

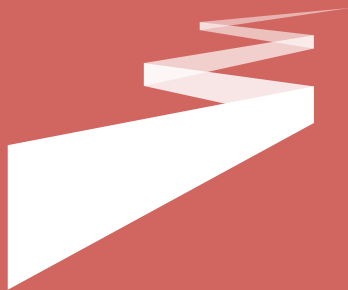
Outsiders

Ideas to improve BAME
representation in the Labour party



DISCUSSION PAPER | DIVERSITY SERIES | BAME

Olivia Bailey & Adebunsi Adebunsi | December 2016



**FACING
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FUTURE**



ABOUT THE SERIES

This is one of a number of Fabian Society discussion papers on the question of political representation for under-represented groups in the Labour party. A paper on gender, 'Practising what we preach', was published in December 2015, and a paper on LGBT representation, 'The Ideal Candidate', was published in August 2016. Labour party members are encouraged to discuss the ideas in this document and make a submission with their ideas to representation@fabians.org.uk

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METHODOLOGY

Research for this paper was conducted through desk-based research, interviews and a roundtable with experts, and a survey of Labour party members. 3,107 self-identified Labour members began the survey (conducted in Autumn 2015), with 2,642 completing the last question. 8 per cent of the respondents (236) have been included within the catch-all definition of BAME (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic). We selected this group using all those respondents who defined their ethnic group as: Mixed (White/Black Caribbean), Mixed (White/Black African), Mixed (White/Asian), Mixed (White/Chinese), Asian or Asian British (Indian), Asian or Asian British (Pakistani), Asian or Asian British (Bangladeshi), Black or Black British (Caribbean), Black or Black British (African), Chinese. We also included those who selected 'other' who described themselves as: Kashmiri, Southeast Asian, Black British, Asia India and Caribbean, Kashmiri, Mixed (White/Black), Asian British (Sri Lankan), Latin American, other Asian, Middle East (Iran), British Iraqi, mixed other, south American, mixed race British, Asian British and Caribbean British, British Iranian, Latin American, Latin American, Asian Indo-Pakistani, Kashmiri, Asian British (Sri Lanka), Mixed (White/Arab), White and African American, Half-English & Half-Iranian, Iranian, Mixed Asian, Persian, Turkish, British Sri Lankan, Mixed English/Greek, Turkish / Spanish / Jewish / Irish, Welsh/Algerian, Middle Eastern, Black British (African, Caribbean), Mixed (White/Black Seychellois), Greek Cypriot British nationality, Mixed (British/Iranian), Greek, Arab, Asian British (Sri Lankan).

We did not include those who defined their ethnicity as Jewish in our catch-all definition of BAME for the purposes of data analysis. This is because only a fraction of those who told us their religion was Jewish also indicated it was their ethnicity. There is also a debate within the Labour Jewish community about whether or not to define within the BAME category, with some Jewish people choosing not to but with evidence that more and more Jewish people are choosing to. While we did not include Jewish people within our data analysis, we have included discussion of antisemitism in this report.

The survey was open access; anyone with the link was able to complete it. We promoted the survey through a range of different means in order to try to reach as wide a pool of party members as possible, including Facebook adverts, media promotion, and emails to Fabian members. The questions in the survey were designed to be as neutral as possible, and parts were modelled on the British Representation Survey, which has been used at recent general elections. While respondents were asked to speak about their current views of their local party, their reflections on being a candidate were not time limited, meaning that some of the experiences gathered may not have happened in the recent past. The survey was conducted in autumn 2015 at the start of the project.

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Foreword

The Labour party rightly holds itself to a much higher standard than any other party or organisation on issues of fairness, equal opportunity and fighting discrimination. As an African-Caribbean woman there is a lot in this report that I recognise and have in fact suffered from. So even if we acknowledge that aspects of this report do not apply everywhere, and recognise that some parts of the Labour party have made real progress, there is no doubt it is a report we must take seriously and act on with determination.

When reading *Outsiders* I was reminded of Malcolm Gladwell's book *Outliers* which offers the important insight that people's success doesn't depend solely on their own merits. He says that the stories of extremely successful people usually focus on their intelligence and ambition. Gladwell argues, however, that if we want to understand how some people thrive, we should spend more time looking around them - at such things as their family, their birthplace, or even their birth date.

This is acutely true when it comes to politics. Within the political elite a person's colour, class, background and friendships are hugely important. For example the intersectionality of being a black woman is often not recognised in the feminist struggle, or a working class black man in the class struggle, and if you add in disability and age the potential to be ignored increases.

