

Judith Katera reinstated at London's Battersea bus depot

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Judith Katera, a bus driver and Unite trade union health and safety rep, has been reinstated at Battersea depot after a six-month campaign of victimisation against her by former Unite officials and Abellio management. Katera won her workplace disciplinary appeal on February 24 and returned to work two days later.

Katera was suspended in July 2020 based on allegations she was racist toward a driver at the depot. She was dismissed on December 4, despite having provided evidence that she had been framed-up for her whistleblowing activities against alleged union corruption.

Katera's reinstatement means her case will not proceed to the Employment Tribunal and therefore evidence of her whistleblowing activities over allegedly forged union invoices will not be heard. Unite official John Murphy, the union's lead officer for buses in London, represented Katera at her workplace appeal.

From the time Katera was suspended on July 30, Unite kept quiet about her case. Not a single workplace resolution or protest action was organised to demand Katera's reinstatement, even though she had served as a Unite health and safety rep at Battersea since 2017.

After Katera was dismissed, Unite responded to drivers' anger by agreeing to stage a "consultative" ballot for her reinstatement. Held on December 16-17, the ballot was promoted by union stooges like the Socialist Party's Moe Manir as "the first step" in a "full industrial action ballot". This was a sham. Unite never even reported the voting results from the "consultative" ballot back to its own members.

Only the *World Socialist Web Site* told the truth to the working class. On December 16, the WSWs published a statement from the London Bus Rank-and-File Committee warning: "Workers can place no faith in the

union. Unite would have preferred the entire matter be swept under the carpet, but they have been forced to feign concern due to the mounting anger of workers."

The committee launched an online petition calling for unified action by bus workers to win Katera's reinstatement, quickly gathering nearly 200 signatures. But the petition was immediately censored on the Bus Drivers in London Facebook group administered by Manir and London Branch Secretary of Unite Joanne Harris. It was also blocked by RMT officials in South West England and on Facebook and WhatsApp groups controlled by other lackeys of Unite.

No method was too underhand or dirty. Twice, the committee's petition for Judith was deleted from change.org after complaints from an unknown person. It was reinstated on both occasions with an apology from the online platform—the only alteration by change.org was the removal of Moe Manir's name from the petition's preamble. A Walworth Garage health and safety rep, Manir is currently suspended, part of a spate of victimisations during a pandemic that has claimed at least 50 bus workers' lives.

Despite these acts of sabotage, the WSWs continued to report on Katera's case and win support. Its articles were read by thousands of bus drivers who shared it on their WhatsApp groups. On January 6, the London Bus Rank-and-File Committee unanimously passed a resolution in Katera's defence, urging garages across London to do likewise.

Katera's suspension had been falsely portrayed by the Socialist Party and the National Shop Stewards Network as "union bashing." In reality, workers at Battersea informed WSWs that Katera had been set up by former Unite officials who wanted to conceal their close relationship with the company. Katera presented hard evidence that she was framed by a longstanding

Unite convenor and local officials. Abellio managers at Battersea ignored this evidence, using manufactured allegations of “racism” to sack Katera. In what universe is this “union bashing”? A more fitting word is “collusion”.

The entire case has demonstrated yet again the way in which pseudo-left groups internationally—in this instance the Socialist Party in Britain—work as political agencies, spies and industrial policemen of the trade union apparatus against the working class.

On Katera’s first day back at work, Manir and Unite’s John Murphy, were quick to claim credit for her reinstatement. Manir tweeted: “I’m glad my colleague, friend Judith Katera a @UniteLondonEast Trade Union Rep has been reinstated back to work! Thnx everyone for supporting us...”

With friends like this, who needs enemies?



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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