

**ADVANCING  
THE FIGHT  
AGAINST RACISM  
AND FOR BLACK  
REPRESENTATION**



**A Black Agenda For Labour**



# FOREWORD

## **Professor Cecile Wright**

**Chair, Momentum Black Caucus  
Ethnic Minorities Officer, Derby North CLP  
Labour National Constitutional Committee  
Vice-chair, National Co-ordinating Group, Momentum**

Momentum Black Caucus's 'A black agenda for the Labour Party' is a rallying call for the Labour Party for greater black representation at all levels in the party.

In the historical context of a large black presence in the UK for almost 70 years, political representation is still woefully inadequate. Many of these people have their backgrounds in the Caribbean, Indian and Pakistan. These are countries where ordinary people have become involved in politics over many years. The heritage is one of political struggle for improvement.

Despite the disproportionately adversely impacted by effects of austerity on black people, the call for political representation remains loud. Likewise, despite the vilification that prominent black politicians can receive, it is not deterring others.

The Windrush scandal affecting many of Commonwealth ancestry and the reaction to it indicates the resistance to the notion that we will never succumb to the "know your place" mentality.

Momentum Black Caucus is aware of the fact that austerity has a black dimension to it; likewise the "hostile environment" policy of the Tories.

These policies could have been mitigated or prevented with a voice being given to the black population that the state wishes would remain voiceless.

The Labour Party must rise above this with black representation at its core.

# BACKGROUND

In April 2016 national Momentum Black Caucus (MBC) was formally launched in Birmingham, with Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell as guest speaker.

This broad-based, progressive, independent, national black organisation, aligned to the progressive politics of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour leadership and Momentum, should be welcomed in the current climate of the Conservative government's programme of savage economic cuts and the rise of post-Brexit racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia.

We use the political term "black" that encompasses African, Caribbean, Asian and other people of colour who self-define as such, and reject Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) that some people have attempted to impose on us.

Over the years a number of black agendas have been published, so this does not claim to be the first. They include one produced by the Labour Party Black Sections in 1988, a year after the historic election of four black MPs, who were members of the organisation. In 1997 Operation Black Vote's Black Agenda was launched and the Labour Party Black Network, whose document inspired this version, did the same this millennium.

So, MBC's Black Agenda is neither unique nor comprehensive; much more could be written. It is merely aimed to be a much-needed and constructive basis for a conversation we believe the Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour Party should have. In fact, John McDonnell at our Birmingham launch invited us to present our demands to the Labour leadership.

For more than half a century in modern times the black communities have developed a tradition of activism within a wider struggle against racial inequality in Britain. This activism has taken the form of campaigns, including direct action.



Despite this struggle, based on the principles of self-determination, self-organisation and internationalism, and hard-won racial equality legislation and political representation, the black communities still face endemic discrimination and under-representation across many parts of society.

The evidence shows the Conservative government's neo-liberal orthodoxy on austerity, namely cuts to public services, welfare provision, back door privatisation of the NHS and the academisation of education, are having an adverse impact on the lives of communities. Black people have borne the brunt of the failed economic policies of the Tory Party and previously Tory-lite Labour Party, which resulted in the 2008 banking crisis.

Within this context, discrimination, disadvantage, racism and deprivation in the Black communities has been heightened and intensified. Furthermore, it is argued that while the structural effects of racism are evident, these effects are often accompanied by an increasingly muted discourse on racism, as the terms of articulation, analysis and critique are dimmed and deleted, distorted and redirected thus creating a situation of "racisms without racism".

For example, as the term "racism" has come to encompass discrimination against foreigners who are not people of colour, anti-black racism and, what some term "Afriphobia", is increasingly overlooked. In addition the media have reported a rise in "race hate" offences, including islamophobia and xenophobia, since the UK vote to leave the EU, known as Brexit.

This is not to down-play that some black people, wary of the effects on them of unfettered immigration from the EU and who would like to see closer economic and other ties with the Commonwealth, supported Brexit.

