

“One Nation Labour”

Black Representation across the Party

Submitted in response to the
‘BUILDING A ONE NATION LABOUR PARTY
INTERIM REPORT’ by Lord Ray Collins

Forward by:

Diane Abbott MP

Authors:

Professor Cecile Wright

Councillor Josie Channer

Councillor Patrick Vernon OBE

Councillor Sanchia Alasia

December 2013

Forward

In 1987 I was one of the first persons of African and Afro-Caribbean descent ever elected to the British parliament from any political party. There were two men, Paul Boateng the MP for Brent South and the late Bernie Grant the MP for Tottenham. And I was the one and only black woman, elected by the good people of Hackney North and Stoke Newington. We were greeted with considerable fanfare in the media.

But if you had told me that, twenty six years later, the numbers of African and Afro-Caribbean Labour Members of Parliament would scarcely be any greater, I would have been shocked. We thought that we were opening a door, through which many others would flood through. But in 2013 there are exactly three male African and Afro-Caribbean Labour Members of Parliament: Mark Hendrick MP for Preston; David Lammy MP for Tottenham and Chuka Ummana MP for Streatham. And there is just one other black female on the Labour benches; Chi Onwurah MP for Newcastle Central.

There are a number of reasons why the Labour Party should take the issue of diversity seriously. It is important to have a parliament that looks like Britain, if that parliament is to have democratic legitimacy. And in our big urban centres a very large proportion of the Labour party vote is black. They ought to see themselves reflected in Labour's parliamentary representation,

This important submission points to some of the challenges faced by black candidates and contains some very interesting ideas that could help the Labour party achieve more diversity at a parliamentary level. In particular, I would draw attention to the recommendation for all BAME shortlists. It was all-woman shortlists that created a step change in the number of women MPs in the 1990's. All BAME shortlists do present some practical problems. But, twenty-six years after I first got elected, it is time the Labour party took some practical steps towards increasing the numbers of black parliamentary candidates in winnable seats. Just hoping that the situation will get better is not getting the job done. So I am happy to recommend this submission for close scrutiny.

Diane Abbott

Member of Parliament for Hackney North and Stoke Newington

1. Introduction

The Black British population is 5.5 % (3.1 million), if parliament reflected the diversity of the population there would be 36 Black MPs. There are currently only **8** Black MPs (**5** Labour).

“Understanding we live in a world where individuals rightly demand a voice”.

“And where our Party always looks like the diverse country we seek to serve”.

These statements reflect the ambitions outlined in Ed Miliband’s speech on the 9th July 2013 which articulated the Party’s ‘One Nation politics’. Central to this vision is the ‘determination to **let** ordinary people back into our politics’.

It is within this context that this document raises the issue of Black representation and experiences across the Party. This report builds on previous documents commissioned by the Party looking at the issue of BAME representation. For instance, in 2010 Harriet Harman, the Deputy Leader commissioned Operation Black Vote to look at the issue of representation and to explore the notion of ‘All BAME Shortlists’.

With the creation of Black Sections in 1983 and now in its current form as BAME Labour there has been a consistent call for ‘All BAME Shortlists’ and greater representation.

The main focus of this submission is to build upon the above issues as they relate to:

- Selection of candidates
- Experiences of and barriers faced by Black candidates
- Financial barriers
- Obstruction and lack of transparency
- Bullying and intimidation
- Recommendations for addressing the underrepresentation

Over the last twenty years there has been an increased desire and interest in Black party members to be MPs and Peers. However this aspiration has left many disappointed, leading to people leaving the party or taking a less active role in their CLP and general campaigning.

The desired outcome is that the issues highlighted within this document are considered within the context of the Party's current change agenda, particularly with regard to its internal structure, exemplified by the Lord Ray Collin's report. Further, the narrative around race equality as part of the Party's race equality strategy is the importance of racial inequality and representation as part of the wider agenda concerning social justice and equality for all.

