

STRONG WOMEN MAKE HISTORY

Edited by:

Jean Janki Samaroo

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I am grateful to each and every one of them.

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INTRODUCTION



“Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and, above all, confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something, and that this thing, at whatever cost, must be attained” – Marie Curie

Marie Curie said those words a long time ago. She was born in 1867 and died in 1934. That was eighty-seven years ago. She was the only person to have been given two Nobel prizes in her lifetime. She was a woman of high achievement and there’s a lot all women can learn even today from what she said. She uses words like ***perseverance, confidence, belief in ourself, gifted for something, must be attained.*** This year as we celebrate International Women’s Day amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, let’s be inspired by her words.

As a Canadian citizen, the biggest celebration I can think of for this International Women’s Day is that the United States of America now has a woman as Vice-President. To all of us watching the Victory Speech Kamala Harris gave, this is what she said: “But while I may be the first woman in this office, I will not be the last. Because every little girl watching tonight sees that this is a country of possibilities.”

We all want to live in the realm of possibilities regardless of what country we come from. This applies to every single person on the planet. Women all over the world were watching this particular Inauguration. In many other countries of the world, there have been female Presidents and Prime Ministers. Having a female Vice-President in the country next to mine feels good to me. Maybe, in the near future, Canada too will have a female Prime Minister. The glass ceiling has been shattered in more than one way – not only is Kamala Harris female but she is also a woman of colour.

She’s educated, articulate, personable, hardworking, and willing to serve. We can’t expect perfection in any of our world leaders but we expect them to be willing to serve selflessly. Joe Biden as President comes as a welcome change after the last four years. He

sees the need for change in America at many different levels and is actively making these. We can only wish this team well as they carry out their duties and responsibilities.

I must admit that as I watched the news and observed events in the USA over the past four years, I had become very disillusioned, downhearted, and quite exhausted. Many times, I wondered where we as the human species were headed for. The language and tone I observed were divisive. The last straw was the storming of the U.S. Capitol on January 6th. I hoped that the Inauguration Day would be peaceful.

As we all know, everything went peacefully and the Inauguration was very moving and uplifting. It seemed that a new day was dawning for America and the world. I had a celebratory feeling in my heart. Out of that feeling, the idea came to me that it would be nice to put together an ebook in which women could share their thoughts about the event and a little about their lives. I thought that IWD would be a good time for this to happen. Every woman has a story.

I reached out to people and it's a great pleasure for this 2021 International Women's Day to share the voices of several women who shared about the Inauguration and/or about themselves in this ebook. I'm grateful to each and every one of them for taking the time to share their voices and heartfelt feelings. I'm pleased to say that the entries are different simply because each person is different and their perspective different. There are also a few blog posts, poems/sayings, quotes, and some Art work that women can enjoy.

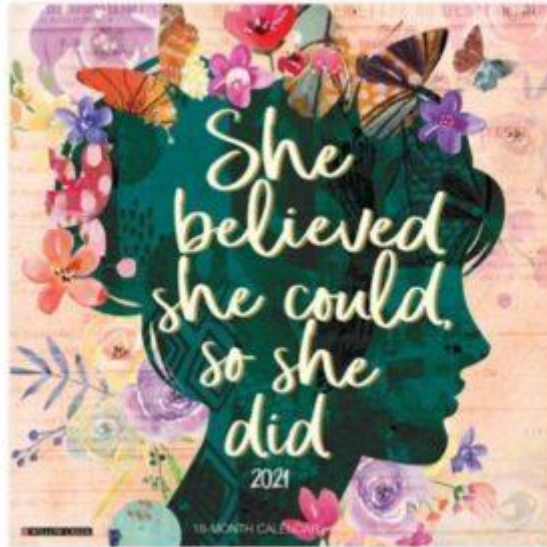
As "sisters" in this vast universe, it's good for us to be excited and happy when something good happens to/for one of us. Sharing like this together connects us with each other in a special way. Although there are only just a few voices here, we too are making history by writing our stories down. We watched the making of history and wrote about it.

"Sisterhood is important because we are all we have to stand on. We have to stand near and by each other, pray for one another, and share the joys and the difficulties that women face in the world today. If we don't talk about it among ourselves, then we are made silent by the patriarchy, and that serves us no purpose." ~ Ntozake Shange

Systems of patriarchy/matriarchy are different all over the world. It's my observation that it's very subtle in some countries. This has been so particularly with regard to patriarchy in the U.S.A. While no male is verbally saying that a woman should "shut up" and be invisible, their action/inaction suggests this.

Despite the Covid pandemic all over the world, best wishes for a "Happy International Women's Day." Hope that the collective voices shared here will be a blessing to women all over the world.

Jean Janki Samaroo



Blog post: <https://www.ronaldjanki.com/lateblooms> – shared on November 24/2020 – *“Biden’s Boldness”*. This was written before the Inauguration.