Jeremy Corbyn's election as Labour leader on a progressive, anti-austerity platform marks a significant break with the discredited British politics of the past. Like the electoral success of other European socialist forces, including Podemos and Syriza, it represents a once in a generation opportunity for a movement based on social justice to be in government and change people's lives for the better at home and abroad.

## Evidence of "entrenched racial inequalities" in the UK

The publication in 2016 of a detailed review: Race Report: Healing a divided Britain by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission assessing race inequality in the UK, led the Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, David Isaac to state:

---

**///** *If you are black or an ethnic minority in modern Britain, it can often still feel like you're living in a different world, never mind being part of a one nation society...Today's report underlines just how entrenched race inequality and unfairness still is in our society.* **///**

(Guardian, August 20, 2016)

---

The introduction to the report pointed to 10 major factors of institutionalised racism we face as black communities.

These are:

1. Permanent school exclusion for black Caribbean and mixed white/black Caribbean children in England is around three times the exclusion rate for all pupils.

2. Over the last five years, the number of young ethnic minority people in the UK who are long-term unemployed has almost doubled, whereas for young white people it fell slightly.

3. People from ethnic minorities are twice as likely to live in poverty compared to white people across Britain.

4. In Scotland, ethnic minority households are nearly four times more likely to experience overcrowding.

5. In 2014, the probability of black African women being detained under mental health legislation in England was more than seven times higher than for white British women (CAAPC, 2016).

6. Rates of prosecution and sentencing for black people in England and Wales are three times higher than for white people.

7. Ethnic minorities in police custody in England and Wales are significantly more likely to be physically restrained than white people.

8. Race hate on railway networks across Great Britain rose by 37 per cent between 2011 and 2015.

9. Ethnic minorities (along with women and disabled people) in the UK continue to be underrepresented in higher positions in public life.



**Despite hard-won  
racial equality  
legislation and  
political  
representation,  
black communities  
still face endemic  
discrimination  
and under-  
representation**

# RACIAL INEQUALITIES

The deep racial inequalities highlighted by the report include:

## Unemployment

- Black unemployment rates [does this and the figures throughout this draft document combine African, Caribbean and Asian?] were significantly higher than white people at 12.9% compared with 6.3% for white people.
- Black workers with degrees earn 23.1% less on average than white workers with a degree
- In Britain, significantly lower percentages of black and ethnic minorities (8.8%) worked as managers, directors and senior officials, compared with White people (10.7%). This was particularly true for African/Caribbean/black people (5.7%) and those of dual ethnicity (7.2%).
- Black people who leave school with A-levels are on average paid 14.3% less than their white peers.

## Education

- Just 6% of black school leavers attended a Russell Group top university, compared with 12% of mixed and Asian school leavers and 11% of white school leavers.
- Black Caribbean and mixed white/black Caribbean children have rates of permanent exclusion about three times that of the pupil population as a whole.
- 3.3% of professors are black females in UK universities.

## Criminal Justice

- The rates of prosecution and sentencing for black people were three times higher than for white people – 18 per thousand population compared with six per thousand population for white people.
- For sentencing it was 13 per thousand population for black people and 5 per thousand population for white people.
- In England and Wales black and ethnic minority children and adults are more likely to be a victim of murder. The murder rate for African and Caribbean people was 30.5 per million population, 14.1 for Asian people and 8.9 for white people.
- In England, 37.4% of African and Caribbean people and 44.8% of Asian people felt unsafe being at home or around their local area, compared with 29.2% of White people.

## Living Standards

- Pakistani/Bangladeshi and black adults are more likely to live in substandard accommodation. 30.9% of Pakistani/Bangladeshi people live in overcrowded accommodation, while for black people the figure is 26.8% and for white people it is 8.3%.
- Black and ethnic minority persons, are more likely to live in poverty. The evidence shows that 35.7% of ethnic minorities live in poverty compared with 17.2% of white people.
- In Scotland, black and ethnic minority households are more likely to experience overcrowding. This was 11.8% for ethnic minority households compared with 2.9% for White households.