Although I am very sceptical about whether Theresa May and her government will deliver meaningful change in this area I understand that she is reaching out to communities whose natural home is in the Labour party. We have lost support in recent elections among BAME communities and unless we see and act on the warning signs we may continue to do so.

Reports like those from the Women's Budget Group and the Runnymede Trust show that individuals in the poorest households lose most from tax and benefit changes but in every income group black and Asian women will lose the greatest proportion of their individual income. This highlights that it is imperative that Labour gets its act together and engages with everyone in a positive way.

In 2006 I relaunched the BSS (Black Socialist Society) against much push back, it has gone through some changes and is now named BAME Labour. This report mentions a community outreach programme and structures

for the friends of Labour groups of which there are many. I am pleased to say that this is in hand and we are in the process of organising a friends of groups conference early next year and I am meeting the chairs and secretaries of all groups very soon.

In general, there are plenty of reports that focus on the problems and not enough on the solutions. As an outsider, a female, working class, African-Caribbean trade unionist I want to do what I can to smooth the road for those coming after me. That is why one of the actions I've taken is launching Bernie's List which I hope will be an important vehicle for encouraging, promoting and opening the doors to the outsiders, because after all the Labour party is the party that has made this country greater and fairer and will always continue to do so.

And to put this all in context, even on Labour's worst day we are still better than all the other parties on their best day.

Dawn Butler MP, shadow minister for diverse communities

Introduction

People who are black, Asian or from a minority ethnic background (BAME) are underrepresented in British politics. BAME people make up just 6 per cent of MPs, despite the fact they are 13 per cent of the population – a figure set to rise to more than 25 per cent by 2051.¹ Levels of representation are even worse in local government, with the most recent census of councillors revealing that just 4 per cent of councillors are not white.²

This lack of representation in public life echoes the discrimination and disadvantage that black, Asian and minority ethnic people face in wider society. Racial abuse is the most commonly recorded hate crime in the UK, with evidence suggesting a recent surge in incidents.³ Black people are significantly more likely to be stopped and searched by the police, with just over 3 per cent of senior officers in the police from a BAME background. Research has also shown that people from ethnic minorities were more than twice as likely as white British people to lose out as a result of recent budget cuts, and there has been a 49 per cent surge since 2010 in BAME youth unemployment.⁴

The Labour party has led the way on race equality. Labour politicians forged the Race Relations Act, the Equalities Act and commenced the inquiry into institutional police racism following the murder of Stephen Lawrence. But relying on its history as the party of equality is no longer sufficient. Evidence suggests that black, Asian and minority ethnic voters are moving away from Labour, and the Conservatives are beginning to take BAME representation seriously.⁵ In fact, the Conservative party has done more to improve BAME representation in the last two electoral cycles than Labour has done in more than two decades. As Diane Abbott argues in her foreword to the Labour Black Network's submission to the Collins Review:

*"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."*⁶

Despite recent positive steps, such as the creation of a shadow minister for diverse communities and record BAME representation in the shadow cabinet, black, Asian and minority ethnic people are still facing disadvantage in the Labour party. Their experience also varies widely, between geographic locations and between different cultural identities. Labour's recent problems with antisemitism, and the figures revealed in this

report, underline that Labour's problems with discrimination go beyond the "bitter incivility of discourse" outlined by Baroness Chakrabati in her recent report.⁷ It should be a matter of great concern for the Labour party that half of the people from BAME backgrounds that we surveyed who are thinking about standing for elected office, are worried about facing discrimination in the process.

Key Findings

As part of the research for this paper, we surveyed over 3,000 Labour party members, with 236 of those members defining as black, Asian or from a minority ethnic background and 2,570 defining as white British, white Irish or white other. 601 respondents told us they have stood for a council selection, with 538 defining as white and 48 defining as BAME. 228 respondents have stood for a national or regional selection, with 205 defining as white and 17 defining as BAME. Notable findings from the survey include:

- Two thirds (12 of 17) of BAME candidates for national or regional office said their selection was not very or not at all fair, compared to just 1 in 5 (45 of 205) white candidates.
- BAME Labour party members are 15 percentage points less likely white members to agree that there are "people like me" in their CLP, and 10 points less likely to agree people are "treated fairly" by their local party.
- 1 in 3 of the BAME council candidates we surveyed said the process of their selection was not easy to understand, compared to 1 in 7 white council candidates.
- 1 in 4 BAME council candidates said that they weren't supported or encouraged, compared to 1 in 7 white council candidates. This problem is replicated in national selections, with just 1 in 4 BAME candidates for national, regional or devolved office saying they felt supported or encouraged.
- 1 in 5 of the BAME members we surveyed who have stood for council said they faced unwelcome scrutiny of their private lives. This is compared to 1 in 10 of the white candidates.
- Half of the 44 BAME people who indicated they want to stand for national or regional office in the future said they are worried about facing discrimination.