Women worldwide love Joe Biden’s “audacious” choice of Kamala Harris as his running mate and now his Vice-President Elect. Joe Biden has his heart in the right place. He knows that in order to eradicate systemic racism in the US, it’s not enough to pay lip service to an ideal. *“Actions speak louder than words.”*

He’s not afraid of people – immigrants, single parents, people of colour, and the disenfranchised. Kamala’s parents divorced when she was seven years old and her mother raised her and her sister as a single parent. Her parents were from India and Jamaica respectively and were international students to the United States when they met. They later got immigrant status. President-elect Biden didn’t see her early status as a barrier. *“Democrats believe in reigniting the American dream by removing barriers to success and building ladders of opportunity for all, so everyone can succeed. ~ Nancy Pelosi*

Joe Biden was Vice-President to President Barack Obama, the first black President of the United States. The two men became like brothers. President Obama gave his Vice-President

the Presidential Medal of Freedom as a surprise before leaving office. On that auspicious occasion, this is what President Obama said: ***“To know Joe Biden is to know love without pretense, service without self-regard, and to live fully.”***

Leadership calls for transparency, honesty, and a desire to serve. I see these qualities in both the President-elect and Vice-President elect. Bringing people together rather than sowing seeds of distrust was obvious in Biden’s speech when he reached 270 electoral college votes. He doesn’t want the harsh rhetoric to go on. ***“I pledge to be a president who seeks not to divide but unify. who doesn’t see red states and blue states, only sees the United States.”*** What a welcome change for the world to hear these words.

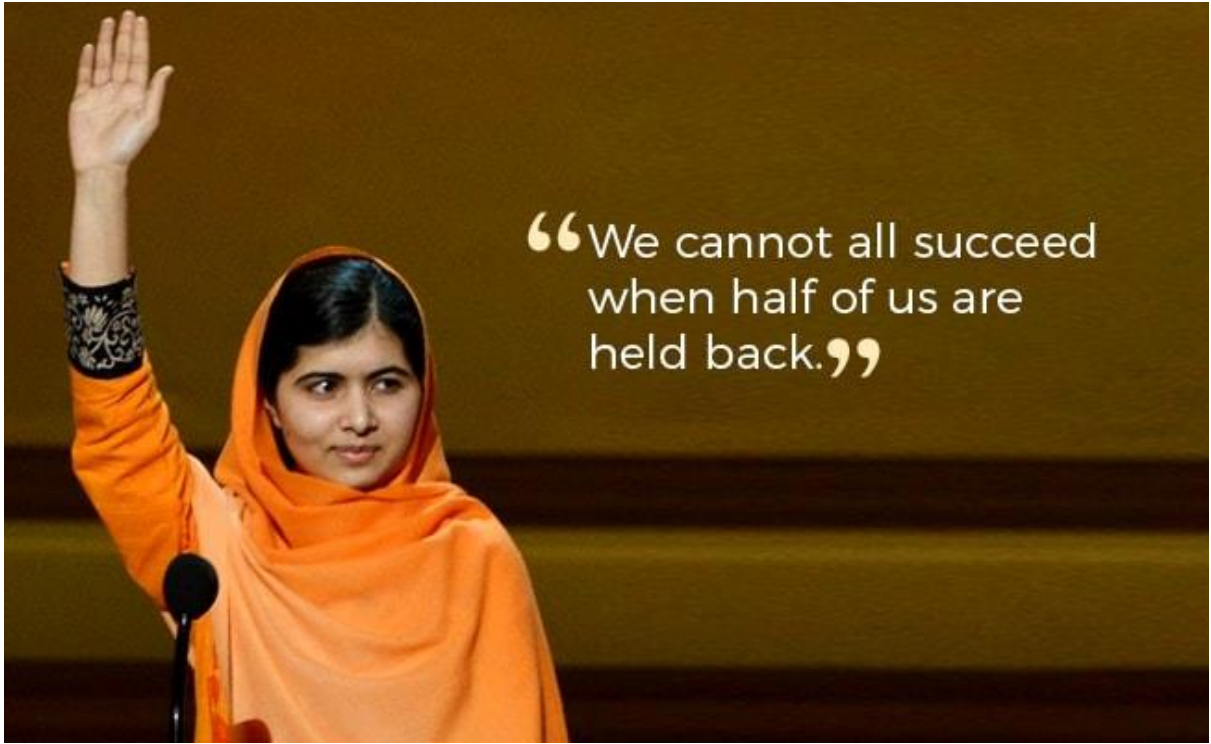
For too many years, the world has heard and witnessed unnecessary drama, indifference to others and too many instances of the corrosion of what we thought were American values. The Vice-President elect also spoke words that reflected what many watchers world-wide felt. She said: ***“You assured a new day for America. You chose hope and unity, decency, science, and yes, truth.”***

Obviously, we don’t expect that there will be no mistakes made by our leaders. Just as all human beings miss the mark, we know that on occasion we can expect this from those at the top. However, it’s my belief that should these occasions arise, we will see a different way of handling the issues. Leaders have to be able to apologize, change course, make compromises, and carry on. ***“Doing what is right isn’t the problem. It is knowing what is right.”*** ~ ***Lyndon B Johnson***

Although I’m not from the United States, I feel excited about seeing a woman become Vice-President there. Furthermore, an educated woman of colour, holding this position bodes well for other women who have felt that their chances at leadership were slim. For the rest of us who have no such aspirations, it’s still good to see one of our own women-folk at the top. We can all be proud. A new day has indeed dawned! ***“One’s philosophy is not best expressed in words; it is expressed in the choices one makes—and the choices we make are ultimately our responsibility.”*** ~ ***Eleanor Roosevelt***

Thanks, President-elect Joe Biden.