2. Background

This document focuses on Black representation, i.e. people of African descent rather than the conflated term of BAME (Black Asian Minority Ethnic) representation because of the specific challenges and barriers that people of African, Caribbean and mixed race heritage face in achieving social mobility and representation in public life.

The Party's recent consultation document on its proposed race equality strategy highlights the extent to which poverty and social exclusion are largely caused by structural inequalities and discrimination, particularly in the fields of employment, education, health, and housing and in public life. The low number of Black MPs and Councillors reflects the social inequalities that affect the Black community and its relationship in relation to civic engagement of mainstream institutions and democratic structures.

There are a total of 8 Black MPs and with only two additional Black Labour candidates selected to stand in 2015 in the 106 Labour target seats there is little prospect of change. In terms of regional politics we only have two elected Black representatives at the GLA and a Deputy Police Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands.

The reasons for this huge disparity may be complex, but as a starting point it is important to take into account wider social disadvantages faced by the Black community in the UK.

- 50% of young Black British men are unemployed (2013).
- In 2006, Black people are six times more likely to be in prison than white people: Black and minority ethnic people accounted for 26% of the male prison population and 28% of the female population in June 2006.
- In 2013, a new study found that Black people in the UK make up seven times the population in prison compared to the US number where this is four times as many.

- 50% of Black British people live in low-income households (2010). The threshold of low income is a household income that is 60% or less of the average (median) British household income in that year.
- 60% of Black boys in 2010 left school without a GCSE grade A-C.
- In 2012, 21 of Oxford's 38 colleges did not admit a single British Black student.

The low representation of working class people in the political parties disproportionately affects African Caribbean people, as they are also under-represented in the 'political and policy' sphere of the employment market from which so many people enter Parliament.

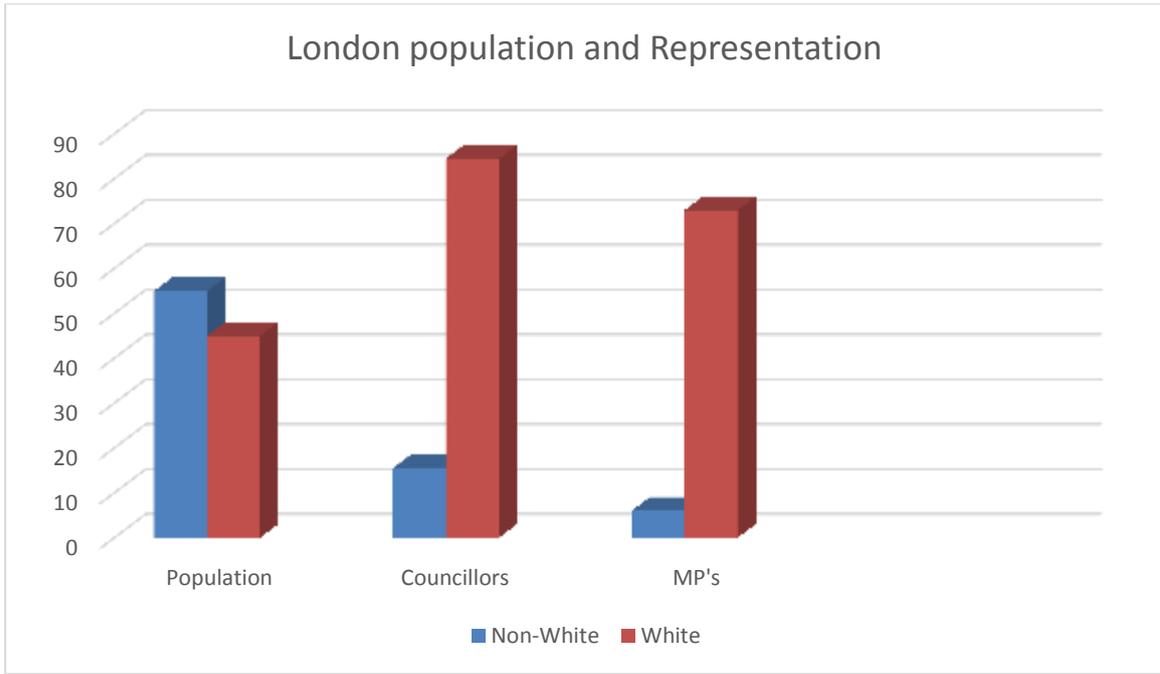
3. Political Representation

The breakdown of ethnic representation at parliamentary and local levels includes:

