Movement for Justice Perspectives for Struggle in the Time of Brexit & Trump

Brexit is Racist – Stop Brexit By Any Means Necessary!
Defend the Free Movement of People - No More Immigration Controls

Build the Mass Immigrant Rights Movement - Stop the Racist Scapegoating of Immigrants!
For Mass Community Action to Stop Immigration Raids, Deportations and Charter Flights.
Shut Down All Detention Centres!

Open the Borders of Britain and Europe
Amnesty Now for Everyone who does not have Secure Immigration Status

Unite the Struggles Against Racism & Against Poverty & Austerity

Create Sanctuary Schools, Colleges & Campuses to Keep the Home Office Out of Education:
Organise Collective Action to Defend International & immigrant Students
Shut Down the anti-Muslim Prevent Strategy. No Co-operation with Home Office Surveillance.

Build Mass Struggle for Free, Integrated, Public Education from Nursery to University - FOR ALL!
Equal Access to Education for Immigrant Students

Build the Mass, Integrated, Independent, Youth & Immigrant Led
Movement Of & For the Poor & Oppressed

Join Movement for Justice...
Establish MFJ Groups in your Schools, Colleges, Universities & Communities
1. A new period and new challenges
2. Movement for Justice & the centrality of the fight for immigrant rights and against racism
3. The significance and threat of Brexit
4. The Anti-Racist Vote against Brexit
5. Brexit is Racist! Stop Brexit!
6. The Conflicts and Contradictions opened up by Brexit: An opportunity for our independent movement
7. Fighting racism, poverty and Fascism: one struggle
8. Education and Racism: the fight for free public education for all; Home Office out of education; create Sanctuary Campuses; defend international students; equality for immigrant students; stop Prevent!

This statement was read, discussed and amended at the national conference of Movement for Justice on 28 & 29 January 2017. Updated and finalised 14 February 2017.
1. **A new period and new challenges**

Brexit, the election of Donald Trump, and the boost that these events have given to neo-fascists across Europe have created a new and more negative political situation that has plunged the ‘western democracies’ into a profound crisis. We can characterise the threat of these developments quite simply: extreme right-wing, ultra-nationalist demagogues have succeeded in establishing a mass base among sections of the white middle class and working class by whipping up the most backward racist and xenophobic prejudices fostered by capitalist society; and they are using that mass base to attack and supress the growing, and generally more youthful, immigrant and ethnic minority communities. For the demagogues to win total power only one thing is needed: that the poor and oppressed of all races stay silent and fail to fight back. The task before Movement for Justice (MFJ) is to build the mass movement that will fight back and defeat this threat by any means necessary.

Of all these developments, the rise of the Trump movement and his election as US President are undoubtedly the most important. The racists, white supremacists and extreme nationalists of the far-right are in power in the country that still has the world’s biggest and richest economy and strongest armed forces. Fascists are installed in the White House and the administration. Trump and his allies have acted swiftly to launch their attacks on Latin American immigrants and Muslims, whipping up their supporters and attempting to silence opponents and threaten judges and critical journalists. We can do no better than quote the sister organisation of Movement for Justice in the USA – BAMN (the Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action, Integration and Immigrant Rights and Fight for Equality By Any Means Necessary). In a statement titled *Trump Must Go By Any Means Necessary*, BAMN declares:

“The warning signs of an international emergency are everywhere—the flashing lights and blaring sirens of a political crisis can be seen and heard around the world. On January 20, 2017, the United States government will confer executive power to Donald Trump, whose ascension to the Presidency has been characterized primarily by the growth of a neo-fascist, anti-immigrant movement in both the United States and Europe. The entire global outlook is becoming overshadowed by desperate questions about the reality and the immediacy of Trump’s program, with his openly branded threats of human catastrophe: the persecution of millions of immigrants and Muslims, the rise of an authoritarian police state, and the advent of nuclear war.

“In America today, it is increasingly evident that the core principles of the nation, ‘conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal,’ are now in serious danger. The defense of those principles will require defeating Trump’s impending attacks, and removing the tyrant from power. Essential to that defense is the building of a new immigrant rights and civil rights movement, a movement that is fighting to win by any means necessary. That movement will carry an immense responsibility that no other leadership in America is capable of fulfilling: ‘that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth’.”

In Britain, Movement for Justice has declared that it is our task to Stop Brexit. We demonstrated at last December’s Supreme Court hearing of the legal challenge to Theresa May’s attempt to use medieval royal powers to implement Brexit behind closed doors, and without a Parliamentary debate or vote. We declared then, ‘Brexit is Racist! Stop Brexit Now!’ In the leaflet we distributed there we stated that:

“Brexit must be stopped because it's only purpose is to stop immigration….

“...We know in our hearts and minds that Trump and Brexit are a racist and nationalist double act. The most powerful solidarity we can show to those marching and shutting down streets in the US is build our independent mass anti-racist movement here in the UK, we must defend immigrants, international students and the Muslim community by any means necessary - we must STOP BREXIT. Stopping the growth of racist, xenophobic, nationalism here is our best contribution to those fighting to stop Trump over there.

Scarcely a day passes without some new indication of what Brexit means: new and harsher anti-immigrant measures; new acts of injustice; the Government reneging on its pledge, in law, to take in unaccompanied child migrants from Syria; Theresa May’s advisors preparing laws to limit the freedom of the press and impose long jail sentences on those who publish secret information on Brexit negotiations; governments preparing for a protectionist trade war, etc. It is becoming clearer every day just how closely Brexit and Trump are connected. Severed from Europe, Brexit Britain will be stuck in a relationship of one-sided dependency on an increasingly protectionist and nationalist US Government; a relationship that is sure to favour the growth of far right and fascist forces here. For that reason the movements against Brexit and Trump are linked as parts of a single struggle. As we have written in the Movement for Justice leaflet for a forthcoming mass walk-out on migrant rights, entitled ‘WalkOut! March! Shut Down London 20/02/17’,

“Brexit inspired & emboldened Trump & together they have strengthened fascism across Europe. To fight Trump's anti-Muslim & anti-immigrant attacks we must fight the biggest single attack on immigrant rights in our generation.

“...
"We CAN Stop Brexit. Everything is up in the air, politicians are divided and May’s grovelling to make a pact with
Trump and a variety of human rights abusers, is a glimpse of the destructive path her government is taking Britain
onto, under the banner of Brexit. The decisive factor, however, lies in our ability to build a movement mobilising the
social power of all youth whose futures were stolen by a referendum they couldn’t even vote in and black, Asian,
Muslim and immigrant communities in mass action.”

In one important aspect, the situation we face in Britain is more negative than in the US. There, millions have taken to
the streets in militant protests against the election of Trump, especially in the Latina/o and black communities and among
women. These integrated and overwhelmingly youthful demonstrations and the school/college walk-outs started as soon
as the election results came out and have continued to Trump’s inauguration and since. They have taken place in every
major city and in defiance of the attempts of Obama and the Democratic Party leaders to maintain ‘business as usual’ and
play down the threat posed by Trump and his movement.

A big part of the danger that MFJ must overcome is that the response to Brexit has been relatively muted, despite its
clearly racist character and consequences. There are several reasons for the difference between the situation here and
in the US. There, the black, Latina/o and immigrant communities and the youth have been readier to act independently of
the Democrats, because they have already had their hopes in Obama dashed, and Hillary Clinton was a deeply unpopular
candidate, even among those who voted for her. Moreover, most of the US ruling class is unhappy with Trump’s victory;
in part that is because they don’t need racist scapegoating policies to the same extent as the British and European ruling
classes, who face a deeper crisis with far weaker economies. Indeed, Trump’s campaign was heavy on misogyny and
other ugly prejudices as well as his anti-immigrant racism, while the Brexit campaign totally focussed on racist immigrant
bashing, playing to a ‘white blind spot’ on racism without creating offence on other issues.

