

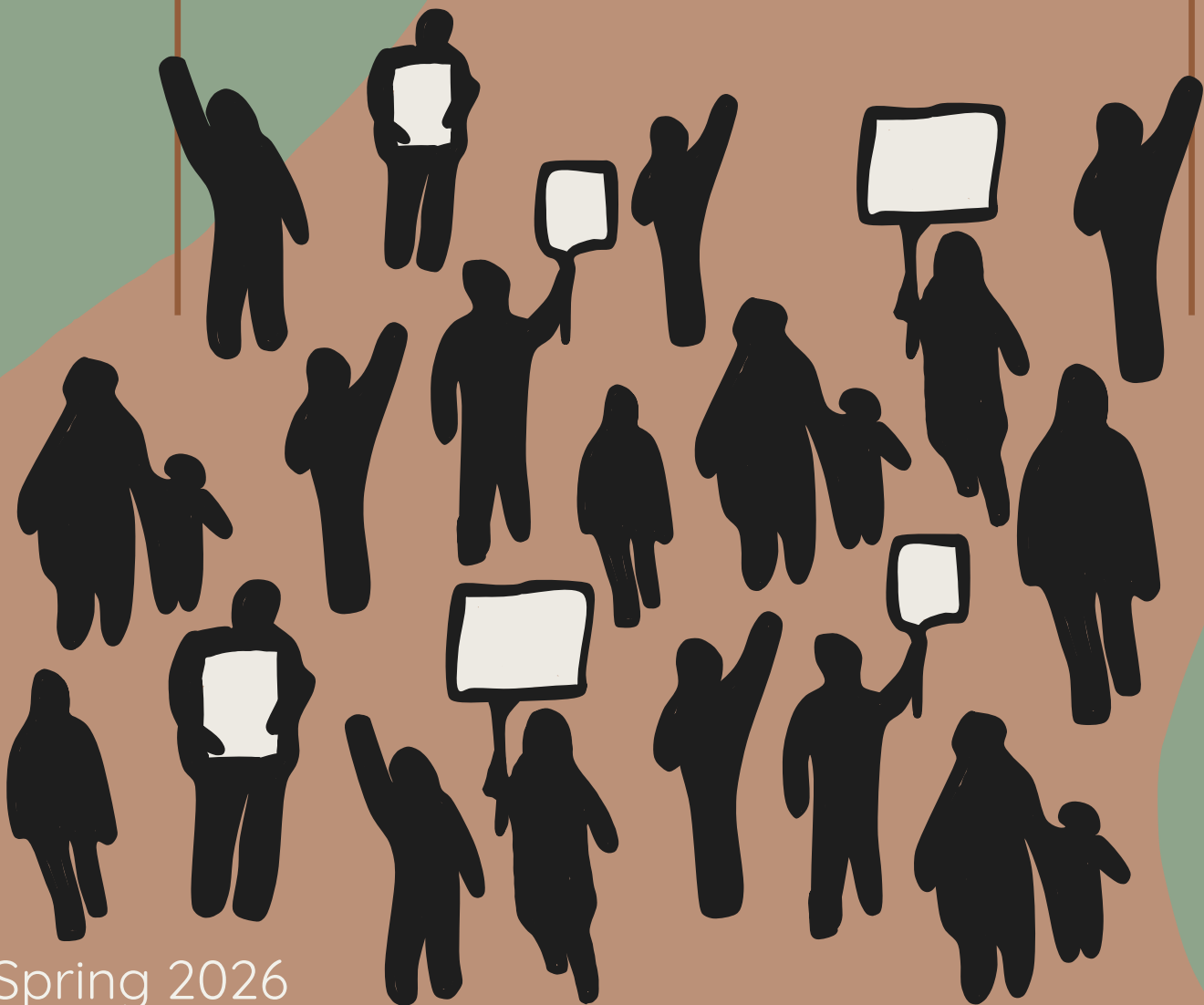
LEFT

Volume 3, Issue 2

Magazine



WHAT WE CARRY FORWARD



Spring 2026

Editor's Comment:



Lola Fallon

Welcome to my last print edition as Editor of LEFT Mag!

These last few years have absolutely flown by, from joining exec in my first year as social sec, and now spending a year as Editor of LEFT (aka the best job EVER!), this society has defined my university experience, and I can't believe it's nearly over.

Being LEFT editor has been such a highlight, and I am so proud of how the magazine has grown. I am so grateful for this opportunity and cannot wait to see how it grows further under your new editor, Tasha!

Coming into 2026, there is increasing uncertainty and tension, both domestically and internationally. This led me to create an edition that highlights ongoing debates while addressing newer issues that need to be fully understood, so that a solution can be discussed.

As always, I want to thank my talented writers for taking time out of their busy lives to write for LEFT. Reading these articles has been a pleasure!

Thank you for all your articles and support, it's been an honour.

In solidarity,
Lola Fallon

Chair's Comment:



Ed Swann

We've come to the end of the second term of our society in its new chapter as Left Society, and what a year it's been.

It's been a genuine privilege to welcome so many members back, or into the society for the first time, through both the continuation of our events and campaigns and the introduction of new ideas, thanks to the freedom we've gained breaking from you-know-who.

We've seen the political sphere change in so many ways over such a quick period, but the adaptability, commitment and resilience from both the Exec and our wider membership has allowed us to strengthen our collective efforts more so than ever before.

I cannot thank every single person who spoke at an event, knocked a door, brought new people into the society and wider Left Network, or just attended an event, enough. Your dedication and presence, in whatever form, doesn't go unnoticed.

What an honour it's been to serve as the Chair for this year. I've been inspired on a daily basis by the work of those around me, who have grown into some truly brilliant organisers and political activists; my personal and political growth comes from them more than anything else.

Warwick Left Society's beauty is its ability to adapt to the challenges around it and offer its capabilities to wherever needs it most. I wish all future Exec members and the wider community the very best.

As ever, keep left.

Ed Swann

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Immigration Under Trump

A Spectacle of Horrors and Fear, matched by Empathy and Hope

Ethan Travica

The Second Trump administration has seen a weaponisation of the politics of immigration that previously, in Trump's First Term, seemed nearly inconceivable. Immigration has been used as a political issue and campaign tool, from the election all the way to now, and likely the future, staying consistently at main focus, with nearly 40 Executive Orders having been passed focusing on the issue and over 500 Official Actions being taken.

Immigration has become a spectacle of distraction, fear, and oppression. The world has born witness to brutal murders, political crackdowns, kidnappings of adults, citizens, and even children, and ethnic cleansings, all at the hands of the Trump Administration's immigration agenda, and most often carried out by the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE).



Image credits: Wikimedia Commons [Edited]

Within these practises, we have seen methods taken to contravene and violate human and democratic rights at every turn, with deportations to foreign countries and torture prisons, in a manner that fully ignored due process and buried victims caught up in it with a mountain of deflecting scandals and media.

