

My name is Nandi. I'm the chair of Hastings Stand Up to Racism and part of Women Against the Far Right, an offshoot of SUTR.

I didn't know whether I would make it today because I am currently not in control of my life: I am a migrant worker in residential care looking after young people with complex needs. I am relocated at the whim of my boss between homes in Corby and Essex and am not given my rota in advance.

When I have asserted my right to specific days off, my boss has reminded me that my visa, and therefore my right to remain in the UK, is dependent on the sponsorship of my employer. In practice, this amounts to indentured labour.

And I am not alone. My sector depends on low-paid frontline staff doing demanding shift work with challenging young people – and not surprisingly, the sector is heavily reliant on migrant labour.

MIGRANTS ARE NOT TO BLAME

Migrant workers pay full taxes and national insurance. We pay thousands in visa and NHS fees and are barred from benefits under "*No Recourse to Public Funds*." Now this government wants us to wait 10, 15 or even 20 years before we can settle permanently. They want a layer of permanently insecure workers without rights, tied to employers and easy to exploit. **Where I was born, this was called Apartheid.**

Labour says it wants to stop Reform UK. But they do the opposite. Every time Kier Starmer or Shabana Mahmood blame migrants for the crisis in housing, the NHS or social care, they reinforce Reform's argument that migrants are the problem.

But the crisis was created by decades of privatisation, deregulation and policies that have allowed corporations and shareholders get rich while public services fall apart. Take my sector. Over the last twenty years, 84% of children's homes have been sold off to private companies. Councils are forced to pay over £300,000 a year for a single child's placement.

Private companies make profits of 20 percent or more in a system reliant on low-paid workers doing incredibly demanding work. And if we let politicians blame migrants, instead of the system that caused the problem, we only strengthen the forces that want to divide us.

REFORM

And those forces are frightening. Last September, Tommy Robinson mobilised the largest far right march in British history, over 100,000 people – financed and promoted by Elon Musk and the tech billionaires. He has announced plans to march again on 16th May. Stand Up to Racism will again mobilise to oppose him.

The parliamentary wing of the far right is Reform UK. Reform wants a **British ICE** to detain 24,000 people in camps and deport up to 288,000 people every year. They want to remove settled status from those who have built families and lives here. They share platforms with far right groups who talk openly of "*Remigration*".

We know where this goes: first, they come for refugees, then migrant workers, then all Black, brown and Muslim people.

And who would be a woman under a Reform government? They want to scrap the Equality Act which protects us from sex discrimination, unequal pay, and harassment at work; from maternity and pregnancy discrimination; from unfair treatment linked to menopause.

They want to restrict abortion rights, make divorce harder and raise taxes for women without children. **They** know **our** place! If we don't want to sleep-walk into the Handmaid's Tale, we have to beat Reform.

TOGETHER demonstration against the far right, 28th March

The far right won't be beaten just through voting, although SUTR will be doing everything possible to ensure that Reform are beaten in the local elections. The inspiring victory of the Green Party candidate, Hannah the Plumber, in Gorton and Denton, has lifted everyone and shown what can be done.

That campaign was won on the streets. We have to organise, take to the streets, and show that unity and solidarity outweigh division and hate.

That is why the 28 March demonstration matters — not only to show opposition to racism and the far right, but to create confidence and momentum from below.

We need to show that we are many and they are few; that people of all backgrounds can come together to defend refugees, migrants, Muslims, Black and brown people, trans people, disabled people and all those targeted by bigotry.

More than 300 organisations are now supporting the TOGETHER demonstration, and, thanks to Hastings NEU, Stand Up to Racism is organising subsidised train tickets from Hastings and St Leonard's. More than 60 people have so far signed up for the anti-racist express! You can book your tickets now on the SUTR stall.

Our Women Against the Far Right group have also made a magnificent banner...

Conclusion

As a migrant worker from the old British Empire, I have a simple message to the British government and politicians: **we are here because you were there.**

Colonisation plundered our nations and forced our people overseas to build your industries and your infrastructure. First through slavery, now through indentured labour by any other name.

We staff your NHS, your care homes, your transport networks and your warehouses. And you want to keep us without rights, without security, without status.

But you cannot turn back the tide. My time in the UK has shown me that, despite your efforts to divide and rule, multiculturalism is a legacy of empire that most people welcome and celebrate.

After all, we brought all the good food and music to this wet, grey island...