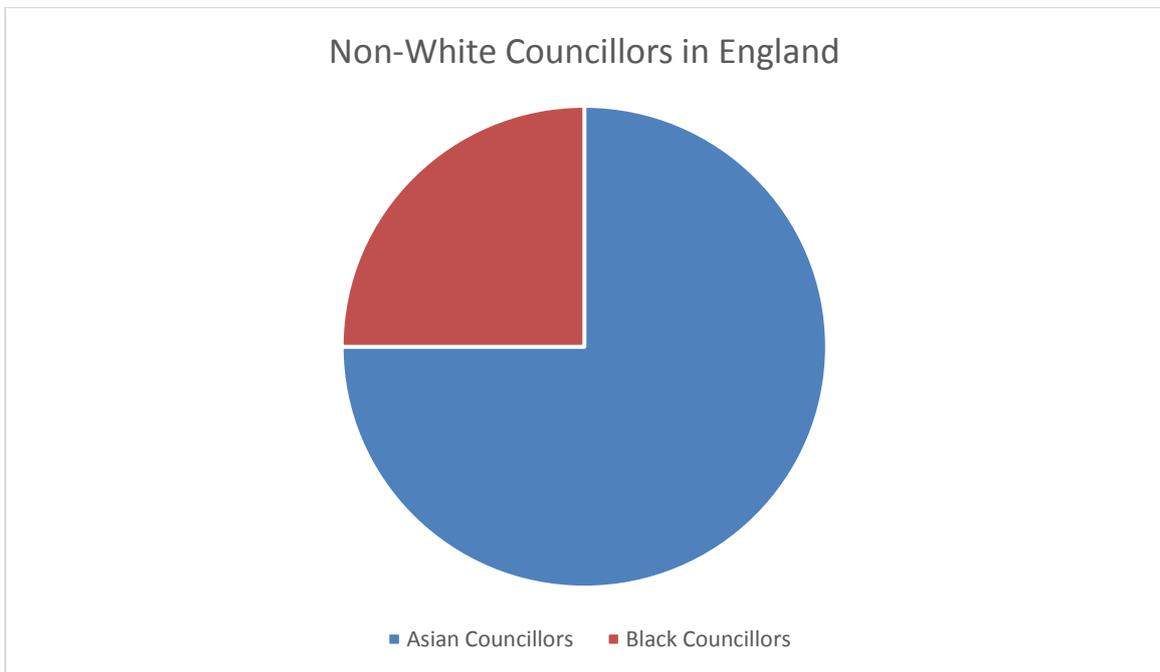
- Eight Black MPs out of 650 (five Labour),

White MPs	622
Asian MPs	20
Black MPs	8

- The number of Labour Black MPs has risen from three in 1987 to five in 2010 and possibly seven by 2015.
- The Chart below shows 55% of London is non-white (census 2011), yet only 15.5 % of London Councillors are from an "ethnic minority" background (figures provided by the 2010 Local Government census 2010). Out of 73 London MPs, there are only six non- White MPs.



12.5% of England's population is non-White, yet the Local Government Census 2010 shows that only 3.7% of Councillors are from an ethnic group other than White. The Chart below shows the breakdown of Councillors in England are from an "ethnic minority" group. e.g. 2.7% Asian and 0.9% Black



3.1. Why representation matters

Representation is at the core of our Party's aspirations, not only in terms of giving a voice to those who we seek to serve, but integral to giving people the opportunity to speak for themselves. In this respect, Labour Party members are extremely proud of the strong relationship with the trade union movement and the leadership shown in the application of measures to address the issue of women's representation in Parliament.