But it is not just in these foreign prisons where ICE has sent people, nor where they enable and utilise abhorrent illegal practises that brutally violate human rights and international and domestic laws, the same also occurs in ICE's domestic prison system.

Facilities that operate in manners far more similar to concentration camps than any form of detention facility, especially true of the remote and obscure Alligator Alcatraz, where rounded-up victims were tortured, products of enforced disappearances, and where evidence of mass burials and kidnappings is still being uncovered.

And this is but one of the brutalities of ICE. Recently, we have seen what can only be called public executions and murders, highlighted by the cases of Renee Good and Alex Pretti, two of at least eight individuals killed by ICE in 2025 so far (following on after at least 32 people were killed by ICE in 2024).

Image credits: Wikimedia Commons



This forms one of the main pillars of the main strategy of ICE and Trump's Immigration Agenda, fear.

Fear has been weaponised, with the removal of due process and the violent militarisation of federal law enforcement who roam around in masks, acting as hoodlums and marauders, violently suppressing any form of resistance or protest, kidnapping people off the streets and leading to many fearing for their safety to the extent that they will not leave their homes without full Identification on them at all times, or for some, will not leave their homes at all.

They do not even attempt to hide it or conceal it anymore, they openly threaten protestors with brutal death and assault, whilst those in control brutally slander any that ICE murders in such a way that even Orwell's Big Brother would be impressed by the brazenness and scale of their exercises in lies and doublethink.

This is not the only way that ICE is being weaponised to politically suppress any who would oppose the fascism that has taken hold of the White House; international academics, universities, and institutions that criticise President Trump or his policies now find themselves targeted by the Gestapo that brutally suppresses any independent thought wherever it can, with entrants to the United States now finding their whole lives and social activities being scrutinised for any sense of political empathy, with those found lacking in the political fascism of the President having fees levied against them and facing barred entry.

The President is also using ICE, immigration, and the military to brutally crackdown on left-wing politics and dissent through operations that can only be described as invasions of political suppression designed as test runs to set out the future methodology Trump plans to use to seize full control of any city, state, or region that disagrees with him.



Image credits: Wikimedia Commons
[Edited]

Deployments have been made to Los Angeles, DC, and Chicago among many others, with the operations there brutally suppressing any protests and operating as naught but a sword for Trump to wield against those he sees as his foes, a grave act of barbarism counter to the US Constitution, democratic principles, international law, and human rights.

Most recently, in Minneapolis, an area with a long memory of political suppression, still bearing long scars from brutal racial policies and the murder of George Floyd, we have seen tactics of abduction and brutal manipulation, with far too many acts taken against the people present there, even to the extent that children leaving their school were pepper sprayed, all topped off by the murders of Renee Good and Alex Pretti.

This is all occurring to fulfil the racism of the right wing populist fascism of the Donald Trump Administration, and to work to ensure that the authoritarian populism of Trump is respected in its toughness by those who support it, and is feared for its capabilities for violence and brutality by any who would oppose it.

But this cannot be allowed to hold us back, even among all this, we can look to those who fight back, who protest, who stand up for what is right, for what is moral, for the principles of empathy and equality. Those who do not back down in the face of this violence and fear, who keep pushing, who keep trying to help, even when it could get them killed, and for some, even when it does.

Whilst Immigration under Trump stands as an exercise in fear, we can see the response to it also as an exercise in empathy and hope, an exercise in moral practise and a love for all peoples and cultures, a rejection of bigotry, racism, and brutality, and a knowledge that for all the might of the US State, it is still in the wrong, it can be challenged, and there are paths to hold it accountable, be those through the system or above and beyond it, as has become so much more necessary in recent times.



Image credits: Wikimedia Commons

Queering Politics, Queering the Left

Jade Francis

‘Queer’ is a scary word. Once considered an offensive term for members of the LGBTQ+ community, now many people identify themselves with the term.

Queer, I argue, is more than a sexuality or identity; it is a radical lens and a method of political critique. This lens can allow us to denaturalise political systems which seem entrenched and second nature to contemporary society. But what can queer ideas do for us on the left?

Many of you may be familiar with the arguments of influential queer thinker Judith Butler. Butler’s work, at times, becomes a convoluted string of words that mean very little to most. It may seem very hard to see how Butler’s work could offer any liberatory promises for communities.



Pictured: Judith Butler [Edited]
Image credits: Wikimedia Commons

However, what is interesting about Butler’s work, and queer work more generally, is that it points a microscope in the opposite direction. By analysing in-depth the structures, behaviours and social norms which make the apparently natural binary genders and sexes become an unquestioned reality, Butler provides us with an important idea. That is, no longer should we become passive in accepting the cards we are dealt, but we can become critical of the deck itself.

Queer theory was developed in the 1980s/90s, when some considered LGBTQ+ activism under a civil rights strategy to be inadequate. Queer people spoke out and became critical of a strategy which aimed to induct them under dominant institutions, instead seeking to transform the workings of society which let hierarchies and systems of oppression persist and operate so efficiently.

We’re at an important time right now. Not only is the government refusing to pass legislation to ban conversion therapy for all queer people, but the transgender community is under constant attack. Transgender people are continually stigmatised in news stories.



Image credits: Wikimedia Commons

New Section 28-style guidance is in place to erase the existence of transgender people in schools. Transgender people are at the imminent risk of being banned from single-sex spaces, with little alternative. It seems, at times, that some aim for an erasure of transgender people from civil society.

This time is not only an important one for queer people. While the wealth gap increases every day, many point the finger at the most vulnerable in society. The far-right are polling scarily high, threatening the inhumane treatment of immigrants and asylum seekers. This has dragged the current Labour government further to the right, adopting austerity policies and xenophobic immigration control policies that devastate communities with little thought of those most affected by them. But what can a queer lens do for any of these issues?

Queer thought can be radical. It can bring into question the hegemonic ideas which structure society, instead of focusing on narrow arguments pointing out political failures. These narrow arguments stay within the same framework which created those very same political failures in the first place. This is why I argue for a queer lens, one which denaturalises dominant systems and ideas in favour of taking a step back and asking, 'How did we get here?'



Image credits: Wikimedia Commons

Take the current xenophobic political moment, for example. While many political parties align in being complicit in the criminalisation and moral attack of asylum seekers in the UK, parties who claim to oppose this seem to only take issue with specific immigration control policies and the stigmatisation of those seeking asylum.

Outside of mainstream political debate, however, is how borders have seemingly become an unquestioned feature of society. This shifts the debate from one which primarily takes issue with partisan handling to one which brings into question the idea of assigning different legal statuses to people based on their birthplace, travel route or nationality.

Just as Butler does not begin with arguing against the misrecognition of transgender people but interrogates the systems under which the binary workings of gender have become dominant, we too should first understand how borders have become so naturalised and concrete. This, I argue, is exactly where we should begin our argument against inhumane policies, avoiding starting our argument too late in the chain.

Of course, the analysis of this example is certainly no more owing to queer thought than to anti-racist ideas.