Jean Janki Samaroo, Canada



“We cannot all succeed
when half of us are
held back.”

CHOOSE TO CHALLENGE

(Written for IWD 2021) by Jean Janki Samaroo

As we celebrate another International Women's Day, women all over the world are still rising to the challenges inherent in being born female. We've come a far way from where we were 100 years ago and this has been good for us as individuals, for our families, and our society. However, we aren't there yet and the theme this year is an apt reminder that we must "Choose to Challenge."

"Woman must not accept; she must challenge. She must not be awed by that which has been built up around her; she must reverence that woman in her which struggles for expression."-Margaret Sanger

Around the early 1900's, if a woman wanted to work, there were very few viable options available – domestic servant, teacher, nurse, or dressmaker. Dependency was a way of life for most women. They went from being dependent on their fathers to being dependent on their husbands for protection and financial support.

This vulnerability made them easy targets for abuses of all sorts. Luckily, today women have taken their place in the workforce and can be found everywhere from the boardroom to the battlefield. Financial independence has given women more freedom and a voice. The world watched the historic inauguration of Kamala Harris as the first female Vice-President of the United States of America on January 20/2021.

"Economic equity is enormous empowerment of women. Having jobs that provide income means that women can be a more effective force, a more equal force, in the political process. Women with income take themselves more seriously and they are taken more seriously," – Betty Friedan, feminist writer and activist.

For women, financial independence means that they are no longer trapped in marriages that don't work. Their livelihood isn't dependent on a man. Divorced women are no longer looked down upon. The stigma of divorce has been lifted and women don't have to put up with as much domestic violence today as in the past. They can choose to leave situations and relationships that are harming them and their children physically and emotionally.

"Freeing yourself was one thing, claiming ownership of that freed self was another." ~ Toni Morrison, *Beloved*.

The list goes on and on where women have had to rise up in order to be counted and heard – right to vote, availability to birth control and abortion, laws to protect women from domestic abuse and violence, pay equity, and so forth. We have lived in patriarchal societies for a long time. Men inherited this system and way of being early in history. Our societies were structured this way from about 10-12 thousand years ago. ***"Women belong in all places where decisions are being made... It shouldn't be that women are the exception."*** – Ruth Bader Ginsburg

The saying that “the only constant in life is change” is true. In 2021, we can’t carry on the way things were thousands of years ago – or even 100 years ago. Our societies have changed and we as women have changed. Even today, we as women have to “choose to challenge.” The work isn’t over.

Whatever we do as individuals or groups towards gender equality, removal of biases against women, recognizing and lauding women’s achievements, and all the other important work, raises awareness. Our presence and our voices need to continue to be seen, heard, and recognized. The rights that we have gained and those we are actively pursuing are, in fact, human rights. ***“Life is not a competition between men and woman. It is a collaboration.”***
~*David Alejandro Fearnhead*

The first International Women’s Day gathering was held in 1911. That was 110 years ago. On this March 8th, the designated day for this celebration throughout the world, let’s not forget to be grateful for how far we’ve come over the years. Many brave women started the work and may all of us join with our sisters and brothers throughout the world to celebrate, encourage, and continue the fight for human rights. We deserve it.

“CHOOSE TO CHALLENGE”



Collage created by Jean Janki Samaroo



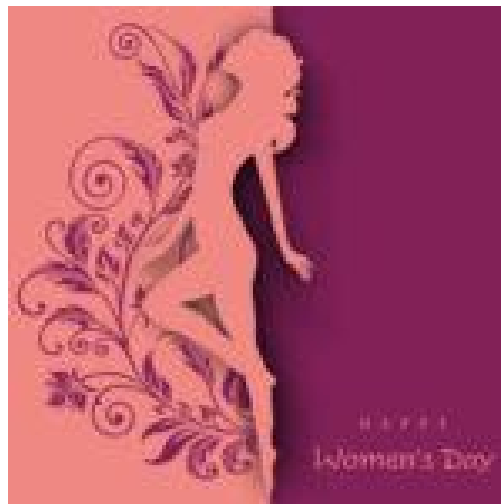
Happy International Women's Day!

On Inauguration Day, I was as excited as when Obama became President and proud that Mr. Biden has chosen a respectful lady as the Vice-President.

I could feel peace, harmony, and hope.