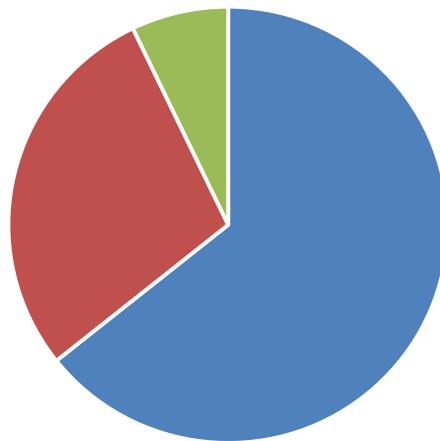
The lack of representation and participation of the UK's Black population in representational politics is indicative of the invisibility of this demographic in other spheres of life in business and leadership roles in the public sector. Powerlessness combined with for instance, a lack of a voice, faced by this demographic, historically and contemporaneously, resulted in young people from the respective communities being more likely to engage in riots and social disorder as a political 'strategy'(see 'Reading the Riot', 2011, LSE and the Guardian). Therefore, the lack of representation has consequences for society as a whole.

4. Selection of candidates

At present only two additional Black candidates have been selected to stand for 106 Labour target seats in 2015.
--

In our quest to become a "*Party which always looks like the diverse communities we seek to serve*", there is a need to address the significant disparities which exist in the number of Black candidates being selected for winnable seats compared to that of other groups that are underrepresented in parliament, for example, those from the Asian community, LGBT community and women.

Under-represented groups selected in 106 Labour target seats for 2015



■ Asian Candidates ■ LGBT Candidates ■ Black Candidates

The Party's commitment to ensuring a marked improvement in the proportion of women selected at the parliamentary level has addressed itself to structural changes which ultimately will see significant progress in achieving our goal of 50%. Indeed, within the Party, many would now accept 'All Women Shortlists' as a legitimate and effective mechanism for redressing the under representation of women at both parliamentary and local levels. However, Black women face layers of discrimination based on class and race as well as gender. As a consequence Black women have struggled to benefit from the 'All Women Shortlists' strategy.

The narratives below are used to illustrate some of the barriers that Black candidates face, particularly: financial barriers, obstruction and lack of transparency and bullying and intimidation.

5.0. Financial Barriers

As a result of financial constraints, Black candidates are restricted in their selection opportunities, by only pursuing selection opportunities where they live or limiting the number of selections they put themselves forward for. The average cost of a selection is £2000. However, some individuals and candidates with trade union backing have been supported with up to £4000 to run for a parliamentary seat, according to the Electoral Commission. Once selected, candidates are expected to fund their personal expenses and some candidates have taken out £20,000 personal loans to enable them to sustain a two year campaign or sold their homes in order to move to the constituency.

Some underrepresented groups offer financial support for candidates, such as the LGBT fund, which is available to Black LGBT candidates. However, there is currently

no financial support available for Black candidates. Below a Black MEP candidate has outlined her experience of accessing resources.

Experience of a Black MEP candidate

I had thought about applying to become a European candidate for some time. I had been writing about French politics for a while and had done some work across Europe in relation to equality and diversity and speaking to our sister parties about how to defeat the far right. I spoke to my Trade union and a few close friends about putting myself forward and they encouraged me to do so and thought that I could be a good MEP.

So I applied and was lucky enough to be called for an interview and was thrilled when I got the phone call that I was to be one of the candidates. Having grown up in the east end of London, in a working class family, I was happy that the Labour party was providing someone like me an opportunity to run for such an important position. All of the candidates were then left on their own to then run their campaign for their position on the list. I was told there was all to play for and that there was every chance I could top the ballot. I realise that I was rather naïve to believe that now. I had budgeted £5000 to run the campaign. Colleagues looked at me in horror, but I knew that as this was a regional seat that a significant amount of money would need to be spent and £5000 was a lot of commitment from me, considering the background I'm from.

