

Prime Minister
10 Downing St
London
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12 April 2021

Dear Prime Minister

We are writing to express our concern and disappointment at last week's report from the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, which we feel understated both the challenge and the scale of change required.

Black and Minority Ethnic workers experience systemic inequalities across the labour market, which we consider the result of structural and institutional discrimination.

BME workers are overrepresented in lower paid, insecure jobs and have to send 60 per cent more job applications to be invited to interview. Currently, the BME unemployment rate is running at almost double that of white workers. And BME workers in London, the region with the highest BME population, experience a 24 per cent pay gap.

These inequalities are compounded by the direct discrimination BME people face within workplaces: around a quarter (24 per cent) had been singled out for redundancy and one in seven (15 per cent) of those that had experienced racist harassment at work said they left their job as a result.

During the pandemic, BME workers are far more likely to be in frontline roles such as education staff, health workers and delivery drivers. This has meant that BME workers have been far more likely to be exposed to Covid-19 infection and were three times more likely to die.

Institutional and structural racism exists in the UK, in both the labour market and wider society. We do not believe that the Commission recognised its extent and impact. And we do not consider that the report's recommendations would make a meaningful positive difference to the working lives and careers of BME workers.

The government previously commissioned Ruby Macgregor-Smith to provide recommendations to increase workplace equality – yet the Commission did not repeat

even these recommendations, let alone go further to propose actions to tackle the profound disadvantage BME workers face in the UK labour market in 2021.

We hoped that the report would recommend action to stamp out insecure work and make employers act to close their ethnicity pay gaps. Instead, the Commission has chosen to deny the experiences of BME workers and be complacent about the UK's progress towards being an anti-racist society.

The UK's trade union movement repudiates this report.

Ministers should instead implement in full the recommendations of previous reports, including McGregor-Smith (employment), Lammy (criminal justice), Williams (Windrush), Angiolini (deaths in custody), Parker (FTSE100 boards), and Marmot (health inequalities).

Trade unions will continue to fight for decent wages, fair treatment and an end to exploitation for all working people – knowing this will disproportionately benefit BME workers. We will stand firm in identifying and opposing direct and indirect racism at work. There is no conflict between defending working class interests and pushing for equality for BME workers. Today's working class is multiethnic and multifaith. We stand for all working people.

We hope ministers will reflect on the inadequacies of the report of the Commission for Racial Disparities, recognise the insult it has offered to BME workers and pick a different path.

Yours sincerely,

Frances O'Grady, General Secretary, Trades Union Congress
Dr Patrick Roach, General Secretary, NASUWT and Chair of the TUC Anti-Racism Taskforce
Gloria Mills, Chair, TUC Race Relations Committee
Gail Cartmail, President, Trades Union Congress
Len McCluskey, General Secretary, Unite
Christina McAnea, General Secretary, UNISON
Warren Kenny, Acting General Secretary, GMB
Kevin Courtney, Joint General Secretary, NEU
Dr Mary Bousted, Joint General Secretary, NEU
Paddy Lillis, General Secretary, Usdaw
Dave Ward, General Secretary, CWU
Mark Serwotka, General Secretary, PCS
Mike Clancy, General Secretary, Prospect

Dr Jo Grady, General Secretary, University and College Union
Karen Middleton, Chief Executive, CSP
Matt Wrack, General Secretary, Fire Brigades Union
Michelle Stanistreet, General Secretary, National Union of Journalists
Roy Rickhuss, General Secretary, Community
Deborah Lawson, Assistant General Secretary, Community
Steve Gillan, General Secretary, POA
Paul Whiteman, General Secretary, NAHT
Tim Rose, General Secretary, Nationwide Group Staff Union
Manuel Cortes, General Secretary, Transport Salaries Staffs' Association
Ian Lawrence, General Secretary, NAPO
Steve Jamieson, General Secretary, The College of Podiatry
Zita Holbourne, Joint National Chair, Artists' Union England
Claudia Paoloni, President, Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association