Esmeralda Knowles, Toronto, Canada

“Lady with Flowers”
by Jean Janki Samaroo



A PROUD DAY!

Happy International Women's Day!

It was with great Pride, Excitement and Happiness that I watched Kamala Devi Harris be sworn in as the Vice-President of the USA on January 20, 2021. **Pride**, because she is a woman, and it's been a long time coming for a woman to achieve this valuable leadership role. She has broken the glass ceiling and will now pave the way for many, many more women to reach this high office in the USA. I emphasized "in the USA" because women have been leaders in other countries around the world for decades, but the chauvinistic USA could not handle that. Thankfully, President Biden saw a way to not only create history but also to open up a path for other women to follow.

Excitement, because she belongs to a minority group like myself – South Asian descent. We were all celebrating around the world that day, and there are many of us. Champagne was on the table, and the excitement was palpable in my household at least. She made us all feel such pride because she is so well spoken, so calm, so highly educated and has held so many important Offices in her career. Being highly educated is a source of great pride among South Asians. We know she will do a great job and will make America and women around the world proud.

Happiness, because I am alive to witness this history being made in the USA. I hope I will be around to watch her be sworn in as President of the USA one day. CONGRATULATIONS Vice-President Kamala Devi Harris.

Savita Yassin, Toronto, Canada



Amanda Gorman, Poet

THE HILL WE CLIMB

When day comes, we ask ourselves,
where can we find light in this never-ending shade?
The loss we carry,
a sea we must wade
We've braved the belly of the beast
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace
And the norms and notions
of what just is
Isn't always just-ice
And yet the dawn is ours
before we knew it
Somehow, we do it
Somehow, we've weathered and witnessed
a nation that isn't broken
but simply unfinished
We the successors of a country and a time
Where a skinny Black girl
descended from slaves and raised by a single mother
can dream of becoming president
only to find herself reciting for one
And yes, we are far from polished
far from pristine
but that doesn't mean we are
striving to form a union that is perfect
We are striving to forge a union with purpose
To compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and
conditions of man
And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us
but what stands before us
We close the divide because we know, to put our future first,
we must first put our differences aside
We lay down our arms
so we can reach out our arms
to one another
We seek harm to none and harmony for all
Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true:
That even as we grieved, we grew
That even as we hurt, we hoped
That even as we tired, we tried
That we'll forever be tied together, victorious
Not because we will never again know defeat
but because we will never again sow division
Scripture tells us to envision
that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree
And no one shall make them afraid
If we're to live up to our own time
Then victory won't lie in the blade
But in all the bridges we've made

That is the promise to glade
The hill we climb
If only we dare
It's because being American is more than a pride we inherit,
it's the past we step into
and how we repair it
We've seen a force that would shatter our nation
rather than share it
Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy
And this effort very nearly succeeded
But while democracy can be periodically delayed
it can never be permanently defeated
In this truth
in this faith we trust
For while we have our eyes on the future
history has its eyes on us
This is the era of just redemption
We feared at its inception
We did not feel prepared to be the heirs
of such a terrifying hour
but within it we found the power
to author a new chapter
To offer hope and laughter to ourselves
So, while once we asked,
how could we possibly prevail over catastrophe?
Now we assert
How could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?
We will not march back to what was
but move to what shall be
A country that is bruised but whole,
benevolent but bold,
fierce and free
We will not be turned around
or interrupted by intimidation
because we know our inaction and inertia
will be the inheritance of the next generation
Our blunders become their burdens
But one thing is certain:
If we merge mercy with might,
and might with right,
then love becomes our legacy
and change our children's birthright
So, let us leave behind a country
better than the one we were left with
Every breath from my bronze-pounded chest,
we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one
We will rise from the gold-limbed hills of the west,
we will rise from the windswept northeast
where our forefathers first realized revolution
We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the midwestern states,

we will rise from the sunbaked south
We will rebuild, reconcile and recover
and every known nook of our nation and
every corner called our country,
our people diverse and beautiful will emerge,
battered and beautiful
When day comes, we step out of the shade,
afame and unafraid
The new dawn blooms as we free it
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it
If only we're brave enough to be it

GRATITUDE, CELEBRATION, CONGRATULATION

As women in 2021, we have a lot to be grateful for. We have come a long way. I believe that when great numbers of women, of all nations and colours, lift up their voices they can make significant improvements in homes, communities and nations worldwide.

Women of the world want and deserve an equal future free from stigma, stereotypes and violence. To get us there, the world needs women at every table where decisions are being made.

International Women's Day has always been special for women all over the world. This year women all over the world can celebrate seeing a woman hold the position of Vice-President of the United States. At last, a woman has a chance to become President in a nation that has always considered themselves to be a world leader.

Women's full and effective participation and leadership in all areas of life drives progress for everyone.

As a citizen of the USA, I'm happy to have a woman as our Vice-President. Most of the women in the world are happy too, especially to have a woman of colour. When women lead, we see positive results. Some of the most efficient and exemplary responses to the COVID-19 pandemic were led by women.

