



Women in politics who  
shattered the glass ceiling

## Description

# Kamala Harris and other “firster” women honoured in a major art project

By **Byron Toben**

“Breaking the glass ceiling” has taken on new meaning with a new work by Swiss Artist **Simon Berger**. The huge installation – 6’ square – features a cracked glass portrait of new U.S. vice president **Kamala Harris**.

The work of art was co-sponsored by the **National Women’s History Museum (NWHM)** and **Chief**, a private network of female entrepreneurs. After some days at the Washington Mall, it now resides at the Chief headquarters in New York City, awaiting further display sites (at 350 pounds, it isn’t easy to transport).

Women, who have increasingly won municipal or state/provisional roles, are now achieving national leaderships.

As the first woman, black and South Asian woman to be so elected, it is a Trifecta compared to other “firster” females for U.S. high office.

- Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman elected to Congress in 1969.
- Ruth Bader Ginsberg, first Jewish woman appointed to Supreme Court in 1993.
- Sandra Day O’Connor, the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court in 1981.
- Carol Moseley Braun, the first black woman to be elected to U.S. Senate in 1993.
- Madeleine Albright, the first woman to be appointed U.S. Secretary of State in 1997.

Kamala's achievement may now allow her more freedom to mention her teen years as a graduate from **Westmount High School**, a short trot from Westmount Mag's offices. She was a student there when her late mother, a cancer researcher, spent four years on a Jewish General Hospital/McGill University program.



Installing one of Simon Berger's art installations – Image: boredpanda.com

She had to downplay this Canadian connection during her campaign as the Trump team tried to use any foreign contact however strained, to claim the nominee was not a U.S. citizen, even though born in the U.S. (Figures, as Trump was the leader of the anti-Obama "birther" movement.)

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- 1940 was the year to host the first elected woman Head of State.
- 1954 was the second.
- The 1960s saw six, including Indira Gandhi in India 1966 and Golda Meir in Israel 1969.
- The 1970s witnessed five, including Margaret Thatcher in the UK in 1979.
- The 1980s added nine, including Corazon Aquino of the Philippines in 1986, Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway in 1986 and Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan in 1988.
- The 1990s increased with 23 more, including Mary Robinson of Ireland in 1990 and **Kim Campbell** of Canada in 1993.

The new century welcomed an explosion of about 120 in its first two decades, including Angela Merkel of Germany in 2005. The average figure for the last several years has hovered about 22 per year and that is the number currently.

Out of 196 countries in the world, here is that current list:

### Europe

Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Norway, Serbia, Slovakia and Switzerland

### Asia



Bangladesh, Georgia, Nepal and Singapore

#### Africa

Ethiopia, Gabon and Togo

#### The Caribbean and South America

Barbados, Bolivia, Trinidad and Tobago

#### Oceania

New Zealand

Feature image: Kamala Harris art installation on the Washington Mall, by [Evy Mages](#)

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**Byron Toben**, a past president of The Montreal Press Club, has been WestmountMag.ca's theatre reviewer since July 2015. Previously, he wrote for since terminated web sites Rover Arts and Charlebois Post, print weekly The Downtowner and print monthly The Senior Times. He also is an expert consultant on U.S. work permits for Canadians.

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