Image credits: Wikimedia Commons

What I argue this queer lens can bring us, however, is a way of perceiving a whole range of issues differently. Queer thought in Britain has already provided us with ways of knowing which oppose austerity policies, immigration control, right-wing taxation systems, anti-queer legislation, the patriarchal control of women and the involvement in inhumane foreign affairs and much more.

Queer thought also cuts across a whole range of identities and is primarily intersectional and coalitional. By pointing to the ways in which hierarchies are maintained across a range of different systems, queer offers us a key opportunity. That is solidarity between oppressed groups and communities in protesting dominant power systems together. Although this should not be taken for granted in queer protest, it can provide us the opportunity to do the work to create a transformative coalitional politics.

In this moment of fear and division, queer can offer us on the left something much more powerful. Queer brings us the power to tackle political issues in a broken system by questioning the very 'common-sense' logics which came to create them. A queer politics, one which reaches across communities to refuse the operations of an unequal society, gives us the opportunity of a more radical starting point. It's time to start asking ourselves, what can 'queer' do for us? 4

Votes Labour Lost, A Comedy of Errors

Has Starmer's premiership been a tragedy of sorts?

Fin Chadwick

It seems fair to say that the Labour Party is in a pretty ruinous state. But if I may, I'd like to take us all back to the 4th of July 2024.

You may not remember where you were on the 4th of July or the early hours of the morning on the 5th, you may not even know the importance of the date. However I do, it was the historic day when Labour came to power and ended the Conservative dominance which had up until this point plagued my youth.

It was like England winning the world cup, fourteen years of hurt over, parliament still gleaming. Safe to say, I was pretty positive for the future. Or as positive as one can be when they can only bear to crack one eyelid out of tiredness, whilst watching Liz Truss lose her seat.

What would ensue though, was more or less another two-ish years of Conservative governing, at least it often feels that way.

There were a lot of warning signs early on, Starmer's failure to criticise the Israeli genocide in Gaza during his campaign probably being the most blatant. That and the fact he has the personality of a wet fish. Sorry to any wet fish I may have offended with that one.



Pictured: Keir Starmer
Image credits: Flickr

Despite this, many felt hopeful, me included, that he would step up and this was simply a tactic to appeal to those moderate swing voters who so often decide elections. Alas it was not, in fact Starmer's time at the wheel of the Labour Party has seen him steer the party even further right.

It has also seen him suspend and outright remove the majority of the left-wing elements of the Labour Party. In fact, it has seen him silence any MP who has been willing to voice an opinion that is different to his own. His leadership can quite easily be likened to the leadership that a spoilt child may offer their school football team. It's my way or the highway. That very may well be a quote from Starmer behind closed doors.

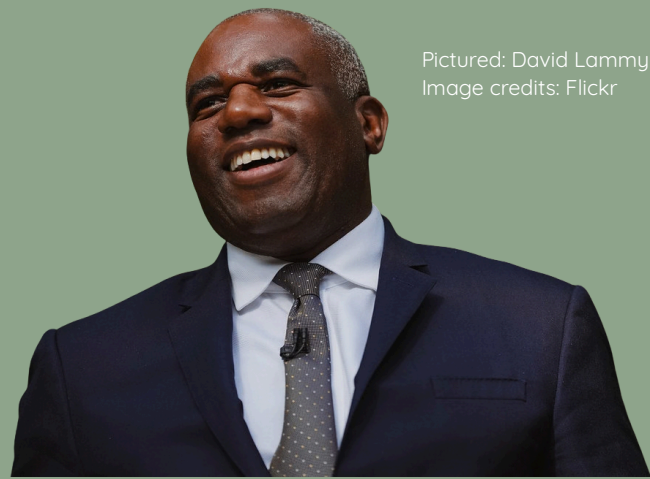


Pictured: Keir Starmer
[Edited]
Image credits: Flickr

It is unfair to criticise Starmer in all this, though. The current Labour government has been let down by more than just its leadership. One only has to look as far as David Lammy to understand that the incompetence and careerism are not an isolated incident within the current Labour crop.

In December, said incompetence was put on full display when Lammy mistakenly released prisoners. I mean, come on. How do you let a prisoner out by mistake? The better question may be, how do you let out a known criminal by mistake, keep your job and still not be the biggest laughing stock in your own party? Maybe that is the solution to the prison system in this country. Just let a couple out for the fun of it now and then.

That's harsh on poor David, though; he was simply making space for all the innocent people they had to arrest when they proscribed Palestine Action as a terror group. Besides, he was pretty good at keeping those on hunger strike in prison when their lives were in jeopardy, and they needed urgent medical attention.



Pictured: David Lammy [Edited]
Image credits: Flickr

Many will feel let down by the current Labour government and they have every right to. Labour was formed by the people, for the people. It stood as a party guided by the trade unions and founded on ethics, a party that I long viewed as the 'good guys' of politics.

Instead, they seem to have only managed to do irreparable bad in their current premiership. They still refuse to intervene in a state-sponsored genocide in Palestine and remain complicit by funding the Israeli war machine with British taxpayer money.

Not only this, but they have done damage on home soil by vetoing the rights of the trans-community and making their lives immeasurably harder to live, in a Britain which they brand as progressive.

Returning to their foreign policy, the handling of the megalomaniac in the rooting-tooting-innocent-shooting USA has been nothing short of abysmal. Starmer and his henchmen have bowed down to Trump and his authoritarian initiative that continually endangers democracy and human rights. Need I even mention austerity and the economy? I may not need it, but I will.

The everyday lives of Brits appear more bleak by the week as they can't afford bread or to keep their house warm, all due to the mismanagement of the economy by Starmer's seeming right-wing woman, Rachel Reeves.

As this is going out in a student paper, it is important not to forget the students. The Labour government certainly haven't, they remembered what a great money-making asset the students are.

In doing so, they raised student loans in line with the inflation that they are partly to blame for and essentially priced anyone who can identify with the masses out of education.

Students will now come out of education with overwhelming debts and most likely a deep resentment for this Labour government – rightfully so. Perhaps the billions spent on the killing of innocents in the name of 'defence' will earn the Starmerites some sympathy.

The downfall of the Labour Party has been in action for quite some time now. It seems their biggest failure is not any of those listed, but more the byproduct of their inadequacy as a ruling 'left-wing' government.

Of course, I put left-wing in inverted commas, as for those of us with enough political literacy to understand what left-wing means, they have been anything but. Their inadequacy has allowed fascism to grow within Britain and established a now disenfranchised public, which has veered towards the far-right Reform UK, who seem to threaten democracy and equality with every policy announcement.



Pictured: Nigel Farage [Edited]
Image credits: Wikimedia Commons

All in all, so far so bad. New leader, new start may very well be the policy that the Labour Party now must adopt to stand any chance in the Scottish and next general election. Unfortunately for them, it appears too late.

It is a grim reality in which we exist, but there do exist reasons to be hopeful.

Zack Polanski leads a revitalised Green Party higher in the polls every day, his charisma and effective communication reshaping the image of the Greens as a one-policy, idealistic party to that of a serious, electorate alternative to the now centre-right Labour Party.

