

A dossier on racism in the Conservative Party

This dossier was put together from news reports in the local and national media and is far from comprehensive.

But it shows is that the Conservative Party is regularly beset by allegations of racism against its MPs, councillors and candidates. It's also clear that only rarely do such instances – even when particularly offensive – result in the person being expelled from the Party.

The cases include Tory elected representatives using racist abuse like "Pakis", "pikies", and "piccaninnies" – as well as several anti-semitic or Islamophobic remarks. But most appear to have been allowed to continue their membership and even to represent the Conservative Party.

Back in 2001 Andrew Lansley MP complained of "endemic racism" in the Conservative Party. In January 2015 a former aide to both Margaret Thatcher and John Major described the Conservative Party as "essentially racist". Just last month lifetime Tory voter and Daily Mail columnist Peter Osborne described Zac Goldsmith's Islamophobic London mayoral campaign as the "most repulsive I have ever seen".

The Tory Party remains the nasty party - and soft on racists within it.

A Brief Chronology

- In 1989, David Cameron defied international sanctions to go on a jolly to apartheid South Africa¹ on a trip funded by a firm that lobbied against the imposition of sanctions on the apartheid regime. The Prime Minister apologised for the trip 17 years later, in 2006.
- In 2001, Tory MP Andrew Lansley told the Daily Telegraph, "There is endemic racism in the Tory party. It is in the system."²
- In a 2002 column for the Daily Telegraph, Boris Johnson (then MP for Henley) described black people as "piccaninnies" with "watermelon smiles".

He apologised six years later in 2008 (when running to be London Mayor). No disciplinary action was taken by the Conservative Party at any point.³

- In July 2006, Chorley Tory councillor Shaun Smith was arrested following an alleged racist incident at Manchester airport⁴.

He quit as a councillor in 2009 after refusing to provide the police with a blood sample following a separate drink-driving incident

- While editor of The Spectator, then Tory MP Boris Johnson published an article that said "blacks have lower IQs". Another article from around the same time said that Caribbeans were "multiplying like flies"⁵. Mr Johnson apologised in 2008, but no disciplinary action was taken.

1 See <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/camersons-freebie-to-apartheid-south-africa-1674367.html>

2 See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1339163/Racism-endemic-in-Tory-party.html>

3 See <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/i-didnt-mean-to-be-racist-claims-boris-6648542.html>

4 See http://www.thisislancashire.co.uk/news/841566.councillor_arrested_after_alleged_racist_incident/

5 See <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/mayor/boris-says-sorry-over-blacks-have-lower-iqs-article-in-the-spectator-6630340.html>

- In February 2009, Bolton Conservative councillor Bob Allen posted a picture of a gorilla alongside a critical comment about an Asian Labour councillor on a blog⁶. He apologised, the Conservative Party investigated, but it is not known if any disciplinary action was taken. According to his Twitter profile, he remains a Tory councillor⁷
- In March 2009, Leicestershire Tory councillor Robert Fraser said that Romanians would "stick a knife in you as soon as look at you", as well as insulting East Europeans and the Irish, saying "Some of these European ones, they make the Irish look like complete amateurs and I would dread, I would dread, to see them in Groby"⁸
The Tory Party sent him on diversity training, but he was allowed to stand again for the Tories.
- In November 2009, Tory MP for Spelthorne, David Wilshire, said the expose of MPs expenses left them treated like Jews in Nazi Germany, stating "Branding a whole group of people as undesirables led to Hitler's gas chambers"⁹
David Cameron asked him to apologise.
- In November 2009, Orpington Tory councillor Peter Hobbins, complained that none of the prospective parliamentary candidates "has a normal English name" – questioning "Why are the Candidates Department so keen on these foreign names?!!!!"¹⁰
He was suspended by the party.
- In January 2010, Tory councillor for Colne, Smith Benson, complained that there were "too many P****s" in his town. Council Leader Tony Beckett refused to discipline him and said, "I think for the Labour Party to say he should be sacked for making a sweeping statement is a bit strong."¹¹
- In January 2011, Baroness Warsi gave a speech about rising Islamophobia. Tory Lord Tebbit wrote a blog dismissing her case and saying "a period of silence from the Baroness might not come amiss."¹²
- In August 2011, Tory Dover councillor Bob Frost described people involved in the riots as "jungle bunnies".
He lost his job as a Maths teacher, but the Conservative Party only suspended him for two months, readmitting him in November 2011.¹³
In 2014, he referred to the prospective Middle Eastern buyers of Dover port as "sons of camel drivers"¹⁴. No disciplinary action was taken and Tory MP Charlie Elphicke defended him, saying "I think the Labour Party is trying to victimise Cllr Frost."
In May 2015, Cllr Frost was in trouble again for tweeting that a Big Issue seller should "f**k off back to Romania".
He was suspended pending investigation.¹⁵
- In December 2011, Tory MP for Cannock Chase, Aidan Burley, helped organise a Nazi-themed stag party.
In June 2012, David Cameron ordered he be sacked from his role as PPS to then Transport Secretary Justine Greening – and ordered a fuller investigation.¹⁶
Later in 2012, Mr Burley described the London Olympics' opening ceremony as "leftie multicultural crap"¹⁷
In 2014 an internal Tory Party inquiry cleared him of any racism or anti-semitism.