However, a major reason for the different response in Britain is the role played by the Labour Party, and particularly the
new left-wing leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell and Diane Abbott – both in the hopes they aroused and in
the responses to the referendum that have now led this leadership and most Labour MPs to vote for May’s Bill to trigger
Brexit on 9th January.

In 2015, following the Conservative election victory and Ed Milliband’s resignation as Leader of the Labour Party, a
new, quite loose movement sprung up around Corbyn’s campaign for the Labour leadership in 2015. This movement
was especially strong among students and youth, many of whom had been with MFJ to Surround Harmondsworth and
Surround Yarl’s Wood. Many had been through earlier struggles that Movement for Justice was part of: the mass student
movement whose battle against fee hikes and the abolition of EMA in the final months of 2010 came close to bringing
down the Coalition Government; the mass demonstrations and student occupations protesting against the Israeli bombing
of Gaza and repression of the Palestinian population; or they had been part of the two million strong demonstration trying
to stop Tony Blair’s Iraq War in 2003. Corbyn’s leadership campaign was regarded by all Labour MPs and journalists (and
even by Corbyn himself) as a hopeless stand by Labour’s diminishing ‘Old Left;’ instead it became the lightning rod for
that generation’s anger, frustration and hopes.

This movement was a positive response to austerity policies, the attacks on education, and the Tory victory in the May
2015 election. It rallied to Corbyn because of his record of opposing cuts and austerity policies, imperialist wars and
immigration controls, and defending Palestinian rights. It secured his victory, and re-elected him with a bigger majority in
2016. In essence, this movement saw itself as a campaign to reclaim the Labour Party for the cause of peace, progress
and social justice, and rescue it from the betrayals of Blair and his successors in the Labour leadership. That is a view the
‘Corbynite’ movement shares with the new Labour leadership; that is their weakness.

For all their history of stubborn opposition on the Left of a Blairite-dominated party, Corbyn, McDonnell, Abbott and their
allies are fundamentally committed to working through the established political system, through Parliament, and they
share a faith in preserving the unity of the Labour Party. They see a role for movements outside Parliament in one of
two ways: trade unionism, defending workers’ pay and working conditions, or single issue campaigns that essentially act
as pressure groups on politicians. Both are seen as adjuncts to electoral tactics, and therefore subordinated to those
tactics. In the case of the trade unions that are affiliated to the Labour Party, it means maintaining an alliance with union
bureaucrats who have presided over the lowest levels of trade union action, the biggest decline in union membership
and the highest levels of inequality for a century. For Corbyn etc., winning elections to Parliament is the highest form of
political activity, because they regard it as the only way to achieve real change.

That whole idea of reclaiming the Labour Party rests on a kind of nostalgia for some golden age that never existed.
Labour has always been a party that both reflected the hopes of the poor, oppressed and exploited in various ways, and at
the same time believed that those hopes could only be realised through the Parliamentary system. Relying on Parliament
means working through the whole set of state institutions, including courts and laws, that maintain the status quo in
society within an economic order totally based on exploitation and profit. That illusion has characterised Labour in both
its more radical and more conservative phases. MFJ is independent of the Labour Party (as well as all the parties in this
Parliamentary system) because that approach cannot end oppression and exploitation, and it will not win any meaningful,
progressive change when the whole system is in a profound crisis, which is the current situation.

Brexit has brutally exposed the limitations of that approach and thrown the new Labour leadership and its supporters into
turmoil, confusion and retreat. Through December and January Corbyn fudged and edged his way towards abandoning
the free movement of people, saying he is not tied to free movement as a principle; he and McDonnell kept repeating
that they would not obstruct Brexit, but did not want a ‘hard’ Brexit; at one point McDonnell echoed Boris Johnson, saying that Brexit offered ‘great opportunities’ to Britain; Labour’s Shadow Foreign Secretary, Emily Thornberry, announced that ‘We’re not going to die in a ditch’ for free movement; Corbyn’s chief trade union ally, Len McClusky of Unite, Britain’s biggest trade union, declared in December that ‘Unions understand that workers have always done best when the labour supply is controlled and communities are stable…. free movement of labour means downward pressure on wages….’ Corbyn ended up imposing a ‘3-line whip’ on Labour MPs to back the Brexit Bill and provoking a rebellion by many of those closest to him. His strongest cheer-leaders were those same right-wing Labourites who were baying for his blood last summer (see section 5, below).

This degeneration and double-speak is disheartening and confusing for the youth, and especially the black and Asian supporters, who had expected so much more from Corbyn’s leadership.

Movement for Justice is the only organisation that has the strategy and politics that can provide a way forward: building an alliance of immigrants, black and Asian communities, youth and students in a new mass movement of action. That urgent task falls to MFJ in this new period. Central to that is stopping Brexit, by any means necessary.

This means applying the methods developed by MFJ to the changing situation, and building on our victories and achievements. In the next section we set out what that basic strategy is – what, in effect, the Movement for Justice is.

2. Movement for Justice & the centrality of the fight for immigrant rights and against racism

Movement for Justice is a single-issue campaign, even on the issues that have been a focus for much of our activity, like immigration detention, charter flights and LGBT asylum rights. Our struggles on these and other issues are combined, because the injustices and abuses we are fighting are combined - part of a whole system of injustice, abuse, oppression and exploitation. We decide our priorities based on how particular aspects of injustice, oppression etc maintain that whole system, and who are the most conscious and militant forces fighting that system.

MFJ puts the struggles against racism, and especially against anti-immigrant policies and prejudices, at the centre of building a new mass movement. This is our strategy because racism and anti-immigrant prejudice are the most important political weapons of the rich and powerful and their political allies, and because immigrants and black, Asian and other ethnic minority youth are the most dynamic force for change in British society.

MFJ demands Open the Borders because that is what hundreds of thousands of migrants/refugees are demanding and putting into practice at Europe’s borders and the Channel ports, and because, as we can see every day on the Mediterranean coasts and in the politics of President Trump, Open Borders are the only alternative to barbarism and tyranny. We understand that Open Borders demands, 1) a reversal of the cuts and austerity policies in Britain and Europe, 2) a fight in the imperialist countries like Britain against their governments’ wars in the Middle East and elsewhere, and 3) a relationship of equality between nations, based on ending the exploitation and impoverishment of the world’s poor countries by the imperialist powers and corporations. MFJ is committed to those struggles and our aim, along with BAMN in the US, is to extend and strengthen them by building an international movement.

It follows that MFJ is not a solidarity group, a support group, or an advocacy group. For us solidarity, support and advocacy are expressed in the practical unity of the struggle. What chiefly distinguishes the MFJ is our understanding that:

1. The fight against racism and xenophobia and the fight against austerity, poverty and inequality are inseparable, because poverty and racism are inseparable. That is especially true under present-day conditions of continuing economic crises and growing inequality (nationally and internationally), with mass migration and increasingly multiracial societies, and with a long period of conservative stagnation and passivity in the traditional labour movement. This is the case both because a supposed scarcity of resources fosters division and conflict, and because encouraging and maintaining such divisions is necessary for the ruling class.

2. To overcome divisions among the poor and oppressed and build a united struggle, we must at all times speak the plain truth about racism and all the divisive practices and prejudices that divide us. This is not just...
an abstract moral principle but an imperative practical task for our movement. We reject the misguided ‘strategy’ that seeks to create ‘unity’ by focusing on opposition to austerity measures or saving the NHS, at the expense of defending immigrant rights and fighting racism. That view dominates the thinking of nearly all Labour Party and trade union leaders and activists. It is a betrayal of all poor, oppressed people. At the most it can only create a false, cynical unity, and it is always counter-productive.

3. The oppressed and exploited must be leaders in the struggles against their oppression and exploitation. We base our strategy on the approach of Frederick Douglass, the former slave and great leader of the 19th century anti-slavery movement in the USA. Speaking in 1857 Douglass declared:

“The general sentiment of mankind is that a man who will not fight for himself, when he has the means of doing so, is not worth being fought for by others, and this sentiment is just… The poet [Byron] was as true to common sense as to poetry when he said,

“Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.

