

Green councillors demand Boris Johnson tackles racist abuse in politics



18 June 2020

- **Councillors call on PM to take action on divisive language in respect of Black Lives Matters protests**
- **Ask what he will do to ensure better protection for politicians of colour**
- **Nannette Youssef: “As people of colour elected into positions of power on local councils, we know first hand what it is like to experience racism”**

Green Party councillors of colour have written to Prime Minister Boris Johnson to ask what he is doing to tackle racist abuse in politics and better protect politicians of colour. [1]

The letter, co-signed by Green councillors Cleo Lake, Kaltum Rivers and Nannette Youssef, [2] calls on the PM to rethink the divisive language he and other representatives have used around the recent Black Lives Matters protests.

In the letter, the councillors set out how Mr Johnson and other members of the cabinet had referred to Black Lives Matters protests as “thuggery” while one Conservative councillor described an enslaver as a “hero” and the recent protests as “frenzied thug violence”.

The letter also asks what the Prime Minister will do to protect black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) politicians from racist abuse.

Councillor Nannette Youssef, who sits on Norwich City Council, said:

“As people of colour elected into positions of power on local councils, we know first hand what it is like to experience racism. However, it is not just about what we have to deal with, but how the political discourse has an impact on communities of colour across the country.

“Political institutions including Parliament and local authorities need to be more representative. Yet when we see the racist abuse many BAME representatives receive, is it any wonder people are reluctant to put themselves in that position?”

Councillor Kaltum Rivers, who sits on Sheffield City Council, said:

“This is not just about the impact on politicians. When our political class sets an example like referring to protests as ‘thuggery’, this is reflected back at people of colour across the country in the form of abuse either online or in the street. This must stop.

“Boris Johnson needs to set out clearly what he is going to do to address this divisive language in political discourse, and what protections he will put in place for politicians of colour.”

ENDS

Notes

1

The full letter can be viewed [here](#)

2

Councillor Cleo Lake is the former Lord Mayor of Bristol and currently represents the Cotham ward on Bristol City Council. In 2018, while still Lord Mayor, Cleo had a portrait of enslaver Edward Colston removed from her office.

Councillor Kaltum Rivers represents the Broomhill and Sharrow Vale on Sheffield City Council.

Councillor Nannette Youssef represents the Nelson ward on Norwich City Council.

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