



Grassroots Black Left – General Election 2019

For immediate release

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Let us be clear, the general election victory for bigoted liar Boris Johnson was a win for the far-right, xenophobic Brexit Party who enabled it and which the Conservative Party has become. It is therefore unsurprising Johnson's success has been welcomed by racist Tommy Robinson because it has ushered in a British government that is arguably more right-wing than Margaret Thatcher's.

Johnson has ensured his "dog whistle" racism against black people, Muslims and migrants has become mainstream. The public outside parliament will have to be mobilised against it, much like the way the suffragettes, civil rights, trade union and anti-poll tax movements did so to achieve success.

Democracy in Britain is surely broken when almost a third of the population did not vote and the general election would have resulted in a hung parliament, with the Tories winning just 288 seats and the Lib Dems way up on 70, if the UK had used proportional representation (PR). Labour, under PR, would have won 14 more seats and the Greens 12, rather than the one MP they got.

Labour should be applauded for its progressive manifesto. Though, it has to be said, the economic policies in the party's offer would be considered mainstream rather than radical in Scandinavian countries that are more progressive than Britain.

Jeremy Corbyn's lifelong anti-imperialism and anti-racism, particularly his support for the Palestinians against their oppression by the Israeli government and opposition to arm sales to the Saudis, should also be commended.

But the Corbyn project failed the working class – black and white – on Brexit. And it failed them by lamentably refusing to robustly rebut the establishment lies about the fake news-

fuelled Labour “antisemitism crisis” and to expose at every opportunity the rampant anti-black racism and islamophobia of Johnson and his newly-moulded white supremacist, populist Conservative Party.

There is antisemitism in society, as there is anti-black racism and Islamophobia. All such forms of hatred must be ruthlessly combatted whenever they rear their ugly heads.

But there should be no hierarchy of discrimination, with that faced by white people being privileged above all others forms as has happened with the cynical weaponising of antisemitism aimed at destroying Corbyn and the Labour Party. The genuine fight against antisemitism, and the co-operation between Jewish people and black people necessary to defeat it, has been damaged by the Labour leadership’s failure to expose the smears and fight off the bullies.

Less than a tiny 0.1 per cent of Labour’s members have been found to be antisemitic. Yet, because of the right-wing-inspired witchhunt, polls showed the public thought the figure was more like a staggering 30 per cent. The Labour leadership, rather than expose the big lie and defend key allies, including black friends, allowed them to be thrown under a bus in a desperate and doomed attempt to appease their enemies and win the election.

Much has been said about the abandonment by Labour of working class communities in the north of England, Scotland, Wales and the Midlands, whose voices in favour of Brexit went unheeded by an out of touch party leadership.

We have heard commentators talk about the “marginalised and alienated white working class”.

But black people - African Caribbeans and Asians - who are disproportionately represented among the most deprived sections of the population, have been ignored in this debate. Yet, black people, particularly black women, have suffered the most from the Tory party’s heartless policy of austerity and cuts in public services, which, under emboldened prime minister Johnson, will now get much worse.

We believe the party leadership made a fundamental mistake by undemocratically rejecting the outcome of the EU referendum and renegeing on its 2017 manifesto promise to respect it. Again, Corbyn was bullied into going against his well-known principle on a hugely important political issue by the remainiacs likes of Chuka Umunna, who ran off to the Lib Dems anyway. We are delighted Umunna has been replaced as the MP for Streatham by the fighting black socialist woman Bell Ribeiro-Addy, whom Grassroots Black Left supported.

Although Labour has increased its number of black MPs - though Eleanor Smith lost in Wolverhampton South West - using, in some cases, all black shortlist as we demanded, there were glaring examples of where the opportunity for the party to achieve greater black representation took a hit. Good socialist black activists were denied the opportunity to be Labour candidates by Labour's control freak NEC - which has a pro-Corbyn majority - despite those candidates having support in their local constituency Labour Parties. This institutional racism must be urgently tackled.

The Labour left, of which Grassroots Black Left is a part, should now be pro-active and swift in its fightback against the well-orchestrated right-wing onslaught against it. Firstly, by demanding the NEC organise by-elections for the posts held by three of its members who are now MPs, or stood down as an MP, in the case of BAME Labour representative Keith Vaz. A fourth, NEC member, Peter Willsman, can no longer attend its meetings because he has been suspended from membership of the party. As a suspended member, he will be ineligible to stand for the NEC again. We believe a black socialist man and woman, Asian and African Caribbean, must be among the NEC replacements.

Furthermore, all candidates for the posts of Labour leader and deputy leader must agree to face hustings of African Caribbean and Asian people around the country to explain what they intend to do for them for Labour to retain their votes for the future elections of MPs and councillors. Black people have remained Labour's most loyal supporters, including during the 2019 general election. But our patience is running out. We are no longer prepared to be mere voting fodder. Action is needed to keep our support.

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