Patricia R. Harris

PATRICIA R. HARRIS
Presidential Cabinet Member

BIOGRAPHY: Patricia R. Harris served as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under President Jimmy Carter for two years (1977-1979) until he appointed her Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. Harris was the first black woman to hold a Cabinet post in the United States. Before serving as a presidential cabinet member, she was the nation's first black woman ambassador. President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed her ambassador to Luxembourg in 1965. She was an alternate delegate to the United Nations General Assembly in 1966 and 1967. Her activities in civil rights and Democratic Party politics brought her to President Johnson's attention. In 1969 she became the Dean of Howard University School of Law. Later she joined a Washington, D.C. law firm as a partner. In 1971, when International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) made her a director, she became the first black woman to direct a major U.S. corporation.

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