

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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[Green Party launches Five Demands For Racial Justice with call to ban NHS surcharge for migrants](#)



15 June 2020

The Green Party has called on the Government to scrap the costly and immoral NHS surcharge for all migrants as it launches its Five Demands for Racial Justice campaign.

From October, the current surcharge of £400 is due to rise to £624, which will be levied alongside all visas, regardless of income. Prime Minister

Boris Johnson ordered the removal of the surcharge for health and care workers last month, after he found himself under immense pressure to do so. [1]

Now the Greens have launched a petition calling for the surcharge to be scrapped for all migrants. [2] The petition says the NHS should instead be funded by tax, according to people's ability to pay.

Benali Hamdache, Green Party London Assembly candidate, said:

"This surcharge amounts to the exploitation of migrants and simply has to stop. To increase the cost of healthcare, which people already pay for through their taxes, is immoral at any time, but to do so during a pandemic is simply cruel.

"The NHS should be funded by a fairer tax system that has millionaires, billionaires and corporations pay their fair share. Not by double charging migrant workers."

The petition also marks the launch of the Green Party's Five Demands for Racial Justice campaign which will promote five different policy proposals to tackle racism and reform society to reduce inequality. [3]

Greens of Colour chairperson Azzees Minott said:

"The momentum we have seen over the last few weeks cannot stop here. We have seen people from all walks of life express their solidarity for the Black Lives Matter movement, and now we need to use the energy from the protests and online activism to make some clear demands.

"This is why we are putting forward five essential changes we need to see to start addressing the prejudice and inequity communities of colour face every day."

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7274/>

2

<https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/end-the-nhs-surcharge-2>

3

<https://greensofcolour.greenparty.org.uk/five-demands-for-racial-justice/>

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Let this mark a new era for Bristol



8 June 2020

Green Party Councillors in Bristol and the Green mayoral candidate join the voices calling for a new era to begin, now that Colston's statue, and the oppression it represents, no longer looks out over Bristol.

Edward Colston's company shipped 80,000 people from west Africa to the Caribbean and southern states. Nineteen thousand were thrown into the sea – much like his statue. By any measure Colston's crime against humanity has put the burden of history and trauma on those in the black community today through institutional and direct racism.

Councillor Cleo Lake, said,

"I have always advocated that the statue be put in a museum in an appropriate context. There have been many opportunities to do this that have been ignored. With the global movement of Black Lives Matter we could have hoped our request to have it removed would have been honoured. But in my experience of the last five years that question has always been avoided and sidelined by the administration which has resulted in this dramatic action."

"Whilst the way the statue was taken down could have been different, I fully support how the incident was policed under the watch of Supt. Andy Bennett."

"The police facilitated a peaceful protest allowing people to come together and make their voices heard on a global stage about a global issue which is Black Lives Matter."

Green Party candidate for Mayor, Sandy Hore-Ruthven commented,

"I have seen the emotion pouring out of the black community yesterday as a symbol of the old Bristol was torn down. We must make sure that this leads to real change. All of this will be for nothing if our BAME communities continue to be disadvantaged by racism."

"If communities remain poor and unheard, if the jobs and houses are not there, if people are denied opportunities simply because of the colour of their skin then we will have failed. We must redouble our efforts and continue the hard work that is needed to change our society."

"It must force us all to listen harder and learn more deeply; reach out across our divided communities, act more boldly and help us to do what is right – even in the face of resistance. If we don't then history will judge."

us all as it has judged Colston”.

ENDS

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[Greens call for citizens' assembly to choose what economy we have after coronavirus](#)



5 June 2020

UK citizens should be allowed to choose how the Government uses public money as it prioritises which sectors will survive if the economy shrinks due to the coronavirus crisis.

Ahead of Degrowth Day on 6 June [1], the Greens have published a report [2] which makes clear how the Government can help manage the potential crash in a way that ensures we are all better off with a smaller economy.

Following the Office for Budget Responsibility's prediction that the UK economy could shrink by more than a third [3], Green Party finance spokesperson Molly Scott Cato has set out the government must ensure we emerge a fairer and more sustainable society.

Scott Cato said:

“Projections suggest that we may lose as much as a third of our economic output as a result of the Coronavirus. If that is the same third that was causing pollution, creating carbon emissions, and generating stress and mental illness, then we can consider ourselves better off with a smaller economy.

“Since most companies will only survive as a result of the investment of public money, citizens have a right to choose what sort of economy we become after the crisis either through our elected representatives or a citizens' assembly.

“We can direct the emergency economic support in such a way that it breathes life into the long overdue proposals for a Green New Deal and energises the transition to a sustainable economy.

“With the impact coronavirus is having on the economy it feels inevitable that we are going to see jobs lost and so we must commit to ensuring that workers are retrained and reskilled for the many high-skilled and well-paid jobs that are essential to enable us to build our economy back better.”

The report also sets out how the costs of preventing the economy from descending into a recession could be borne by the wealthier members of society, ensuring that we come out of the pandemic a more equal society as well as one more ready to tackle the accelerating climate emergency.

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.degrowth.info/en/globalday/#:~:text=The%20next%20Global%20Degrowth%20Day,life%20for%20all%20is%20possible!>

2

The report “Less is More: How To Be Better Off With A Small Economy” [is available to read here](#)

3

<https://obr.uk/coronavirus-analysis/>

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Green Party stands with Black Lives Matter every step of the way



4 June 2020

Green Party deputy leader Amelia Womack has outlined the party's support for the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of the death of George Floyd.

In a video published today, Womack spoke of the need to dismantle structural racism and repeated the Greens' call for an independent inquiry into the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on communities of colour.

The full video can be [viewed here](#).

Below is a full transcript:

The killing of George Floyd has sparked a wave of resistance around the world, and the Green Party stands with the Black Lives Matter movement every step of the way.

In the UK, it's common to hear people say that racism isn't as bad here as it is in America.

So I'm just going to say a FEW names.

Stephen Lawrence. No justice for decades.

Christopher Alder. Choked and died while handcuffed and lying face down on the floor of a police station.

Belly Mujinga. One of the disproportionate number of BAME people who have died of Coronavirus, with no protection at work.

We're still deporting people to their deaths, two years after Windrush.

We've still got tower blocks ready to go up in flames, three years after Grenfell.

Make no mistake. Britain has a bloody history of racism.

It's a history which limits the lives of every person of colour living in Britain today.

And it's a system which benefits white people like me.

So don't just share this video. It's not enough.

We need to dismantle structural racism together.

Donate to legal funds and mutual aid groups. Demand a public inquiry into BAME Covid-19 deaths.

Most importantly, amplify Black voices, listen, educate ourselves and join the fight for a better world for people of colour everywhere.

Not just today, not just this week. Every day. Until we win. Black lives matter.

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