

The only thing that unites us is class



Socialists must avoid the trap of bourgeois identity politics if they are to make headway in uniting the working class against capitalism.

*This text is an excerpt from a speech made by a member of the central committee to the party's [eighth congress](#) in September. The speech was part of a long discussion on the topic of [identity politics](#) in general and LGBT+ activism in particular. At the end of the discussion, the central committee's [emergency motion on identity politics](#) was overwhelmingly adopted by the congress. Other motions on the topic, asking the party to adopt LGBT+ activism into its programme, were overwhelmingly voted down. The reason for our debate today is a phenomenon I first encountered as an academic doing a masters then a PhD in the humanities. For the last eight years, I have been employed to lecture on LGBTQ identities, queer theory and identity politics in performance. In 1995, there was a huge shift in the humanities – a moment I can clearly locate in the trajectory of my own studies, which coincided with the beginning of my training for a degree in languages and linguistics in Europe. This shift was consolidated when I started my postgraduate programme in Britain, in the belly of western capitalist education. The first thing that I was taught, as a student and later as part of the academic staff in the early 2000s – based on books that had been published years earlier, as a result of the 1960s and of what Euroleftism considered to be ‘the end of class struggle’ – was that we *do not need to talk about class* in the humanities; that it is no longer ‘trendy’ to consider ‘the grand narrative of class’, and that such ideas had expired after May ’68. Instead, I was told, we needed to talk about ‘identity’ based on a notion of ‘difference’. I needed to acquaint myself with the full philosophical movement that focuses on difference; which no longer talks about things that can rally people around a shared reality, or material conditions that people can have in common, but declares this a ‘failure’ from the start, arguing that it is useless to try to find things in common with others. I was taught that this understanding of ‘failure’ should be the basis of contemporary humanities and culture, and that there is no need to study ‘positivist’ sciences like sociology with its rigid categories any more; that there is no need to research sociological explanations for cultural phenomena, because this leads to ‘deterministic’ conclusions. Instead, you need to go straight*

to poststructuralist theories, ideas about ‘deconstruction’, and postmodern philosophers like Jacques Derrida to address ‘difference’, as the only idea that unites people. This was the conclusion of my postgraduate studies: we are united only in our individualism. I can still get paid today, or have flight tickets offered by universities to give lectures on ‘queer studies’ – which I can try my best to transform into opportunities for class analysis, but believe me, that is not easy. Of course, I am hourly-paid with no permanent contract, as a woman lecturer, because university businesses where I worked have in place a positive discrimination policy, which ticks boxes when hiring a man who self-identifies as a ‘woman’ and who can get a lecturer’s position that makes much more financial sense to the university’s management than paying for my maternity leave. One needs to compare the material basis of my existence and the identity of a man who calls himself a woman, and who has studied Derrida of course, as I have. This man has all the philosophical backing, plus the university funding to bolster his position and call my class concerns a ‘failing project’ like the project of the Enlightenment (this is what they teach in postmodernism – the end of logic; the end of history; the futility of social struggle and resistance). Are we in this party because we agree with what Karl Marx said? Do we understand the need to escape from this capitalist education that disables us; that disables our ability to unite and to understand what we have in common and act upon it; that teaches us to fetishise our loss? I have been offered various jobs to talk about my ‘loss’, about what makes me different, as a woman; to talk about rape and the traumas of the ‘patriarchy’. One can land academic careers by being ‘anti-patriarchal’ and by considering oneself to be ‘a class on our own’. But we are not in this party because we believe we are a class on our own, and nobody who is Marxist Leninist should believe that. One can definitely make more money teaching others to believe that they are a class in themselves, but we are here because we defend the truth, not careers. We defend Stalin because we defend the historical truth, not because Stalin sets us apart as being ‘different’. I am sure that nowadays some can come to this

