



Speech by Kiri Tunks, on behalf of Woman's Place UK Labour Women's Declaration #Expel Me rally London, Monday 9th March 2020.

Thank you very much for coming tonight.

Woman's Place UK campaigns:

- To defend and uphold women's sex based rights
- To ensure women's voices are heard

On behalf of all of us at Woman's Place UK, we would like to thank you for your solidarity, your respect and your friendship. We have come under attack a lot in the last couple of years and your support has kept us going. Thank you.

We were astonished when we saw the Labour Campaign for Trans Rights' pledge. We were astonished that those leadership candidates and MPs signed it. We were astonished at the complete lack of political judgement.

We have previously met key figures in the Labour Party who seemed to understand women's concerns and commit to action.

The good news is that: There is a commitment to upholding single-sex exemptions in the Labour manifesto. That remains Labour Party policy.

Woman's Place UK is **of** the movement. Most of us are rooted in socialist, labour traditions.

The movement needs to remember that women are not just an adjunct. Women are central to the movement – historically and in the present day.

We look to historical struggles by women.

My particular favourite, the Matchwomen's strike of 1888 – brilliantly researched by Louise Raw – when young women led 1,400 factory workers out on strike for 10 days over appalling conditions and won. A year later, their brothers and fathers were out on strike in the Dockers strike of 1889 and kick started a new labour movement;

The Chainmakers of Cradley Heath who in 1910 went on strike for 10 weeks and established the first minimum wage in this country;

The Dagenham Ford strikers in 1967 who fought and won the principle of equal pay;

The Grunwick strikers in 1976, mainly immigrant Asian women workers fighting for human and trade union rights.

Most of these struggles took place before, or in spite of, the modern trade union and labour movement – not because of it.

These struggles helped build the movement. Women are key in building and sustaining the movement.

Thank you Labour Women's Declaration for organising this '#ExpelMe' rally tonight. You have reminded the movement that women matter. That a movement that doesn't include women, or address women's concerns, fails not just women but the whole class.

Women's contribution to this movement is not incidental. It's not accidental. It's fundamental.

Today, in the UK, women make up the majority of trade union membership: 54%.

We make up nearly half of the Labour party membership.

Yet we are not properly represented in leadership or policy making structures.

Women are the backbone of the labour movement and the Labour Party giving hours of unpaid voluntary work to organise meetings, leaflet and canvass.

The disregard and disdain for us is a disgrace.

We have weathered contempt, belittling, abuse and outright hostility. But we are not deterred. We are here to say 'Enough'.

We are not prepared to bargain away our rights (won by women who came before us).

We are not prepared to be told to wait, or step aside – again.

We are here to say that women matter in this movement.

And you ignore us at your peril.

Kiri Tunks is a teacher, a trade union activist and a co-founder of Woman's Place UK.