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(Michelle Kondrich/The Washington Post; Demetrius Freeman; Getty; AP)

The most consequential decision Vice President Harris will make in the first weeks of her new campaign will be choosing a running mate. And the predictable questions surrounding that choice are already budding like cherry blossoms in springtime.

Who can deliver a swing state? Who can outwit JD Vance in a debate? Who is capable enough to take the wheel someday yet restrained enough to ride shotgun in the meantime?

As Harris ponders her selection, let me issue a gentle warning: These familiar questions frame the decision too narrowly.

An uncommon candidate (Black, Asian American, female) in an unusual campaign (a 100-day sprint rather than a 100-week slog) against an unprecedented opponent (a thrice-nominated, twice-impeached, once-nearly-assassinated former president) calls for an unconventional approach.

Instead of choosing one person, why not pick a team?

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Donald Trump has said many nutty things over the years, but among the most alarming were five words he uttered in his 2016 Republican National Convention acceptance speech. After reciting a litany of national miseries, Trump assured America: “I alone can fix it.”

Four years later, he told devotees, “I’m the only thing standing between the American Dream and total anarchy, madness and chaos.” And in his speech at this month’s convention, after vividly describing how a madman’s bullet lacerated his ear, he suggested that “I had God on my side” — an echo of his earlier statement that “I am the Chosen One.”

Confronted with such a cartoonish megalomaniac, Harris could draw a lesson from the best comic books: Fight back with a team. Their five-word promise: “Together we can fix it.”

Harris could select her prospective vice president, as presidential candidates always do. That person’s name would appear with hers on ballots. But at next month’s Democratic National Convention, she could also announce the core members of her eventual government, including people who didn’t get the VP nod.

Imagine an ensemble of All Stars. She could tap swing-state celebrities across the country, such as Sen. Mark Kelly of Arizona as her potential defense secretary, Gov. Andy Beshear of Kentucky or Gov. Roy Cooper of North Carolina as attorney general, and Gov. Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania as transportation secretary.

She could elevate a few popular Biden officials — make Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo secretary of the treasury, Surgeon General Vivek Murthy secretary of health and human services, and multilingual Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg secretary of state.

It could be an opportunity to introduce fresh faces — perhaps Los Angeles Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho as education secretary, California Supreme Court Justice Leondra Kruger as solicitor general, Adm. Lisa Franchetti as national security adviser and General Motors CEO Mary Barra as commerce secretary.

Now imagine this entire crew appearing alongside Harris and her veep choice at the convention, waving together from the stage as balloons descend from the rafters, and then fanning out across the country to campaign for the next 10 weeks.

In a compressed and competitive race, a dream team helmed by Harris has several advantages over the usual dynamic duo.

1. A team offers good government, which is almost always good politics.

Trump’s presidency exposed the absurdity of his “I alone” boast. His unwillingness to listen, to tolerate opposing views or to demonstrate even the barest humility stalled his policies and produced record turnover in his administration.

By replacing the arrogance of isolation with the confidence of delegation, Harris can set herself up to succeed as president. Research in organizational behavior and social psychology demonstrates that individuals often outperform teams in solving simple problems. But teams are better at tackling complex challenges. Groups bring diverse experiences and clashing perspectives, which generate more options and yield smarter solutions for complicated problems.

So, to determine whom to fire on a reality TV show, rely on a triumphant loner. But to repair a broken immigration system, strengthen wobbling democratic institutions, manage ever-shifting geopolitical alliances, prepare for the rise of artificial intelligence or address just about any 21st-century issue, a squad beats a squawker.

At the same time, this novel approach shines a light not just on her opponent's past performance but also on his future policies. Trump allies have laid out two equally disturbing plans of governance. One is Project 2025, 900 pages of authoritarian revenge porn that rolls back rights, rewinds regulations and rewards the president with the powers of a king. The other is the platform the party unveiled at its convention this month — a shaggy collection of randomly capitalized catchphrases and outbursts that read as if Bart Simpson scratched them on a chalkboard.

A fleet of pragmatic policy wonks ready to govern on Day 1 delivers a stark contrast — more mainstream than Project 2025, more substantive than an ALL CAPS party platform.

2. A team recasts the conversation about age and vigor.

Many national elections distill to a single question: Forward or back?

With Biden out of the race, Trump is the oldest presidential nominee ever. In the space of two weeks, he has become the last gasp of baby boom politics, the very embodiment of “back.” Democrats can press that case.

Picture a split screen. On one half is an elderly Florida man dishing out a word salad with a side of grievance. On the other half is a lineup of accomplished, energetic professionals — a physician, a carmaker, even an astronaut, almost none of them yet eligible for Social Security — rolling up their sleeves and getting to work.

On one side is a 78-year-old politician who has attempted to launder his age by selecting a 39-year-old yes-man as a running mate — enlisting him less as a partner than as a sidekick. On the other side is a Gen X woman tough enough to assemble a team of rivals to serve her country.

Present that contrast relentlessly until Election Day and the question bubbles to the top of the conversation: Forward or back?

3. A team mitigates some of the nominee's political disadvantages.

Women leaders often confront what social scientists call a “double bind.” Though people in general, and voters in particular, readily accept that a male leader can be both likable and effective, they assume that women face an inherent trade-off. If you're warm, you must not be competent. If you're competent, you must not be warm. And we want our leaders to be both.

A contingent of running mates gives Harris a way to untangle this unfair knot by outsourcing some of the effort. When she's displaying the steely competence of a prosecutor, her partners can project warmth. When she's showing the kindness, laughter and dance moves of “Momala,” her colleagues can demonstrate competence.

Likewise, a unit can insulate Harris from the inevitable attacks. It's tougher to portray her as a woo-woo San Francisco liberal if she's leading a squadron of political centrists, corporate executives and military veterans.

In movies and comics, heroes like Batman and Wonder Woman can battle most bad guys on their own. But facing a supervillain requires a team. The signal goes out. The band assembles. And the work begins.

That's the secret to victory in November: Kamala's own Justice League of America.

What readers are saying

The comments reflect a mix of opinions on the idea of forming a "Dream Team" to oppose Trump, with many expressing enthusiasm and support for a centrist coalition led by Kamala Harris. Some suggest including figures like Jeb Bush and Cindy McCain to appeal to a broader audience,... [Show more](#)

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