I then began to pull some volunteers together. Although I was a councillor that campaign was led by the campaign coordinator of the CLP. Suddenly I felt all alone. I had no idea how to run a campaign, no guidance was given and I was just left to get on with it. I then started to pull my leaflet together, the Labour party were only allowing us a 250 word statement with no pictures and so I knew I had to get my own campaign leaflet together. When I started to calculate the costs of getting my leaflet designed and posted to thousands of Labour party members, attending all the fundraising dinners so I could network with members and travel costs I quickly realised that £5000 would be nowhere near enough to meet the campaign costs. I had tough decisions to make. Do I send out text message to members? Do I send my leaflet out to all members by post? I could see that the costs could easily spiral out of control. I checked the electoral commission website to see if any of the other candidates had made declarations so I could get a sense of what would be the average spends for a campaign like this. I quickly realised that candidates from some trade unions were being given between £17,000-£20,000 worth of support. This of course would allow them to send out full mailings, multiple text messages etc. I stared at the figures for ages. I was not going to get anywhere near that sort of support and this did not look like a normal figure that an ordinary working class person should spend. Then I started receiving the emails from candidates who had gotten senior MP's to send out emails on

their behalf. I approached some MP's but none of them would sent out an email for me as they had not "know me" for long enough. I became more depressed as those emails kept coming.

I decided to raise my budget to £8000 and no more. People were telling me that I was doing very well at all of the hustings events. It got to the point that when I walked into hustings events, people came up to me and told me that they had heard about me and how good I was. My hope increased again that I could perhaps top the ballot. When the ballot results were announced however, the inevitable was laid bare; I was that last woman on the list. I'm glad I did not go over £8,000 as it would have made no difference to the outcome of the ballot. I spoke to some of the other candidates who did not top the ballot in their region. Some of them had taken out loans for five, 10 or even 15,000 pounds. They were very depressed as they were now heavily in debt with no chance of success and felt unable to go for a parliamentary seat where they were still on the list for Europe.

I'm fighting the European campaign with all I have to give. I would be delighted to see more Labour MEP's in Europe. I am disappointed that none of the new candidates who topped the ballot were from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background (Claude Moraes topped London as a sitting MEP and Neena Gill topped the West Midlands as a former MEP). That means that all of the new MEP's from Labour in 2014 will be white. There still is not a single female MEP of African/Caribbean heritage. It doesn't look like there will be until at least 2019. I would have to think long and hard about running for Europe next time. If I don't have £20,000 then it will most likely be a complete waste of time.

Recommendation:

1. Develop a Diversity Fund that individuals, affiliated groups and outside organisations can donate to.
2. Have a spending cap on selections.

5.1. Obstruction and lack of transparency

In one parliamentary selection, a number of Black women put themselves forward for the 'All Women Shortlist' however some Branches in local Party did not shortlist a Black candidate and did not consider using the BAME nomination.

The experience of one prospective Westminster candidate below also highlights concerns regarding Black candidates not being given the opportunity to compete. She was not shortlisted even through the rules clearly state that an 'All Women Shortlist' should have a minimum of three candidates. The shortlisting committee only shortlisted two women. She was not given the BAME nominations by the

shortlisting committee which would have allowed her the opportunity to continue taking part in the process. She was also not given any information regarding branch nominations. Due to a lack of transparency and the complicated rules of the selection, the candidate was not aware at the time of what the rules were. The process currently depends on those in the “know” preventing individuals from a wider range of backgrounds from competing.

Black prospective candidate

I wish to draw your attention to my experience of unprofessionalism and unfairness throughout the selection process.

First, unlike other candidates I was not given the details of the time and venue for the planned ‘meet the members event’ on the 13th October. I had to contact a member of the local Constituency Labour Party in order to obtain the information. Also, unlike other candidates, I was in a unique position of not receiving the ‘set questions’ for the short-listing interview in a timely manner. The Procedure Secretary did acknowledge this oversight.

