BAME GENERAL ELECTION MANIFESTO 2015

Green Party
for the common good

EQUALITY FOR ALL

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The UK has been built by people from all walks of life and from every corner of the world. Our history, our traditions and our society have been shaped by countless cultures, creeds and races. Our society is an international one and we owe a debt to the generations of individuals and families from all over the world who have made the UK what it is today.

It is a core aim of the Green Party to champion equality. Anyone born into the UK, irrespective of their race, sexuality, gender, creed or disability, should be entitled to an equal start in life. For too many people their visible identity remains a fundamental obstacle to education, work prospects, health and wellbeing and inclusion in society.

It is time in 2015 to say we can do better. Yet addressing racism has fallen off the agenda. The recession has driven an unemployment crisis disproportionately affecting the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community while deep public sector cuts and austerity have rolled back efforts to address racism.

The Green Party is presenting a brighter future that tackles systematic inequalities in society and would work to provide everyone an equal start in life. Talent and energy remain untapped because of inequality, whilst too many communities face poverty, exclusion and marginalisation.

In May 2015 you have a stark choice: to continue with the failed, grey Westminster politics of old, or create a whole new type of politics. Vote Green on May 7th and help start a peaceful political revolution.

Shahrar Ali
Green Party Deputy Leader

HEADLINE POLICES

- Progressively introduce anonymised CVs so that BAME candidates are not excluded before the interview stage because of their identity.
- More apprenticeships and more funding for BAME entrepreneurs Reform the asylum process and scrap the spousal income requirement.
- Ethical international diplomacy that supports peace-building.
- Reform of stop and search – community cohesive policing rather than antagonisation.

There is a looming crisis in unemployment among young BAME people. Figures from the House of Commons Library show that in 2014 there were 41,000 long term unemployed 16- to 24-year-olds from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, which is a 50% rise from 2010. As a whole BAME workers are almost twice as likely as white workers to be unemployed.[1]

There is also a growing body of evidence to suggest employers, particularly private sector employers, are filtering out applicants with foreign-sounding names[2], while many workplaces report a lack of opportunity for career progression for BAME staff including the NHS,[3] the police,[4] and academia.[5]

To address these issues the Green Party would:

- Progressively introduce anonymised CVs so fewer female and BAME candidates are screened out before the interview stage.
- Introduce a mandatory living wage of £10 an hour by 2020, so BAME workers are lifted out of workplace poverty.
- Enforce the minimum wage by law and more actively police breaches.
- Strengthen workers' rights and trade unions so workers can more actively fight against discrimination in the workplace.
- End exploitative zero hours contracts which trap BAME workers in insecure low paid work.
- Pursue stronger recruitment drives for BAME workers in the public sector.
- Reduce Employment Tribunal fees so that workers facing racism can afford to seek justice and recompense.
- Increase funding for apprenticeships by 30% to help deliver more opportunities for young people.

Green councillors have worked hard in providing job opportunities for BAME people. Former Councillor Maya De Souza in Camden worked hard to address council cuts which were disproportionately affecting BAME employees whilst entrenching a lack of diversity at the top of the council. Maya pushed Camden Council into better transparency on the workforce and increased training to deal with bias in the workplace.

In Barnstaple local Green councillors have pushed support for Sunrise, an organisation designed to provide training, support and education for BAME people across the town.

1 http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/SN06385/unemployment-by-ethnic-background

2 http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/dec/07/ethnic-minority-women-jobs-crisis?INTCMP=

3 http://www.hsj.co.uk/Journals/2014/04/09/w/n/j/The-snowy-white-peaks-of-the-NHS.final.docx.pdf.pdf

4 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2014/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2014#police-officers

5 http://blackbritishacademics.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Research-Report-The-Experiences-of-Black-and-Minority-Ethnic-Academics-Dr-Bhopal.pdf

COMMUNITY

The Green Party wants to create a Britain where people have the time to get to know their neighbours, shop in their local high street and build strong, vibrant local economies.

Yet over under the Coalition Government we have seen 'Go Home' vans, aggressive stop and search, and a rhetoric that blames and alienates certain communities. These approaches are harmful to the fabric of society. In the pursuit of undocumented migrants the government is creating a hostile environment for all BAME people by turning landlords and banks into border agents. In the pursuit of extremists the government legitimises negative attitudes towards entire communities.

Green councillors have also fought against Islamophobia in our communities. Councillor Will Duckworth has fought for the right for local communities to build a local mosque and stood in solidarity against English Defence League (EDL) campaigners.

