

STATEMENT

BLACK LIVES MATTER STATEMENT ON KAMALA HARRIS SECURING ENOUGH DELEGATES TO BECOME DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE

JULY 23, 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Black Lives Matter calls on the DNC to host a virtual snap primary.

Washington D.C. – Black Lives Matter demands that the Democratic National Committee (DNC) immediately host an informal, virtual snap primary across the country prior to the DNC convention in August. We call for the Rules Committee to create a process that allows for public participation in the nomination process, not just a nomination by party delegates. The current political landscape is unprecedented, with President Biden stepping aside in a manner never seen before. This moment calls for decisive action to protect the integrity of our democracy and the voices of Black voters.

While Joe Biden wasn't our preferred candidate, we cannot ignore the troubling actions of the Democratic Party:

- The DNC refused to host debates during the primary, even though a vast majority of Democratic voters wanted them. This would have likely allowed America to see the decline of Joe Biden in 2023.
- The DNC changed the primary schedule and created rules that made it almost impossible for non-Biden candidates to appear on the ballot, effectively clearing the field of any challengers to the incumbent president.
- Following the primary where millions of Black voters weighed in, after one poor debate performance, the DNC Party elites and billionaire donors bullied Joe Biden out of the race.

Now, Democratic Party elites and billionaire donors are attempting to manipulate Black voters by anointing Kamala Harris and an unknown vice president as the new Democratic ticket without a primary vote by the public. This blatant disregard for democratic principles is unacceptable. While the potential outcome of a Harris presidency may be historic, the process to achieve it must align with true democratic values. We have no idea where Kamala Harris stands on the issues, now that she has assumed Joe Biden's place, and we have no idea of the record of her potential vice president because we don't even know who it is yet.

At Black Lives Matter, our focus is on building strong communities, addressing root issues, and creating spaces of justice and joy. This election process has been a disservice to our communities and to democracy. Historically, Black people have been loyal Democratic voters, but time and again, the party has taken our votes for granted and prioritized political theatrics over our real needs.

So we will do the hard thing: we will celebrate, and honor the joy many in our community are feeling about Kamala's historic candidacy and path to the nomination—while calling out the undemocratic process and engaging in a vigorous discussion on the issues our community cares about.

We do not live in a dictatorship. Delegates are not oligarchs. Any attempt to evade or override the will of voters in our primary system—no matter how historic the candidate—must be condemned. **We demand an informal, virtual snap primary now that the incumbent president is no longer in the running.**

For the past few years, the Democratic Party has proclaimed that “democracy is on the ballot” in an effort to persuade Black voters to participate in the upcoming general election. They have presented this as the most serious election for democracy in our lifetimes. However, democracy isn't just an ideal to be protected against Republicans; it must also be safeguarded from erosions within the Democratic Party. Calls for “unity” cannot come at the expense of democracy. The Democratic party, which has been the loudest in defending democracy, is now poised to commit some of the most undemocratic maneuvering to avoid listening to the will of the voters.

D'Zhane Parker, a Black Lives Matter leader, said: “Black Lives Matter is independent of any political party. We focus on fighting racial and economic injustices that impact Black communities. While we may back policies that align with our goals, our commitment is to the liberation of Black people. This independence allows us to hold all political entities accountable and stay true to our mission without party influence.”

We must stand firm against any attempt to silence Black voters and other marginalized communities. This is not just about Biden or Harris; it is about demanding a political system that genuinely represents us and upholds democracy.

Let us be clear: This is about the Democratic Party following a process that protects the legitimacy of any future Democratic president following this unprecedented moment. Installing Kamala Harris as the Democratic nominee and an unknown vice president without any public voting process would make the modern Democratic Party a party of hypocrites. It would undermine their credibility on issues related to democracy. Imagine our first Black woman president not having won some sort of public nomination process. The pundits would immediately label it as affirmative action or a DEI move, and any progress made by a President Harris would be on shaky foundations. If Kamala Harris is to be the nominee, it must be through a process that upholds democratic principles and public participation.

Reflecting on history, we remember Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman to run for the Democratic nomination for president in 1972. She faced significant opposition from the party establishment, underscoring the need to stand firm against undemocratic practices today. Since 1972, presidential candidates have needed to undergo a vote by the public to receive the nomination, which replaced the era when party bosses controlled the nomination process. Binding primaries were established to ensure that the nominee reflected the will of the people rather than party elites.

Shalomyah Bowers, a Black Lives Matter leader, said: “This is not an attack on Kamala Harris or Black women, and right now we aren't questioning Kamala's qualifications or capabilities. This is about the nominating process. Those of us who care about the principles of democracy cannot be serious about installing Kamala Harris and an unknown vice president as the Democratic nominee without any semblance of a people-powered process. Not delegates and party elites, but actually asking communities across the country if they believe this should be the democratic ticket. Anything less is unserious in the quest for democracy. Democracies are stronger when political parties operate with primary systems that allow for genuine participation.”

We demand a transparent and fair virtual snap primary to allow for a democratic selection of the nominee. The DNC must address systemic issues, increase transparency, and promote genuine grassroots engagement. Our democracy is strongest when it is inclusive, transparent, and fair.

About Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation

Our mission is to work inside and outside of the system to heal the past, re-imagine the present, and invest in the future of Black lives through policy change, education, healing justice, and a commitment to the arts. Our vision is to imagine a world where Black people across the diaspora thrive, experience joy, and are not defined by their struggles.

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BLACK LIVES MATTER ANNOUNCES SUPPORT FOR THE PEOPLE'S RESPONSE ACT

Last week, Congresswoman Cori Bush (MO-01), along with Congresswomen Ayanna Pressley (MA-07), Jan Schakowsky (IL-06), Pramila Jayapal (WA-07), families impacted by state-sanctioned violence, Shalomyah Bowers (Black Lives Matter Foundation Board Member), and movement leaders reintroduced the People's Response Act, seminal legislation that would push forward an inclusive, holistic, and health-centered approach to public safety by creating a public safety division within the United States Department of Human Health and Services — because communities and experts agree that public safety is a matter of public health.

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