

# ***TAKE BACK THE CITY***

**A PEOPLE'S MANIFESTO FOR LONDON**



VOTE!

## LONDON – A TALE OF TWO CITIES

**London.** One of the most diverse cities on the planet. A place of incredible vitality, energy and creativity. A city that challenges convention, that drives social change, that allows us to explore life in new ways. A city where social housing was built in the twentieth century to support the communities at its heart. The city of Blake, Stormzy, Wollestonecraft, Marx, Dickens, Bowie, The Clash, Kate Tempest, the Chartists, the Suffragettes, the Battle of Cable Street, Notting Hill Carnival, Queens Market, Focus E15 Mothers...

And a city that millions of us call home.

**But London is in danger of becoming a playground for the rich.** Across the city, arts venues, pubs and small independent businesses are closing every week and being replaced with chains. Social housing is being demolished to make way for luxury flats for the rich while the communities that lived there are

being pushed out of the areas they created. Families are being evicted by landlords seeking to maximise their profits. London isn't working for the people who make it what it is.

We need to Take Back the City from the super-rich and the City of London, career politicians who don't represent us, exploitative landlords and estate agents charging rip-off fees, councils colluding with property developers in gentrification, a racist, unaccountable police force, and big businesses paying poverty wages.

**All over London communities are organising creatively to resist** gentrification in their local areas, cuts to public services, and exploitation in the workplace. This resistance gives us hope for a different London, but there's a lot more we need to do...

**It's time to stand up and Take Back the City.**



A Tale of Two Cities by Dhelia Snoussi



Photo by Rohan Smith

## TAKING BACK THE CITY



Take Back the City was founded in March 2015 to make the possibility of transforming London a reality. We know the people of London can take our city back - but only if we work together.

That's why we've spent a year reaching out to groups of Londoners that make our city so great, but whose voices aren't heard. Over 1000 Londoners have told us the changes we need to see. This manifesto is based on their demands.

But we can't just hear what people say - we need to challenge the powerful directly. That's why Amina Gichinga, a singing teacher rooted in the communities of East London, is standing on this People's Manifesto

to be elected to the London Assembly this May.

If Amina is elected she'll use her platform to campaign for the changes in this manifesto, but more importantly to work with communities to make their vision a reality. She won't accept the £55,000 salary that Assembly members get paid - she'll donate half to organisations and campaigns that are working for London.

In the future, we need many more people like Amina from marginalised communities to be in positions of power - to change politics in London.

But we know that elections are only a small part of what needs to happen. We need a people's movement in London. A movement that will take power away from the super-rich and place it in the hands of the people. A movement that will come from the creativity, energy and experiences of millions of Londoners.

## ***BUILDING A PEOPLE'S MANIFESTO***



### **Haringey Sixth Form**

Demand: Increase in the minimum wage



### **St Pancras Court housing cooperative**

Demand: Affordable housing, taxing big business



### **Workers from 3 Cosas ('3 Things')**

Demands include: rent control, reclaim the city

To build our manifesto Take Back the City has talked to a huge range of groups across London, reflecting the city's diversity. Here's a selection of the groups we had intensive discussions with to shape the manifesto, and some of the demands they made as a result:

### **Tower Hamlets Athletic Club**

Demand: Students should not pay for transport in London



### **Single homeless project**

Demand: Tax big business to help improve access to higher education



### **Live in guardians.**

Demand: Rent Caps







**VOTE!**

## SEVEN WAYS TO TAKE BACK THE CITY

Take Back the City aims to turn politics on its head - so that the people of London run their city, not the politicians. That's why we've built this People's Manifesto from the demands of ordinary Londoners.

And as we've built the manifesto we've learned about the urgent changes that Londoners need now to deal with the problems so many of us face. Here are seven changes we urgently need:



### 1. Build people power

People power isn't a slogan, it's something we need to make a reality. That means local assemblies where people can come together to discuss the issues that affect them and make decisions about how to use the city's wealth. And it means taking power away from Westminster and giving it to London - otherwise, many of the changes we need simply aren't possible.



### 2. Rent control

People are being priced out of their homes and communities because of rising rents. We need rent control, more rights for tenants, and a tenants' union to prevent landlords from breaking rules.