In York Green Councillors and local faith leaders rallied around the local mosque when an EDL march was planned in the wake of the tragic Lee Rigby murder. The organised open day at the mosque diffused the EDL march which only had six attendees, whilst the counter-protest had over 100.

To support BAME communities all over the UK, the Green Party would:

- Restrict police use of stop and search, which disproportionately targets BAME people.
- Reverse the Immigration Act (2014) policy to create a "hostile environment" for undocumented migrants.
- Ensure local government receives adequate funding to run schemes to facilitate community cohesion and celebrate all local communities.
- Empower local high street businesses by making sure multinational corporations pay their fair share of tax.
- Make it easier for local businesses to thrive by reducing their national insurance contributions, increase access to capital via £2 billion of funding for community banks and lowering VAT to 5% on cooked food, entertainment and accommodation.
- Ensure the census is structured to adequately collate details on all the ethnic groups in the UK and the languages spoken.
- Promote diversity amongst entrepreneurs and ensure finance is more accessible to a broader range of small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs.
- Encourage more people to get involved in local politics and represent their local communities.
- Strengthen hate-crime legislation to ensure people who commit acts of violence against a community are punished to full extent of the law.
- Ensure that more sites are provided to preserve the traveller culture.
- Protect people's freedom of religion.
- Deliver 500,000 more social rent homes to help preserve communities.

Green Party councillors have worked hard to counter discrimination against the Roma and Irish traveller communities. In Somerset Councillor Tom Leimdorfer took a stand against and removed racist "Gypsies could be on your doorstep" posters, put up by the local paper.

In Brighton & Hove the first Green-led council provided more sites for travellers and Roma. Under the Greens, Brighton & Hove council initiated a scrutiny panel to work out how best to provide public services and foster community cohesion for travellers and Roma.

Green politicians have worked to address our housing crisis. London Assembly Member Darren Johnson and Green MEP for the South East, Keith Taylor, have launched inquiries into a lack of affordable housing. Darren has campaigned against the loss of council housing, and the building of luxury flats. Increasing the amount of affordable housing is vital to preserving our communities.

EDUCATION

The Green Party wants to open up education to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to learn and grow. GCSE results for Pakistani, Black Caribbean, mixed race and Traveller communities remain below the national average.[6] Too many BAME university students get lower results than White British students, with data from 2014 showing 73.8% of white students obtained a first or 2:1 compared with 57.0% of BAME students.[7] Too few BAME students attend our best universities.[8]

We would:

- Scrap undergraduate tuition fees. No student should see huge debts as an obstacle to going to university.
- Target support to student groups falling behind in academic achievement.
- Restore the Educational Maintenance Allowance, increasing access to further education.
- Push universities and colleges to do more to broaden their intake.
- Introduce mandatory classes about diversity, inclusion and anti-racism for school children.
- Free up our curriculum to teach more about global history, culture and societies to better foster understanding.

6 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/399005/SFR06_2015_Text.pdf

7 http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ECU_HE-stats-report_student_v19.pdf

8 http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/feb/26/oxford-university-ethnic-minority-applicants

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

In today's world we are more interconnected than ever. More UK citizens have relatives and friends who live abroad than ever before. The need for an international policy that protects all the world's people has never been more felt.

It's important to recognise the impact of UK foreign policy. The disastrous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have devastated the region and helped create the circumstances in which the appalling ISIS has emerged.

On the international stage the Green Party would:

- End the sale of arms to cruel and inhumane dictatorships like Saudi Arabia.
- End disastrous foreign intervention which has helped deliver a failed state in Libya and devastation in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Increase foreign aid spending to 1% of GDP to help provide humanitarian aid and help develop more opportunity and stability abroad.
- Seek a just, sustainable and peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, based on mutual recognition of the rights to independent statehood for Palestinians and Israelis. We condemn human rights violations by both parties and the oppression and disproportionate use of aggression by the Israeli government against the people of Gaza. We seek to suspend the EU–Israel Association Agreement.
- Seek resolution to conflicts in Kashmir, Ukraine, Democratic Republic of Congo and Yemen. Respect for human rights, restitution for injustices and the right to self-determination should be at the core of conflict resolution.
- Promote international agreement to address the global threat of climate change.
- Push more nations to observe human rights and more aggressively pursue sanctions and justice via the International Criminal Court for regimes that breach international law.
- Reform international trade so that developing countries can build sustainable local and regional economies, rather than continue to be exploited by the Western world.
- Build fair trade and ensure UK companies operating abroad are acting ethically and not exploiting labour or bribing officials.
- Work with governments to ensure UK aid reaches areas in need.
- Scrap trade deals with developing countries that unfairly open up foreign markets whilst offering only limited access for those countries to international trade.
- Address international tax avoidance and evasion and encourage greater financial transparency to ensure developing countries have reliable tax revenue.
- Fulfil our commitments on the international stage by taking our fair share of refugees.