Secondly, in accordance with the short-listing interview procedure (K- short-listing interview guidance), the composition of the selection committee did not represent the local members. The panel did not include a Black or ethnic minority member. Regarding the interview, I found the atmosphere and the manner in which it was conducted to be unprofessional, hostile and demeaning. Throughout the interview proceedings I had to encounter “eye rolling” and “side glances” from the two women panellists as a reaction to my presentation and my answers to questions. Whilst I welcome robust questioning of candidates in order to discern and select the best person, I deplore the use of the measure to humiliate those candidates not ‘favoured’. Finally, I was told that I would be informed of the decision of the committee by telephone on the evening of the interviews. This did not happen; rather I received the decision by email which I saw the following day.

As a lifelong member of the Labour Party I am left deeply disappointed by my encounter of the Party’s selection procedure for MP.

Recommendation:

1. Open Primaries in areas with a high Black population and where the local party does not reflect the diversity of the community. We advocate the closed primary system based on the French Socialist system.

(a) Voting in a closed primary would be restricted to Labour supporters. Members could still have the responsibility of selecting the shortlist which would then be opened up to a vote by registered supporters of the Labour party. Not only would this help to involve a wider group of local people in the selection of their Labour candidate, it could,

contrary to popular assumption, also help to increase Labour membership.

- (b) The French Socialists took the same approach which worked very well for President Francois Hollande and helped ensure their first win since 1988 in a presidential election. First of all, the socialist primary garnered the interest of the public and media. There was widespread press coverage of the campaign. Second, in terms of turnout, the first round of the Socialist primary was seen as a success by most commentators. The French Socialists have a similar membership base to the Labour Party – around 200,000 signed-up “militants”. The primary thus succeeded in reaching well beyond the party’s membership base, attracting over 2 million non-members to take part. Third, the French Socialist process offers an interesting model for determining who to involve in party selection processes. One objection to primaries is that they are vulnerable to be over taken by opponents of the party, who could use their voting rights to back a candidate with no Labour values. The French Socialist approach was to require those wishing to participate to sign a declaration that they support the “values of the left”. Those wishing to participate had to make a contribution of at least €1. This fee raised a total of €3.5 million, enabling the French Socialists to more than cover the considerable costs of the nationwide exercise. The high costs of primaries are one reason why British parties have used them sparingly so far. A user fee would be one way to overcome this problem that did not make recourse to public funds.

2. **All BAME Shortlists:** The NEC should impose ‘All BAME Shortlists’, with particular consideration given to Black candidates, to address the imbalance in upcoming late retirements and by-elections.

(a) One of the two Black 2015 candidates was selected by an All BAME Shortlist. Also for the 2012 GLA election a Black woman was selected by an All Woman All BAME Shortlist. All BAME Shortlists have therefore proven to be a vital way for Black members to have the opportunity to stand as candidates. It also shows that All BAME Shortlists do not conflict with the Party’s other equality aims such as increasing women’s representation.

(b) “Historically, the last minute selections which take place within a week favour people working closely to ministers and the party machinery and thus can work against women, BAME candidates and even the working

class. We need to adopt best practice in recruitment and selection and move away from favourites and elements prejudiced particularly against women and BAME candidates, particularly Asian women and black men who are often at the bottom of the selection process. The NEC, in consultation with CLPs, needs to establish the following rules to ensure proper selection processes are followed and also create a legacy for more women and BAME candidates, as according to current polls we could potentially be out of power for the next 10 years.” Article in Progress 2009 <http://www.progressonline.org.uk/2009/10/23/a-new-generation/#sthash.PEAfHOqU.dpuf>

5.1. Bullying and Intimidation

It is argued that a culture of bullying and intimidation exists at local government level that is often unchallenged by individuals who fear being prohibited if they complain.

