

## **Comment from Karen Ingala Smith, CEO of nia, on the CEO of Women's Aid (England) speech at the UKIP conference in 2015 in the capacity of her previous role**

[In the capacity of her previous role as Chief Executive of the Electoral Reform Society \(ERS\) the now Chief Executive of Women's Aid, Katie Ghose, spoke at the UKIP conference in 2015.](#)

We sometimes have to work with people with whom we disagree to achieve our aims, and that isn't the same as supporting them. Obviously I understand that Katie's role at the ERS was to promote electoral reform and not to work towards a world that is better for women and girls but her support for UKIP in this clip appears to be effusive, and when one is compromising to achieve common goals, enthusiastic support is not a pre-requisite.

Surely one of the requirements of the appointment to the role of CEO of Women's Aid was that the post holder should be a feminist. No feminist could believe that women and girls would be better off with more UKIP MPs, including women subjected to men's violence and especially women from Black and minoritised ethnic backgrounds.

This is not an old recording. It is from September 2015. Katie Ghose took up her post as CEO of Women's Aid less than two years later in July 2017. The recruitment process must have predated that by some months. No reasonable well informed feminist could/should have been unaware of the rising climate of hostility to BME people with the rise of the Right in 2015, and I cannot see how a feminist could compromise her own beliefs in carrying out her employment role to the extent that she could offer UKIP enthusiastic encouragement. To claim that one is 'just following orders' is used as a justification for morally questionable actions but a CEO's job is not to follow orders, it is to lead, and Ghose was CEO at the ERS. Someone who is politically active, as Ghose was, cannot have been unaware of the racism that is, at the very least, associated with UKIP. My own opinion is that racism is fundamental to the party's position and rise.

In 1867, John Stuart Mill said "Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing." Whilst he was using the sexist male default, this quote still imparts valuable lessons. Looking on and doing nothing about UKIP's racism and [Douglas Carswell's homophobia](#) may have been what Ghose was doing. Learning is a continuous process for all of us and none of us are perfect, we are all capable of errors of judgement but this is something more fundamental than that.

As CEO of nia, I cannot allow us to be members of a federation where the umbrella body puts protecting its own above working towards a safer world for ALL girls. I will not look on and say or do nothing and I hope that neither will the board of Women's Aid. Feminist leadership is incompatible with racism and with leaving racism unchallenged.