6 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/4806155/Conservative-councillor-put-gorilla-picture-next-to-a-blog-about-Asian-colleague.html>

7 See <https://twitter.com/cllrboballen>

8 See <http://www.leicesterm Mercury.co.uk/Race-rant-Leicestershire-councillor-suspended/story-12033721-detail/story.html>

9 See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/mps-expenses/conservative-mps-expenses/6480680/MPs-expenses-David-Wilshire-compares-treatment-of-politicians-to-Jews-in-Nazi-Germany.html>

10 See <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1229637/Why-havent-MPs-got-normal-English-names-asks-Tory-official-Peter-Hobbins.html>

11 See <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1243574/Embarrassment-Cameron-Tory-councillor-declares-P--s-town.html>

12 See <http://www.theweek.co.uk/people-news/8431/warsi-and-tebbit-war-over-islamophobia>

13 See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-15112654>

14 See <http://www.kentonline.co.uk/deal/news/bob-frost-accused-of-racism-15560/>

15 See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-32886774>

16 See <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2075649/Cameron-sacks-foolish-MP-Aidan-Burley-joined-Hitler-Hitler-Hitler-stag-party.html>

17 See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/10589234/Tory-MP-who-threw-Nazi-themed-stag-party-not-racist-or-anti-semitic-inquiry-finds.html>

- In January 2013, an Enfield Tory councillor Chris Joannides compared Muslim children to black bin bags in a Facebook post. He denied being Islamophobic,¹⁸ but was suspended from the party for a year. It is not clear if he has now been readmitted¹⁹, though when cleared from prosecution he thanked the local Tory MP, David Burrowes, for standing by him.²⁰
- In April 2013, Tory councillor for West Sussex, John Cherry, told the Mail on Sunday, "Ninety-seven per cent of pupils will be black or Asian. It depends what type of Asian. If they're Chinese they'll rise to the top. If they're Indian they'll rise to the top. If they're Pakistani they won't," and described Stockwell as "a coloured area".²¹ He resigned his position as a councillor, but there is no indication he faced any sanction from the Conservative Party.
- In April 2014, a Tory Barnet councillor, Tom Davey, was accused of being not fit for office, after a Facebook post came to light in which he suggested it might be easier to find a job if he were "a black female wheelchair-bound amputee who is sexually attracted to other women".²² No disciplinary action was taken by the Conservative Party.
- In May 2014, David Bishop, a Tory council candidate in Brentwood, Essex, tweeted "It's good to be anti-Islam" and called Islam "the religion of peace & rape". He resigned from the Conservative Party.
- In May 2014, Tory Coulsdon activist Stephen Lees tweeted "Every single Muslim should be expelled from this country – not deported – expelled, and every mosque demolished."²³ The Conservative Party denied he was a member.²⁴ Yet he was apparently a former Secretary of Coulsdon South Conservatives²⁵
- In August 2014 UCL Conservative Society was under scrutiny for a series of anti-semitic, Islamophobic and racist remarks, fostering a culture of discrimination and bullying, and creating a "toxic" environment. One comment included, "Jews own everything, we all know it's true. I wish I was Jewish, but my nose isn't long enough".²⁶ In October 2014 after an investigation by UCL Union, the Conservative Society was ordered to apologise²⁷. There is no evidence that the Conservative Party investigated the incidents.
- In October 2014, Maidenhead Tory councillor Alan Mellins suggested complained about Travellers and said the solution was to "Execute them." He apologised and then later resigned as a councillor over the incident. It is not clear whether the Conservative Party took any disciplinary action.
- In January 2015, Derek Laud, a former aide to both Margaret Thatcher and John Major, described the Conservative Party as "essentially racist". He went on, "They are the ultimate racists because they deal in stereotypes."²⁸
- In January 2015, a Conservative councillor for Bishop's Stortford was accused of anti-semitism for a tweet and condemned by Tory MP Robert Halfon as "abhorrent" and "unacceptable".²⁹ Councillor Colin Woodward apologised and no action was taken by the Conservative Party.

