**Strong when on your shoulders**

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There is a famous song by Josh Groban, American singer and Irish Secret Garden member, entitled ‘You Raise Me Up’. “You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains; You raise me up to walk on stormy seas; I am strong when I am on your shoulders; You raise me up to more than I can be.” The music for the song was composed by Rolf Løvland. Numerous groups have recorded it and we can listen to it on YouTube as we reflect on politics and life—in USA, Pakistan and the world.

This year it is a hundred years since women got the right to vote in USA. Following the recent general elections there, the first woman ever was elected Vice President. Kamala Harris (56) will take office on 20 January next year when President-elect Joe Biden (78) will be sworn in, if all goes as expected. The title of my article today refers to the fact that our achievements are never only our own individually; they are the result of what others do today and have done in the past. Thus, Kamala Harris is standing on the shoulders of many feminists who fought for equality for generations—and the struggle goes on. Also, she is the first non-white woman to become Vice President in USA. Her mother was a medical doctor who came from India to USA, and her father came from Jamaica. He was of African background. Her first husband was African-American, and Douglas Emhoff, whom she married less than a decade ago, is a white American, a lawyer by training, like Kamala Harris herself. It should be mentioned that she lived in Canada for some years when her mother worked there. In other words, Kamala Harris is multicultural and thus in many ways typical American, where creed and colour don’t matter, at least not always. But this year, we have again seen race-related crimes and police violence; George Floyd was brutally killed, leading to the founding of the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement.

[Azerbaijan: Traces of war disappearing in Tartar city](https://nation.com.pk/12-Nov-2020/azerbaijan-traces-of-war-disappearing-in-tartar-city)

I believe that Kamala Harris has a good background to understand, and help reduce, major inequalities in USA and the world. Furthermore, having been Attorney General in California and a Senator for one term, she has practical experience from top posts in the civil service and politics. One of the things that should be addressed urgently is a criminal justice reform, noting that the system is broken, and so is actually in many ways also the political and election system. Kamala Harris will stand on the shoulders of many, including those in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, when implementing change.

President-elect Joe Biden has emphasised building bridges across the gender and race divide, and he has underlined the need for continuing further reforms of the health sector, including expansion of the ‘Obamacare’. Furthermore, education financing reforms are high on the agenda, especially at tertiary level. Here, another woman, the next First Lady Dr. Jill Biden, a professor at a community college, is certainly going to remind her husband and Kamala Harris of that, should they not prioritise it. Jill Biden is herself going to make history as First Lady because of her high academic qualifications and her intention to continue earning her own salary even when her husband is President, as she did when he was Vice President during Barack Obama’s two terms as President (2009-2017).

[6 migrants die in Mediterranean](https://nation.com.pk/12-Nov-2020/6-migrants-die-in-mediterranean)

It is often said that one must be rich to become President of USA. Yet, Barack and Michelle Obama worked their way up, and they were the first African-Americans in the White House, standing on the shoulders of many before them. Also, Joe and Jill Biden come from humble backgrounds, and so did Bill and Hillary Clinton; he served as president from 1993-2001 and she was First Lady and later also Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (2009-2013). The rich President Trump beat her by a hair’s breadth in 2017. I wonder if she (at 73) might again get a role again in the Biden-Harris administration. I also wonder if Senator Bernie Sanders (79) who was also a candidate in the presidential bid, will be part of the new administration, and Pete Buttigieg (38), who would focus on LGBT and other issues of interest to young and modern people. They could play key roles in bridging the growing class and social divide in USA—standing on the shoulders of workers and marginalised people. In the future, USA must find new ways of inclusion and redistribution of wealth in the world’s richest country. If poor Cuba can have a good health system for ordinary people, then the rich USA must be able to have it!

[Spain plans to extend Military Agreement with US](https://nation.com.pk/11-Nov-2020/spain-plans-to-extend-military-agreement-with-us)

At this particular time, the corona pandemic is particularly cruel to poor people, immigrants, and others at the bottom of the ladder. President Trump handled the pandemic carelessly, worried about keeping up employment. Biden and Harris are already on the ball. Besides, according to good news this week, a vaccine is near and that will help save the situation, and the leaders.

Furthermore, although the USA like many other countries has become more insular during Trump, it is important that the USA returns to the fold and regains an active and respected role as a prominent member of the multilateral world. It should not always lead, but be one of the leaders—in the Paris Agreement on climate change, the World Health Organisation, and other organisations. Many would also want it to continue to play a leading role in NATO, the world’s largest military organisation—and essential for USA’s own weapons’ industry. I am not for the ongoing rearmament of the world. I’d rather hope that people in the USA, Europe and the rest of the world revive the more idealistic peace movement work of the 1960s and 1970s. After the fall of the Soviet Union, USA and Europe should have played a much more active role in disarmament and peace creation, and reorganised or dissolved NATO when the Warsaw Pact was dissolved. We have during Trump’s four years in office been eager to criticise him for everything from style to content. Yet, at least he did not get the US involved in yet another foreign war during his term. We don’t need the USA as ‘world police’; it should be less aggressively involved in conflicts which are not their business.

[Ankara didn't coordinate idea of deploying Turkish Peacekeepers in Karabakh with any stakeholders: Russia](https://nation.com.pk/11-Nov-2020/ankara-didn-t-coordinate-idea-of-deploying-turkish-peacekeepers-in-karabakh-with-any-stakeholders-russia)

I believe the USA’s time as a moral leader is over. Europe should play a more central role, including in the development of welfare states worldwide. Bernie Sanders has in his political thinking borrowed much from Europe; he has been standing on their shoulders. The Europeans themselves must now not give up too much of what they have achieved in the social sectors, in the fields of democracy, human rights, tolerance, openness to others, and all-inclusiveness. We all sit on the shoulders of the working people, their sweat and labour, more so than the owners of capital and companies. Future leaders must understand this, indeed President-elect Biden. Since he is not a young man, much of the work would fall on the shoulders of Vice President elect Harris—provided that President Trump indeed leaves the office. Kamala Harris is ambitious and competent, and then, in 2024, she might break another glass ceiling, that of the US Presidency. We live in exciting times!