Wishing a Happy International Women's Day to all the amazing women in the world, especially our Vice-President.

May you always shine and succeed in everything you set out to do.

Kathy Samaroo, New Jersey, U.S.A.

A ROLE MODEL FOR WOMEN

My name is Sirene Qureshi. I will have been in Canadian Politics for 10 years this October 11th.

Seeing Kamala Harris become the Vice President of America was so uplifting. Not only was she a woman but she was also a woman of colour. She represented so many beautiful things that the West had not seen before in a leader.

I, myself, too, want to be the Prime Minister of Canada. Kamala Harris showed us what change looks like. How we too can make our dreams possible. She was a symbol for so many girls that could never even see themselves in leadership roles.

Kamala Harris has been an incredible Vice President. Since day one of the inauguration, she and Joe Biden have gotten to work. They know that with great privilege come greater responsibilities.

I am proud that a woman like Kamala Harris can even make it to Vice-President. But we have to try even harder. We have to get a woman President too. Having Kamala Harris as Vice President is a celebration but having a woman President would be the final victory.

We women of all nations need to step up into seats of power. We women sacrifice so much for others. I think it's time that we step up our game and go even further. Kamala Harris is a nudge to all of us ladies of what we can do. But it is up to all of us to continue this mission of electing even more women.

Seeing women in power is definitely important. But seeing black women in power is the most important! I am so happy how girls around the world saw themselves in Kamala Harris.

This is just the start! It should never finish here. Kamala Harris has given us so much hope for the future. We need to push for women leaders and even diversity in our leadership. We shouldn't always just want the rich to lead us. For me, the most important thing a politician should have is a story. A story of how they overcame so much adversity. How they are people too!

I love Kamala Harris for all she stands for and all she is. But I know we can even do so much more. But even having the first female Vice-President of America who is of East Indian/Jamaican origin? We have broken so many barriers right there. Women always have had to work hard. And my life is no different. But Kamala has lit the way for us. May we all also follow that path. Not only more women in politics; but more women in leadership roles. That is my dream! And I am glad to have such a beautiful sister like Kamala Harris who is already up there.

Kamala Harris is that hope that we women need in this world. She made it possible to break the glass ceiling. But we still can even reach greater heights. She has awoken the dreams of so many girls!

It is very difficult for anyone to go into politics. I even took Political Science in University but none of the women wanted to be a politician. Guys definitely want to! Even the girl that said she wanted to be Prime Minister of Canada changed her mind three years later.

To be a politician, we have to love our country and want to serve it. And this is what Kamala Harris embodies. She is more than woman, more than any colour. She is a leader! I just hope that we definitely see Kamala Harris up there for two sessions. Because it's women like her that make me think I can be Prime Minister of Canada too!



Indian woman selling snacks.

STRONG WOMEN

As we celebrate International Women's Day this year (2021) with the theme "Choose to Challenge," I can't help thinking about those strong women who were responsible for my existence and who nurtured me into the woman I have become. They balanced their role in the world and they chose to be challenged.

I remember hearing stories of my paternal great great grandmother (in the late 1800s) who made the trip across the ocean from India to a new land with promises of a better life. As a young sixteen-year-old with a young child and no husband (because he was not as brave as she was, he stayed behind) – she challenged, she ventured and she succeeded.

I know first-hand of my own maternal and paternal grandmothers who worked tirelessly night and day. My maternal grandmother mothered thirteen children and did not "sit down" one single day. Even though she married into wealth, she would cook, clean, look after the kids and also go to work in the rice fields. She became widowed at a young age and continued to plant her garden and rice fields. She worked until she died, making Bara, Peera (fudge), Sugar cake and Channa which she sold as snacks to primary school children.

My paternal grandma did the same. She looked after her children while also planting vegetables which she sold at the market. Her day started at 5 a.m.

My Mom, another generation, did not work in the fields. By the 1930's, girls were sent to school but only up to a certain grade. They didn't go any further than primary school. My Mom never had a career and after she got married, she spent time taking care of the home and family. Years later, she would help me to take care of my family when my children were young. This meant I was able to spend my time working and pursuing my career.

At age 60, I challenged myself and was brave enough to leave the country that had been home for more than 35 years (Canada) and migrate to a new country (USA) to help take care of my aging father. I started all over in a new land with a new job... with determination and zeal.

I feel blessed that I have strong genes and I hope and pray that I have passed them on to my progeny and recursively into subsequent generations.

As we celebrate women all over the world and their achievements, I would like to say what an extraordinary feeling it was to watch the first woman being sworn in as Vice-President of the USA – Kamala Harris. From one woman to another... I wish women all over the world a "Happy International Women's Day." Stay strong and always "Choose to Challenge."

~ Jackie Janki (Seecharran), Florida – U.S.A.

THINGS ARE CHANGING

We've come to another International Women's Day and it's nice to see that we're finally breaking ground for women in North America to move into political leadership roles. North America has long been a patriarchal society.

