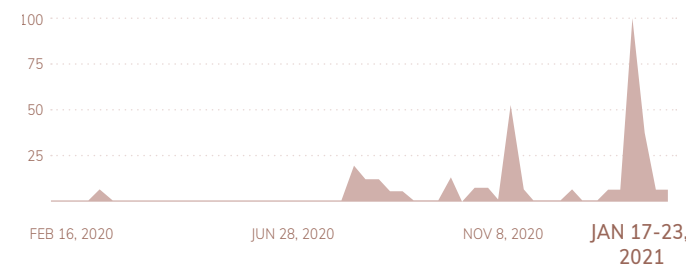


HARRIS INSPIRES DESIGNERS AND CUSTOMERS ALIKE

The conversation around the Converse (“Chucks”) Harris wears often didn’t just end on social media and fashion blog posts — it actually led to an increase in sales for the company. According to Quartz “sales of women’s Chuck Taylor’s doubled” during the week of the inauguration and there was a continued rise of searches on Google for the term

“Kamala Harris fashion” peaking on Inauguration Day.

Google Trends “Kamala Harris Fashion” Search



“We saw designers use pearls on the runway for Spring 2021,” says Landrum. “And its forecast that pearls will be a popular jewelry trends for this year. As designers, we’ll all have to make adjustments in the industry to meet this new demand for pearls.”

Our experts all agree that Kamala’s impact is greater than just on pearls and fashion.



“Kamala has been an inspiration to young women, especially those of color, who now see someone like themselves in a role never occupied by a woman of color, paving the way for new possibilities.”

- JESSENIA LANDRUM

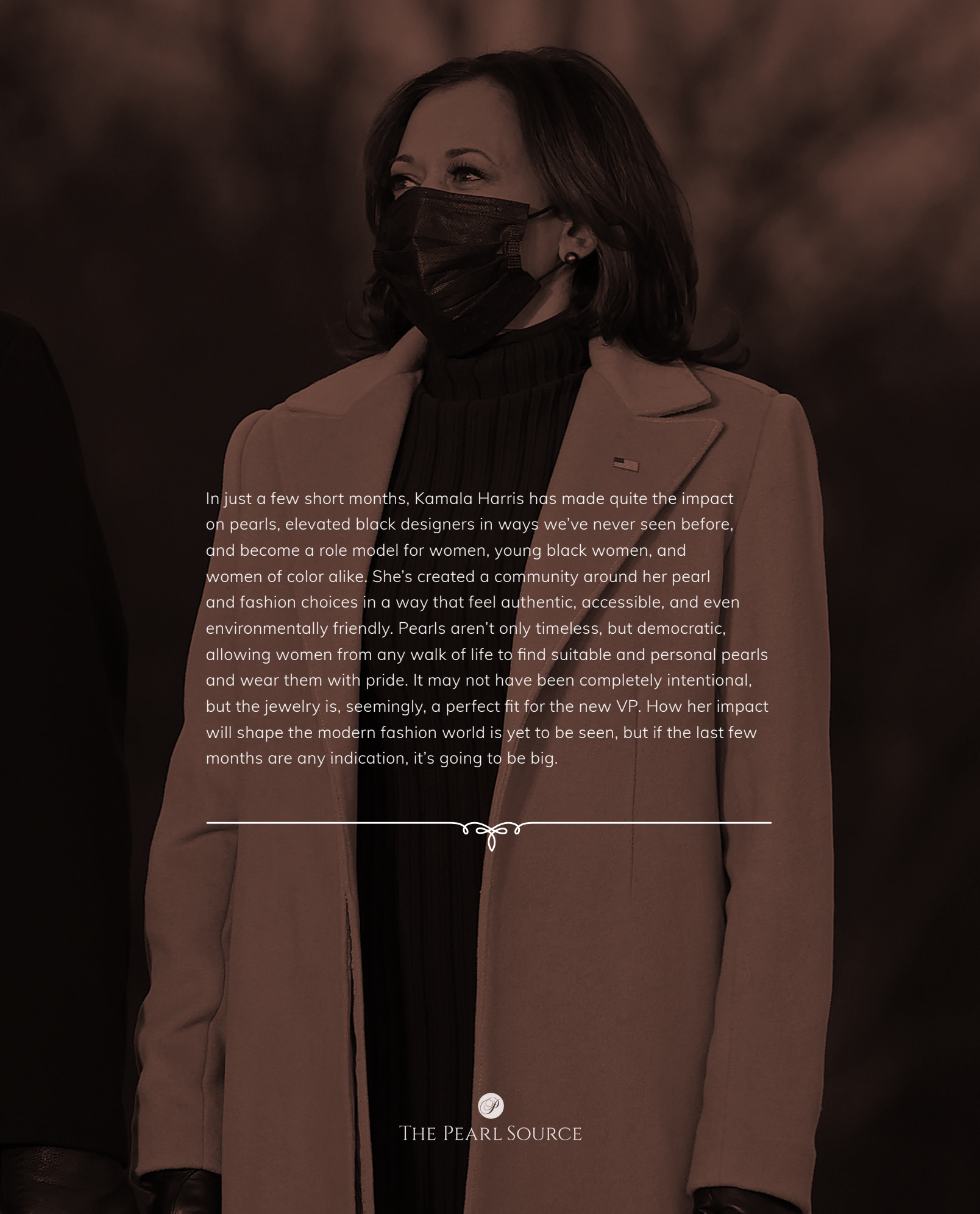


“Almost everything Harris has custom-made comes from American designers that are most often people of color, women, or lesser-known designers. This idea of using her position to amplify others is very well-received among her fans and in the fashion community at large.”

- VITTORIA VIGNONE



THE PEARL SOURCE



In just a few short months, Kamala Harris has made quite the impact on pearls, elevated black designers in ways we’ve never seen before, and become a role model for women, young black women, and women of color alike. She’s created a community around her pearl and fashion choices in a way that feel authentic, accessible, and even environmentally friendly. Pearls aren’t only timeless, but democratic, allowing women from any walk of life to find suitable and personal pearls and wear them with pride. It may not have been completely intentional, but the jewelry is, seemingly, a perfect fit for the new VP. How her impact will shape the modern fashion world is yet to be seen, but if the last few months are any indication, it’s going to be big.



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