party to be 'themselves'; as another 'radical' way of fetishising their 'identity' and declaring themselves 'different' to other gay or other lesbians or other 'gender fluid' people they know. Defending Stalin can become another way to self-identify. But we are not here to defend our individual identities; we are here to really find what made communist society happen. If we want to help people who are in a state of loss, in a state of dependency, then we have to be 'a communist' and dare to talk about the things that are the alternative to what they teach us. First, we have to become aware of exactly what lies and fallacies the ruling class are teaching us, and how these ideologies disable us whilst cloaking themselves in a narrative about individual 'empowerment', 'agency' and 'self-liberation'. They teach us that we have more 'agency' as a 'hybrid', 'fluid', individual, unattached to biology or material groundings, precariat. They teach us that it is actually unfashionable to expect to enjoy retirement, a pension or permanent housing; it is trendy to be 'nomadic'; it is *creative* to live in precarity, and not to have a permanent job. They teach us to love 'change' and to dislike 'stability'; to unite with others in loving our 'lack' – what capitalism has stolen from us. They teach us to love the inflictions of capitalism, the traumas of exploitation; they teach people to think that this attitude is revolutionary. But it is false consciousness and nothing else. They make a parody of the working class. This ideology segregates us, isolates us in lonely, passive crowds of 'I'. They teach us to hate what is healthy and instead love our illnesses. The moment of truth came for me when I was denied my PhD award. My thesis was a critique of New Labour's 'inclusive' education. In it, I talked about students' disability and, apparently, I made the 'mistake' of failing to link disability with identity politics, instead talking about it in terms of class. I argued that bourgeois education oppresses children not because they are physically or mentally disabled but because they are working-class children. I argued that capitalism defines bourgeois identity as ability; people are seen as able when they belong to the bourgeoisie and submit to its ideology. Capitalism considers working-class identity to be a disability, and tries to 'manage' it and integrate it into its system of exploitation, not to alleviate it or cure it. The moment I started to draw such conclusions, the examiners challenged my methodology on 'ethical grounds' and denied me my doctorate. I had to resubmit my thesis, because, according to the examiners, I was 'labelling' people by calling them 'working class'. The only truthful identity – a sociological reality that I was able to prove with lots of statistical evidence – was censored as 'labelling'. I

was forbidden to talk about the class of my students, but I could conduct a survey on the 'sexual desires' of primary school kids without any problems. I am in this party because communism is the only discourse, the only philosophy, the only way to talk about things as they are and rally people not around their 'lack' but around their only collective identity, the only one that we have, that which is based on our class. We are not here to fetishise our traumas, as we live them under capitalism. In a communist society, people experience themselves and others differently, as in a society like Cuba's. We cannot compare ourselves with Cuba. Cuba has been developing along a socialist path; the people are in power; they pass legislation relevant to their society and its place in the international sphere. Cuban kids at schools are not taught what our kids are taught. The state and the socialist government filter things very differently because the economy is not the same we have here. Cuban laws on LGBTQ cannot be compared to dominant British policy. As British workers we have to focus on what is happening in our own country and look for an alternative education to the one we are getting. We have to reinstate the things that unite us and not the things that divide us. The only thing that unites us is class, and if you care about the welfare of gay people, raped women, disabled children, etc, you have got to declare the only agency they have is if they act collectively in an organised political manner based on their class interests, and not some vague idealism. If you care about oppressed people's dignity then you have to convince them to unite with others and demand power; to demand all the things we discuss in our party congress resolutions. Marxism Leninism is the only way to guarantee that the working people's struggle will be successful. As Marxist Leninists we don't patronise people; we don't tell them that what they are going through is something that they should wear as an identity, because such isolating identities disable them. We have a responsibility towards people who suffer, and we have to defend them by telling the truth. 'Transgender rights' are bourgeois ideology. The whole issue confounds reality. It is pure idealism because the reality is that we cannot choose our identity at will. It is an illusion, a mistake and a crime to teach people to think that they can choose like this, under capitalism. We are here to help them dispel their bourgeois illusions, and our own first, however taxing and painful that can be. ***** *More speeches and materials on this topic will be published here over the coming period. Check the page on [identity politics](#) for updates.*

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