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Respect

FREE RESPECT SPECIAL EDITION

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GALLOWAY

A PARTY OF PROTEST

Salma
YAQOOB

MULTICULTURALISM
ON THE MARCH

and
Election
News

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This month marks the fifth anniversary of the invasion and occupation of Iraq. What has followed has been five years of catastrophe for the people of that country.

It also marks the fifth birthday of the global anti-war movement. On March 15th 2003 two million people took to the streets of London, and another eight million did around the world, to protest against the impending disaster.

Respect was born out of that movement as the voice of opposition to war and neo-liberalism, which in today's world go together hand in hand.

In this free special you can read articles by two leading figures of the movement, **George Galloway MP** and **Salma Yaqoob**. You can also read about why we'll be challenging the parties of war and neo-liberalism in the **elections in May**. Finally on back pages you find out **what we stand for** and how you can **stand with us**.

Like what you read? Then read on...

- » Articles from leading figures in the movement
- » Regular column by Respect MP George Galloway
- » National and International features



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GEORGE GALLOWAY MP

a party of protest

Students at the Oxford Union held a debate recently titled “This house supports Her Majesty’s Government’s policy on Iraq”.

The only person they could get to propose the motion was MP Iain Duncan Smith MP, the former leader of the Conservative Party. No government minister dared turn up.

It says everything about the abject cowardice of those who led us into this disaster. It also indicates just how comprehensively the arguments against the Iraq war have been won.

Five years ago, it was very different. I was treated as mad, bad or both by journalists – not only from Murdoch’s mucky stables but from the BBC, and the liberal press – for daring to say that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and that the Iraqis would fight us if we invaded, not wash our feet in rosewater.

It’s easy to lose sight of that now, as one

‘I have no hesitation in saying that we were right about Iraq.’

politician after another claims that they weren’t really in support of the invasion after all.

But I have no hesitation in saying that it we were right about Iraq and, with elections approaching for the London Assembly and for councils in Birmingham, Manchester and other parts of the country, that’s something everyone should remember when they cast their votes.

We are still living with the consequences of Iraq and the disastrous occupation of Afghanistan. Tony Blair and Gordon Brown have placed our country in the front ranks of the hated. And alongside war abroad, they have brought a nastier more authoritarian Britain at home.



Pictures: <http://mancsagainsttanks.org/>

‘Respect was born out of the movement against the war to fight for peace.’

Our government is destroying our freedoms in ways that terrorists could never achieve. It is collecting more and more data on us only to let it slip into God knows whose hands. It is threatening to lock up more and more people for longer and longer without trial, and it is resorting to ever more grotesque bigotry against Muslims, minorities and migrants.

The carefully choreographed royal adventure in Afghanistan is a grim indication that the worst is not behind us. Prince Harry has provided the perfect recruitment poster; the

warrior prince taking on the savages in the Hindu Kush.

Afghanistan, for the British Army, is set to become a bloodier trap than Iraq. Over the months I’ve asked rhetorically on my radio show, at public meetings, on walkabouts and elsewhere, “What are we doing in Afghanistan? What would constitute a victory?” Our ambassador in Kabul says we will be there for 30 or 40 years.

We are told that Nato forces are killing Taliban. It’s not Taliban they are killing, it’s Afghans, Afghans who are as indignant at foreign occupation as we would be – to imagining that they would be otherwise is evidence of the kind of racist delusion that underpins imperialism.

For some – including those latter day opponents of the Iraq war – Afghanistan was the Good War that had to be fought. But, as with Iraq, what we in the anti-war movement said about Afghanistan has also turned out to be true. Remember Tony Blair warning of the heroin produced in Afghanistan finding its way to the streets of Britain? Well, there’s been a 1000 per cent increase in opium production under the occupation. It is ending up in the veins of desperate young people in our country via the gangster-ridden statelet of Kosovo, one we “liberated” earlier.

Now, in the dying days of the Bush administration Washington is ratcheting up the threats against Iran. Our movement is going to have to find new depths of energy and militancy in the face of these threats.

Respect was born out of the movement against the war to fight for peace, against racism and for justice at home and abroad. By taking the fight against war to the ballot box, as we are doing again in London and elsewhere this May, we hope to strengthen the movement as a whole and demonstrate to pro-war politicians that they cannot expect to plunge us into disaster and be confident of survival at the ballot box.

George Galloway is Respect MP for Bethnal Green & Bow
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WHY WE'RE STANDING IN MAY

Respect was born out of the anti-war movement four years ago. It was created because, as one cheerleader for war wrote, "there is no hidden hand of the market without the hidden fist". In Iraq the fist stopped being hidden and many in the anti-war movement recognised that it was not enough just to oppose war, you have to oppose the neo-liberal policies that drive it. These policies bring not only war abroad but privatisation, cuts in services and growing inequality at home.

We are running for election to the London Assembly and standing in a number of local councils including Birmingham, Manchester and Bradford in the May elections. All three big parties not only support the continuing occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, they also all support the domination of the "free" market over the lives of ordinary people. This stifling consensus means that millions of people have no choice and have stopped voting. We will give you a reason to go out and vote.

If you are against war and poverty, and for peace, justice and equality, vote Respect on May 1st.

To join Respect turn to the inside back page.

>>Click on www.respectrenewal.org

>>Read the Election Special pullout in the Respect newspaper. Out now.

"Together we can make history on May 1st."