1. Increase the supply of BAME candidates

“I am one of the few Africans in my constituency, colleagues who I met more than three times pretend not to remember my name, one asked me what I was planning to get in a condescending way. My local Labour party is not and has not been a pleasant experience for me.”

Survey respondent

Improving black, Asian and minority ethnic representation in the Labour party starts with widening the pool of BAME activists at Labour’s grassroots, and encouraging more BAME people to come forward to stand for selection. But our research has revealed a number of barriers in the way of full participation: a sense of being an outsider, a lack of information, and a lack of support and encouragement.

Our survey revealed that black, Asian and minority ethnic people are 15 percentage points less likely than those who defined as white to agree that there are “people like me” in their CLP. 25 of the 44 BAME people who told us they wanted to stand for national, regional or devolved office said similar, stating that they are worried about feeling like an “outsider”. This is also a problem in local government, with 1 in 3 BAME people who have stood for council saying they felt like an outsider, compared to 1 in 6 white council candidates.

Black, Asian and minority ethnic people also expressed a sense that the Labour party’s processes are not transparent or easy to understand. For example, 1 in 3 of the BAME council candidates we surveyed said the process of their selection was not easy to understand, compared to 1 in 7 white council candidates. Just 1 in 4 BAME candidates for national, regional or devolved office said the process of their selection was transparent, compared to 3 in 4 white candidates.

The third barrier to the full participation of black, Asian and minority ethnic people is a lack of support and encouragement during the selection process. 1 in 4 BAME council candidates said that they weren’t supported or encouraged, compared to 1 in 6 white council candidates. This problem is replicated in national selections, with just 1 in 4 BAME candidates for national, regional or devolved office saying they felt supported or encouraged.

To tackle these problems, our research suggests a number of potential actions for the Labour party to take:

Improve community outreach and make local parties more inclusive

A number of people told us that CLPs are too insular, and spend too much time talking to the members they know rather than engaging with the wider community. This means that “some CLPs look like they did 40 years ago” as they have failed to diversify along with demographic shifts in the local community. As one roundtable participant argued: *“I represent a very, very diverse constituency and I reckon a reasonable proportion of my membership are from ethnic minority backgrounds but they very rarely come to meetings.”* This adds to the sense of being an “outsider” felt by many black, Asian and minority ethnic people who might want to get involved or stand for selection.

To tackle this, local parties should review how and where they conduct their meetings, in order to ensure that those environments are well suited to all members. As one roundtable participant argued: *“there’s a very strong drinking culture ... which is off putting for lots of people who want to be involved.”* Local parties should also spend more time reaching outside of their current membership base in to the local community. By building relationships, and actively seeking out talented local activists to take on political roles, local parties can demonstrate that Labour activism is open to all.

Improve the networks and information available to BAME people

Evidence suggests that self-organisation was crucial in the election of black, Asian and minority ethnic politicians like Diane Abbott, Bernie Grant, Paul Boateng and Keith Vaz in the 1980s. But black sections eventually evolved in the 1990s became the Black Socialist Society (BSS) with full rights of representation at NEC and National Policy Forum. The BSS was reconstituted and branded as BAME Labour in 2006. However, many commentators feel this has not achieved the potential impact compared to the early history of black sections.

Today, there is a lot of confusion about the structures available to BAME people from CLP level to the NEC. There are over 30 ‘friends of’ groups reflecting faith and nation states with a variety of aims from fundraising to

campaigning, but it is often unclear what they are doing and they receive no central support. There is BAME Labour, but it has limited resources and is relatively unknown. And there are also ethnic minority officers in some constituencies, as well as ethnic minority forums (some of these are linked to BAME Labour). It is unclear which organisation is responsible for what, and there is very little coordinated activity.

