

Nice Vice: Kamala Harris visits Wayland Square



Books on the Square manager Jennifer Kandarian stands with one of the plethora of books from the display created by Percy Sutton just the evening before the historic visit by Vice President Harris

When Jennifer Kandarian awoke on Cinco de Mayo, she did not anticipate meeting Vice President Kamala Harris. As manager of Books on the Square on Angell Street in Providence, Kandarian hadn't planned to even go in to work. It was her day off, but the rainy weather wasn't going to lend to her plans for yard work. So she decided to switch her day off. "I had to wonder, 'If I knew I was going to meet the vice president, would I have worn jeans?'" she said.

Thirty minutes before the vice president arrived at Books on the Square with 30 secret service people present, Kandarian got the call that they were having some visitors. Serendipitously, just the night before, Percy Sutton had put together a lovely display of their collection of Kamala Harris books.

The staff was thrilled to find out that they would have such a rock star visitor, along with former governor and current Secretary of Commerce, Gina Raimondo. Raimondo was the reason for the visit. She and her family used to frequent the store on Sundays. Raimondo routinely declares, "This is my

neighborhood store. The best place ever.”

Books on the Square was already open for business when they got the call. When the entourage arrived, the store was so crowded that it was challenging to see Harris, let alone take photos. Team member Chris Byrnes noticed two teenagers at a book shelf “completely in their own world,” and took it upon himself to pop over and inform them of their possibly once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet a historic leader. Harris caught on to their presence and walked over to chat a bit with the surprised young women.

During this monumental visit, a secret serviceman shared with Kandarian that their team had made several visits to the store over the last weeks. In retrospect, it was intriguing to realize that they had been selling books to covert feds. Says Penny Fisher, “I didn’t know there was a pre-cursory perusal.”

Local co-op Urban Greens was aware that they would be in the socially distanced presence of our veep. Their council chair **Philip Trevett** had two minutes to speak on the Social Enterprise Greenhouse. “The most important message that I tried to convey is that co-ops work for communities, that co-ops are a critical part of building an equitable economy and that will build community wealth across this country.” Trevett met the vice president bearing yams from Ghana and numerous locally produced items.

Pedestrians on drizzly Ives street photographed in awe the low-flying helicopter that appeared to be giving Vice President Harris a COVID-safe tour of the small businesses in Rhode Island.