For instance, recent stories covered by the Voice newspaper and OBV (Operation Black Vote) have highlighted the difficulties experienced by some Black councillors within the Party. These difficulties are detailed by the Councillor below.

Experience of a Black PPC and Councillor

I was proud to be selected to stand a Labour Parliamentary Candidate although I found the experience of the selection process, like many, very difficult.

I considered a number of seats before getting selected and tried to get Union backing as I had limited funds to run a selection campaign. The process of applying for affiliated nominations is not transparent. Never the less, as a long serving trade union member I managed to secure an interview with my own union. I was unsuccessful. Weeks after they had chosen their candidates, I was informed that my union had started to contact councillors in my borough to “fact check” my achievements. I believed that they were really sniffing around for dirt. I was then threatened with legal action for stating the fact that I was a union member on my website. It is noticeable that many of the people who have received endorsements had been employed in professional or policy roles, meaning that not only are African–Caribbean people (who are underrepresented in these roles) disadvantaged, but so are working class people. When I approached local Unions for support in the area that I put myself forward for, I was informed that they had all already decided on one candidate before the selection was opened so no interviews would be held.

My selection by the local Labour Party members sparked outrage amongst some trade union activists, who appeared in the local press and radio following my selection to express their anger. However after I was selected I attempted, I believe successfully, to build my relationship with local trade unions. I started working with a number of Unions and others who were locally engaged and doing a lot positive work in the community.

I stood down as a candidate after a dossier concerning personal and private matters was sent “anonymously” to the Labour party and press, I did not wish to distract from the campaign.

What makes me very sad, is that personal information was deliberately leaked to the media from (I believe) people in the Labour Party who were displeased that I had been selected to stand for Parliament.

I wanted to stand for Parliament for the same reasons that I am standing again as a Labour councillor, I believe that I can represent ordinary hard working people like me.

I was honoured to have been reselected by Labour Party members in my ward to stand again as a council candidate. The Labour group also voted overwhelming against any further action. Labour party members and local residents were very supportive throughout.

I'm not perfect, and have had my fair share of struggles in life but like most people, now I'm looking forward to fighting for a Labour victory for a second term as a Labour councillor.

Recommendations:

The Party should take action against any CLP, LCF, or individual Labour Party member or Union that brings the party into disrepute by:

1. Collecting information about another member with the intention to smear them.
2. Deliberately withholding information from them with the intention to stop them standing.
3. Manipulating the party rules with the intention of stopping someone standing
4. Briefing the press, opposition parties or other members against another member.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations:

The number of Black Labour MPs has risen from **three** in 1987 to **five** in 2010.

This document has aimed to highlight the current lack of Black representation and some of the barriers that Black candidates faced in the political process. In order to address this imbalance action is required by the Labour Party at a national level.

In summary the main recommendations are:

1. Open Primaries in areas with a high Black population and where the local party does not reflect the diversity of the community.
2. The NEC should impose 'All BAME Shortlists' (with particular consideration given to Black candidates) to address the imbalance in upcoming late retirements and by-elections.
3. The Party should take action against any CLP, LCF, individual Labour Party member or Union that bring the party into disrepute by:
 - Collecting information about another member with the intention to smear them.
 - Deliberately withholding information from them with the intention to stop them standing.
 - Manipulating the Party rules with the intention of stopping an individual standing.
 - Briefing the press, opposition parties or other member against another member.
4. Local Government - in areas where there is a high Black or Asian population, one seat in every three should be assigned a Black or Asian seat.
5. Develop a Diversity Fund that individuals, affiliated groups and outside organisations can donate to.
6. Have a spending cap on selections.
7. The Labour Party should attempt to increase the proportion of Black staff at both national and regional levels.

8. Regional targets for BAME representation for local government, Parliamentary candidates, MP's, Peers and all forms of public office at regional level.
9. The Party Leader should use his discretion and patronage to appoint Black working peers in the House of Lords to redress the balance of under representation in Parliament.