



## I fought racism and misogyny to become an MP. The fight is getting harder by Diane Abbott

In 30 years I've never complained about abuse. I'm speaking out now because I fear the politics of personal destruction is silencing minorities



MPs Bernie Grant and Diane Abbott at the 1988 Labour party conference in Blackpool.  
Photograph: PA/PA Archive/PA Images

The Nobel prize-winning author [Toni Morrison](#) once said, “If there is a book you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it.” And as a young woman the “book I wanted to read” was a narrative where a black woman could be a member of the UK parliament.

It was an extremely unlikely aspiration. After the 1983 general election, out of 650 members of parliament in total, there were no black, Asian or minority ethnic MPs – [and only 23 women](#). But I ignored the odds and was [elected in 1987](#), the first ever black woman MP. The campaign was tough. A brick was thrown through a window at my campaign HQ. Many Labour party members worked hard to back me, others went missing. The Times had marked my selection by complaining about my “rhetoric of class struggle and skin-colour consciousness”. Judging by the wariness with which I was treated when I entered the House of Commons, many MPs agreed with the Times.

There are those who seem to think that sexist abuse is just the price women pay for being in public life



But suppose that someone had told me back then that 30 years on I would be receiving stuff like this: “Pathetic useless fat black piece of shit Abbott. Just a piece of pig shit pond slime who should be fucking hung (if they could find a tree big enough to take the fat bitch’s weight)”. I think that even the young, fearless Diane Abbott might have paused for thought. ...

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