



GRASSROOTS BLACK LEFT

Labour African, Caribbean and Asian Socialists

January 25 2021

The Labour Party and its neglected BAME members

Dear NEC Member

Grassroots Black Left (GBL) is extremely concerned that three years after the important Labour Party Democracy Review recommendations on increasing Black representation and equality within all structures of the party were made, no action has been taken to implement them. GBL consists of African Caribbean and Asian socialist Labour Party supporters from all around Britain.

At a time when confidence in the leadership of the Labour is at an all-time low among Black members despite the dramatic events of the Black Lives Matter movement, it is crucial that the party demonstrates its commitment to addressing anti-Black racism and the inequality of representation of African Caribbean and Asian Party members within its ranks. Black party members have invested much time and effort in the various meetings and consultations in 2018-19, leading up to the final conclusions of the Democracy Review directed by Jeremy Corbyn's former political secretary Katy Clark, with whom GBL worked closely. While Katy Clark has been rewarded for her involvement in the Review with a seat in the House of Lords, Black party members have been left shamefully ignored and frankly, treated with contempt by the Labour leadership. It is therefore unsurprising that some Black activists, fed-up with being treated as mere canvassers and voting fodder, have said enough is enough and have threatened to "down tools" and no longer campaign for Labour. It should be remembered, Africans Caribbeans and Asians are Labour's most loyal voters and, in more than 60 parliamentary seats around the country, the party relies on them to get an MP elected. It can't get into government without us.

GBL calls on the party's National Executive Committee, including its Unison-nominated BAME representative, Constituency Labour Party (CLP) and trade union representatives to act now to ensure the implementation of the following Democracy Review proposals, without further delay, by:

- Doing another mass mailing of the national survey to identify the African Caribbean and Asian members in the Labour Party, with targeted publicity to encourage participation. GBL believes that the party's approach to this in the past has lacked commitment, resulting in low numbers of members taking

part. Labour Party regional directors should spearhead a new drive to get this vital information.

- The organising of the promised and so far, not delivered, annual BAME conference with voting and decision-making rights to mirror Labour Party Annual Conference, as has been arranged for the Women's Conference in June.
- Getting each region to organise a Regional BAME Conference.
- Getting elected national and regional BAME committee members.
- Getting elected BAME representatives on every Regional Executive Committee.
- Doing a mapping exercise of BAME communities all over the country
- Making sure there are BAME seats on bodies such as CLP management committees, CLP executives, CLP management committees and local government committees, at the very least, in areas where there is a high percentage of BAME people in the population to redress their under-representation.
- Using all-African Caribbean and Asian shortlists the same as all-women shortlists to redress Black under-representation.
- Tackling the failure of the party to properly investigate discrimination against its members of colour, including them being disproportionately affected by disciplinary action.

African Caribbean and Asian communities are experiencing unbearable suffering as the disproportionately high victims of the Covid-19 pandemic, (see GBL's pamphlets about this <https://bit.ly/3qHpJhh>) systemic and other racism, Islamophobia, economic poverty, attacks on the rights of migrants, including the Windrush generation, and state and police brutality. We know that a socialist Labour Party and government can help remedy these issues. That is why GBL will do whatever is necessary to ensure that the Labour Party is held to account when it fails what traditionally has been its most loyal supporters and voters.

*GBL uses the term BAME in this statement because that is how the Labour Party refers to African Caribbean and Asian members. It is not a description we like or would otherwise employ. We use the political term Black to embrace African Caribbean and Asian people and other people of colour.

We look forward to receiving a reply at your earliest convenience.

Best wishes,

Hassan Ahmed

Deborah Hobson

Grassroots Black Left Co-Chairs