There is hope for us yet.

The 'Screen-ager'

A Public Nuisance or a Reflection of Something Deeper?

Tasha Brock

On the 26th of January 2026, a troubling report about the neurological state of British children was published by Sky News. The report found that nearly 1/3 of children cannot use books by the time they start school, as they try to swipe them like phones.

The anti-social, phone addicted, adolescent has undeniably been a (relatively) fitting stereotype imposed upon the teenagers of the last decade or so. Whilst probably accurate for most (including myself with my four hours of daily screen time) little has been done until now to address how this growing normalisation of screen addiction may be affecting infants and young children.

The Sky News report found that entering formal education at 4 years old, children are being deemed as unequipped in growing numbers. Approximately, one in three children are starting school without being 'school ready', eg, not being toilet trained, able to feed themselves or possessing required language capabilities.

Image credits: Pexels

Areas particularly impacted include the North east, North west and the West Midlands, with staff estimating children in these areas are losing "2.4 hours of teaching a day" due to pupils lacking basic skills.

It is all too easy to blame screens and parents in this situation.

Indisputably, young children are increasingly being raised by their iPad and this evidently is impacting their early childhood development. However, as with most things, there are more complex reasons for children's reliance on screens.

Rather than blaming parents from these historically economically deprived areas, it is important to address how these growing problems are systemic.

Chief executive of the study Felicity Gillespie has said this crisis has been fuelled by "stretched school resources, low expectations, the rising cost of living, and by parents who lack the right information and understanding early enough to truly support their children's development."



Image credits: Rawpixel

Whilst 88% of parents surveyed said their children were ready to start school (an obvious falsity when compared with the 37% of children who are deemed as not ready), 94% said they would like to see national guidance on school readiness made available. Particularly in this new technologic age.

In response, the government has set targets to increase children's 'readiness' and set aside 12 million pounds to aid in children's development. However, there is a lot to be said about what got us into this situation in the first place and if this governments action is enough.

The infamous iPad kid is, just as much as their parents, are a victim of techno feudalism and societies ever increasing reliance on technology to allow late stage capitalism to function.



Pictured: Mark Zuckerberg, Image credits: Flickr

In 2024 Instagram alone generated \$66.9 billion in revenue with 60% of the apps users being under the age of 35. Tech billionaires like Adam Mosseri, Mark Zuckerberg, Elon Musk and others are making billions, insurmountable amounts of money, to keep children and adolescents addicted to their screens.



Pictured: Elon Musk, Image credits: Flickr

Other reports show that 98% of two-year-olds watch screens on a 'typical day' and more worryingly almost 40% of 3-5 year olds use social media. It's with statistics like this that it becomes evident why the conservatives and labour alike are proposing a similar social media ban to the one Australia implemented in 2024.

Undeniably, social media has a detrimental impact on the mental health of young people. It is worrying to think that children younger than 5 may be being exposed to algorithm-driven short form content and the ugly, self-conscious comparison that comes from being granted social media too early. Moreover, with the growing indistinguishability of AI and deepfakes, the troubling things young children may be exposed to is frightening.



Image credits: Truescope

However, is an all-out social media ban (particularly for those who are teenagers) really the solution political parties believe it is?

Fundamentally, I am against children being on apps like TikTok and Instagram but government suggestions to ban it in the UK feels like a lazy way of avoiding discussing the deeper societal issues that lead to these early childhood additions.

Poverty, underfunded schools, a lack of public awareness, a refusal to appropriately tax social media apps appropriately, tired and unsupported parents are the root cause of these issues.

Ultimately, as is usually the case, the people in power should be doing more to support those who need it. Sadly, if they don't, gen Z and gen Alpha are potentially going to be damaged and tech reliant before they've even reached adulthood.

The British Curriculum

Colonised and Confused

Haarisah Haq

British history is a complex patchwork undeniably integrated with the longstanding legacy of colonialism, empire, and slavery. A difficult past the UK education system neglects to acknowledge.

A YouGov survey found that 33% of people claimed to be 'proud' of the British Empire, whilst 64% claimed to be 'proud' of British history. This begs the question, how true can these statements be given that the full extent of British history is not taught in the UK curriculum?

This is even though the national curriculum states that students are supposed to learn about 'how Britain has influenced, and been influenced by the wider world', and yet the core history of the empire that shaped our society and identities is seemingly not included.

The history in question is not as long ago as many like to proclaim. Most British colonies have become independent in living memory, for example, India gained it 1947, whilst Namibia gained it in 1990. The connection to the empire remains as prominent as ever.

Topics, such as the Atlantic Slave Trade, migration, and even colonial rule, are sometimes taught at a KS3 or GCSE history level. However, there is no credible database that states how many students were taught these subjects, and what exactly was taught within this scope, given it is up to the discretion of each school.

Therefore, it is unknown to the Department of Education, the quantity and quality of the content being taught. This uncertainty only increases with the rise in academies, which have no obligation to follow the National Curriculum.

Is it not in our civic duty to provide an accurate and comprehensive education? Even in the few instances when these topics are taught in schools, the version spun is usually a sanitised and even skewed version, neglecting the impact of British colonialism in modern-day Britain.

In topics almost universally taught, such as the world wars, the role of empire is often, if not always, omitted entirely. Few are made aware of the significant contribution of the pre-separated Indian army, yet the efforts of the European countries in the Allied forces are never forgotten. Despite all of this, not all children take history at a GCSE or higher level, and so are never exposed to this teaching, or lack thereof, in the first place.

It can be argued that in leaving the decision to teach, or not to teach, the empire is a blatant example of decentralisation. In not making it a compulsory part of the national curriculum, the government can easily avoid responsibility for not acknowledging the empire. This is another factor in the systemic ignorance surrounding the British Empire, its prolific integration into present-day Britain.

The impact of colonialism can be seen in all aspects of modern Britain. It is one of the main causes of immigration patterns in this country, which has shaped society and will continue to do so. It has also caused structural racism, establishing a hierarchy that is embedded in our institutions, such as language, housing, and employment. There is a significant disparity in healthcare provisions and educational levels. Even through politics, colonial rhetoric prevails, whether this be through the controversial Commonwealth, arguments about Brexit, or the idea of 'empire 2.0'. The mark of British colonial legacy is blatantly obvious and yet is blissfully ignored.

Teaching about British colonialism is of paramount importance, as without exploring British history in its entirety, how modern Britain came to be can never truly be understood, and as such we fail to understand the people around us. History is a core part of a person's identity, it dictates where they came from, influencing what they will, in the future, do. This sentiment is reminiscent of the discourse surrounding the Windrush scandal.



Image credits: Montecruz Foto

The refusal to acknowledge the contributions of Black, Asian, and other minority ethnic individuals creates a harmful culture of unaccountability and invisibility for non-white Britons.