“… In the great struggle now progressing for the freedom and elevation of our people, we should be found at work with all our might, resolved that no man or set of men shall be more abundant in labors, according to the measure of our ability, than ourselves.

“… If there is no struggle there is no progress…. This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand....”

Detainees and former detainees must be leaders and organisers in the fight to end detention, in order to change the balance of forces inside detention centres and outside; immigrants (asylum seekers, migrant workers etc) must be leaders in the fight for immigrant rights and freedom of movement, and Muslim students must be leaders in the fight to shut down the Government’s anti-Muslim surveillance policy, Prevent. That will inspire the widest possible unity and mobilisation of all oppressed and exploited people.

4. None of this can happen ‘spontaneously.’ The anger that inspires rebellion and the willingness to fight the oppressors are vital to the creation of a movement, which is why MFJ welcomes the more or less spontaneous struggles that break out. By their nature, however, spontaneous struggles are always too narrow, limited to a particular outrage or act of injustice, or to a particular group or section of society. Even when they spread like wildfire for a time, this cannot be maintained without organisation based on a conscious strategy and clear demands. If spontaneous struggles don’t simply die down, their energy is diverted by the time-worn practices and illusions of the established political system - false promises, do-nothing inquiries, paper reforms etc. Because MFJ is committed to building a movement that can win, we reject such misleading notions as ‘the action is the demand,’ and ‘we have no leaders.’ We leave such illusions to those who can afford the luxury. The poor and oppressed, the immigrants in detention or threatened with deportation, the youth whose education is being destroyed, need to win. That requires the conscious development of a strategy, organisation, and accountable leadership. That is impossible without discussion, education and training.

In today’s battles MFJ stands on the proud history of past generations of immigrant struggles that have shaped this nation: the thousands of slaves and run-away slaves (forced immigrants, asserting their right to freedom) whose personal and collective battles for freedom in Britain were the basis of the Abolitionist movement; the black and Irish workers who were the most militant leaders of the mass Chartist movement for the right to vote; the Irish and Jewish immigrants who were critical to the development of a mass labour movement and the fight against Fascism; the generations of black, Asian and more recent Latin American immigrants who have been the most dynamic force for equality and justice over the past half-century; the Muslim youth who have been the most militant force opposing Britain’s recent imperialist wars and foreign policy.

Today, however, the future of all poor, oppressed, working class and struggling middle class people in Britain, and most of all the future of the youth, is immeasurably more bound up with the struggles of immigrants and the black and Asian communities than ever before in the nation’s history.

For more than six years the principle focus of MFJ has been on the right of asylum and the fight to end detention, because these have been the most explosive and vulnerable aspects of the racist immigration system. We have applied the same fundamental method that is central to all our work – changing the balance of power and building the leadership of the oppressed. That has meant building an organised movement inside and outside detention, filling court rooms with fellow asylum seekers etc. and fighting with detainees and asylum seekers against fatal illusions in lawyers, moral appeals to the powers-that-be for sympathy, hunger strikes etc., because those tactics set them up to lose.

That work has achieved great victories: we have won hundreds of asylum cases, many of which had been deemed hopeless by lawyers; scores of asylum detainees in MFJ have fought their way off planes; detainees have stopped charter flight deportations. In the past four years we have won a series of victories against the asylum and detention systems: the notorious system of Detained Fast Track (DFT) in asylum cases has been shut down; on 20th January this year a final nail was driven into its coffin when the High Court ruled that all DFT processes were unlawful, right back to 2005 when the system was introduced by a Labour government; the expansion of Campsfield detention centre has been stopped; Haslar, Dover & Cedars House have been closed and new detention facility near Glasgow Airport has been stopped; there are overall fewer people in detention, reversing a constant expansion of detention that we were told was
They maintained Thatcher’s anti-trade union laws and increased privatisation in the public services. There was no respite thereby intensified the crashing of the productive economy. They embarked on far more disastrous colonial-style wars. Their governments embraced ‘neo-liberal,’ ‘free market’ economics at home and abroad, and with the Labour governments from 1997 to 2010. Under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, Labour embraced all the key elements of ‘Thatcherism.’ Their governments maintained Thatcher’s anti-trade union laws and increased privatisation in the public services. There was no respite.

Responsibility for the much wider and more virulent growth of anti-EU sentiment and anti-immigrant racism lies squarely with the Labour governments from 1997 to 2010. Under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, Labour embraced all the key elements of ‘Thatcherism.’ Their governments embraced ‘neo-liberal,’ ‘free market’ economics at home and abroad, and thereby intensified the crashing of the productive economy. They embarked on far more disastrous colonial-style wars. They maintained Thatcher’s anti-trade union laws and increased privatisation in the public services. There was no respite.

The context and goal of this growing movement will be Stopping Brexit, because anti-immigrant racism is driving Brexit and Brexit is driving anti-immigrant racism.

3. The significance and threat of Brexit

No-one who shares the aims and perspective of MFJ can afford to under-estimate the national and international significance of the majority vote for Brexit in last year’s referendum. An event of such profound importance is obviously not accidental. We are in a new situation, but it has deep roots in both recent and more distant history. A long-drawn-out crisis in Britain’s economy, society, political system and international relations has erupted, and like a volcano it is opening multiple fault-lines, changing the political landscape and sending shock waves round the world. It has plunged the United Kingdom into its deepest political and constitutional crisis for over a century, casting doubt over its continued existence or future shape, and it has thrown the Labour Party into the greatest crisis of its 117-year existence. Neither will continue unchanged.

The referendum only happened because politicians of all the main parties have spent decades stirring up anti-immigrant bigotry. Successive governments have crashed the productive economy, crushed collective working class action, trashed our public services and started disastrous colonial-style wars. With no hopeful future to offer people who are battling long-term poverty and insecurity, politicians have promoted fear, division and racist myths - the stock divide-and-rule strategy of an establishment that knows the damage its policies are causing for the poor and oppressed and wants to divert our anger and divide our ranks. That strategy doesn’t produce new jobs and housing or better public services, it doesn’t end insecurity or bring real hope for the future, so governments have brought in one tougher and more racist immigration bill after another, with increasing frequency. This vicious spiral into the pit of racism and xenophobia produced the referendum and led to Brexit.

We need to clarify the history set out in the previous paragraph, since politicians and commentators have done so much to mystify it. British ambivalence and/or opposition towards being part of Europe’s economic integration have, from the start, been entwined with this country’s long-term economic and political decline as an imperialist power, and its attempts to maintain an independent great power status through a relationship with US imperialists. The latest example of this policy is May’s (and swiftly rebuffed) offer to the EU governments to act as a ‘bridge’ to the Trump administration. This attitude towards European integration has historically been reflected in the Labour Party, and the trade unions, by illusions in economic protectionism as the way to protect working class living standards. Whether in the Conservative Party or the Labour Party, this policy has always been at odds with the increasing importance of continental Europe as Britain’s biggest trading partner.

The Government has had to change the focus of its immigration policies and cast the net wider, in order to maintain its racist scapegoating policies. The last Immigration Act introduced a whole set of new criminal offences related to immigration, to catch and deport more ‘offenders.’ Changes to immigration law, and cuts in access to support, housing and Legal Aid are designed to drive more immigrants ‘underground’ and into destitution. International students are coming under increasing attack. The policy of Theresa May and her replacement at the Home Office, Amber Rudd, can be summed up as criminalisation, destitution, more and quicker deportations, and a faster journey from arrest, through detention to deportation.

This is a potentially explosive policy. It means a much greater and wider targeting of black, Asian, Latin American, East European and other minority communities and families. It is already targeting communities and families that had not thought they had an immigration problem, and it is creating many more enemies. MFJ must become an immigrant rights movement in the fullest sense of the term. Our focus will increasingly be on building and mobilising mass action in those communities, among migrant workers and in schools, colleges and workplaces. Expanding our field of action in that way is how we can defend the victories we have won, extend the right of asylum and shut down detention.