18 See <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/conservative-councillor-compares-muslim-kids-1593285>

19 See <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2572785/Tory-councillor-compared-children-burkas-binbags-kicked-party.html>

20 See http://www.enfieldindependent.co.uk/news/10927742.Councillor_cleared_after_anti_islamic_Facebook_comments/

21 See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/secondaryeducation/10011977/Police-to-investigate-Tory-councillors-racist-comments-about-boarding-school-for-inner-city-pupils.html>

22 See http://www.times-series.co.uk/news/11150246.Claims_Tory_Councillor_is_not_fit_for_office_after_disgusting_Facebook_posts/?ref=mr

23 See <http://www.islamophobiawatch.co.uk/tory-activist-every-single-muslim-should-be-expelled/>

24 See <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/may/04/tory-council-candidate-quits-anti-islam-homophobic-comments>

25 See <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2014/05/03/tory-activist-every-muslim-expelled/>

26 See <http://thetab.com/2014/08/04/tory-society-thrown-into-disarray-amid-claims-of-anti-semitism-19455>

27 See <http://thetab.com/uk/london/2014/09/30/tox-ucl-tories-forced-to-apologise-for-racist-behaviour-13770>

28 See <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/552697/Conservative-Party-Derek-Laud-David-Cameron-racism>

29 See <http://www.jewishnews.co.uk/tory-councillor-probably-stores-open-paris-gaza/>

- In April 2015, a Tory candidate for Derby Council, Gulzabeen Afsar, said she would never support "the Jew" in reference to Ed Miliband.³⁰
Cllr Afsar apologised, and was later suspended by the Conservative Party.
- In April 2015, a Tory council candidate in Luton, David Coulter, described Travellers as "pikies" and "thieving troublemakers".
He was suspended.³¹
- In May 2015, a Tory councillor, Thomas Crockett for Maida Vale in Westminster, compared some young locals with the Hitler Youth.
He apologised and no disciplinary action was taken.³²
- In May 2015, Tory councillor for Leicestershire Bob Fahey referred to a fellow councillor as a "Chink".³³
This is no record of any disciplinary action and apparently remains a Conservative councillor³⁴.
- In September 2015, Tory councillor for East Renfrewshire, and former parliamentary candidate Gordon MacAskill tweeted: "Scenes we'd like to see: the refugees Nicola invites into her house are Daesh moles", in response to the Scottish First Minister saying she would take in a Syrian refugee.³⁵
He was suspended by the Party, but has seemingly been reinstated.³⁶
- In October 2015, a Tory councillor in Rugby, Jim Buckley, tweeted re: Sadiq Khan, "Your next London Mayor? You think his corner shop would be open on a Saturday?"
He was suspended from the Conservative Party, and charged (though not convicted) with sending an offensive message.
- In December 2015, it was revealed that Oliver Letwin then an adviser to Margaret Thatcher had made a series of racist remarks following the riots in 1985, describing black people as having "bad moral attitudes", and saying schemes to help black people would be spent in "the disco and drugs trade" and employment programmes would only see black people "graduate ... into unemployment and crime".³⁷
The Conservative Party took no disciplinary action and Mr Letwin remains a government minister.
- On 27 January 2016, Prime Minister David Cameron described refugees fleeing Syria and other conflicts as "a bunch of migrants"³⁸. He has previously spoken of a "swarm of people coming across the Mediterranean"³⁹
He has yet to apologise for either comment.
- In February 2016, Glasgow Tory councillor David Meikle accused the SNP of anti-semitism for opposing the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land.⁴⁰
He later apologised and withdrew his comments
- Matthew Sephton⁴¹, Tory councillor in Altrincham, tweeted on 31 January 2016 a leaflet that read: "Tired of your job? Sick of working 40 hours or more each week just to feed your family? Would you like to relax all day and still have all the benefits of a full time job? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you should consider moving to England, The Welfare Country."