It's a first for women to see that the new VP of America, Kamala Harris, is a female and also one of colour. This has been unheard of in North America. Incidentally, her mother was a scientist. She hailed from India, studied in the U.S.A., married a Jamaican and raised two daughters as a single parent after being divorced.

In Europe, Asia, South America, and New Zealand, there have been at least seven Prime Ministers who were women. Let's get it together North America – don't let's lag behind in the world.

Inauguration Day, January 20th, was a memorable day for me. Even before the actual swearing in, I was struck by the ceremony that was planned the evening before the Inauguration to pay tribute to those who died by the Coronavirus. This was a wonderful showing of respect for the victims and their families and an acknowledgement that their lives were precious.

On the actual Inauguration day, I noticed how much thought and detail went into the ceremony. It was carefully planned and there was a calming effect as a result of Joe Biden's demeanour and tone. Lady Gaga's outfit brought some light-heartedness and fun to the day. I thought that Amanda Gorman's poem touched many hearts and made the whole Inauguration ceremony special. I was glad to be part of this moment in history – seeing the first woman in the U.S.A. become Vice-President.

Happy International Women's Day!

Orissa Washington, Toronto, Canada



Lady Gaga

THE FUTURE FOR WOMEN?

As we celebrate another International Women's Day, there's a lot to reflect on.

Forbes listed the World's most powerful 100 women. The women span a wide age range from Rihanna 33 to Queen Elizabeth 93. They included women from various disciplines but few Heads of State. According to UNwomen.org.

“Women serve as Heads of State or Government in only 21 countries, and 119 countries have never had a woman leader [1]. At the current rate, parity in the highest decisions of power will not be reached for another 130 years [2].”

The fact that the US finally has its first female vice-president in 2121 and never a female president shows that female bias still exists for leadership roles in a country that is supposed to be forward thinking. We have had women leaders in India, Germany, and New Zealand and they are doing a fantastic job. The sky did not fall.

On January 20th, as I watched the Presidential Inauguration in Washington, DC, these words resonated in my head – truth, decency, honour! A breath of fresh air, and it was like we had been holding our breaths for four years and could finally exhale! Of course, Amanda Gorman's poem was awesome, and shone a light on youth and their future. We came out of the twilight zone.

For International Women's Day, let's celebrate women's strength and resilience, and that the push for human and education rights for girls around the world will be realized.

Janet L'Abbe, Waterloo, Canada



Women are the real
architects of society.

-HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

~ Janet's Calligraphy

THE RIGHT COMBINATION

Happy International Women's Day!

On January 20th, I watched the whole ceremony along with most people.

After the elections, there was so much confusion culminating on the dreadful day of January 6/2021. One didn't know what else to expect. It is true we live in uncertain times, what with the pandemic and all, so I suspect we are feeling somewhat fragile.

The ceremony was beautiful. The Biden speech was better than a sermon. It was so full of hope and promises of peace, unity, and compassion. The sufferings of his life's experiences have made him such a man. His perseverance is to be applauded.

From someone who is also a senior, it gives me a wonderful outlook on my senior years. Anything is possible.

Of course, I rejoiced to see a woman, any woman in such a position as Kamala Harris. But what a pleasure to see a woman of colour next to the President of the USA. She exudes vitality and he exudes serenity. A clever combination.

Jeanette Persaud, Toronto, Canada

POSITIVE VIBES

Happy International Women's Day!

When I watched the Inauguration of the new U.S. President and Vice-President, I was positively impacted by the entire ceremony. I was very surprised when I learned of Kamala Harris' career path and was moved to tears with the entire celebration.

She is certainly a person for young women and especially those of minorities to emulate. She portrayed herself to be very real, down-to-earth, truthful, and a happy person. I was also very happy and relieved that there were no demonstrations or violence. This was an inauguration that will go down in history. I hope that President Joe Biden will be successful to restore democracy.

Juliet Stevens, Toronto



Women's Day Painting (European artist)

"Effect of Butterfly" by Anastasiya Markovich

FIGHTING BACK THE TEARS

Happy International Women's Day!

On January 20th, women around the world witnessed a huge moment in history— Kamala Harris sworn in as Vice-President of the United States. Despite being Canadian, I still followed the election, watched the debates and any other news relating.

At first, I had mixed feelings. I wondered if people were more concerned about Kamala's heritage than what her stance was on issues in the U.S. I'd seen so many different posts circulating on Instagram, all with different opinions. Some people couldn't be happier, after all, we've never seen a Black or South Asian woman in this position before. That alone made her candidacy worthy of celebrating. On the other hand, others said her heritage didn't matter if her plans for the country weren't going to be helpful to the citizens— also a very valid point. Still, I couldn't help but feel excited whenever I saw her.

On the day of the Inauguration, I tuned in of course, mainly wanting to watch the candidates sworn in and give their speeches. Watching Kamala, dressed beautifully, sitting there amongst Joe Biden and the other guests, was powerful. When she was sworn in and later gave her speech, I felt a number of emotions swell inside of me. I fought back tears at a few moments because I wasn't sure why it was, I felt that much emotion. But the fact is, as a Brown girl, as an Indo-Caribbean woman, I grew up never seeing myself represented in media and powerful positions.