We have already begun that turn to the communities, starting with the Peckham Community Pride in February 2016, led by LGBT asylum seekers and linking the fights against homophobia and for immigrant rights, through to the community demonstrations in Brixton and Peckham this January against immigration raids and mass deportation, and we have taken the first steps to making this fight international with January’s simultaneous demonstrations in London and Lagos against mass deportation charter flights.

The referendum and led to Brexit. An event of such profound importance is obviously not accidental.
in the devastation of manufacturing and mining communities. Rather than reverse the Tories’ public service cuts, they applied sticking plasters: a miserably low national minimum wage, and in-work benefits for the low-paid that subsidised corporate profits. They created the situation where the majority of people on welfare benefits are actually in work.

Alongside those economic and social policies, the Blair/Brown governments intensified the racist scapegoating of immigrants and asylum seekers and the demonisation of Muslims. One of their first measures was a new, more draconian Immigration Act to replace the one they had half-heartedly voted against a year earlier. They began the massive increase in the use of detention and introduced the unlawful Detained Fast Track system and the policy of deporting so-called Foreign National Offenders (FNO’s).

The widespread disillusion with the Blair/Brown governments and their betrayal of the hopes aroused by Labour’s 1997 election victory intensified a cynical attitude towards the whole political system. That sense of alienation increased with the impact of the 2008 financial crisis and the austerity policies of the 2010-15 Coalition, while immigrant bashing policies and rhetoric rose following the immigration of workers from the new EU members (Poland etc.). This toxic mix created the basis for the rapid rise in support for UKIP, a party with a populist, ‘anti-establishment’ rhetoric and just a single policy, that could attract both former Labour and former Tory voters. This was the real basis of the demand for a referendum on Britain’s continuing EU membership.

In reality, Brexit started with the Conservatives election campaign in 2015, when Cameron promised an ‘in/out’ referendum on the EU to hang onto the racist, anti-immigrant and pro-UKIP vote and hold his own party together. Bringing in the Referendum Bill was one of his government’s first acts. It was closely followed by yet another Immigration Bill from Theresa May, the most racist, brutal and inhuman legislation since World War Two. At the same time, before the referendum was held or the Immigration Bill became law, the Home Office intensified its onslaught on EU citizens in the UK – or, to be precise, on immigrants from eastern Europe – that started when May became Home Secretary in 2010. Since then the number of EU citizens deported has risen by 256%, and there has been a rapid increase in the number held in detention since 2010. By the end of 2016 17% of immigration detainees were EU nationals.

The Brexit referendum campaign was accompanied by an increase in racist abuse and attacks on the streets, and the assassination of Labour MP Jo Cox, a prominent campaigner for Remain and for the rights of Syrian refugees. It was entirely predictable that the vote was followed by a murderous upsurge of racist, xenophobic and anti-Muslim attacks and abuse that is still continuing (a 41% increase in reported incidents alone in the weeks following the referendum). It produced a more right-wing government under Theresa May that is embracing xenophobia and ‘white populism’.

Internationally, Brexit has deepened the crisis within the European Union and emboldened far-right, racist demagogues like Trump and Le Pen. The combination of Brexit and the election of Trump as US President have acted as a political catalyst, creating a situation where far-right and fascist forces are closer to power than at any time since World War Two. Far-right parties in close relationship with militant fascists are already in power in Hungary and Poland, and on the day after Trump’s inauguration Marine Le Pen of the French National Front and Geert Wilders of the Dutch Freedom Party, together with far-right leaders from Germany, Austria and Italy, held a highly publicised meeting in Koblenz on the Rhine. Brexit clearly means more racism, more austerity, and a more dangerous international situation.

4. The Anti-Racist Vote against Brexit

From the perspective of building a movement against this threat, the most important aspect of the referendum was the strong anti-racist vote against the stream of immigrant-bashing rhetoric and policies that was the driving force of the Leave campaign.

Britain’s black, Asian, Muslim & immigrant communities saw the Brexit campaign for what it is: a racist campaign that threatens immigrants and everyone in those communities, regardless of citizenship status or where they were born. Many people in those communities who have the right to vote, saw voting Remain as a way to oppose that threat. That is clearly demonstrated by the evidence of surveys: 73% of black people who voted opposed Brexit, along with 67% of Asian voters & 70% of Muslim voters. And 73% of voters in the country’s most multiracial generation, those aged 24 & under, opposed Brexit on an unusually high 64% turnout, along with 62% of those aged 25-34. In London, the highest votes for Remain were in the most multiracial and youthful boroughs, like Lambeth 78.6%, Southwark 72.8%, Haringey 75.6%, Tower Hamlets 67.5%, Hackney 78.5%.

And remember, many people who will be affected by Brexit do not have the right to vote: EU citizens, regardless of how long they have lived in Britain, those with Right to Remain or Right of Residence, and those under 18.

The challenge now is to turn the sentiment reflected in those voting figures into an organised mass movement that unites the poor and oppressed of all races, regardless of national origins and immigration status, in the fight against the racism of Brexit and the greater poverty it will lead to. Our starting point is the analysis and perspective outlined in the pamphlet issued by MFJ before the referendum. It was titled “Stop the Leave campaign’s racist, xenophobic attack – No to Fortress Britain! No to Fortress Europe!” – in that order. We quote two key passages here in full. In the opening section, we wrote that:

“Many of those voting for Remain have supported the MFJ and contributed to [its] growing strength: you have been with us on our demonstrations with the detainees in Harmondsworth/Colnbrook and Yarl’s Wood detention centres, that have been the focus of the growing movement against detention over the past two years; you have marched with us on demonstrations in solidarity with refugees, for free public education, against austerity and war,
or on Peckham Community Pride in February; you have bombarded airline switchboards and gone to Heathrow to stop deportations; you have attended our public hearings to put detention on trial and organised meetings for us or contributed to our fundraising, you have heard us speak at your colleges, universities and conferences. You will be with us on the Immigrant Rights Bloc at London Pride two days after the referendum and on the next Surround Yarl’s Wood on 10th September.

"In reality you will be casting your vote against Leave, rather than for a Remain campaign that leaves most people feeling confused, baffled or indifferent and offers only a continuation of an uninspiring status quo. Nor is it a vote for EU institutions that have established the supra-national Frontex border force, that are closing borders and condemning immigrants and refugees to drown in the Mediterranean or live in destitution if they reach an EU country. It is not a vote for the economic policies that have devastated the jobs, living standards and public services of the Greek people and imposed mass unemployment on the youth of Spain and Portugal.

"In reality there will be an anti-racist vote for Remain (which could well be decisive) because those voters want to do something about the threat posed by the Leave campaign and can’t see what else to do in the circumstances, because the movement is not yet big enough and powerful enough – in reality because the Movement for Justice is not yet powerful enough. That is what has to change." (emphasis added)

Later, in a section titled ‘Europe in crisis, Britain in crisis,’ we wrote that:

“... Europe... faces its biggest and deepest crisis since World War Two. This is not a ‘migrant crisis’ as the media keep calling it - there is a profound crisis in the relationship between Europe and its near neighbours, the countries of the Middle East and Africa, that is part of the global crisis that Europe is facing. It is the crisis of an economic system that can’t meet the needs of humanity, or create a more equal and prosperous world, because its only goal is to maximise the profits of a small minority. The greed of the capitalists who dominate the world economy created the banking collapse in 2008, and they can’t find any way out of the long depression that followed. That is leading to dangerous international conflicts and to more damaging attacks on the working class and the poor in every country.

“MFJ sees nothing progressive in the EU. It is an imperialist club, set up to protect the interests of the ruling classes of west European countries by integrating their economies more closely. Those interests include exploiting poor countries and former colonies in Africa, Asia etc., and since the 1980s the EU has expanded to include and exploit its poorer neighbours in eastern and southern Europe. Now the crisis in [the] global capitalist economy has brought this EU project to a juddering halt and sent it into reverse. The countries and regions of Europe are pulling apart and falling out – but they are also far less able to prosper separately.