There is a case for standardization of the structures available for BAME people, in order that one body can build power and influence to advocate for better representation. The party should also centrally organise networking opportunities for BAME people, perhaps organising a yearly conference like it does for women members. All new members joining the party should be made aware of the networking opportunities available to them. As one survey participant argued: *“holding events specifically for LGBT, BME, women or other under represented groups can galvanise them to action and make them feel valued.”*

The party should also overhaul the information it provides to members before selection contests, to tackle the exclusivity of the political cliques who often control the crucial information in local parties. This is as simple as publishing clear information about selections that are approaching and how the process of standing for selection works. The party should also consider developing a training module centrally, which could be run by local parties, on the selection process.

Mentoring and role models

To prevent black, Asian and minority ethnic members of the Labour party feeling like outsiders, and to improve the support and encouragement available to them, role models and mentoring is crucial. This starts with leadership at the top, which is why Diane Abbott’s appointment as shadow home secretary and the record number of BAME shadow cabinet members must be welcomed wholeheartedly. The party must ensure BAME politicians are at the centre of the leadership team presented to the public, as this in turn encourages BAME members to know that they too can aspire to hold senior positions. The backlash experienced by Diane Abbott since her appointment suggests that even senior BAME politicians – particularly women – receive a more hostile reaction than white politicians against whom similar political criticisms could be leveled.

In addition to the presence of BAME politicians in senior leadership positions in the party, it is also important that the party provides the framework for

those politicians to mentor and support up and coming BAME members. The mentoring scheme run by Operation Black Vote is an example of the success such schemes can bring, with notable graduates such as Marvin Rees and Clive Lewis having achieved elected office.⁸ The party is due to launch a new training and mentoring programme for BAME members in the coming months, which is very welcome. But for the programme to be a success, it will need the support of Labour party staff and activists across the country in order that talent can be spotted and developed.

Get the policy right

The party must also consider its policy offer to the black, Asian and minority ethnic community, in order to encourage a wider range of people to engage with the party. This is particularly important in the current climate. There has been a reported rise in hate crimes and racism following the EU referendum campaign. And Theresa May has put tackling inequality – and race inequality specifically – at the heart of her agenda, using her first speech as prime minister to argue that black people are treated more harshly by the criminal justice system.⁹ There is also evidence that BAME communities are increasingly likely to connect to the Conservative message. Polling has suggested that one third of BAME voters backed the Conservative party in 2015.¹⁰ This is significantly higher than estimates for the 2010 election, where an estimated 16 per cent of the BAME community voted Conservative.¹¹

There is a strong sense amongst black, Asian and minority ethnic activists in the party that Labour has taken BAME voters for granted for too long, relying on past successes rather than looking forward to current challenges. As Sonny Leong, the chair of Chinese for Labour, has argued:

“People who are the second, third, and fourth generation of families who have come here from across the world simply don’t vote on the basis of what Labour did in the 60s and 70s, or even in government in the 21st century. They want to know that Labour is working to create a society in which their lives are more secure and they have a better chance of making their individual dreams come true.”¹²

The party has recently launched a ‘Race Equality 2020’ consultation document, where it sets out its ambition to “tackle structural issues affecting BAME communities.” This is welcome and necessary in the coming months, but Labour must also recognise the importance of its policy and political narrative for BAME people who are aspirational for themselves and their families.

2. Tackle the barriers that hold black, Asian and minority ethnic people back

“I came upon unspoken opposition from some staff members and unions for being a BAME woman going for a 98% per cent white constituency. Also the unions did not support me as I was seen as not being ‘connected’ or assumptions were made about my political views. My race was used as a factor against me by other candidates as was the fact I didn’t live locally.”

Survey respondent

“I don’t think that being black helps when you’re sitting in a room full of white people who have chosen their own candidate already”

Survey respondent

Our research reveals that black, Asian and minority ethnic people are still facing discrimination when standing for selection in the Labour party.

Our research reveals an unsettling picture. 1 in 5 of the BAME people we surveyed who have stood for council said they faced unwelcome scrutiny of their private lives. This is compared to 1 in 10 of the white candidates. Similarly, 1 in 4 BAME council candidates said they have experienced disadvantage because of their identity, compared to 1 in 10 non BAME council candidates (however 1 in 5 also said their identity was an advantage, which indicates the benefits of positive action). And half of the BAME people who said they want to stand for national or regional office in the future said they are worried about facing discrimination.

The BAME people we surveyed also articulated a general sense of unfairness surrounding their involvement in the party. Our survey revealed that BAME people are 10 points less likely to agree people are “treated fairly” by their local party. 1 in 3 BAME council candidates said the process of their selection was not fair, compared to 1 in 8 non BAME candidates. Two thirds of BAME candidates for national or regional office said their selection was not fair, compared to just 1 in 5 non BAME candidates.

