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18th June 2020

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
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By email

Dear Prime Minister

As anti-racism protests gain strength around the world, people look to politicians to show moral leadership on the defining issues of the day. Sadly in Britain, our leaders are falling short. We are writing today to ask you what action you will take to curb divisive language from politicians, and better protect politicians of colour.

As people of colour elected into positions of power on our local councils, we know first-hand what it is like to experience racism. We are often overburdened with the emotional and practical labour of dealing with all issues relating to race, on majority white councils.

We have personally faced discrimination on our councils. It has been assumed of one of us that we can speak the language of any resident in a hijab, while white councillors and officers have treated us as if we ought to declare a vested interest when dealing with BAME residents as part of our council duties.

Too often, this example is set by our peers in the political class. It is unhelpful and unfair for the Prime Minister and other members of the cabinet to label protests as “thuggery”, while in Bristol, it was upsetting to see a Conservative councillor describe an enslaver as a “hero” and the recent protest as “frenzied thug violence”.

This is a time to show solidarity with people of colour here in Britain, and around the world. Structural racism is demonstrable and undeniable in our society, and our anger is justified. We pay tribute to all people of colour coming together to demand justice and all allies who stand with us. We regret that progress is being impeded by politicians being careless, reckless and inflammatory with their use of language.

As councillors of colour committed to achieving equality and justice, we ask you what steps you will take to address divisive language in political discourse, and what protections can be put in place for politicians of colour.

Yours sincerely



Councillors Cleo Lake, Kaltum Rivers and Nannette Youssef