“Neither the EU nor a capitalist Britain outside the EU offer any solution or hope to the poor and oppressed. Britain is part of the crisis in Europe not separate from it – whether it leaves the EU or stays in. For that reason, while we recognise the positive anti-racist and pro-immigrant reasons why many people and many of our supporters will vote for Remain to defeat Leave, the MFJ does not endorse the Remain campaign. (emphasis added)

“We can’t politically endorse the EU that is the bailiff and debt collector for the banks holding Greece to ransom, the international enforcer of austerity, the parent of Frontex and mass deporter of refugees, and the institution that has negotiated the notorious Trans-Atlantic Trade & Investment Partnership (TTIP) – a robbers’ charter that gives giant monopoly corporations power over national governments whose policies might damage their profits. To endorse that would be a betrayal of the refugees who are opening the borders and every anti-racist and anti-austerity struggle in Europe.”

Because our central question is always how to build the new mass movement, it was not sufficient for MFJ just to point out the truth, that on economic policies and immigration policies there is nothing to choose between ‘Fortress Britain’ and ‘Fortress Europe,’ and that both campaigns were led by politicians who are responsible for scapegoating immigrants and demonising the Muslim community.

In a referendum that we did not want, that was forced on us by the most racist elements in British politics, with a Leave campaign that was driven by rabid immigrant-bashing and unabashed racist scaremongering, Brexit was the greater danger. A Brexit victory had to mean a more racist Britain. That is why we did not equate voting Leave and voting Remain.

While a vote for Brexit was a conscious vote for more immigration controls, by voters who accepted the argument that immigration was a ‘problem, a significant part of the Remain vote was a progressive anti-racist vote against the racism of Brexit. It would have been a serious mistake for MFJ to say ‘A plague on both your houses’ about the consciousness of the voters.

Nevertheless, in voting for the ‘lesser evil,’ there was an element of illusion – the illusion that it is possible to resolve our problems through the established political system. That illusion is rooted in the mistaken view that we are all taught to believe, in a thousand different ways, that only the rich and powerful and governments and parliaments can bring about change. The result of the referendum has greatly encouraged attacks and other public manifestations of racism, it has seriously increased the racist scapegoating of immigrants and the drive for more austerity policies, and it has escalated Europe’s political crisis; but a victory for Remain would not have ended immigrant-bashing policies, reversed the austerity policies or resolved the crisis in Europe. That can only change when we overcome our illusions in the system and build a mass movement based on our own independent social power. As we said above, those illusions remain strong because we don’t yet have a strong enough mass movement. That is what we must change.
5. Brexit is Racist! Stop Brexit!

The plain truth about the referendum is that overwhelmingly those voting for Brexit accepted the politicians’ constantly repeated lie that there is ‘not enough to go round’; not enough jobs, not enough houses, not enough hospital beds, not enough school places, and above all, not enough money. So, according to that reckoning, more people coming into the country must mean an even smaller share of the cake for them. That is the bedrock of Brexit racism; it means entitlement depends on who ‘really’ belongs in Britain.

This is the 'last in, first out' principle applied to the whole society; that inevitably creates a racist and xenophobic hierarchy. In trade union practice, ‘last in, first out’ is a way of collaborating with employers who are imposing redundancies, rather than fighting to save all the jobs. In theory it is meant to stop employers victimising workers who fight for their rights and organise trade union struggles, but in practice it generally protects more privileged workers at the expense of those who are less secure. That generally means that young workers, ethnic minority workers and women workers are ‘first out.’ Applying ‘last in, first out’ to a whole society means, 1) accepting that it is impossible to fight the scarcity, austerity and poverty imposed by the politicians, and 2) seeking a collaboration with those same politicians against immigrants.

Comments that ‘not everyone who voted to leave is racist’ simply miss the point. Individual Brexit voters are not all racist in the same way or to the same extent, but the whole dynamic of the campaign, and the vote, was anti-immigrant racism. That inevitably stirred up all the timeworn racist prejudices that saturate the life of an old colonial and imperialist nation like Britain. The consequences of the vote have borne out its racist character, both at the level of government policy and in the sharp and widespread upsurge of racist attacks and abuse. The great majority of people who voted for Brexit have not been involved in those attacks, and many are doubtless shocked by them, but the escalation of racist violence would not be happening without the mass support for the Brexit campaign.

For these reasons, **MFJ declares unequivocally that Brexit is racist.** Years of lowered aspirations for the majority of people, economic policies that have devastated large and small industries and whole communities, and the seemingly endless scapegoating of immigrants for those developments, have led to a situation where many poor, working class and struggling middle class white people view any talk of racial equality or the rights of immigrants and refugees (and human rights etc.) as attacks on them, as coming at their expense. Brexit is an expression of that view. To overcome that view, defeat the Government’s racist, poverty-creating Brexit policies, and build a united struggle for equality and against austerity our movement must Stop Brexit.

This is the real-world dynamic that the so-called ‘Lexiters’ (‘left-wing’ campaigners for Brexit) have proved incapable of understanding, because they see racism and xenophobia (which, of course, they are ‘against’) as simply another single issue, rather than the central political issue for the future of all the poor and oppressed throughout Europe, and for rebuilding any progressive mass struggle. Those groups, who include the SWP, the Socialist Party, Counterfire etc., think it is enough just to condemn the European Union as a capitalist club and a driver of neo-liberal, ‘free market’ economics. They are right about that, but what else do they think the United Kingdom is? UK governments since Margaret Thatcher have been the biggest driver of free market economics within the EU, and Britain has ‘opted out’ of a whole series of EU policies that limited the power of employers.

The Lexiters’ arguments are a rehash of the protectionist prejudices of Labour’s ‘Old Left,’ and they would be irrelevant...
Corbyn and McDonnell have been talking increasingly of the economic ‘opportunities’ for Britain outside the EU, echoing the words of Theresa May and Boris Johnson. Their vision is different of course. They see a new period of public investment, a National Investment Bank, higher public spending, reversing public sector cuts, a higher minimum wage etc. as the way forward; and they hope to implement these policies through the present political system and with the co-operation of the big banks and corporations! MFJ would happily support the proposed measures, but, in a period of economic crisis and increasing conflict between rival capitalist nations, Corbyn’s political plan for carrying them out is a utopian dream. The measures Corbyn proposes would have to be forced on the rich and powerful by the mass action of an independent mass movement. To build such a movement requires a militant fight against the racism, xenophobia and immigrant-bashing of Brexit, and neither Corbyn or McDonnell will say that Brexit is Racist. Instead, they have demanded that Labour MPs vote, not for some illusory ‘soft’ Brexit, but precisely for May’s ‘hard’ Brexit. And, to their shame, the ‘Lexiters’ are behind them, without a word of criticism for their betrayal of the freedom of movement.

Recent pronouncements by Theresa May and other members of the Government have made it clear what ‘Brexit means Brexit’ really means. It is a decision that ending free movement of people between Britain and the rest of Europe is more important than maintaining free trade with Europe. This was set out definitively in May’s 17 January speech, in which she announced that the Government would not try to stay in the Single Market (tariff-free trade area of the EU, Norway & Switzerland) because that would mean keeping free movement of people. They have made that choice because they see no way of maintaining their austerity measures or fundamental economic policies without maintaining the racist scapegoating of immigrants. The consequences are that Brexit Britain will be a super-exploitative, low-pay economy to see no way of maintaining their austerity measures or fundamental economic policies without maintaining the racist scapegoating of immigrants. The consequences are that Brexit Britain will be a super-exploitative, low-pay economy to attract short-term business with the lure of ultra-low business taxes, all of which mean further cuts and privatisation of public services, health, education etc.

