

Amy Klobuchar ends bid to become Biden's running mate in favor of a "woman of color"

By Genevieve Leigh
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On Thursday, Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar announced she was removing herself from consideration to become the vice presidential running mate of Joseph Biden, the Democratic presidential nominee. Klobuchar mounted her own campaign for the presidency before dropping out in early March and backing Biden against Bernie Sanders. She has been on the "short list" of vice presidential candidates, along with almost a dozen other women, ever since.

Klobuchar told MSNBC that she had called Biden on Wednesday night to withdraw from the running. She said she told him he should choose a woman of color to be his running mate. The move, in Klobuchar's words, would be a step toward "healing the country."

Klobuchar had been considered one of the leading contenders for the vice-presidential pick. However, the eruption of mass protests over the police murder of George Floyd put an unwanted spotlight on her career as a local prosecutor in Minneapolis. Like virtually every other Democratic and Republican prosecutor, during her seven-year tenure Klobuchar declined to bring charges against officers who were involved in police murders in Minneapolis.

Even more damning, as documented by an Associated Press story earlier this year, Klobuchar used the railroading of a black teenager, Myon Burrell, to prison for life as a springboard for her political career.

The well worn narrative promoted by the promoters of identity politics, particularly in and around the Democratic Party, is that a woman of color, based on her gender and race, will represent all other women and people of color. This claim is based on the false notion that the fundamental divide in society is not that of class, but rather of race, gender or sexual identity.

The reality is that, like Klobuchar, none of the "women of color" being considered for vice president have anything to do with progressive politics, not because of their race or gender, but because they are Democratic Party politicians committed to defending the capitalist system. The selection of any one of them would do nothing to "move Biden to the

left" or curb the frequency with which the police murder poor and working class people of all races.

Biden himself, it should be noted, has boasted of his good relations with Southern segregationist senators and was the author of the 1994 law-and-order Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which increased the mass incarceration of primarily African American men and expanded the death penalty. As Barack Obama's vice president for eight years, Biden was part of an administration that funneled billions of dollars worth of military equipment to the police and whitewashed one police killing after the next.

A brief review of the political record and background of the leading candidates to become Biden's running mate reveals that nearly every one of them is a "law and order" Democrat with a record of defending the police.

Senator Kamala Harris of California, who also ran against Biden in the primary, is the only black woman in the Senate. Harris was also the first African American and the first woman to serve as attorney general of the state of California.

During Harris' political career, she has faithfully carried out the dictates of the ruling elite, sending working class people to jail, defending unconstitutional practices, preventing prosecution of the wealthy and defending the police. Her record includes campaigning as district attorney for criminal penalties for parents with truant elementary school children, up to a \$2,000 fine and a year in jail.

In 2010, a Superior Court judge issued a scathing ruling charging that Harris' office had failed in its constitutional duty to give defendants relevant information about the credibility of prosecution witnesses. And in 2014 she appealed the ruling of a federal judge in Orange County that the death penalty was unconstitutional, stating that the decision "undermines important protections that our courts provide defendants."

On the issue of police violence, she has consistently sided with the police. She argued that "the left" needed to "get over its bias against law enforcement." In 2015, she opposed

a bill that would require her office to investigate police shootings. She further opposed calls for statewide standards on the use of body cameras by police. A full review of Harris' political record can be found in the WSWS article, "Who is Democratic Senator Kamala Harris?"

Another prominent candidate who has emerged in recent weeks is Representative Val Demings of Florida, formerly the chief of police of Orlando. Demings began her law enforcement days in junior high, serving on the "school patrol" at Dupont Junior High School in her home town of Jacksonville.

When she was 26, Demings joined the Orlando Police Department. She became its first female police chief in 2007, serving until 2011. Her husband, Jerry Demings, who held the position before her, was elected sheriff of Orange County after leaving Orlando and in 2018 became the first black mayor of that county. There is no doubt that the "get-out-the-vote" machine of this couple is an attractive quality to the Biden campaign in the battleground state of Florida.

However, Deming's record of overseeing a brutal police force during her tenure is well documented. A 2015 investigation into the city's police department by the *Orlando Sentinel* found that from 2010 to 2014 officers used force 3,100 times, including kicking, pepper-spraying and shocking suspects. Furthermore, the report found that the Orlando police used force more frequently on black suspects, with about 55 percent of use-of-force incidents involving African Americans though only 28 percent of the city's population is black. During this period, 10 people were killed by police officers.

While its investigation only partially overlapped with Demings' tenure as police chief, the *Sentinel* found that in 2010, the last full year that Demings served as chief, the department used force 574 times, 20 percent more than officers in similarly sized cities with comparable demographics, such as Baton Rouge.

Another contender is Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms of Atlanta, Georgia. Bottoms imposed a curfew, welcomed the deployment of the National Guard to her city and oversaw scores of arrests during the initial wave of protest following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

At one point, Bottoms denounced the "very diverse crowd" of protesters in Atlanta and suggested that the many white people participating in the demonstrations were "outsiders" who were not welcome in the city. More recently, Bottoms has been working to contain a new upsurge of protests in Atlanta following the police murder of Rayshard Brooks, a 27-year-old black man shot dead by Atlanta police outside of a Wendy's last week.

Bottoms has a long record of supporting "tough on crime"

policies. She often boasts of having "authored the toughest panhandling legislation in the history of the city," under which the city's destitute and homeless can be thrown in prison for being out on the city streets.

In addition to her leading role in attacking the pensions of city employees, Bottoms has almost doubled the number of police officers in the Atlanta police department.

Next up is Stacey Abrams, the former Georgia gubernatorial candidate and leading Democratic Party proponent of racist identity politics, considered for some time a front-runner in the vice presidential contest. While protesters are calling for an end to police killings and many support the call to "defund" the police, Abrams is pushing for "diversifying" law enforcement with more black officers and chiefs, and supports, along with Biden, an increase in funding for the armed enforcers of capitalist "law and order."

Earlier this year, Abrams wrote an article for *Foreign Affairs* in which she asserted that blacks and whites have "intrinsic racial differences." In the same article, she denounced politics based on "the catchall category known as 'the working class.'"

During the Democratic primary race, Abrams defended the entry of presidential candidate Michael Bloomberg, the billionaire oligarch, saying it was a positive development since "for once we actually know where the money is coming from."

Finally, there is Susan Rice, the former national security advisor to President Barack Obama. Rice's response to the multi-racial and multi-ethnic protests was to denounce them as "right out of the Russian playbook." She made the absurd claim that foreign governments were responsible for stoking domestic dissent.

Rice's tenure under the Obama administration included countless crimes in the service of US imperialism, including fierce support for Obama's war for regime change in Libya, his wars in Iraq and Syria, and his drone assassination program.

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