Part of this discrimination seems to relate to where black, Asian and minority ethnic candidates stand, with the view that BAME people should primarily stand in areas with a high proportion of BAME residents still pervasive across the party. This seems to be due to local members second guessing the

impact of prejudice on voting behavior. One prospective candidate prior to the 2015 election heard comments such as *“we can’t have someone of her background on the doorstep because of the Ukip threat”*. Parmjit Dhanda, one of the few people from an ethnic minority to serve as a Labour MP for a majority white area, recounts his experiences prior to the 2001 election in his book *My Political Race*. He was asked directly in his selection meeting to justify how he could win in a seat with *“very few people from minorities”* as a *“Sikh from outside the area”*. The local newspaper wrote after his selection:

“Many of the voters of Gloucestershire have yet to reach the advanced state of consciousness that makes a ‘foreigner’, in their eyes, acceptable as their local MP. And Mr Dhanda isn’t doing himself any favours by getting adopted in a cathedral city in the West Country that has a 5 per cent ethnic population”.¹³

It is also clear that discrimination is worse for certain groups of black, Asian and minority ethnic people. BAME women, for example, experience the combination of sexism and racism. Religion also has an influence, with both Islamophobia and antisemitism evident across modern day Britain. One survey respondent who has stood for selection revealed that they were *“asked repeatedly about being Muslim, if [they were] a jihadi sympathiser.”* It is also well reported that antisemitism is a particular problem in the Labour party, with abusive language and ethnic stereotyping too often commonplace in political debates amongst party members and supporters. The antisemitic abuse faced by Jewish Labour representatives such as Ruth Smeeth and Luciana Berger is not only the tip of the iceberg, it also acts as a deterrent to other Jewish Labour members who may now not put themselves forward for selection.

Zero tolerance for discrimination in the selection process

The code of conduct agreed by the National Executive Committee this summer states that:

“Any behaviour or use of language which targets or intimidates members of ethnic or religious communities, or incites racism, including antisemitism and Islamophobia, or undermines Labour’s ability to campaign against any form of racism, is unacceptable conduct within the Labour party”.

It is however unclear how this principle is being embedded and enforced in the selection process. To tackle this, the party must look at both the formal

and informal parts of the process.

First, the rulebook and selection guidelines must be reviewed to ensure they explicitly state that questions relating to race or religious identity are unacceptable and will be ruled out of order. It is also clear that the party's complaints procedure must be overhauled, a process which is reportedly already underway. As the Chakrabati Report recommends, this must include greater transparency for the complainant, and it must be accompanied by significant additional resources rather than relying on already overstretched regional staff. All candidates for selection must also be asked to sign a clean campaign pledge, which publicly commits them to spurn all forms of discrimination and abuse.

Action must also be taken to tackle unconscious bias from the selection panel and local members. As the 2010 Speakers' Conference report points out

"The grading criteria used by selection panels can also be a source of indirect discrimination. For example, selectors may set great store by a candidate's previous political activity... female or BAME candidates may be more likely to have gained comparable skills through being active within the community, but that selectors can fail to place sufficient emphasis on the value of this experience."

To challenge these assumptions, it should be compulsory for members of selection panels to attend equality and diversity training that covers diversity and non-discrimination. This training should be run by the party regionally, and should include unconscious bias training and myth busting about the electability of underrepresented groups. This training could also be open to party officers, who could then be empowered to run the training locally with members in advance of a selection contest. The party should also consider requiring selection panels to be representative of the local community - covering at the least gender, race and age - to reduce the likelihood of prejudiced assumptions about candidates influencing the selection process.

Bring the cost down

In addition to the discrimination faced by black, Asian and minority ethnic candidates, it is also clear that they also face an increased cost barrier in the selection process. Just 1 in 5 of the BAME candidates for national or regional office told us they could afford their selection, compared to 67 per cent of white candidates. To tackle this, the party should impose tough caps on spending for Westminster and devolved selections, which evidence has

suggested can notch up to thousands of pounds. This was recommended by the 2014 Collins review, as well as in a number of previous party reviews.

The party should also consider supporting bursaries for black, Asian and minority ethnic candidates who want to stand for selection, such as Bernie's List which was recently relaunched.¹⁴ Bursaries might be particularly effective in council selections, where the overall cost is lower and where small amounts could be transformative for BAME candidates. Bursaries may also help BAME candidates break down political cliques and exclusive networks which also often provide funding for their chosen candidates.

