

Labour Suspends Veteran Member of Parliament Diane Abbott Amid Controversy Over Race Remarks

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The Labour Party has suspended veteran Member of Parliament Diane Abbott for a second time after she reiterated controversial remarks suggesting that racism based on skin color is distinct from prejudices experienced by other minority groups. Her refusal to retract those views

during a BBC interview prompted swift disciplinary action from the party leadership.

Abbott, who has served as MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington since 1987 and is the UK's first Black woman elected to Parliament, defended her original position, stating that racism "about colour" is different from the bias encountered by Jewish, Irish, or Traveller communities. She argued that people from those groups are not visibly identifiable in the same way as Black individuals, a point which sparked renewed criticism.

This latest suspension follows a previous controversy in 2023 when Abbott made similar comments in a letter to The Observer newspaper. At the time, she issued a public apology and retracted her statement, allowing her to be readmitted to the party before the 2024 general election. However, in her most recent comments, she stood by her views, saying "No, not at all" when asked if she regretted them.

Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer has made a point of tightening internal discipline, particularly in response to public dissent on key issues. Speaking following Abbott's latest remarks, Starmer emphasized that the party would not be "deflected" from its core commitments. Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner added that she was "disappointed" by Abbott's position, stating firmly that there is "no place for antisemitism" in the Labour Party.

Abbott, for her part, claims she is being unfairly targeted, insisting that she has spent a lifetime campaigning against all forms of racism. She continues to enjoy strong support in her constituency, with local activists reportedly organizing events to back her.

From a centre-right perspective, this episode highlights Labour's increasing reliance on centralised control and messaging discipline, often at the expense of nuanced internal debate. While there is broad consensus on the importance of tackling antisemitism and prejudice, critics warn that the party's approach risks suppressing legitimate discussion and marginalising long-serving figures who challenge the leadership's narrative.

Ultimately, Labour's leadership faces a delicate balancing act, upholding standards of conduct while preserving democratic space for divergent views, especially on matters as complex and personal as race and identity.