## Health and care

- Black African women had a death rate four times higher than white women in the UK.
- A disproportionate number of ethnic minorities detained under mental health legislation in hospitals in England and Wales – black African women were seven times more likely to be detained than white British women.
- Gypsies, Travellers and Roma were found to suffer poorer mental health than the rest of the population in Britain. They were also more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression.

## Immigration

The Tory government have created the immigration Act 2015 to build on the Immigration Act 2014. The new immigration act will exacerbate these problems of increasing discrimination against Black people by introducing measures to criminalise undocumented migrant workers, restrict migrants' access to services, increase document checks and withdraw support for failed asylum seekers and their children. MBC is appalled by the way that the Windrush Generation has been treated by the Tory government.

During 2018/2023 we aim to carry out the following tasks:

- Campaign for a regularisation programme commitment from the Labour Party for undocumented workers.
- Build international links with other commonwealth countries.
- Campaign for a fairer, non-racist system. A welcome to migrants. Public acknowledgements they have helped make the UK the success it is.
- Work in partnership with advice agencies to provide a comprehensive advice service for refugees and asylum seekers.
- Work with other Black organisations to oppose deportations and the Tory's hostile environment.



The reasons for this must be studied and the results of that examination acted on. In response to the racism highlighted by the report the Prime Minister has launched a “race audit” of public services. We strongly believe that injustices against one group pose a serious threat to justice for all.

## REPRESENTATION

In MBC’s submission to the Chakrabarti inquiry 2016 into anti-semitism and racism in the Labour Party, we raised the issue of the political under-representation of black people.

Labour can be proud that 10 per cent of its MPs are black – more than any other party. But the figure should be double that. And out of 32 members of the party’s ruling national executive, only four are black.

We are not aware of any figures that show how many black people Labour employs and in what positions at party headquarters, in the regions, parliament and town halls and likewise for black Labour councillors.

To borrow a phrase from an important political movement, black lives matter, not just in America but in Britain too and our voice needs to be heard, especially in the party to which black people give their overwhelming support and are key to its electoral success.

Yet Chakrabarti’s report shows that we have a long way to go.

It describes that too often there is an unwelcoming environment to black people in politics and a lack of black representatives at all levels, including in parliament. What an irony then that it was the voices of people of colour, in particular those of African descent, that were sidelined in the media reporting of the inquiry from the

moment the headline grabbing press conference had finished.

Why is black representation so important? Because politics, more than anything, is about power, or in the case of black people, the lack of it. Of course we have to remember, the Labour party just reflects the rest of Britain and we have a long way to go.

In our opinion the Labour Party is better than many other organisations, but it must do better. Black people do not only feel under-represented, or stereotyped in the Labour Party. They are under-represented at decision-making levels. We may be members, we may be Labour party supporters and voters, but black Labour members are too often excluded where it matters – particularly from positions of power.

But this must not be mistaken as a demand for black tokens – merely some black faces in high places. MBC want progressive black people in positions of power; black representatives accountable and responsive to the communities they serve.

For its own sake, it is up to the Labour Party to make sure the changes listed above are implemented - and quickly.

We note that Jeremy Corbyn has promoted nine MPs of colour to the Labour Party Shadow Cabinet, which includes Diane Abbott, as Shadow Home Secretary, one of the great offices of state, Kate Osamor, Dawn Butler, Clive Lewis, Imran Hussein and others, which is helpful for our agenda to keep our struggle at the forefront of their minds.

Let us not waste the opportunity to build our organisation based on a progressive programme rather than personalities.