In addition to this, the party should consider carefully the length of the selection process which contributes to the overall cost, and the overall time spent away from work and family. There is a debate about whether a shorter or longer process would be better for underrepresented groups, so the party should consult widely before making a decision. It has also been suggested that Labour should campaign for the law to change to enable people to have the right to request unpaid leave for political campaigning, a provision which already exists under the Employment Rights Act (1996) for people who want to undertake other forms of public service.

BAME representation in every part of the UK

The Conservative party has successfully started to "*select minority candidates for safe white seats*". This is rare for the Labour party, whose BAME representatives tend to serve areas with a comparatively high BAME communities. This is due only in part to the demographics of safe Labour areas. To ensure that BAME candidates aren't always directed towards areas with high BAME density, the party should set a target for the number of BAME candidates selected in areas that do not have strong BAME communities.

Action to tackle religious discrimination

The Royall Report and the Chakrabati Report have both looked in detail at religious discrimination and stereotyping in the Labour party, and made a series of recommendations which must be implemented urgently and in full. This report does not seek to recover that ground, but it is clear that decisive action from the centre is needed.

3. Show leadership from the centre

"I've received a range of discriminatory comments. Also had other potential candidates and their supporters tell the selectorate not to vote for the 'Chinese guy' as he won't work for other communities."

Survey respondent

Leadership against racism and discrimination from the centre is crucial. Not only does this leadership set the tone for party members to follow, it is only the party which has the resources necessary to tackle the problem and work to engage more BAME people. In the words of one roundtable participant, to increase BAME representation, *"frankly the party and the leadership has to embrace it."* There are four steps the party must take to do this:

Collect the data

The first thing the party must do is make sure it understands the scale of the problem. There are three parts to this: collecting data about candidates, collecting data about members, and then publishing the proportions. Not only will this inform the party's work to improve representation, it will also act as a public incentive to make as much progress as possible. The party must also monitor the diversity of its senior staff, who are overwhelmingly white. As one survey respondent commented: *"Even though I voted for Corbyn and share many views the "make up" of his core senior team, think tanks, academic nexus does not represent me and many others ... as it should, if at all"*.

A race equality director

Participants in our research also raised the importance of a senior member of staff at head office being given responsibility for black, Asian and minority ethnic representation. One roundtable participant suggested that this was important to ensure BAME representation was taken seriously and was given sufficient prioritisation, calling for *"a director for BAME representation at the senior director level, so they have status, gravitas, respect... so that when they say something it happens"*. The appointment of Dawn Butler as shadow minister for diverse communities is a good first step, but her role must explicitly cover party operational matters.

Set targets and enforce them

Once the party collects the data, and has a structure to ensure action is taken, they should also consider adopting targets for black, Asian and minority ethnic representation before the next cycle of selections begins. The party should consult BAME groups on what this target should be, but BAME Labour's Collins Review submission suggested aiming for a target of 30 per cent in winnable seats ahead of the 2015 election. These targets should be reviewed regularly by the NEC equalities committee, who should have a strengthened remit to report the Leader, deputy leader and annual conference.

In addition to targets, the party should consider the use of positive action – which has proved a very successful tool for improving women's representation. There are a number of ways the party could consider doing this. There have been calls for all-black shortlists, and BAME Labour have called for majority black shortlists in their submission to the Collins Review, arguing for the introduction of *"majority BAME short lists, in parliamentary constituencies that have over 30 per cent BAME population. The Equality Act 2010 allows for such positive action"*. The party may also wish to consider exploring tools used by other parties, such as the A-list used by the Conservative party which aimed to improve BAME and women's representation with a focus on winnable seats. In considering options for positive action, it is important that the party ensures that BAME women are not disadvantaged, something which research has shown to be the case with quota systems used around the world.¹⁵

Get the language right

Finally, the party should consult widely about the use of the term 'BAME', which many raised with us as a barrier to widespread engagement from BAME communities. BAME Labour describe the term BAME as a *"wide and potentially an all encompassing description of white ethnic communities, faith and ethnicities which are either visible or strong cultural heritage links"*. But many argued to us that this catch-all term diminishes important differences between ethnic groups. As part of their consultation, the party should seek views on an appropriate replacement for the term. Some suggestions made to us include using the phrase 'diverse communities', or simply stopping using the acronym BAME and writing each word in full.

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