Even to this day, while there is more representation than there was in my childhood, it's still nowhere near enough. But to see Kamala, who is Indian and Jamaican, South Asian and Caribbean, I saw myself. I saw a woman who looked like me in a position of power, a position that has never been held by any woman in history. To think, the first woman to hold this position is a woman of colour, it's huge for all of us.

I also think of her journey to the position she's in. All women of colour understand what it's like to face obstacles in the workplace both for our gender and our heritage. Whether it's being in male dominated spaces, spaces dominated by white people or being worried your first name, last name, or both, might prevent you from getting a call back. Being in politics, Kamala would've likely been in spaces most of her career that are dominated by white males from established families. You can imagine people must have looked down on her or overlooked her for being a woman of colour.

I also think of the time period she has built her career in. Over the past ten years, people have begun to stress diversity and representation in the workplace, but prior to this new found "wokeness" there wasn't a push for it in the 90s and early 2000s. As well, being the daughter of immigrants as many of us are, she had no advantages in her industry based on family name and wealth. Whether you like her or not, I think her hustle is admirable. She worked her way up on her own merit and that's never easy.

To Kamala, my final words are congratulations Madam Vice-President. You have ignited a flame that has been wanting to burn for so many decades and it is one that is powerful to all the Black and Brown women watching you.

Tiara Chutkhan, Toronto, Canada



Women in history who won the Nobel Prize (Internet)

ABLE TO IDENTIFY

January 20th, 2021 is a day that will forever stand out in my memory, because it was so history making. Not only was the first female Vice-President of the United States sworn in, but she was like me – a woman of colour with an East Indian background. She's a woman who was raised by a strong mother, a woman who has worked hard for everything she has. This is the America I dreamed of as a child. Now my future grandchildren can one day hold the highest office in the land because we have broken all the barriers. This happened first with President Obama in 2008, and now twelve years later, with Vice-President Harris. I am proud to be a female immigrant in this America.

Chitra Pillay, U.S.A.



“It took me quite a long time to develop a voice. And now that I have it,
I am not going to be silent.” ~ Madeleine Albright

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Gender equality remains a topic of discussion time and time again because there is still a long way to go to achieve equality between men and women in the areas of leadership, socio-economic need, financial equality, education, and health. In order to close the gap, we need to find effective solutions to do so.

It's been really encouraging to see that in the recent United States election a woman was elected as Vice-President. This represents a big step forward in the right direction towards gender equality. Women in major leadership roles will inspire other women to succeed and will have the potential to make changes to increase equality. It's also important to celebrate and put a spotlight on these women.

As the eldest of six children, I became a natural leader and role model for my siblings. I have a sister and four brothers who look up to me with a lot of respect. I taught my brothers by example that being female didn't mean that I was weaker, less intelligent, less confident, less talented, less creative, less ambitious, less independent or less important. I proved to them that females could be just as powerful as a male and I give my upbringing by my parents and grandmother a lot of credit for that.

I was very fortunate to have been raised in a household where I was never told that I couldn't, but to try and achieve. I was encouraged by my parents to be the best that I could be and that the sky was the limit. This is really valuable because it allows one to reach their full potential in anything they do.

I feel extremely blessed that I was given the freedom to make my own decisions on what I wanted to do in life. I was quite an ambitious child with many interests and talents. For example, I wanted to become an artist, architect, author, astronaut, scientist, inventor, doctor, entrepreneur, martial artist, and so on. I've been fortunate enough to have fulfilled some of those ambitions to date and I plan on continuing to fulfil as many of my childhood and future ambitions as I can. I hope to inspire other people to do the same to unleash their power within.

When I was ten years old, I learned how to make friendship bracelets and I really got into learning new patterns and then creating my own patterns. I was making so many of them that all my siblings and parents were even wearing them. The trend really caught on as kids at school started asking me to make them some as well. My siblings' friends were also asking for bracelets and before I knew it, I had my first business.

I created a business name, business cards, packaging and later on a catalog with all my patterns and designs along with order forms. It eventually got so busy that I had to teach my siblings how to make them to keep up with fulfilling the orders. When I was in my teens my mother even contacted Walmart to ask them if they were interested in my bracelets. They said yes, but wanted 10,000 bracelets to start, which was a bit much even with the help of all my siblings.

Even though I had to turn them down that really gave me the confidence that I could be a successful entrepreneur. Years later, I have created an e-commerce store, which I launched last year specializing in products that improve one's wellbeing and lifestyle. I still have a lot to learn about e-commerce, but I plan to grow my store and make it as successful as possible.

Aside from managing an online store, I also run a busy private Traditional Chinese Medicine practice in Toronto. I treat patients using acupuncture, cupping, Tuina massage and herbal medicine. At the age of twelve, I had decided that I wanted to become a doctor or do something with healing and medicine.