### 3. Reclaim empty properties for social use

Across London, properties are being left empty - by property developers, the super-rich, and councils - while thousands sleep rough each night, homelessness continues to increase and community spaces are being lost. These buildings should be used for community projects and to shelter people who need homes.



### 4. Replace the Met

Over 20 years since Stephen Lawrence's murder, the Metropolitan Police remains a corrupt, unaccountable and racist institution. We need to replace it with an accountable and transparent police force, strongly connected to communities, with effective citizen monitoring of police behaviour.



### 5. A London Minimum Wage of £11 per hour

Many Londoners are currently paid poverty wages and the London Living Wage remains voluntary. To ensure fair pay for workers we need a new, compulsory minimum wage for London.



### 6. Restore Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

The EMA helped working class students across London access further education - until the government cut it in 2011. We need to bring back EMA as a first step to a genuine 'right to study' in London - the right to access education no matter a person's income or wealth.



### 7. Cut all transport fares by 20%

Transport is an unavoidable cost for so many Londoners, with jobs, relatives, and homes inevitably in different places. Ticket prices have been rising too fast. We need transport that all Londoners can afford.



## **HOUSING**

Housing is a right, not a privilege. We believe everyone should have a safe place they can call home.

### **Build more high quality social housing**

We believe in the expansion of quality social housing with secure tenancies. Restrictions on council borrowing should be lifted and councils should be building homes for the people who need them most.

This means campaigning against the government's Housing Bill, which is an outright attack on social housing. If elected, Amina will use her platform to support that campaign.

### **End discrimination and unfairness in the rental market**

We support campaigns to end discrimination against Housing Benefit claimants - like Hackney Digs' 'Yes to DSS' campaign. We also need to restrict 'rip off' estate agent fees, and to limit the use of Section 21 notices and bailiffs, especially in the case of 'revenge evictions'.

### **End Buy-To-Let subsidies**

Too many homes end up in the hands of landlords making money out of others who can't afford to buy. Landlords currently enjoy billions of pounds worth of tax breaks by claiming deductions on expenses. This needs to end.

### **Support housing co-ops**

Housing co-operatives (co-ops) are important sources of community where groups of people manage their households collectively, but currently face barriers accessing the credit they need. We need to give people without capital the chance to run their own communities and their own built environments, together.

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## **DEMOCRACY**

### **More powers for London**

8 million people live in London - but the city has very limited power to create laws. Many of the changes we need simply can not be realised without powers devolved to us from Westminster.

### **A 'people's budget' for London**

To directly empower the people of London, we propose a people's budget that will allow all Londoners to decide how the city's wealth should be used. This has been successfully used in other cities across the world. Creating a people's budget would start with local community assemblies open to any resident in the area.

### **Power over our politicians**

Politicians are out of touch with communities. They can only be reached in surgery sessions and when the next photo-op arises. If elected, Amina would actively consult and engage with communities across City and East, only taking key decisions after a vote.

### **Defend the right to protest**

In 2015, the Met attempted to make certain groups pay for private security to hold protests on the streets of London. Any future attempt to make protesters pay in this manner is a breach of Article 11 of the European Court of Human Rights, the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, and needs to be opposed by our elected representatives.



## EDUCATION

### Create a London Education Authority

We want communities, education workers and students to have control over London's education system - not the Government or Ofsted. London needs a democratically-run London Education Authority so that schools, colleges and universities in London can plan, coordinate and cooperate rather than compete.

### Education for democracy and participation

We need improved citizenship education that teaches critical engagement with questions of power and inequality in society, and the role that students can have in a democracy. To enable Londoners to fully participate in society, we also need to strengthen the teaching of life skills, and to support skills training for adults as well as young people.

### Valuing diversity in education

A London Educational Authority would promote education that genuinely reflects the incredibly varied history and culture of London's school children. Crucially, this requires teaching and learning about the history of the British empire and the stories of migrants - their experiences of discrimination and their struggles and contributions to society.

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## WORK AND WAGES

### Social justice employers

To strengthen democracy, prevent workplace exploitation and over-work, we need to create and promote a register of 'social justice employers' in London. These employers would have both maximum and minimum wages, maximum working hours, and strong rights for workers to have a voice through trade unions.

The Greater London Authority would become the first social justice employer and its contractors would also have to meet these standards.

