



SPOTLIGHT

Legal eagle

As attorney general of California, KAMALA HARRIS occupies a powerful position in the Obama administration. But then, AARTIVIRANI reminds us, her initiation began quite early

1

She's a pioneering powerhouse

Forty-nine-year-old Kamala Harris, the attorney general of California, is the first woman to be elected as her state's top law enforcement officer. In a recent face-off, Harris, who battles financial institutions guilty of mortgage fraud, recovered an estimated 20 billion dollars for jilted home-owners.

2

She'd play herself in a biopic

"I would cast Kamala in a movie about Kamala," says Hollywood producer-director JJ Abrams, floored by Harris' glamorous looks (courtesy her Indian mother and Jamaican father) and signature belly laugh. US President Barack Obama infamously referred to her as "easy on the eyes" earlier this year.

3

She was inspired by her grandfather

Harris' maternal grandfather, an accomplished Indian diplomat (he was joint secretary to the government of India), regularly drilled into her the importance of good and honest governance during lengthy beach-side chats on her family's routine visits to Chennai.

4

She was a pint-sized activist

As a toddler, Harris, who grew up in the politically-charged climate of the 1960s, witnessed a surge of civil rights marches (via a stroller) in California and often pestered her mother—a renowned breast cancer researcher—for "freedom". Harris later studied political activism at Howard University in Washington, DC.

5

She's still rising Harris, who cut her teeth as a prosecutor over 20 years ago, may eventually replace 79-year-old US Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, though she has previously joked that the prestigious position would pose a serious challenge because she has difficulty "sitting down for too long". ■

FACT CHECK

In her 2009 book, *Smart On Crime*, Harris prescribes solutions for the broken American criminal justice system, while also taking a stance against racial profiling. She offers a compelling argument on how to make the criminal justice system truly, not just rhetorically, tough.