**Talk of modifying Brexit is a fantasy and it is a lie to call the result of the referendum ‘democratic.’** Brexit is an attack on the rights and equality of millions of people in Britain. It will diminish rights at work etc. and fundamental human rights that have been established in EU law; it is whipping up racism and endangering the welfare and security of minorities. **There is nothing ‘democratic’ about the vote of a majority to extinguish or endanger the rights of minorities: that is the road to tyranny, not democracy.**

MFJ defends the free movement of people unconditionally and opposes more immigration controls. If we are to continue that struggle **WE MUST FIGHT TO STOP BREXIT.**

**6. Conflicts & Contradictions opened up by Brexit: An opportunity for our independent movement**

It is to our advantage that the Supreme Court blocked the Government’s attempt to use medieval powers of Royal Prerogative to start Brexit behind closed doors. It is to our advantage that Brexit and May’s policies have created serious divisions in the political, economic and legal establishment and in both the Conservative and Labour Parties. The divisions and delays mean that the Brexit project loses momentum and our movement can grow and have a greater impact, and Stop Brexit.

The divisions reflect different concerns and contradictory pressures. On one hand, there are the concerns of business interests, especially those of the biggest companies that fear the loss of markets and profits from their trade with EU countries, and the banks that fear the City of London will lose its place as Europe’s principal financial centre. Along with that are fears in the political and legal establishment about legal uncertainty, the possible break-up of the UK, and growing poverty leading to more social unrest. All these concerns are reflected in each of the mainstream parties.

On the other hand, and of far greater significance for our struggle to Stop Brexit, the biggest growth recently in opposition to Brexit within the mainstream parties has been in the Labour Party and has reflected the concerns and fears of the black, Asian and immigrant communities and a considerable part of Corbyn’s left-wing base.

As we commented above, Corbyn has been saying since the referendum that Labour would not oppose or obstruct Brexit. Though he has criticised the divisive rhetoric of the Leave campaign, he has avoided calling Brexit racist and said that Labour would respect the result of the referendum as a ‘democratic decision.’ At the Labour Party Conference in September, however, he argued that there is no need for a cap on immigration and criticised attempts to blame immigrants for problems caused by Government policies. Then, in the following months, he and McDonnell talked more and more about making Brexit work. At the same time, Abbott, the shadow Home Secretary and longest serving black woman MP, spoke out about the racist impact of Brexit and emerged as the most trenchant defender of the free movement of people between Britain and Europe. In December she made a point of being filmed with MFJ demonstrators proclaiming **Stop Brexit Now** outside the Supreme Court.

These evasions and fudges could not survive once May announced, on 17 January, that Brexit meant no free movement of people and put the Brexit Bill (formally the European Union [Notification of Withdrawal] Bill) before Parliament. When the Bill came to the House of Commons for a two-day second reading on 31 January, Corbyn issued a 3-line whip instructing Labour MPs to vote for Brexit on 1 February. He made fundamentally the same choice as May, that stopping immigration controls is more important than the economy. His action pulled the rug from under an expected rebellion by pro-EU Tory MPs, but it split the Labour Party.
At that stage, 47 Labour MPs voted against Brexit, including many of Corbyn’s strongest supporters. Abbott left Parliament two hours before the vote ‘with a sudden Migraine.’ When the Bill came back for a third reading on 8 February Corbyn once again instructed his MPs to vote for it, even though every single amendment had been defeated and five more Labour MPs joined the rebellion (Abbott voted for the Bill this time, however). The loudest support for Corbyn has come from right-wing Labour MPs who were baying for his blood six months ago.

The 52 rebels included 5 (3 of them black or Asian) who were members of Corbyn’s shadow cabinet until the Bill came up for a vote in Parliament, and around 14 who had more junior positions in his frontbench team or were Labour ‘whips.’ 21 of the 52 are London MPs and most of the others are from major city areas, including 4 from Merseyside, 3 each for Cardiff and Greater Manchester, and 2 each for Bristol, Newcastle and Nottingham. 10 are black or Asian - 7 of them for London constituencies. Over half had only been MPs since 2010 and 16 were first elected in or since May 2015, and most of the frontbench rebels were among the newer MPs.

Most significantly, the majority represent integrated, multiracial communities with large black, Asian and immigrant populations that voted heavily against Brexit in June. The vote against the Brexit Bill by those MPs reflected the concerns, fears and anger of those communities and their local Labour Party organisations. One MP from such a constituency, who nevertheless voted against, the Bill, Keir Starmer, Shadow Brexit Secretary in Corbyn’s team and MP for Holborn & St Pancras, confirmed the pressure he had been under from his constituency to vote against it. None of the rebel MPs are speaking out directly about the racism of Brexit (that would be ‘un-Parliamentary!’) but most of them hint at it in various ways, or describe the racist abuse and threats they and their constituents have received. Diane Abbott, even though voting for the Bill, declared that “This is not a Tony Benn Brexit, this is a Donald Trump Brexit - and it's got very ugly undertones.” In a series of interviews, she repeated that she voted for it as “A loyal supporter of Jeremy Corbyn.” A truly misplaced loyalty!

In general, most of the rebels still talk about ‘unity,’ but it’s to no avail: the die is cast and Corbyn has effectively divided the Labour Party and his own supporters on lines of race and how IN PRACTICE you respond to racism and immigration-bashing.

MFJ welcomes this rebellion. It is positive that a significant part of the Labour Party is now making a stand against Brexit. It is an opportunity to build our independent, integrated movement more widely, put down deeper roots in our communities, and take the fight to stop Brexit into the Labour movement as well. Our call to the MPs who rebelled is: speak the plain truth about the racist scapegoating and xenophobia of the whole Brexit project; state clearly what is implicit in your stand, that it is not ‘democratic’ to destroy the rights of minorities and most important of all, to do everything in your power to build the fight in your communities, in the Labour Party, and in Parliament to stop Brexit happening. However, it is only through the impact and leadership of our growing movement that we can ensure the development of a serious, anti-racist, pro-immigrant rights opposition to Brexit in the Labour Party, both in the constituencies and in Parliament.

The stronger our movement becomes in action and the more the Labour rebellion grows, the more those establishment forces with an interest in derailing Brexit (corporate interests, universities etc.) will use the opportunity to increase their pressure on the Government and Tory MPs. To put it clearly, they need to feel either that they need MFJ’s action to give more ‘weight’ to their arguments, or that the growing power and unity of the mass action we are mobilising makes it too dangerous to continue with increasing anti-immigrant policies.

In a sign that doubts are already growing, before the damaging consequences of Brexit are fully apparent, an ICM poll taken on the day of the Bill’s third reading indicated that 54% of people now oppose May’s ‘hard Brexit’ approach, while those prepared to back Brexit without an agreement with the EU members are down to 35%.

MFJ will put Stopping Brexit at the centre and forefront of everything we do to build youth and community action against immigration raids, to disrupt the anti-Muslim Prevent strategy, to build action to stop the attacks on international students, make detention unsustainable, stop deportations and charter flights, shut down fascist mobilisations, and on the forthcoming Peckham Community Pride march linking the struggles for LGBT equality and against immigrant raids (18 Feb.). We will use every legal case, political event and Parliamentary debate on Brexit to raise the demand to Stop Brexit. Brexit is a threat to all immigrant rights, to the Muslim community, to all students; it is a boost to all the fascist groups. The direction in which Brexit will take British society is a direct threat to human rights, LGBT rights and women’s rights. We can see that already with the Trump movement in the USA.

Crucially, we will fight to make the campaign to stop Trump’s planned State Visit to Britain a campaign to Stop Brexit. Trump and Brexit are a racist and nationalist double act. That is why Theresa May rushed to Washington and booked Trump for a State Visit. That is not just about May’s over-optimistic hopes of a trade deal. Trump’s State Visit is designed to seal Brexit and ‘normalise’ the rise of the far right (while also trying to outflank UKIP and Farage). We must stop that visit as part of the fight to stop Brexit, for the sake of our future hopes and freedom, to support the mass resistance to Trump in the USA, and to deal a blow to the Le Pens and Co. across Europe. Trump’s election and Brexit are both the result of virulent, racist, immigrant-bashing politics, and they have both ushered in even more divisive and repressive anti-immigrant policies and sharp rises in racist, xenophobic and anti-Muslim attacks. They have both strengthened the fascists and far fight across Europe. If the visit goes ahead, we must take to the streets to Shut Down London and bring the sordid show to a stop. (See section 1. above.)