### A Universal Basic Income pilot

People receiving benefits in London are stigmatised for being 'scroungers', while many working are paid too little to afford rent, food and other basic items. Around the world, the idea of a universal basic income - an income for all citizens in a city or country, whether or not they work - has been gaining ground. It's a way of showing that everyone is guaranteed a decent standard of living - as a right.

Take Back the City proposes a pilot of a UBI across the boroughs of City and East, to see if this could work for all of London.

### Equal rights and pay for outsourced workers

Employers such as universities and hotels are guilty of denying basic rights and at times exploiting outsourced workers in services such as cleaning and catering. Outsourced workers should be paid the same per hour as regular staff, and have the same rights to sick pay, holidays and pensions.





## ***EQUALITY AND LIBERATION***

### **Make LGBTQ+ venues community assets**

Many of London's most loved LGBTQ+ venues have closed in recent years, resulting in a loss of safe spaces for the community to come together and socialise. These should be protected as community assets reflecting and celebrating our diversity as Londoners.

### **Protect services for vulnerable and marginalised groups**

Austerity is hitting the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in society first, and hardest - people of colour, women, the LGBTQ+ community, religious minorities, and people with disabilities. These groups are at higher risk of violence than other groups and face particular challenges associated with their identities. Local authority funding for specialist services needs to be ring-fenced to support these groups.

### **Make equality and community the foundations of planning**

Regeneration projects are forcing minorities and low income families out of the areas they helped to create. Equality Impact Assessments should be made compulsory again for all planning projects, with communities directly involved in this process. Planning consultations also need to be more accessible and address communities as a whole rather than using divide-and-rule tactics.

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## ***TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT***

Take Back the City believes that everyone committed to making London work for its people need to cooperate. So, in addition to demanding a cut in fares, we share principles and policies with the Green Party on transport and the environment.

### **Close London City Airport, support community**

London City Airport is a blight on the local community in the Royal Docks, Newham, and those living under flight paths. It serves the interest of a tiny business elite while causing major air and noise pollution. Our candidate Amina Gichinga has been organising with the local community in objection to the expansion of the airport since 2013. We share the vision of HACAN East, to re-use the space for the community. Quality social housing, green spaces, community centres and local businesses are what's needed.

### **Flat fares for London**

Fare zones make central London harder to access for working class people, and encourage car use. We support the Green policy to eliminate fare zones by 2025, with a single cost across London.

### **Air pollution**

Air pollution causes nearly 9,500 premature deaths in London every year, and it hits the poorest hardest. We support the Green Party policy of immediately excluding the most polluting cars, vans and lorries from central London, and the cancellation of plans for airport expansion. And we want to speed up the replacement of diesel buses with hybrids and electric vehicles, and ultimately move towards car-free zones and a massive expansion of electric car charging points.





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### **Increase disabled access at tube stations**

Transport in London discriminates punitively towards those with disabilities. Journeys take on average four times longer for disabled people, and only a handful of tube stations are fully accessible. Every new station needs to be fully wheelchair accessible and the needs of disabled Londoners must be considered in every new transport development. In addition, train companies need to include audio and visual information on every train for deaf and blind people

**£££**

### ***HOW ARE WE GOING TO FUND IT?***

London is one of the richest cities in the world - there is a huge amount of wealth in this city with which to fund the urgent social measures outlined in this manifesto. And in the developed world's most unequal city the demand to redistribute wealth away from the richest is not a radical one.

To reintroduce the EMA, we would simply need to remove tax breaks for private schools. And to fund measures such as reductions in transport fares, we could remove the generous tax breaks landlords enjoy and, more importantly, close tax loopholes. There is also a case for introducing new taxes on the rich, such as a land value tax and a second homes tax.

All of this would require more power for London to govern itself. But that's something we need anyway, if we are to create meaningful democracy in our city - to take it back for its people.



Photo by Rohan Smith

GET  
INVOLVED

## ***GET INVOLVED!***

We need people in power who really represent us, who reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the city and who walk like us and talk like us. That is what Take Back The City will fight to deliver. If you want to join in, please get in touch, whether to add your demands to our manifesto, show support or contribute your skills and ideas to our campaign. Whoever you are, we would love to hear from you!

Contact us at [takebackthecity2016@gmail.com](mailto:takebackthecity2016@gmail.com)



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