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EU Referendum: Road Forward to Diversity and Solidarity

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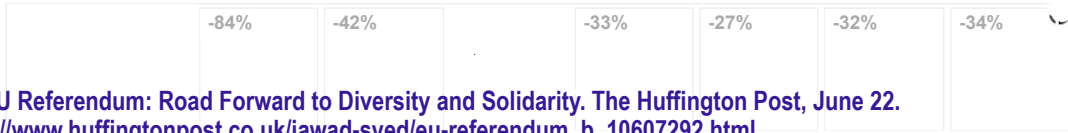
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## THE BLOG

# EU Referendum: Road Forward to Diversity and Solidarity

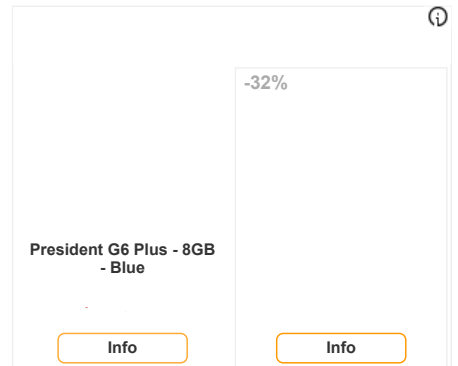
22/06/2016 12:04 | Updated 22 June 2016



 **Jawad Syed**   
Academic, writer and rights activist

On Thursday 23rd June 2016, UK will vote either to stay in or opt out of the European Union, a decision that will shape the country's future. In this brief post, we outline why it is important for all British voters of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds to have their say in the EU referendum rather than leaving it to fate.

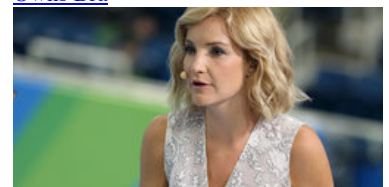
EU referendum is a major decision point for the UK and a chance for all British voters to have their say on a question that has raged for a generation. It is an opportunity for everyone to have her or his voice heard on an important topic. However, there is a concern that Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups are less likely to vote, which if true may leave a considerable political participation gap.



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is becoming a major challenge for the UK and EU, almost all BME groups feel indirect targets of this narrative. Although, there is no denial that hostile views exist about immigrants and ethnic minority groups, an active participation in the EU referendum may help reshape the national conversation on immigration and cultural diversity.

According to an estimate, that there are 4 million BME voters in the UK plus another 400,000 British Commonwealth voters who are eligible to vote and have their say in the EU referendum. However, around 30% of them are not even registered (Stewart, 2016). Therefore, it is really important that ethnic minorities including BME women actively exercise their democratic right, participate in the political process and do not feel deterred or threatened by negative stereotypes and perceptions that exist. Their political activism will be per se a sign of their integration and vibrant presence as well as show that ethnic minorities are as much capable of making important decisions and standing up for what they believe is right as their white compatriots. It is also an opportunity for the British nation to unite across the boundaries of ethnicity, race, faith, gender, age, sexuality, political ideology and other dimensions of diversity.

It is therefore no surprise that political giants across party lines such as Sir John Major and Tony Blair have united to warn that an exit vote could tear apart the United Kingdom and plunge the country into an era of economic and political instability. In contrast, staying in the EU may would mean a continued commitment to workers' rights and social standards as well as greater employment opportunities and healthy competition. Malhotra et al. (2016) suggest that about three million jobs are linked to our trade within the EU, and an estimated 800,000 further more are expected to be created in the future. Our economy will also grow much faster as being part of the world's largest 28-nation trading bloc, offering lower prices on consumer goods, increased wages and greater trading possibilities. The flow of immigrants, most of them young and keen to work, will continue to support economic growth and help pay for public services in a rapidly ageing society.

By leaving the EU, prices are likely to increase significantly in terms of living costs and the general day-to-day expenses with potentially negative impact on the economy. Sullivan and Parker (2016) suggest that there could be up to 10 per cent drop in the nominal exchange rate of Sterling on trade-weighted basis, pushing up inflation by between 1.0 and 1.5 percentage points, which may in turn increase the number of people living in poverty. Therefore, one cannot stress enough why it is important for every eligible person to vote. In conclusion, whatever is your view, make sure it gets counted on 23 June. Here is to diversity and solidarity!

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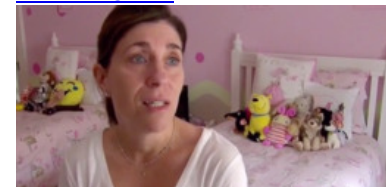
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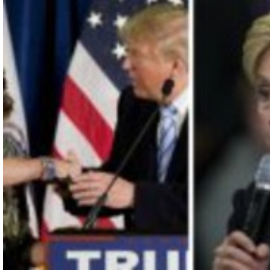
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