"We will give you a reason to go out and vote."

www.respectrenewal.org

WHY I'LL BE HEADING RESPECT'S CHALLENGE

GEORGE GALLOWAY MP

The last time Respect ran for the London Assembly in 2004 we were only four months old, yet we came within half a percent of getting someone elected. Four years on we have become part of the electoral landscape of London with an MP and councillors.

We aim to take a real voice of opposition to racism and privatisation into the assembly. This time we have a real chance.

That's why I'll be heading the Respect list in this election. It will be by proportional representation and every vote will count.

Some people say Mayor Ken Livingstone doesn't take the assembly seriously. Well that's probably because the assembly members themselves are hardly serious. Barely anyone in London knows who they are or what the assembly does.

They'd know if I and my colleagues were on it. Ken Livingstone would not be able to ignore us. We'd hold him to account: supporting him when he does the right thing, like facing down Tory clown Boris Johnson, and opposing him when he was in the wrong. We'll make sure that ordinary Londoners have a voice in the assembly.

Together we can make history on May 1st.



SALMA YAQOOB

Multiculturalism on the March

The Western attempt to refashion the Middle East to serve its economic and strategic interests – a new imperialism – also requires a new racism.

Central to the ideology that has justified the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan has been the notion of a ‘Clash of Civilisations’ between an ‘enlightened’, secular West and a ‘backward’ Arab and Muslim world. The implication is that Arabs and Muslims are lesser people, from lesser civilisations. ‘Collateral damage’ may be regrettable but is justified by the benefits that Western intervention brings. With the death toll in Iraq estimated at one million people since the invasion five years ago, these views display a callous indifference to the suffering of others.

The British public have opposed the war. They have sent a very different message.

‘They marched in solidarity with the people of Iraq with whom they shared neither faith nor culture but simply humanity.’

It is a remarkable fact, and one that gives me tremendous pride, that the largest demonstration this country has ever seen, was on February 15th 2003. Two million people took to the streets, the majority of whom were not Muslim. They marched in solidarity with the people of Iraq with whom they shared neither faith nor culture but simple humanity. They acknowledged the humanity of those who would soon be on the receiving end of bombs and bullets paid for by British taxes and delivered by British soldiers.



In so doing they affirmed that the life of an Iraqi, Afghan or Palestinian is of no less value than the life of a Briton or American.

For me, and many people like me, the British public's opposition to war and the racism that it brings, has done more to restore a sense of belonging – a sense of British identity and democracy – than any number of government sponsored citizenship classes ever could.

It is that humanity, that ease with difference, that attitude of 'live and let live' that I feel encapsulates the true sense of multiculturalism and the best of Britishness. We talk about Britain being

multicultural, diverse and tolerant, but it's when you need those things that they become meaningful.

The rhetoric of the war, which demonises Muslims both at home and abroad, is undermining our hard won multiculturalism. All ethnic minority communities will be affected if this onslaught gathers speed and Britain becomes less tolerant.

At the heart of multiculturalism is the idea of cultural diversity. It was never supposed to be about the white community insisting on the assimilation of ethnic minorities, nor was it supposed to be about communities separating themselves. It was based on the principle of a respect for

'Respect is determined to challenge those who want to roll back the gains of the anti-racist struggle.'

difference, whether it related to religion, culture or race.

At a time when Britain's population is becoming ever more diverse the attack on multiculturalism is the thin end of the racist wedge; an attempt to narrow the boundaries of how it is acceptable to be different.

Much of the current debate about Muslims and immigrant communities is simply irresponsible scaremongering, but it is having an effect. Polls show that the public believe that 20% of the population



are immigrants (in reality the true figure is 4%) and that Britain takes 25% of the world's asylum seekers (the true figure is 2%). Ignorance breeds intolerance. Intolerance breeds racism.

We may be different, but we are equal, whether we live in Baghdad or Birmingham, whether our parents come from Portsmouth or Poland. Abroad our foreign policy should reflect the values of equality and dignity. At home our multicultural nation should enshrine these values. Respect is determined to challenge those who want to roll back the gains of the anti-racist struggle, and is proud to champion the values of dignity and equality for all, both at home and abroad.



Pictures: <http://mancsagainsttanks.org/>

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We stand for
Respect
Equality
Socialism
Peace
Environment
Community
Trade Unionism

An end to the war and occupation in Iraq. We will not join any further imperialist wars.

An end to all privatisation and the return to public ownership of the railways and other public services.

An education system that is not dependent on the ability to pay, that is comprehensive and gives an equal chance in life to every child no matter how wealthy or poor their parents, from nursery to university.

A publicly owned and funded, democratically controlled NHS, free to all users.

Pensions linked to average earnings.

Raising the minimum wage to the EU Decency threshold of £7.40 an hour.

Tax the rich to fund welfare and to close the growing gap between the poor and the wealthy few.

The repeal of the Tory anti-union laws.

Opposition to all forms of discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, beliefs (religious or secular), sexual orientation, disabilities or national origin.

The right to selfdetermination of every individual in relation to their religious (or secular) beliefs, and sexual choices.

The defence of the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

Opposition to the European Union's 'Fortress Europe' policies.

We will strongly oppose the anti-European xenophobic right wing in any Euro referendum. We oppose the 'stability pact' the EU imposes on those who join the euro. This pact would outlaw government deficit spending and reinforce the drive to deregulate the economy. We will therefore vote 'No' in any referendum on this issue.

Support for the people of Palestine and opposition to the apartheid system that oppresses them.

An end to the destruction of the environment by states and corporations for whom profit is more important.

Stand with us

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