Green MEP Jean Lambert is the chair of the European Union South Asia delegation. In that role she has worked hard to deliver aid, campaign against abuses of human rights and make the region safer, more prosperous and more sustainable. Green MEPs in the EU push for action on climate change and help deliver much needed development and humanitarian aid.

HEALTH

The NHS is a service to be proud of and the Green Party is committed to ensuring it is a public service, free to use and for the common good.

Yet today in our society there are various health inequalities to address. Data from the 2011 Census suggested that Pakistani and Bangladeshi women had poorer health outcomes than others.[9] Research into mental health finds that BAME groups living in the UK are more likely to be diagnosed with mental health problems.[10] Our cities' illegal levels of air pollution have also been shown to impact BAME people's health more than other groups.[11]

To redress these inequalities the Green Party plans to:

- Increase funding to mental health services, improve access to talking therapies and ensure services are delivered effectively and sensitively to all communities.
- Tackle mental health stigma, and continue to support programmes like Time to Change.
- Reverse the privatisation of the NHS and ensure that it is a publicly-owned free service.
- Make prescriptions free and bring back dentistry as a free public service in the NHS.
- Reverse coalition cuts to the NHS and ensure the NHS gets the public funding it needs.
- Increase access to local community health centres and improve out of hours care.
- End mixed sex wards in hospitals.
- Improve NHS data collection to better understand whether the NHS delivers for BAME people.
- Address dangerous levels of air pollution by getting more people walking and cycling.
- Introduce a regime of presumed consent for organ donation, which respects the right of relatives to refuse consent. This would help to deal with the shortage of BAME donors.

9 http://www.ethnicity.ac.uk/medialibrary/briefingsupdated/which-ethnic-groups-have-the-poorest-health.pdf

10 http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/mental-health-a-z/b/bme-communities/

11 http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/newsandeventspggrp/imperialcollege/newssummary/news_26-1-2015-12-17-52

MIGRATION

Migration is a fact of life. Britain has become the nation it is today because of the contribution of countless migrants. Our culture, our society and our economy have all benefitted from inward migration. It is hugely damaging that that message has been lost and failures of government have been blamed on migrants.

Greens from across London condemned the racist "Go Home" vans and targeted citizenship checks in like places in Brent. Jenny Jones Green London Assembly Member condemned the vans as "racist rhetoric" that sought to "divide and rule".

The Green Party would work to:

- Abolish the requirement that a British citizen must earn at least £18,600 a year before their partner can come to live with them in the UK, which unfairly separates families.
- Allow international students to work in the UK for two years after graduation.
- Address international issues that force many migrants and refugees to leave their countries by increasing international aid, ending foreign military interventions, putting pressure on human rights-abusing regimes and taking action on climate change.
- Reverse the Immigration Act, which turns landlords and doctors into border agents.
- End the detention of refugees and migrants.
- Allow asylum seekers to work while they are waiting for their claims to be processed.
- Reintroduce Legal Aid for reasonable levels of immigration and asylum work.
- Ensure that refugees fleeing their country of origin because of their sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity or religion receive a fair hearing.
- Push regimes surrounding the EU to treat migrants and refugees in a humane way, and end support for regimes that terrorise those fleeing persecution and seeking opportunity.

Greens have been at the forefront of pushing local councils to take Syrian refugees. In January David Cameron committed the UK to taking in 500 refugees, a promise which has still not been delivered.

Green Party councillors have successfully persuaded Malvern council to take in Syrian refugees and are in process of pushing St Albans to do the same. Moves to get Islington council to do the same have been rejected by Islington Labour.

On a European level Jean Lambert MEP has pushed the EU to take action over refugees drowning in the Mediterranean Sea and encouraged the UK government to help Syrian refugees.

THE GREEN PARTY AND BAME PEOPLE

The Green Party recognises we need more diversity in politics. We need more BAME MPs, more female MPs, more LGBTIQ MPs and more disabled MPs. The Green Party recognises it needs to do more to improve this situation and is striving to improve the diversity of our candidates.

We have:

- Introduced BAME quotas for PR list elections like the European and the London Assembly elections.
- Launched the Greens of Colour group to push issues of ethnicity within and outside the party.
- Launched mentoring for young BAME members looking to get more involved in the party.
- Introduced training sessions at Conference and on a regional level around race, inclusivity and diversity.

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