Without being aware of the history, racism, disparity, and bias becomes harder to tackle in a meaningful way. The harm caused by microaggressions, racist 'jokes', and stereotypes cannot be understood if the history informing the hurt remains unknown and unacknowledged. Whilst the intent behind these actions vary, the history remains unchanged, and the future may also if we continue this pattern of sweeping difficult conversations surround empire and racism under the rug.

38.0% of students in British public schools are Black, Asian, and/or minority ethnic. This means that over a third of students are unrepresented within their national curriculum. Many argue that this had led to these groups being underrepresented in fields and higher education courses relating to history. This is not only important for keeping children engaged but would also help create a sense of understanding between students. A necessary social movement that needs to be facilitated in the backdrop of rising anti-immigrant rhetoric.

It is unfair to deny students the right to learn their history, when it is so integral to their identity. Without teaching empire, it creates the idea that belonging is framed through 'whiteness' and as such excludes entire communities and their connections to Britain.

The solution seems simple; an inclusive curriculum is needed as a priority. It would ensure that ethnic minority groups are fully integrated into both the national curriculum, the institution of education, and British legacy, rather than being a footnote. A sense of belonging is fostered and makes ethnic minority communities more affiliated with the UK education system. Britain's wealth depended upon exploitation. What comprises of British national identity is only possible through colonialism, and the efforts and plights of the effected communities deserve to be heard and uplifted.

The history curriculum needs to be broadened and include British colonialism as a compulsory topic, given that the current national curriculum, especially in teaching history, is usually a reflection of local politics and resource allocation. However, teaching about colonialism does not fully tackle the lack of representation of non-white students. An inclusive and decolonised curriculum entails a large-scale change, for example studying books by Black and Asian authors.

There have been calls for the last few years to 'decolonise the curriculum', but the questions of what this looks like and how can this be implemented stubbornly remain. How can schools enact this process when their identities are tied to figures associated with Empire and/or slavery. It is a large commitment that the government is unlikely to tackle anytime soon. Higher education and the public education system is already under considerable financial strain, and these efforts may not even be able to be facilitated. Despite all this discourse around decolonising, any efforts are yet to come into fruition.

As a society, a more palatable (and inaccurate) version of history is pushed to preserve national pride and identity. In teaching the full history of empire, and this had to include slavery, exploitation, famines, and resistance efforts, will force a reckoning of the foundations of modern Britain. Often conversations about colonialism and empire devolve into a blame game, causing many to avoid the subject all together for the sake of comfort. We choose to push patriotism over honesty.

The atrocities of empire are unfairly weighted against the small successes that borne from the conflict. The partition of India v. railways. The Bengal famine v. the rule of law. These comparisons are drawn without nuance or understanding. The UK only wants to take accountability for the good, whilst the bad remains in the past. There is time to change the narrative, and this is done through education.

The flaws in British history and in the education, system needs to be acknowledged so that we can move forward to a more inclusive society, focused on fostering belonging rather than shame and secrecy.

Spotlight or Soapbox?

Should celebrities get political?

Ellie Smith

Regardless of what Sydney Sweeney may think, art is, and always has been, inherently political. It is therefore no surprise that those producing this art are also politically minded and speaking up about it, despite the controversies.

Year on year, we see pleas from Ricky Gervais, essentially begging celebrities not to use their moment in the spotlight to make things political. In his 2020 Golden Globes monologue, Gervais told the actors in the room not to turn their acceptance speeches into political calls to action. He said that they are in 'no position to lecture the public about anything', remarking that they 'know nothing about the real world'.



Pictured: Alex Lacamoire
Image credits: Wikimedia Commons

This is incredibly typical of the complaints levelled against those celebrities that utilise their time on stage to make political comments.

There is the argument that by making a quick political statement in an already brief acceptance speech, celebrities run the risk of oversimplifying really complex issues, as well as promoting virtue-signalling, or distracting from grassroots activism and the systemic solutions that are actually needed to confront these issues.

Even outside of awards season, celebrities have been known to heavily dilute some issues with their use of social media.



Image credits: PMC Media Group

I cannot help but think back to when it seemed that everyone, celebrities included, were posting the AI generated image captioned 'All eyes on Rafah'. The image was reportedly shared by over 47 million people, and among this line up were celebrities like Dua Lipa, Kit Connor, and Lewis Hamilton.

While there is no doubt that the intentions and message behind this image were, and still are, vital, this is a perfect case to be demonstrating the all too easy dilution of important political issues. The absence of the real people and the distressing scenes that we know are happening in Palestine, made this image much easier for people to post yet not confront the deeper issue at hand.

This is made clear in the fact that so many people who posted this image back in May 2024, have not posted anything more on the matter since this day, despite the fact that Israel is still continuing their genocide of Palestinian people. This ultimately shows that their engagement in political issues is limited to being quite surface-level, and lacking of the deeper political engagement that is needed to make real change.

Celebrities are by no means politicians, and by platforming their voices that come from positions of fame and wealth, there begs the question: **are we only reinforcing existing inequalities?**

I do understand this argument, but overwhelmingly I truly believe that in cases like this, any publicity is good publicity and in a world where the far-right is on a rapid rise, any sense of solidarity is more than welcome.

So far at this year's awards shows, we have seen many celebrities donning 'ICE OUT' pins. In fact, many seem to have also taken to wearing them out and about. An article by Daysia Tolentino for GQ even described these pins as the 'celebrity accessory of the moment'.

Not only is this sentiment being expressed through accessories, but multiple acceptance speeches have explicitly and implicitly referenced the recent actions of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Billie Eilish, in her speech accepting the Grammy for her song "Wildflower" winning song of the year, said 'Fuck ICE' before adding 'no one is illegal on stolen land. And, yeah, it's just really hard to know what to say and what to do right now, and I feel really hopeful in this room, and I feel like we just need to keep fighting and speaking up and protesting, and our voices really do matter, and the people matter.'

Many people on social media branded these acts as performative and say they believe them not to go far enough, while others take the view that in a political climate where we are seeing increasing hostility and hate, small actions can have big meaning.

I am inclined here to agree with the latter. Eilish's speech perfectly encapsulates the idea that even as a politically active individual, who does not need celebrities to inform be about issues like ICE, there is something so comforting about seeing a celebrity who's work I enjoy raising awareness and speaking up about issues that I think are important.



Pictured: Billie Eilish
Image credits: Heute.at

We need to remember that pop culture is a huge point of engagement for young people, and by making it a political space, celebrities can help young people become engaged with politics, potentially before they can participate in the traditional methods, like voting.

Celebrities have huge platforms, typically made up of highly impressionable followers, some of which have historically been known to help drum up huge amounts of money for important causes very quickly. Their platforming of political issues can thus be hugely beneficial to the cause.

A lot of this debate is generally dismissed as chronically online discourse, but there is a real reality here where celebrities have real powers of social influence.

We already allow celebrities to have a huge amount of influence over the way we live our lives. Literally every year there seems to be a 'Hailey Bieber this' and a 'Hailey Bieber that'. Without having any professional experience, we as consumers still let celebrities have a huge say over what diets we follow, what skincare products we use, what clothes we buy. Although celebrities are not politicians, they are also not dieticians or dermatologists, yet we often still blindly follow what they recommend.