³⁰ See <http://www.jewishnews.co.uk/exclusive-tory-council-candidate-id-never-support-the-jew-miliband/>

³¹ See <http://www.luton-dunstable.co.uk/Tory-candidate-suspended-party-following-racial/story-26407912-detail/story.html>

³² See http://www.kilburntimes.co.uk/news/politics/political_row_after_maida_vale_councillor_compares_local_children_to_hitler_youth_on_twitter_1_4089205

³³ See <http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/Outrage-councillor-uses-racist-language/story-26480791-detail/story.html>

³⁴ See <http://moderngov.oadby-wigston.gov.uk/mgUserInfo.aspx?UID=697>

³⁵ See <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/603928/Gordon-McCaskill-Nicola-Sturgeon-tweet-Conservatives-IS-moles-Islamic-State-joke-Twitter>

³⁶ See <http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/ward4>

³⁷ See <http://www.channel4.com/news/oliver-letwin-accused-of-racism-over-1980s-riot-comments>

³⁸ See <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jan/27/david-cameron-bunch-of-migrants-jibe-pmqqs-callous-dehumanising>

³⁹ See <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/jul/30/david-cameron-migrant-swarm-language-condemned>

⁴⁰ See <https://www.commonspace.scot/articles/3485/tory-david-meikle-apologises-for-dangerous-smear-of-minister-humzayousaf>

⁴¹ See <https://www.rt.com/uk/331291-tory-racism-migrants-welfare/>

In September 2015, he was accused of posting "vile" and "disgusting" comments on Facebook, including "they should be transported directly back" and "Refugees in 'angry stand-off with police' in #Hungary? What on earth do they think they're doing?! They're guests, not there by any right!"⁴²

No action was taken for either incident, and he remains Chair of Greater Manchester Conservatives⁴³

- In March 2016, the deputy provost of South Ayrshire Council, Tory councillor Mary Kilpatrick backed attacks on fasting during Ramadan and calls to outlaw Muslim veils. She apologised, but the Conservative Party merely issued a reminder to all its elected representatives and candidates over online behaviour.⁴⁴
- Boris Johnson, Tory MP and current Mayor of London, wrote in an article for The Sun in April 2016, that asserted that US president Barack Obama had an "ancestral dislike" of Britain, and described him as "part-Kenyan". He was criticised by Tory MP Nicolas Soames⁴⁵ as "appalling" and "totally wrong", but backed by Nigel Farage. No disciplinary action was taken or investigation launched.
- In April 2016, former Tory parliamentary candidate Shazia Awan wrote of Zac Goldsmith's mayoral campaign, "one cannot forgive a collection of divisive literature and rhetoric within this negative campaign", adding "if the current mayoral campaign is anything to go by, there is a very real danger that it will drag the party back to the prejudice, intolerance and ignorance of 50 years ago."⁴⁶
- In April 2016, Fareham Tory councillor David Whittingham mimicked foreign accents, said he didn't want foreigners living in his road and made comments and behaviour that were "racist in nature".⁴⁷ He was kicked out of the Conservative Party in April 2016.⁴⁸
- In April 2016, the deputy chairman of Bradford Conservative Association, Abdul Zaman, made inappropriate comments about Jews and women while speaking at a launch event for the local election campaign.⁴⁹ He was suspended.
- In April 2016, Tory peer Baroness Warsi wrote, in relation to the London mayoral campaign of Zac Goldsmith, "the right needs to weed out its Islamophobes ... Dog-whistle nasty politics is damaging the UK"⁵⁰
- In April 2016, lifelong Tory voter and Daily Mail columnist Peter Osborne wrote, "Goldsmith's campaign for mayor has become the most repulsive I have ever seen"⁵¹

⁴² See <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/vile-councillor-sparks-fury-disgusting-6384513>

⁴³ See https://twitter.com/MatthewSephton?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor

⁴⁴ See http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/14335126.Top_Tory_councillor_facing_quit_calls_after_retweeting_Islamophobic_slurs/

⁴⁵ See <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/04/london-mayor-boris-johnson-obama-brexit-160423063018186.html>

⁴⁶ See <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/devolution/2016/04/tory-activist-shazia-awan-zac-goldsmith-s-damaging-exploitative-and-ugly>

⁴⁷ See <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/tory-councillor-kicked-out-party-7772310>

⁴⁸ See <http://www.portsmouth.co.uk/news/politics/fareham-tory-councillor-axed-from-party-after-racist-rant-1-7330701>

⁴⁹ See <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/156666/senior-conservative-suspended-amid-antisemitism-speech-allegations>

⁵⁰ See <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/zac-goldsmith-london-mayor-campaign-sadiq-khan-baroness-warsi-a7009126.html>

⁵¹ See <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/london-mayor-race-conservatives-game-religious-and-racial-divisions-538083247>