MFJ was part of the mass mobilisations to stop the state visit that were held in London and other cities on 30 January and again in London on 4 February, winning support for the demand Stop Trump! Stop Brexit! The movement against
Trump’s visit is already winning. The speaker of the House of Commons, John Bercow, and most of the opposition parties have made it clear that they will not agree to Trump addressing Parliament. The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has said that Trump is not welcome in his city, and increasing leaks and reports indicate that the Government will keep Trump out of London and other major cities because they can’t ‘guarantee his security.’

However, we will not allow the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, Momentum, or the ‘Left’ groups that called for a Leave vote to use the movement against Trump’s state visit as a cover for their prostration before the immigrant-bashing Brexit juggernaut. It is rank hypocrisy for the Labour Party to denounce Trump’s attacks on immigrants and Muslims, and demand the State Visit be cancelled, while they simultaneously issue 3-line whips to MPs to vote for the Brexit Bill. It is rank hypocrisy for him to declare that, “Donald Trump should not be welcomed on a state visit to this country while he continues to propagate his anti-women, anti-Muslim and anti-Mexican policies,” while he propagates the lie that Brexit is ‘democratic,’ and it is rank hypocrisy of the ‘Left’ groups to host a Stop Trump ‘summit’ on 18 February as ‘Grassroots for Corbyn,’ and say not a word about the racism of Brexit.

**MFJ will build the movement to stop the visit as a fight against Brexit: STOP TRUMP! STOP BREXIT! That will be the demand of our Shut Down London mobilisation for 20 February, when Trump’s visit will be debated in Parliament.**

7. **Fighting racism, poverty and Fascism: one struggle**

Politicians and journalists of a liberal or Labour persuasion (i.e. those who are ‘against racism’ in words) believe that the basis of racism lies in the prejudices, fears, backwardness, ‘ignorance’ etc. of the ‘white working class,’ which they must appease in order to be electable. For liberals and Labourites, it is a convenient cover for their racist measures. In the hypocritical language of many Labour MPs it is described as ‘listening to the concerns of our supporters,’ shamefully discounting the massive support that Labour has traditionally received from the black and Asian communities.

**MFJ rejects that politically convenient and false account of racism, along with its ideological cousin, the argument that racism is rooted in biology or ‘human nature.’**

Racism and xenophobia arise when societies are divided by exploitation, oppression and class and the ruling classes draw the poor and oppressed into their conflicts with other states. In capitalist societies, competition in the labour market fosters racism, especially when poverty and hardship increase during periods of economic crisis, such as we are experiencing now. In addition, white supremacist prejudices have been fostered in countries like Britain, the USA, France etc. by their long colonial and imperialist domination of poorer countries around the world, and by the benefits, however limited and insecure, that the middle and working classes in Britain etc. have got from that.

Consequently, racist prejudice among the poor and oppressed arises in a thousand ways through their conditions of life in societies saturated by racism and xenophobia, but it exists in conflict with their material interest in combining against their real enemies, their exploiters and oppressors. There is an inverse ratio between the readiness, consciousness and confidence of the working class, poor and oppressed to unite against those real enemies, and the strength and toxicity of racist prejudice.

The racism and xenophobia of the rich and powerful ruling class is a different matter. It is far more profound than racism among the poor and oppressed, because it is deeply rooted in the fundamental material interests of the rich and powerful, and it serves their interests. The ruling class needs to cultivate a shared ‘national identity’ among the whole population, rich and poor, in order to maintain control of a national state and national economy; it needs to be able to mobilise ‘national’ support in its conflicts with the ruling classes of other national states and for domination over the world’s poorest countries; and of course, it needs the ability to divide-and-rule the poor and oppressed, especially where populations become more diverse and economic power is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands - the tendencies of modern capitalist development.

**Movement for Justice demands ‘Stop the Racist Scapegoating of Immigrants’**. This is a crucial demand, and the term ‘scapegoat’ very precisely describes the political attacks on immigrants in Britain and elsewhere, the rise of anti-gay campaigns in many parts of Africa, etc. It is the practice of putting the blame for your actions and the damage they have caused onto some innocent but vulnerable group: to go back to the Biblical original, “…Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel… putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities…” All oppressors need such a scapegoat in times of crisis: a group they can blame for the problems they are themselves responsible for, and which they can ‘drive into the wilderness,’ literally or metaphorically.

However, this is neither a rational policy nor some cunning plot that rulers and politicians can turn on and off at will. The form that scapegoating takes in a particular society has its roots in the problems that confront its ruling class and must connect in some way with the fears of a significant section of that society. Consequently, it has a life of its own and isn’t something the rulers and politicians can necessarily control. In a period of crisis, a scapegoating policy can create a destabilising threat to other interests of the ruling class. We are seeing that situation now in the USA, with Brexit in Britain,
and across Europe.

That is why the racist scapegoating of immigrants can’t just be stopped by education, moralism, intellectual argument or an Act of Parliament. MFJ is certainly for anti-racist education and better intellectual arguments. We would welcome an act of Parliament that, for instance, abolished detention, or declared an unconditional amnesty for everyone who doesn’t have a secure right of residence. We want Parliament to reject the Government’s Bill to start the Brexit process. However, none of those things will materialise or be effective without the independent power of a mass movement.

The reality is that now, when the far right has established a mass basis for racist, anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim politics among sections of the poor white population across the ‘western world’, racism and immigrant-bashing must be defeated IN ACTION, and that action must be taken and led by those directly threatened by those policies. That is where the scapegoating analogy breaks down: the goat was an innocent bystander who had no understanding of what was happening and no say in the matter; it could not speak out and expose the plain truth about scapegoating, or fight back by organising mass goat action. That is not a distinction that the liberals and Labourites really understand, or would welcome if they did. The immigrant, black and Asian communities, the youth, the detainees and people facing deportation understand very well what is going on, they know they are not responsible for the iniquities of the ruling class and the politicians, and have shown the greatest readiness to fight.

The truth is that the growing black, Asian and ethnic minority communities, and especially the youth in those communities, have increasingly been the most important and dynamic force fighting for justice and equality in Britain over the past forty years. The immigrants who are now opening the borders of Europe by their actions are the best and strongest fighters for the values that ‘western democracies’ proclaim so loudly and trample on in practice: ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity;’ ‘All men are created equal;’ the right to ‘Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness;’ the rights of women, LGBT rights, the right of asylum etc.

The fight for immigrant rights is central to the fight against poverty and inequality, because poverty and racism are themselves directly linked, firstly of course because it is those who are discriminated against by racism who experience the lowest pay, the most insecurity, the highest unemployment etc. However, racism inflicts poverty on poor and oppressed white people too, because it distorts their aspirations and ambitions and feeds their despair, illusions and feeling of powerlessness. The constant refrain of conservatives and self-proclaimed ‘liberals’ who want to counter anti-racist policies is, ‘what about white working class boys.’ And it is true that poor white working class boys have some of the lowest levels of educational attainment and expectations and have suffered the destruction of traditional industrial employment; but too many are held captive in a cycle of despair by the distorting effects of racism, in much the same way as the poor white farmers of the US South who, in the words of Martin Luther King, were ‘given Jim Crow to eat.’

The movements being mobilised by demagogues like Trump, Farage, Wilders, Le Pen etc. are a product of that cycle of despair. They cast the immigrant, Muslim, black, Asian and other minority communities as the ‘enemy below’ that threatens the position of disadvantaged white people. As we said above, in section 1., their aim is to mobilise their white supporters into a mass racist force to defeat, disenfranchise, subjugate and expel those communities. As well-practised demagogues, Trump, Farage, Wilders, Le Pen etc. combine their attacks on the ‘enemy below’ with purely rhetorical tirades against the rich and powerful (Wall Street, the EU, Westminster, the City, the ‘Liberal Elite’ etc) – the ‘enemy above’ that has ignored the plight of those disadvantaged white people. In reality, they attack immigrants, black people, Muslims etc. because those are the communities that the ruling class fears the most. It is because of the nature of these movements, what they are doing in practice, that we characterise them as neo-fascist or semi-fascist. All they have in store for poor white people is ‘Jim Crow to eat.’