## THE WAY FORWARD

We demand Labour adopt a Black Agenda that will deal with the needs of the black communities by delivering:

- An end to economic austerity, which has been exposed by Jeremy Corbyn's progressive Labour leadership as a government choice and not a necessity
- Social housing
- An end to racist police stop and search
- An end to racism in the criminal justice system, including by making judicial appointments and juries racially representative of the communities they serve
- An end to racially biased sentencing by the courts
- An end to black deaths in custody
- An end to the Prevent programme that singles out our Muslim Sisters and Brothers
- An end to the permanent exclusions of Black students, which plagues schools
- Full employment for our communities on a living wage
- An end to welfare cuts, which have disproportionately affected black communities
- A welcome for refugees
- An end to racist immigration policies
- Zero tolerance of racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia, including among politicians and in the media
- Support the Movements for Reparations

This critical moment in politics offers an opportunity for a shift in our thinking concerning notions of intervention in the "entrenched race inequality" in British society.

Of interest is the growing call for Affirmative Action through the legislative sphere. Moreover, the principled argument for affirmative action in the United States, and subsequent legislation with relatively successful outcomes, is a testament to it being a measure for dramatically reducing racial inequality.

In this regard, we recommend that the Labour Party establish a "Black Agenda Working Group", with representation from MBC and others, to simultaneously work towards re-invigorating "race" within the public policy forum and develop the argument and legislative framework for positive change.

# MDC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

## Background:

At its meeting in Birmingham on the 24th April 2016 Momentum Black Caucus [MBC] affirmed that it was formed in order to re-invigorate Black political mobilisation, contribute to the progressive political agenda, and align with the progressive Labour movement and the Momentum project. Black is a positive and inclusive term encompassing African, Asian and Caribbean people in the UK discriminated against as a result of their colour.

As the successor to the campaign to elect Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party, Momentum is a Labour Party-focused organisation. It seeks to strengthen the Labour Party by increasing participation and engagement at local, regional and national levels. In forming Momentum Black Caucus, the intention is to embed Black politics at the heart of the new Labour Party politics. Furthermore, as a grassroots political movement, Momentum Black Caucus will focus on broadening local and national Black political engagement in the belief that the diversity of Britain's population must reflect a much greater influence over the political decisions that directly affect our lives.

## What MDC is committed to:

- Mobilising, organising and creating a sustainable Black political movement to secure the election of a progressive Labour Party in order to bring about real transformative change in respect of:
- Affirmative action legislation that tackles structural racial discrimination and inequality across all sectors.
- Campaigning for greater Black representation in public life.
- Opposing British military interventions abroad, including bombings
- Supporting the building of council housing to end homelessness
- Positive action employment programmes, including apprenticeships, to tackle disproportionate Black joblessness, poor pay and lack of promotion.

- A clear commitment to tackle Black under-achievement, stereotyping and over representation among students that are suspended and excluded in education. Black history learning beyond Black History month. More good quality Black teachers. The tackling of institutional racism within higher education.
- Opposition to government budget cuts, co-ordinated with Labour councils, to build the anti-austerity agenda.
- Welcoming migrants and refugees and acknowledging their contribution to the success of the UK.
- Greater Police accountability to the communities they serve and operational priorities set by those communities. Measures to end police racial profiling and disproportionate Black deaths in custody.
- The youth service to be placed on a statutory footing and adequate funding for it.
- Targeted growth not austerity, by government investing to create jobs and reverse the privatisation of the railways, the energy sectors and public services, including the NHS.
- An international/global agenda as it relates to the Black diasporic communities, including support for reparations.

## MDC will do this by:

- Supporting Black self-organisation and self-determination
- Encouraging Black people to join, be active and hold office in the Labour Party.
- Encouraging Black people to join, be active and hold office in trade unions.
- Building local Momentum Black Caucus groups in communities.
- Producing a "toolkit" for setting up local groups.
- Building an organisation that is genuinely open and democratic.
- Developing future leaders and succession planning.
- Supporting Black young people in the community and as students.

Twitter: @caucus\_black

Email: [Kingsley.momentumblackcaucus@gmail.com](mailto:Kingsley.momentumblackcaucus@gmail.com)

Website: [www.blackmomentum.org.uk](http://www.blackmomentum.org.uk)