I also believe that it's extremely important to volunteer and give back to your community because that will also bring about positive change. As women in 2021, let's move forward boldly and bravely, individually and collectively, to bring about the changes that will better women's lives.

Happy International Women's Day!

Mai-Yee Yue, Toronto

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY!

What a special day for us ladies! My day was made even more special by a young, handsome, well-dressed man, giving me a rose and saying “Happy International Women’s Day.” This happened in Downtown Toronto this morning. Unfortunately, I didn’t have my camera with me. All the images here were taken when I got home.



The first Women’s Day took place in 1911 and we women have come a long way. There is still a long journey ahead though. **“International Women’s Day honours the work of the Suffragettes, celebrates women’s success, and reminds of inequities still to be redressed.”** Some countries take this day so seriously that it is a public holiday. The United Nations theme for 2014 is: “Equality for women is progress for all.”

While the surprise of receiving a rose was very touching, all of us women know that this day and our lives are about more serious matters. Our personhood as people and our right to be treated with dignity and respect in all spheres of life is really what this day is all about. Here are some interesting quotes to reflect on by people you may know.

1. “Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacity.”

— Gandhi

2. “God gave women intuition and femininity. Used properly, the combination easily jumbles the brain of any man I’ve ever met.”

— Farrah Fawcett

3. “Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of a man at twice its natural size.”

— Virginia Woolf

4. “Somewhere out in this audience may even be someone who will one day follow in my footsteps, and preside over the White House as the President’s spouse. I wish him well!”

— Barbara Bush

5. “Women are leaders everywhere you look — from the CEO who runs a Fortune 500 company to the housewife who raises her children and heads her household. Our country was built by strong women and we will continue to break down walls and defy stereotypes.”

— Nancy Pelosi

6. “A woman with a voice is by definition a strong woman. But the search to find that voice can be remarkably difficult.”

— Melinda Gates

7. “Whatever glory belongs to the race for a development unprecedented in history for the given length of time, a full share belongs to the womanhood of the race.”

— Mary Mcleod Bethune

8. “Nobody can make you feel inferior without your permission.”

— Eleanor Roosevelt.

9. “Dream the dreams that have never been dreamt.”

— David Bower

10. “The fastest way to change society is to mobilize the women of the world.”

— Charles Malik

11. “Remember the dignity of your womanhood. Do not appeal, do not beg, do not grovel.
Take courage, join hands, stand besides us, fight with us.”

— Christabel Pankhurst

12. “Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren’t.”

— Margaret Thatcher

13. “Be thankful for what you have; you’ll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don’t have, you will never, ever have enough.”

— Oprah Winfrey

14. “When I thought I couldn’t go on, I forced myself to keep going. My success is based on persistence, not luck.”

— Estee Lauder

15. “If you were born without wings, do nothing to prevent them from growing.”

— Coco Chanel.

Beautiful Woman

There is inner beauty about a woman who believes in herself, who knows she is capable of anything she puts her mind to.

There is a beauty in the strength and determination of a woman who follows her own path, who isn't thrown off by obstacles along the way.

There is beauty about a woman whose confidence comes from experience; who knows she can fall, pick herself back up, and move on.

"You are one of them."



*Send this rose to a beautiful woman.
I just did.*

AFTERWORD: AN APPRECIATION

Those of us who are part of this time in history must realize how fortunate we are. Despite the Coronavirus and all the political mayhem, we've been experiencing in the world, the vast majority of women were ecstatic to see a woman sworn in as Vice-President of the United States

It's my belief and feeling that these kinds of historic moments must be acknowledged and celebrated in some way. Many times in life I thought or had an idea of doing something and didn't end up doing it. Years later, I looked back and felt sad that it wasn't accomplished.

I'm deeply grateful for all those who gave in to my desire to carry out this project and supported this effort. Without all the writers, there would be nothing to share. You are a very special group of women making history in your own little way. Not all of us can become Vice-Presidents but we can share about what it was like to see another woman step into this role.

We've also been able to share about some of the deeper issues and concerns that we have surrounding women's needs and rights. Other women in other generations have carried out this work so that we can be where we are today. They were making history at that time and whatever we are able to do, big or small, to further the cause of women, means we too are making our own history.

For those women who share by reading what other women have written here, you too become experiencers of that history. A ripple effect is being created. I hope that those who shared by writing and those who share by reading will both be blessed in some small way. My deepest gratitude to all of you.

Many thanks,

Jean Janki Samaroo



ABOUT THE AUTHOR/EDITOR

The author/editor, Jean Janki Samaroo, lives in Toronto with her husband and Ragdoll kitten, Ali. She studied Library Arts at Ryerson University and is also a certified TESL/TEFL instructor. She's been keeping busy during her retirement and her two books on Amazon are "Late Blooms: Inspiration for Seniors" and "Making New Friends" which is a picture book for children. She's delighted to be able to collaborate with other women for this ebook which is her first.

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