

Willie Brown: My Extramarital Affair With Kamala Harris Benefited Her Politically

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Senator Kamala Harris announced last week her intentions to run for president, and on Sunday she officially kicked off her bid with a rally in Oakland.

While she'll talk about a wide array of issues on the campaign trail and how she believes her qualifications make her the best Democrat to take on President Trump in 2020, one thing the first-time Senator won't mention is her past relationship with former San Francisco mayor and California State Assembly Speaker Willie Brown.

Brown, on the other hand, opened up about their time together in a short piece posted at the *San Francisco Chronicle* on Saturday:

I've been peppered with calls from the national media about my "relationship" with Kamala Harris, particularly since it became obvious that she was going to run for president. Most of them, I have not returned.

Yes, we dated. It was more than 20 years ago. Yes, I may have influenced her career by appointing her to two state commissions when I was Assembly speaker.

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Brown went on to talk about other Democrats he's helped in the past:

And I certainly helped with [Harris's] first race for district attorney in San Francisco. I have also helped the careers of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Gov. Gavin Newsom, Sen. Dianne Feinstein and a host of other politicians.

Well, he went *there*, so we'll go there, too.

Brown did indeed date Harris – who is 30 years younger than him – for a period of time between 1995 and early 1996, and yes – he “influenced” her career in a big way:

In 1995, she began dating Brown, then Assembly speaker and one of the most powerful men in California politics. Brown put Harris on the state Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board and the California Medical Assistance Commission, part-time posts that supplemented her prosecutor's salary with nearly \$100,000 in extra annual pay.

The December night Brown was elected mayor, Harris joined him at center stage in a longshoremen's union hall and gave him a blue cap that said, “Da Mayor.”

One thing not mentioned in most pieces you'll read on Brown's dating relationship with Harris is that Brown was (and is still) married at the time (and has been since 1958, to Blanche Vitero, though they are have reportedly been estranged since 1981). And Harris and Brown remained political allies even after they split up shortly after his 1996 mayoral inauguration, according to the *LA Times*.

It's interesting to see Brown downplay their history, as if to suggest it was no big deal to give his mistress at the time two cushy appointments and a 1994 BMW, and introductions to valuable political players. And his mention of how he also helped Pelosi, Newsom, and Feinstein was peculiar when you consider that, unlike Harris, none of them had had an affair with him.

Harris, for what it's worth, detests when the subject is brought up, as she made clear in this 2003 interview with *SF Weekly*:



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She acknowledges that Brown is an “albatross hanging around my neck” and fears that voters who dislike him will ignore her candidacy — even as she dismisses such an act as irrational. “Would it make sense if you are a Martian coming to Earth that the litmus test for public office is where a candidate is in their relationship to Willie Brown?” Harris asks. “Willie Brown is not going to be around. He’s gone — hello people, move on. If there is corruption, it will be prosecuted. It’s a no-brainer, but let’s please move on.”



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Unfortunately for Harris, he’s *not* gone, and the man widely regarded as a kingmaker in California Democratic party politics decided to talk about her least favorite topic on the eve of her first presidential campaign rally.

Though the affair has long been a well-known fact in California, it did not hurt her state political ambitions in later years. However, Harris is now introducing herself to America on a national stage, and it remains to be seen as to whether Democratic primary voters in other states will hold her affair with Brown and allegations of cronyism against her.

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