It seems to me, therefore, that there is no reason why we cannot allow celebrities the opportunity to use their platform for politics as well. We just need to remember that it is possible to listen to celebrities and simultaneously participate in more meaningful political actions.

There are so many people out there who do not naturally engage in politics in their day-to-day lives, so any way that we can get them involved and caring is helpful. The success of the far-right unfortunately lies with those who do not engage in politics because they believe it does not affect them. Therefore, in our fight against the forces of fascism, we must welcome any kind of resistance, no matter how big or small.

How to Steal the Work of Thousands of Artists and Get Away With It

AI Art and the Industrialisation of Creative Theft

Adwita Gupta

AI-generated art is everywhere now: in galleries, on social media, and even winning competitions. Platforms such as Midjourney and DALL-E market themselves as tools to “democratise” creativity, promising that anyone with a prompt can become an artist. But the reality is far less inspiring. It’s quiet theft.

These models are trained on millions of artworks scraped from the internet without any consent or credit. Human artists are being displaced by systems built on their own labour. As AI art goes mainstream, it’s worth asking a simple question: who really benefits when creativity becomes automated?

I first noticed the shift toward AI art on social media. My feed filled up almost overnight with glossy, hyper-polished images labelled as “AI-generated”. At the same time, artists I followed started talking about commissions drying up, or about their styles being copied without permission. The platforms were rewarding speed and volume over skill and time, and it was clear that this new creative economy was built for platforms and profit, not for the people actually making art.

To understand the politics of AI-generated art, you have to look at what it’s built on. Image generators such as Midjourney, DALL-E and Stable Diffusion don’t just create art from thin air. They’re trained on datasets, like LAION-5B, which scrape billions of images from the internet. This includes work posted on platforms intended for artists, such as DeviantArt, ArtStation, Getty, Tumblr, and countless others. Almost none of the artists whose work was taken were asked. They weren’t credited. They weren’t paid.

This mass data harvesting is framed by technology companies as “innovation” but actually amounts to industrial-scale intellectual property theft. Ongoing lawsuits, such as Andersen v. Stability AI, argue that these companies are infringing copyright on a scale never seen before in the creative industry.

But it’s not just about legal ownership. As former Stability AI senior executive Ed Newton-Rex put it, “When AI companies call this ‘training data’, they dehumanise it. What we’re talking about is people’s work - their writing, their art, their music”. AI art tools may promise new forms of creativity, but at their core they rely on a simple trick - use millions of artworks without permission, and call it progress.

AI-generated art has also built a booming industry on unpaid labour. Midjourney charges monthly fees. Stability AI licenses image-generation tools to businesses. Tech firms then pitch these models as innovative, cost-cutting creative solutions. Meanwhile, the illustrators, designers, painters, whose work trained these systems, get nothing.

Commercial commissions, editorial artwork, and even book covers are now being generated using prompts. For freelance artists, especially those without institutional backing, this is catastrophic. Their source of income has begun to dry up as clients opt for unpaid imitation over human skill and time.



Image credits: Pexels

In 2025, Christie's launched their first all-AI art auction, which led to over 6,000 artists signing an open letter accusing the sale of profiting from "mass theft" of creative labour. Many of the works were made using AI models trained on scraped, copyrighted work, exploiting artists without consent or pay. Christie's, unfortunately, refused to cancel the sale, and made over \$728,000.



Image credits: Wikimedia Commons

Another question to raise is what happens to art when the artist is removed from it? AI-generated images don't create anything new; they combine instead. They stitch together fragments of existing work to produce something that looks intentional, but has no memory, emotional stake or politics behind it. The result might look like art, but won't mean anything.

This is why the US Copyright Office refuses to grant these works protection as there's no real human voice behind them. Real art reflects the artist and their context and struggle. When that is stripped away, what we are left with is not culture, just automated aesthetics.

The rise of AI art isn't just a technological shift, it's a cultural one. At its core is a question about power: who gets to create, who gets to profit and whose voices get erased. Without transparency or accountability, AI image generators function as tools of extraction that turn creative communities online into free datasets for tech companies to mine.

Supporters of AI art often defend it by claiming that it "democratises" creativity. They argue that if everyone can generate images instantly then culture becomes more accessible and less elitist. But even though the user might feel empowered, the infrastructure remains firmly in corporate hands.

The idea that AI "levels the playing field" also ignores who gets pushed off it. When publishers, companies, and media outlets replace commissions with prompts, it doesn't lead to more creativity, but fewer paid artists and less space for people to sustain creative careers at all.

A genuinely democratic approach to creative technology would start from consent. It would mean artists having control over whether their work is used and having a real say in how these systems are built and governed.

But resistance is growing. Artists are refusing to be written out of the story, and are organising protests and suing tech companies. More than 6,000 people signed the letter against Christie's and there are many ongoing lawsuits such as Andersen v. Stability AI. If we believe art still matters, we cannot hand over its future to algorithms and billionaire-run platforms.



Image credits: Flickr

In Crisis

How can the UK provide a more Equitable and Accessible Mental Health service?

Grace Smart

It is not news to anybody that the NHS has been brought to its knees from 14 years of austerity from the Conservatives, and has continued to decline under Starmer's Labour government due to lack of funding.

Within this system, an area that has unequivocally suffered is mental health services, with a YouGov survey taken in October 2025 concluding that 42% of adults in the UK are not confident that the NHS is sufficient in treating mental illness. The waiting list is spiralling, the quality of care is declining, and it appears that the system needs to undergo immense changes to make it more accessible and equal.



Image credits: Geograph Ireland

So how have we gotten here? And ultimately, what can we do to ensure this system is improved?

As of December 2024, it is estimated that 1.7 million people in the UK were waiting for community care, this includes appointments with psychologists and psychiatrists to treat various mental health conditions, ranging from depression to personality disorders. As a result, people with mental health conditions are not being treated quickly enough, with the Centre for Mental Health (CQC) finding that people are “more unwell” by the time that they receive support, further increasing pressure on NHS to treat more severe conditions.

This has created a cycle where those seeking help are not being provided the care they require, and those providing the aforementioned services are unable to cope with the mounting pressure placed upon them. Through examining the CQC's report further, it is evident that those from deprived areas are more likely to be detained under the Mental Health Act, with ill mental health being directly linked to experiences of inequality in society.

This shows how declining mental health services are symptomatic of the much larger inequalities in British society, inequalities that have consistently been fostered by government policy.

Therefore, there must be a much stronger effort to tackle economic and social disparities, as an effective mental health service must centre those who are most vulnerable and at risk, otherwise the inequalities that are making mental health care inaccessible will be reinforced, and the services that are essential will be perpetually debilitated.

As previously mentioned, it is clear that the insufficient mental health provision in the UK is just symptomatic of wider underfunding for the NHS, as well as a general undervaluing of care work and wellbeing.

