Opinion



by NCR Staff

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Former Vice President Joe Biden, the Democratic nominee for president, made the historic announcement that Sen. Kamala Harris was his vice president pick, the first woman of color to be on a major party presidential ticket. Some responded to the announcement by calling Harris "anti-Catholic," an attack that is not true, writes Social Service Sr. Simone Campbell. But picking Harris as his running mate was not a great choice, says NCR political columnist Michael Sean Winters. Letters to the editor have been edited for length and clarity. To write a letter to the editor, follow the guidelines below this post.

I found Social Service Sr. Simone Campbell's column regarding Kamala Harris' record thought provoking and insightful, yet incomplete. Many of the positive contributions made by Harris to the advancement of economic and social justice are laudable. However, the word abortion never appeared in Campbell's column; the absence of this critical issue glaringly obvious.

Progressive Catholics often (and often correctly) level the charge that the pro-life church focuses on the issue of abortion to the exclusion of other social justice needs. However, in the reverse it is also unjust to ignore political leader's records on this issue; Harris has demonstrated that she is among the most pro-abortion Democrats.

We cannot claim to truly hear and respond to the cry of the poor while ignoring the fundamental human right to life and the "least of these," children in the womb.

LARRY LACROSS

Presque Isle, Michigan



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I've given a lot of thought to the Democrat option. Here are reasons why Kamala Harris is a poor choice. As a Catholic, I do not support her.

I'd run out of space to include other reasons on education, energy, electoral college, Green New Deal, gun control, increased taxes, reparations, voting, and more. I find Sr. Simone Campbell's article very sad.

The first reason is abortion, even late-term. Harris:

- Firmly believes *Roe* v. *Wade* is law of the land;
- Favors restoring federal funding for Planned Parenthood
- Favors federal funds for abortion (everyone pays)
- Ensures abortion access for men (Democratic platform)

The second reason is the border between U.S. and Mexico. Harris:

- Stops funding the wall
- Prohibits police assistance of border patrol
- Favors full benefits of citizenry for undocumented immigrants
- Ends deportation of illegals including criminals

KEN BOYER

St. Louis, Missouri

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In Sr. Simone Campbell's rah-rah piece for Sen. Kamala Harris, we, as Catholics, were urged to

"evaluate Sen. Kamala Harris' record carefully" and, we assume that means, as well, her record as district attorney for the city of San Francisco prior to her record as attorney general for the state of California.

Even limited research about Harris' early career yields an impressive tally of her toughness on crime and her previous, meteoric rise in electable ranks thanks to more than a little help from Willie Brown, noted, political radical in the city and, eventually, its mayor. Willie's wife, Blanche Vitero, would agree.

As for being tough on the horrific sexual abuse and cover-up crimes of the powerful San Francisco Archdiocese, there is little dispute now that, in her seven years as district attorney, Harris' office did not proactively assist in civil cases against clergy sex abuse and ignored requests by activists and survivors to access the massive cache of investigative files regarding the diocese's brutal crimes accumulated by her predecessor, Terence Hallinan — files that could have helped them secure justice in a timely fashion. This "evaluation" comes from several victims of clergy sex abuse

living in California who spoke last year through the highly regarded, independent news source, The Intercept.

Sexual assault survivor, Joey Piscitelli, is quoted therein as saying: "It went from Terence Hallinan going hundred miles an hour, full speed ahead, after the Catholic Church to Kamala Harris doing absolutely nothing."

No thanks. Clergy abuse survivors and their advocates did their evaluation of Harris years ago.

NANCY McGUNAGLE

Kalispell, Montana

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I believe Sen. Kamala Harris is a great pick for vice president so I am inclined to disagree with Michael Sean Winters' statement that she would be a disappointment to progressives. As a progressive, I think extreme views, left or right, are problematic since they reduce the chances for dialog, common ground, and compromise.

Harris has shown as a prosecutor and as a senator that she can seek and find common ground with her opponents all while being respectful of their views. However, as a prosecutor she is also quite capable of putting a witness on the spot which would elicit some truth telling by raising their discomfort level. She showed that skill in interrogating Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh and well as her interrogation of Judge Brian Buescher. In the latter case pointing out a political stance of an organization to which the witness is affiliated certainly does not represent any sort of bigotry.

Harris may be only the third woman to be nominated for the vice presidency but those who preceded her and Hillary Clinton's run for the presidency in 2016 show that we as a nation have evolved somewhat. We do not see gender as much of an obstacle as the media did when Geraldine Ferraro ran for the vice presidency in 1984 against a cavalcade of misogyny masked as "values." I don't appreciate NCR falling into that same trap in 2020.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana

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Michael Sean Winters may be right that Sen. Kamala Harris is a disappointing choice to the progressive wing of the Democratic Party. However, Joe Biden's goal is not to satisfy the progressive wing but to win the election. To do that he needed to reach out to more than the progressive wing to win the election. Ask Bernie Sanders after his two failed efforts.

Harris is an excellent choice especially in this moment in our history when Black Americans are crying out that they matter. With her background, coupled with her intelligence and experience in government, she will be a positive addition to the ticket. The polls all show that the higher the Black turnout, the better chance for a Democratic victory. She will help increase the Black and Hispanic vote and certainly the members of her national sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, will do their part to bring out the vote nationally.

Far from being a hindrance or little help, Harris will help elect Biden as president in November. Maybe Winters' choice, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, can be Secretary of Treasury or some other cabinet position.

(Fr.) LOUIS ARCENEAUX, CM

New Orleans, Louisiana

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I do hope that NCR and Michael Sean Winters get over the fact that your "choice" was not Joe Biden's choice and that the return of our country to a moral level it was prior to 2017 is the main focus. No, we "progressives" are not disappointed in the choice of Sen. Kamala Harris — at least, not this progressive.

Hopefully, the country (and NCR) has learned the tough lesson that 2016 should have taught us. As the Rolling Stones told us way back when: "You can't always get what you want, but if you try sometime you find you get what you need."

Have faith!

DAVID A. LAUER

Kenosha, Wisconsin

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Thank you, Sr. Simone Campbell, for your insight into who Sen. Kamala Harris is. There is nothing like firsthand experience.

The people of God give more weight to the opinion of the sisters as opposed to many bishops. Keep up the good work of the master.

COELITA HAYNES

Lakeland, Florida

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Thank you, Sr. Simone Campbell for a very informative article based on your personal experience.

Given the polarization in our country, I would like to quote what His Holiness has written about abortion in *Gaudete et Exsultate*.

> Our defense of the innocent unborn, for example, needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person, regardless of his or her stage of development. Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection.

ANSELM SEQUEIRA

St. Thomas, Virgin Islands

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In "Evaluate Sen. Kamala Harris' record faithfully," Sr. Simone Campbell fails to tell us how Harris would treat foreigners who are neither at our borders or within our borders. What does Harris think about the enormous "defense" spending of the United States government? What does she think about the violence, chaos, and suffering perpetuated across the world daily by the U.S. either directly through bombings or sanctions or indirectly through funding and supplying allies and proxies? Does she believe that it is just and moral to sacrifice the people or the peace of other countries for the sake of maintaining U.S. hegemony?

To answer those questions, it is necessary that we first ask them, yet it seems that even the best of us Catholics in the U.S. don't seem especially interested in doing so. Yet the truth remains that our lives do not matter more than the lives of the people outside of our borders who are victims of U.S. foreign policy.

I don't believe in a God who blesses genocide in Yemen to keep Iran down. President Donald Trump does. Does Harris? Does Joe Biden? Please, let's ask those questions.

JEFFREY JONES

Hamburg, New York

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