May and her Conservative Party are not fascists, but they are adapting to the rise of the far-right, to Trump and to Brexit, and shorn of the empty rhetoric about people who ‘are just about managing’ (the huge number who are not managing at all will apparently be cut loose to fend for themselves) her government is giving poor and struggling white people ‘immigrant-bashing to eat.’ We repeat, her plan for a post-EU Britain is for a ‘race to the bottom,’ with more welfare cuts and a low-pay, low-regulation economy to attract short-term investment deals with even lower business taxes and racism is essential to imposing this ugly, despairing future.

Our movement, the mass action we can build and the victories we can win are the force that can break this vicious circle and turn the tables, not just on May’s government but on the whole system of oppression, exploitation and racism. Only through that mass action can we change the balance of forces and give new hope to replace the despair of the impoverished communities that embraced Brexit.

8. Education & Racism: the fight for free public education for all; Home Office out of education; create Sanctuary Campuses; defend international students; equality for immigrant students; stop Prevent!

Over the past three years growing numbers of students of all races have been part of MFJ’s fight against detention and the racist scapegoating of immigrants, standing together with former and current detainees demanding justice and freedom at Harmondsworth, Colnbrook and Yarl’s Wood detention centres. During the 2016 autumn term MFJ speakers addressed more student meetings than ever, up and down the country, multiple times in some universities. At the most recent Surround Yarl’s Wood demonstration on 3rd December, when close on 2000 took part, students made up the
majority of the protest for the first time, and following that students who took part have started to set up MFJ groups in their universities. They are part of a rapidly growing force that recognises that their futures are completely bound up with the fight against racism, immigrant-bashing and Brexit. They will be crucial to building a movement that unites the fights for immigrant rights and free education.

MFJ fights for free, universal, integrated and comprehensive, quality public education for all, from nursery to university. That is a basic requirement for a society where everyone can fulfil their dreams and realise their creative potential as the people they are; and it is a necessary foundation for any truly democratic system based on the equality of all. It is a right, not a privilege. That view does not accord with the Government’s plans for our future. The attack on education that May is taking even further is a key part of her overall post-Brexit strategy; it is fundamentally racist, and it is an attack on the education and prospects of all poor and working class youth. One of May’s first announcements when she became Prime Minister was her plan to restore a Grammar School system of formal selection. Whether or not she is able to realise that particular plan, it is more than just an appeal to the sense of privilege among conservative white middle class parents. It is part of a policy of reducing the educational opportunities and aspirations of the majority of youth, in line with the Government’s plans for our economic future.

In October, the Chartered Institute for Personnel & Development (the professional body for ‘human resource’ managers) urged the Government to drop the long-standing goal of expanding the numbers in higher education. They specifically referring to Brexit as a reason why this was more urgent. With May as Prime Minister they are pushing at an open door. The same goal is reflected in her talk of more focus on ‘vocational training’ as part of her vacuous industrial strategy, in the attacks on international students, the shift of school funding away from London and other cities, the so-called Teaching Excellence Framework in higher education, more privatisation at all levels of education, and the intention that some universities will have to close.

This is a head-on assault on youth, who have already borne the brunt of benefit cuts, low pay and job insecurity. It includes a huge increase in government surveillance of students of all ages that is spearheaded by the divisive, explicitly anti-Muslim Prevent strategy that is having a chilling effect on the rights of all students to freedom of speech and freedom of association; surveillance is being extended to all students (and their families) who may be thought to be immigrants or asylum seekers.

The fight for education and the creation of a militant mass student movement is crucial to our future equality and freedom. There have been plenty of concerned voices expressing their unhappiness with one or another aspect of government education policies - academics and university managers, leaders of teaching unions, business leaders, MPs etc - but none of their words have been translated into proposals for action, let alone actual action. The only force that has come close to bringing down a UK government in recent years, and won great popular support in the process, was the mass student movement of 2010. Only a mass student/youth movement in our schools and on our campuses and our streets, joined with the movement for immigrant rights, can defeat the Government’s multiple attacks on our education and our future.

As the fight for Sanctuary Campuses is key to the development of this movement, MFJ has produced the following 10-point pledge for action that has been endorsed by NUS London:

**Defend International, Immigrant & Muslim Students - END the Hostile Environment**

Pledge to make our college/university a Sanctuary Campus

The racist, anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim climate of Brexit and the attacks on our education by Theresa May’s government can be defeated if we come together and act in solidarity with one another. The Government is deporting thousands of international students who have not been able to complete their courses and cutting the number of new international students. It is carrying out mass surveillance and harassment of Muslim students simply based on their religion (the Prevent strategy). This is an attack on all our educational opportunities. The Government is restricting educational options for poor, for working class, and for black, Asian and immigrant communities and intends to close several of our universities. This must be stopped and we must get organised.

We pledge to build a movement in our School/college/university, and work with students in other colleges and universities to stop the government-organised harassment of immigrant, Muslim and international students and teachers and the immigrant workers in our colleges/universities. We pledge to make our college/university a Sanctuary Campus by our actions and organisation. That means....
1. We will work with the international students in our school/college/university to organise meetings of all students to increase the awareness of the threats and harassment faced by international students and what it means for all our education.

2. We will organise speak-outs and tribunals where immigrant, international and Muslim students can testify openly, and where we can vote and decide on actions we need to take.

3. We will campaign for student/staff boycotts of any Home Office ‘monitoring’ measures inflicted on international students and attempts by the Home Office to use school data to target families for deportation.

4. We will use whatever means are necessary (strikes or walk-outs and demonstrations, occupations, accompanying threatened students to classes, etc.) to defend any international student or immigrant student whose place in college and right to stay in Britain is threatened.

5. We will work with students across the country to build national actions in defence of international students from the toxic and racist attacks by politicians and the media, and campaign for the reinstatement of the post-study work visa and for no fee hikes.

6. We will defend and mobilise in support of EU students who are facing uncertainty and xenophobia post-Brexit. We will fight for the continued right of EU students to study in the UK with no restrictions.

7. We will organise to boycott and block attempts by the school/college/university to implement the Prevent strategy e.g. demonstrations or occupations to disrupt training for Prevent, or monitoring of Muslim students.

8. We demand that our university treats students who have lived in this country for all or most of their lives and studied in UK schools as Home Students with Home fees, regardless of the stamp on their passport. We demand that our university offers full sanctuary scholarships or fee waivers and grants to asylum seekers, refugees and students who otherwise could not afford to study because of their immigration status.

9. We will establish close liaison with the migrant workers who are the backbone of our schools/colleges/universities and with their representatives (unions, community groups etc.) so that we can support their fight for fair pay and equal conditions, and act together against immigration raids. We demand that college/university management does not co-operate with Home Office requests for ‘sting operations’ – raids and ‘fishing missions’ to pick off undocumented staff. If the university allows the Home Office in we will surround the Immigration Enforcement teams, block them, and prevent them taking away any workers for detention and deportation.

10. We will enact in every way possible a policy of ‘Students, not Suspects’ and ‘Home Office off our Campus and out of our schools’.

MFJ will fight for that perspective and promote this policy nationally. MFJ will work to commit student unions and NUS bodies nationally and regionally to this policy of mass action – but we cannot be bound by their willingness or unwillingness to fight. MFJ students and their allies must take the lead and urge others to follow. That is always how real mass struggle develops.

We must build MFJ groups in universities, colleges and schools across the country. In schools and colleges those groups will automatically be a link to the local communities; in universities those groups will combine the fight for action on their campuses and taking our movement into more and more communities and cities across Britain.

In the year of Brexit and Trump this is how the MFJ will grow and win more struggles – building an independent, integrated mass movement that is youth-led and immigrant-led and unites our struggles. It is how our fight for a future of justice, equality and hope can win.