

## **UNISON National Executive Council (NEC) Elections 2023-2025**

**Nominate APRIL ASHLEY for National Black Members Seat (female)**

UNISON membership number: **3167703**

***All branches can nominate for the black members seats and all members can vote in the election for this seat.***

***Nomination period 9<sup>th</sup> January – 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023***



January 2023

Dear Branch Secretary,

I am writing to ask for your branch's nomination for the National Black member's seat (female) on the National Executive Council (NEC) elections 2023.

I currently hold one of the 3 female black members seats on the NEC which I have held for over 10 years, and I would like your support to retain this seat. I would like to continue to be the voice of black members on the leading body of UNISON to ensure the fight against racism and discrimination is at the forefront of UNISON.

I am the Branch Secretary for Southwark Local Government Branch and I have been an activist in UNISON for over 25 years with experience of organising and leading many campaigns against attacks on members' pay, jobs, and terms and conditions.

### **Cost of Living Crisis**

We are in the worst cost of living crisis since the 1950s as inflation has shot up to over 15% as energy prices have rocketed and food inflation continues to soar. We cannot afford to live on poverty wages and all trade unions have reported their members visiting food banks and struggling to pay rent or mortgages. 2023 will see more suffering as the UK is now officially in recession, and with the raising of the energy 'cap' and more public sector cuts.

A decade of austerity has ravaged the public sector and we have lost over 20% in wages since 2010. We were therefore unprepared for the massive hike in inflation paying 3 times of much for our energy which will rise again in 2023. This whilst energy companies make billions of pounds in profits to give to their shareholders – BP said they were like a 'cash machine' as they are making so much money!

This plummeting of our wages has provoked the tsunami of strike action which will continue into this year.

### **Co-ordinating Action – Build for a 24-hour general strike!**

We are all so proud of our NHS workers on strike for a wage they can live on but also for safe staffing levels, and to save the NHS which, like health workers, is close to breaking point!

Health workers have huge public support in recognition of their role, especially during Covid, and our ambulance members have delivered very effective strike action with solid picket lines. UNISON Higher Education members have also taken industrial action alongside other unions fighting for higher pay. I support co-ordinating our action with the host of trade unions on strike, or currently balloting for action, and to build for a one- day general strike to win our pay demands. Enough is Enough!

## **Fight the Cuts**

The pressure on local government budgets continues as inflation strips away at this year's funding settlement. At the end of last year another Local Authority declared effective bankruptcy as local government funding has been decimated since 2010. In many Local Authorities central funding has been reduced by 50%. There is a £10 billion funding gap in local authorities. The number of job losses as a result has been substantial. Schools funding is still in crisis along with adult social care.

We must fight any cuts to services, jobs, pay and conditions. Branches must not be left to fight alone – we need to join up the struggles. We need co-ordinated UK wide action to fight council cuts. We must call on Labour councils to stand up against the cuts now. I do not support the position that there is 'no alternative' to cuts and that Councils have 'no option' but to implement them. We must campaign for councils to set no-cuts needs budgets, using reserves and borrowing powers. This will give us time to develop a campaign with mass support from workers and local communities to fight for additional central Government funding to meet the funding gap.

## **2023 Year of the Black Worker**

2023 is UNISON year of the Black worker as we are at the forefront of the fight against racism and discrimination in the workplace. The Black Lives Matters movement led by black youth galvanised the fight against racism in the UK. When this was linked to the Covid crisis which saw the terrible impact on black workers it gained mass support of all workers, black and white, to fight against racism across the UK. The energy of the Black Lives Matters movement must continue in the workplace. We need to oppose any far-right activity with action and policies to fight for jobs, homes and services not racism.

We must still remember the survivors of the Windrush who were driven out of the country as part of the Tories hostile environment. Windrush survivors have received little or nothing in compensation. I support justice for the Windrush survivors.

## **Climate Emergency**

Trade UNIONS must lead the fight against environmental destruction. Campaigning alongside environmental activists and Green campaigners we must ensure that there is a 'Just transition' to future Green jobs. We must campaign to nationalise energy companies under workers control and management to develop sustainable energy supply and distribution. UNISON must demand no loss of jobs, pay, or conditions for any workers in the sector.

## **A member Led Union**

I support the election of Regional Secretaries and Senior Regional & National Officers on no more than the average wages of those they seek to represent. Members and activists must have full transparent, democratic control over the union.

The next two years will be some of the most important years in UNISON's history as we fight against the crisis ridden Tory government trying to make us pay for the capitalist crisis instead of the rich. We need to ensure any incoming Labour government does not carry on 'Tory lite' policies and stands for UNISON polices and the working class against the rich.

**I urge you to nominate me along with Hugo Pierre for the black members' male seat.**

Solidarity,

April Ashley, NEC Black Members Rep