To showcase this on a local level, it was reported in September 2025 that two adult day centres that provided essential support for adults with autism and learning disabilities were set to be closed down in Nottinghamshire by Nottinghamshire County Council.

Being described as “devastating” by the mother of an attendee, these closures illustrate how undervalued community care work is. Meanwhile, these services remain essential in maintaining the wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable individuals in our communities, to shut them down further shows a complete disregard for their welfare and security.

The closure of these services came in conjunction with the announcement of the Reform-led County Council’s plan to spend £75,000 on putting up Union Jack flags in areas across Nottinghamshire, allegedly to “strengthen community spirit.”



Image credits: Cassandra Morgan

To spend £75,000 on a blatant intimidatory tactic targeting the migrant community is abhorrent in itself, but then to deny essential services for another marginalised community on the basis of economic feasibility exposes a clear hypocrisy in claims of caring for the most vulnerable in society. To me, this further illustrates how there should also be a push to maintain and rebuild these hubs that are integral to the wellbeing of many in our communities, and this push must be through electoral, grassroots and collective action.

So, what would a more equal, accessible and sustainable mental health service look like in the UK?

After investigating the shortcomings of mental health services, a cross-party Health and Social Care Committee report argues that there is a clear opportunity to improve Britain’s mental health services.

Known as ‘24/7 Neighbourhood Mental Health Centres,’ inspired by similar services in Italy, offer a “one-stop-shop with individualised care and advice services for housing, employment and other issues,” with the community-based aspect of the service making mental health services more accessible, as well as reducing the stigma around seeking mental health support.

In order to achieve this, it is once again imperative that the government begin to divert funding back towards mental health services, making a clear commitment to improving mental health provisions in the UK.

Furthermore, the committee also touched on the disparity in mental health provision for marginalised communities, stating that there is clear evidence to suggest that ethnic minorities, particularly Black British individuals, ‘face discrimination, and lack culturally appropriate or personalised support.’

With the committee recommending that the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (NHS England’s first anti-racism and accountability framework) is legally imposed on mental health services in the UK. Once again, it is then clear that one of the first steps in achieving equal mental health services in the UK must be tackling the social and economic inequalities that exist within British society.

Ultimately, I believe that a truly effective, accessible and equal mental healthcare system derives from prioritising people at its core. For too long have we experienced governments and policies that have sacrificed the welfare of individuals in the pursuit of unguaranteed economic prosperity. It is the people who provide this essential care such as psychologists, psychiatrists, community care workers, and nurses, whose work needs to be sufficiently valued in order for those who are seeking support to be properly cared for. Without placing these individuals at the centre, policy that aims to improve the wellbeing of the most vulnerable remains devoid of any social progress.



Pictured: Wes Streeting
Image credits: Geograph Ireland

The 'British' Museum

A History of Colonial Domination

Emily Gibbs

The British Museum, located in London, is recognised as a leading figure in showcasing human history and culture. Their vast range of collections, spanning cultural histories like ancient Greece and Asia, provides an international outlook on history. Nevertheless, the British Museum has faced decades of criticism over their withholding of artefacts that do not belong to Britain.

The British Museum is an uncomfortable visible reminder of Britain's colonial past. Many objects were acquired in dubious ways during the pursuits of the British Empire, such as being looted from sites of conflict. These artefacts were taken from their cultural contexts and are held in an institution that prides itself on being 'British', a poignant reminder of the oppression that led to the acquisition of these collections in the first place.

By holding these artefacts, colonial history is enshrined; the British public's way of encountering global history is mediated through a lens of colonial domination.

Can an institution truly be trusted to educate us about history whilst ignoring its own?



Image credits: Wikimedia Commons

The British Museum has made some efforts to address its controversial history. On the section of the website titled 'Collecting histories', the British Museum identifies the many ways it has acquired objects over the years. There are small sections addressing the connection between the British Museum and imperialism.

The statement made on the website about colonial influence is as follows:

“The British Empire had a significant impact on the collection of the British Museum, as officials, diplomats, missionaries and travellers acquired both large and small collections in the countries under British rule where they visited or lived.” This statement seems to wash over the crippling effect that colonial violence instigated by the British Empire, has had on colonised nations.

The British Museum further addresses problematic acquisitions that centre around conflict, which the webpage refers to as “through military action and its consequences”. This vague language offers some attempt to recognise the histories of certain collections but again falls short of actually acting on these concerns and instead promises that the Museum is re-examining collections and working in partnership with other cultural institutions around the world. The British Museum further addresses problematic acquisitions that centre around conflict, which the webpage refers to as “through military action and its consequences”. This vague language offers some attempt to recognise the histories of certain collections but again falls short of actually acting on these concerns and instead promises that the Museum is re-examining collections and working in partnership with other cultural institutions around the world.

The British Museum references the Benin Bronzes here. These artefacts were looted from Benin by British troops during a military expedition in 1897. Despite recognising the contentious circumstances surrounding their acquisition, the Benin Bronzes remain in the British Museum's collections. This is particularly relevant as Cambridge has recently agreed to return over 100 Benin bronzes to Nigeria. Originally, there were concerns surrounding whether Nigeria was equipped to care for them, as government

museums were underfunded, but a privately funded renovation of Nigeria's National Museum in Lagos means that the Cambridge collection should have a secure home. This marks an important step in the repatriation of these artefacts, which acts as a stark comparison to the British Museum's continued hold over their collection that amounts to over 900 artefacts from the kingdom of Benin.



Image credits: Flickr

One obstacle to the British Museum returning objects is the British Museum Act of 1963, which stipulates "objects vested in the Trustees as part of the collections of the Museum shall not be disposed of". The only exception to this is if an artefact is a duplicate.

Trustees are only allowed to lend objects out to other museums. This reflects the organisation of the Museum under the British government, and a body of 25 Trustees appointed by the monarch, the Prime Minister, the Lord President of the Council, and from within the Trustees themselves. This legislation, and the very nature of the British Museum's organisation, means that from a legal sense, it would be incredibly difficult to overrule. It would rely on a change in the law, which would not be of particular concern to Parliament.

Moreover, there is something to be said about the education one can receive from a world history institution like the British Museum. By displaying collections from around the globe, objects are put into dialogue with one another and a common sense of humanity is revealed, for example in how we mourn loved ones. It gives people the opportunity to be exposed to things they would not otherwise know and to learn about other cultures. Nevertheless, this aim must be balanced with moral questions surrounding holding on to artefacts that were never ours in the first place.

An important case study for the argument for repatriation is the Elgin Marbles. These pieces of marble were obtained from the Parthenon by Lord Elgin, a British diplomat, whilst Greece was under occupation from the Ottoman Empire. He originally asked permission to document the marbles through drawings but ended up taking many sections back to England for his personal collection. Even the name 'Elgin Marbles' references their colonial past – an alternative name, the Parthenon Marbles, reinstates their cultural heritage.

