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So what if I'm black and thinking about voting for Brexit?

Dreda Say Mitchell

Apparently I'm not alone: there are plenty of black and minority ethnic votes to be had if the out campaign gets it right.

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Now we have a student of Marx as shadow chancellor and a Republican frontrunner seriously being compared to Hitler, you might think there aren't many ways left to blindsides people politically. But I've found one. Over the past couple of months I've managed to shock some people by telling them I'm thinking of voting for Brexit. It seems black voters are supposed to be in favour of staying in the European Union. A report in the Times, though, suggests that's not necessarily the case, and there are plenty of BAME votes in play if the out campaign gets its arguments straight.

Some of the concerns mentioned I share; it is alarming how many votes far-right parties are piling up in some EU countries and what influence they may have. On the other hand, it's hard not to roll your eyes at people from migrant backgrounds who buy into Nigel Farage's end-of-the-pier take on recent migration from eastern Europe.

I share the view of leftwing politicians like my former MP, the late Peter Shore. The EU debate isn't about bent bananas or migrants on the take; it's about democracy. There doesn't seem much point in electing MPs if their votes can be overridden by supranational institutions like the EU or tax-dodging corporations. Much of the apathy

and cynicism towards politics is a result of people feeling that real power is somewhere else and not in the ballot box. I've seen the EU described as "post-democratic". Some of us would prefer the real thing back.

Meanwhile, if it's true that there are growing numbers of BAME voters down the golf club worrying about all these Polish plumbers, I'm taking the positives from that. It proves integration works - we're becoming just like our white counterparts.

Why Cubans love Castro

With Obama flying into Havana, my thoughts turned back to an open-air gig I attended in Grenada in the late 1990s where the star turn was Fidel Castro himself. Castro, who was in town on a state visit, gave a speech to a rapt crowd of thousands, although I doubt whether many shared his brand of revolutionary politics. And to be honest, three hours was overegging it a little.

Supporters of Castro often point to the work his government has done in education and health, and regard that as a trade-off for the lack of democracy and human rights. But I think this misses the real reason why he became such an icon for so many in the region. Castro's defiant and absolute refusal to accept Washington's right to interfere in Cuba, or anywhere else in the US's so-called backyard, is what really won him support and sympathy. Successive American presidents never seem to have understood this. If Kennedy and the rest had tried hugging Castro to death, they might have got a much better result than with the CIA's exploding cigars.

Home is where the goat isn't

As a youngster, I was brought up to think of Grenada as "back home". It was for my parents, of course, but for me, home was Whitechapel, east London. And it took me a little while to work that out.

Whenever I had the money, I'd take myself off to the Caribbean, stay with relatives, join in the gossip and do the rounds. I expected and was expected to be local. But I also had the feeling that being on holiday should involve small luxuries like having your bed made and your dinner served. Things came to a head one night when I was kept awake by a bleating goat, an alarm call from a neighbour's cockerel, and the local insect population, which was determined to have a nibble on my arm.

Grenada is a beautiful place and I recommend it to anyone looking for sun, sand and sea. But as I pulled the blanket over my head, I realised I didn't want to be there, I wanted to be back home.

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