

# Letter: Identity politics v class politics



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*If our political activities don't threaten imperialism, we need to think again about what we are doing.*

Regarding the present much-discussed issue of [identity politics](#), I think the most important matter here is how to organise for a socialist transformation in our society. The CPGB-ML correctly argues that this can only be achieved by organising the working class to seize power. Anything that detracts from this is objectively reactionary. Identity politics seems to be absorbing a lot of the energy of the working-class movement. The question posed is: does this help or hinder the struggle for socialist transformation? Real oppression is [homelessness](#), hunger, destitution, war, [poverty](#), police brutality, [anti-trade-union laws](#), etc. While we talk about identities, are we seriously challenging this oppression? We all are very concerned when minorities are targeted and scapegoated by the state and by the ruling classes organising the far right, especially in times of crisis, as an extra-legal arm to attack workers on identity bases. The movement has always seen such tactics as a means to [divide the class](#) whilst promoting supremacist ideas, ie, the survival of the 'fittest', as natural, which ultimately expresses itself in the most vile imperialism and war. Historically it has been the working-class movement that has fought [racial oppression](#), realising that 'an injury to one is an injury to all'. The key critical question is this: Can the movement defeat racism, sexism and homophobia if it is divided on these issues, and can real lasting solutions be found for these within a capitalist society, which promotes competition and division, as well as a ruling class that seeks to divide the working masses? We can only appeal to the working class on the basis that an injury to one is an injury to all. The issue that unites us is being members of the working class suffering the same injustices. We cannot achieve this unity by seeking to elevate our differences to the fore, taking the focus off the class enemy that enjoys its privilege at our expense and uses those differences to divide us. This is the Marxist position, which argues that the key contradictions in society are class-based, and that class is determined by our relationship to the means of production. You only have to read the [Communist Manifesto](#), written in 1848, in which Karl Marx and Frederick Engels turned identity issues into class conflict. Hand on heart everybody: is the current identity-political activity class

based, and, more importantly is it threatening imperialism? If not, then, as Marxists, how do you expect to defeat oppression without the unity of the working class? This is how we should approach this issue if we are serious. MC, Leeds

*17 December 2018*