There have been many arguments over the years about returning the Parthenon Marbles, as outlined in Christopher Hitchens's book *The Parthenon Marbles: the Case for Reunification* (2008). Some have upheld that Elgin was protecting the marbles from harm by removing them from a site of conflict, but Hitchens argues that ironically the very process of removal damaged the statues. They were also further damaged whilst in the British Museum, as improper cleaning methods damaged the stone. Furthermore, this does not justify the continued retention of the statues, as since 2009 there has been a purpose-built Acropolis Museum waiting to house the missing artefacts. The British Museum's refusal to return these artefacts remains a contentious issue that has yet to be resolved.

Museums have a responsibility to repatriate cultural artefacts to former colonies because countries have a right to the cultural heritage that was stolen from them. It is ironic that the understanding of culture perpetuated by the British Museum is based upon stealing other nations' culture and labelling it under the umbrella of 'British'. The British Museum stands as a museum of colonial domination, a domination that it seeks to uphold through a distorted interpretation of history that enshrines Britain as a 'preserver' of these artefacts, as opposed to a thief of cultural heritage.



Image credits: Wikimedia Commons

Pale, Male and Stale

The Renewed Case for the Abolition of the House of Lords

Alex Gold



Image credit: Wikimedia Commons

I am at a loss to introduce this debate in such a way that my readers (who are inevitably well-informed on the subject already) won't vomit into their yellow-and-black sick bucket, or start launching darts in uncontained fury at their life-sized cardboard cut-out of Nick Clegg.

So yes, we have already seen previous (failed) attempts at Lords Reform. And yes, it is easy to become bored with the idea of its abolition because we know it is very unlikely to happen. The principal reason for this is that any party who intends to tackle the fundamentally undemocratic chamber at the heart of UK politics, will not be able to resist the temptation to flood the Lords with peers of their own party if elected to form a government.

For those in favour of abolition, the Lords' power to amend and delay legislation (attributed to them by the 1911 and 1949 Parliament Acts) is an outrageous blight on the democratic principles upon which the British government was built. The idea that over eight-hundred unaccountable peers with life tenure can de jure delay (and de facto block) the legislation of the governing party is unacceptable to them.

For those opposed to its abolition, the very lack of accountability which is critiqued in the Lords is seen as a positive force for parliamentary scrutiny. They argue that a group of eight hundred experts, professionals, and businesspersons will be able to make beneficial bi-partisan amendments to government bills, which (especially after the delivery of Starmer's 172 seat majority in 2024) are unlikely to have undergone rigorous oversight at the hands of hundreds of constituent-fearing MPs.

Nevertheless, when Starmer outlined a detailed reform program for the Lords in Labour's 2024 manifesto, we all leapt up off our sofas chanting 'Here, here!' and 'What a good man!'. A year and a half later (after a trademark piece of Starmerite backtracking) we are left with a flimsy commitment to replace the Lords with a 'more representative body'. For those who don't speak politics, this translates to 'We said we'd do this, but we probably won't.'

And yet it appears that Starmer has resisted his impulse to flood the Lords with Labour peers. As of December 2025, Starmer has made a meagre 30 peerage appointments, leaving the Labour party with a minority 230 seats (27% of the chamber). So unlike a certain 2012 House of Lords Reform Bill proposed by a certain 'Sweet Caroline'-loving party, there is still evidence that Labour will honour its manifesto pledge and be the vanguard of constitutional reform.

Marginal progress has certainly been made. In March 2024, 28-year-old Carmen Smith (Plaid Cymru) became the youngest peer to be appointed to the Lords. More remarkable is the fact that she 'fundamentally disagree[s] with an unelected chamber; Thus, while it is unclear whether she has a Tom Cruise-style plan to take down the second chamber from the inside, the mere appointment of a peer who is actively campaigning for her own redundancy marks an unprecedented step forward on the long road to reform and/or abolition.



Thus, the proverbial wheels of Lords reform have been set in motion. But what might this ‘more representative body’ that Labour envisage look like? Would it be modelled on the US Senate - with longer terms, significant legislative powers, and those beautiful checks and balances which Alexander Hamilton so adored?

Whilst I am committing a heinous literary crime by answering my own rhetorical question, my answer is yes - a second parliamentary chamber modelled on the prestige of the US Senate would be the ideal form of this ‘more representative body’. In terms of political theory, there is no form of governance in the world which better upholds fundamental democratic principles and human liberties than the American political system. Hold your sarcastic remarks temporarily while I explain my humble vision.

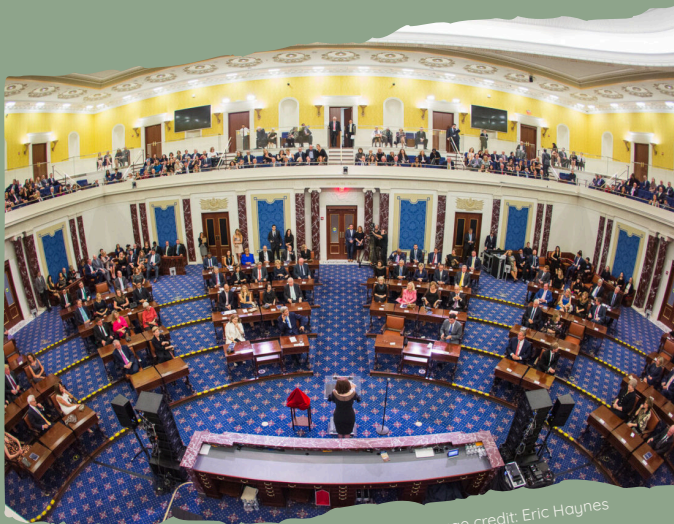


Image credit: Eric Haynes

A remodelled second chamber could include all the most promising aspects of regional devolution in the UK and marry it to the democratic respectability of the US Senate. If membership of this second chamber were offered to Metropolitan mayors and senior councillors on a five-year parliamentary term (I can hear Andy Burnham’s ears pricking up from here), MPs could more easily be held accountable to the issues raised by local representatives. Power to the people and all that.

Similarly, the House of Lords (Hereditary Peers) Bill is currently in its debate stage in both parliamentary chambers. This would not only remove the 92 hereditary peers left over after the 1999 House of Lords Act, but would also impose a mandatory retirement age of 80 on all peers. In the title of this article, I have referred to the House of Lords as ‘pale, male and stale’; it is hard to argue the contrary of a chamber with an average age of 71, and a membership of which 70% are male. Therefore, any bill which would force the retirement of 185 peers is one to be supported unconditionally.

Ultimately, the debate on Lords reform/abolition remains largely academic. At best, it is a long-term ambition which the Labour government is conveniently ignoring. I also understand that I am no expert on constitutional reform; Lin-Manuel Miranda isn’t going to be writing a musical number about the ‘Room Where my Idealistic Vision for a Second Chamber Happened’ any time soon (Desk 2337 by the recycling bins in the Silent Zone on the second floor of the University Library, if you must know). In a country where the tendency is to cling blindly to political convention, we are years away from such monumental reform.

But if we lose the voices who continue to champion this cause in spite of its adversaries, it will never happen!

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