

Published: April 12, 2016

46 comments

## Marina Kim: Check your privilege, Khan



By Marina Kim

Follow @MarinaKim\_ 570 followers

*Marina Khan is a freelance journalist and her website can be found [here](#).*

Privilege is meant to give you an advantage. Apologies for being a “wordist”, but let’s use the word ‘privilege’ where it belongs: it’s Sadiq Khan who’s had a privileged background – privileged for politics – not Zac Goldsmith.

Council estate, ethnic minority, bus-driver-dad – mentioned yet again when revealing his Transport Manifesto recently...sometimes I wonder whether I am watching the X-factor, on which contenders tend to exploit their life stories. Khan’s hardships happened a long while ago, and since then he’s been comfortably off, but this hasn’t stopped milking his privilege by exploiting his bus-driver-dad background. It’s all very well calculated.

Zac’s been mercilessly bullied for being born wealthy, and yet people who do so think they are holier than holy. The other day, the *Guardian* reworked yet another silver-spoon metaphor with regard to the Conservative candidate. Poor Zac has already been feeling so guilty about his inherited wealth that he still drives a battered ten year old car, eats in workmen’s cafes and even wears his father’s suits!

Silly him. A lesson to everyone who’s been born rich: stop giving a damn about the troubles others are in, look down at us losers, jet-set the world, get a chauffeur and a limo, have Dom Perignon for breakfast – no, even better, water the plants with your Dom Perignon... because no matter what you do, no matter how hard you try to prove your worth, they will always throw back at you what they call “your privilege”. Apparently, “you’ve had too much luck already”, and can’t possibly be willing or able to give back to the world.



### Related Articles

Iain Dale: The task of Leave campaigners now is to come together, unite – and fight the campaign of their lives.

Boris and Cameron unite to Back Zac

Goldsmith publishes his Manifesto for London

Shaun Bailey: Why I’m a Conservative and why we cannot let Corbyn’s man win in London

Zac Goldsmith: Forty days left in the

Those who do not feel chippy wonder why Khan boasts of having lived in a council house in the first place? His parents had eight children. If they couldn't afford to provide for eight children themselves, and that includes accommodation, why did they have eight children in the first place? "Having a council house meant my parents had the opportunity to save up to buy a house of their own," says Khan in his promo video. With all due respect, that is hardly an achievement...that is a privilege. My parents wanted to have a third child, but they knew they couldn't afford to do that, so they didn't.

The Corbyn-the-bogiemans campaign Zac's camp has been conducting against Sadiq Khan has not been very gentlemanly. Zac should have been stronger and resisted the party election machine, doing it the way he did it when he won Richmond Park, twice. In the long run, nothing works better than being true to yourself.

But Khan has been equally guilty of campaign tricks, knowingly framing relatively innocent issues and words into something far more ominous, and cunningly accusing Zac of being divisive, thus turning his Muslim faith into...a privilege (a Muslim Mayor of London would 'send a message to the haters' – a clear attempt to bully Londoners into feeling guilty, if they vote the other way).

Khan says that his opponent's politics "would turn away young Muslims". What is this bringing his faith into the equation yet again, if not a cold and cynical attempt to win Muslim votes? Yet at the same time he slams Transport for London for having "too many white men" on its board, thus making an issue of the colour, but not the professionalism, of those concerned. Why did he focus on TFL, out of all organisations, with this covert threat to fire board members? Could it have been revenge for TFL confirming that there will be a £1.9 billion [black hole in its budget](#) if his undeliverable fares pledge goes ahead?

It's the person doing the framing who is being divisive, not vice versa. Moreover, Khan has called himself "radical" many times (it's on record, google it). But when his Conservative opponent calls him "radical", he suddenly takes offence, and calls it racism. Again, he is exploiting his privilege – knowing that few are going to accuse him of being divisive because, well, because he is a Muslim, how could he be? And yet he can be – because he's Khan.

Khan seems to have got into the dangerous habit of becoming used to not being held accountable for his words. He has conveniently switched his position to the opposite on a number of important occasions: Heathrow, Jeremy Corbyn, a mansion tax, the green belt. Now, whatever your view is of Heathrow expansion, you have to hand it to Zac: not only has he been consistent about his own, but has moved mountains to deliver what he promised to his constituents before he was elected. The same applies to his view about Britain's EU membership: Zac could have quietly U-turned, and yet he chose to stay consistent.

It is hardly surprising, then, that in 2014 Sadiq Khan was on the "list of shame" of MPs who voted against Zac's real recall proposals. Real Recall, proposed by Zac, would have allowed voters – you, I and others – to hold our MPs to account in between elections. Now, why would any politician object to that, unless they intend to break their promises?

The only way in which background matters is the role it plays in inspiring candidates' ideas. I find a reflection of Zac's background in his aspiration for everyone to live within ten minutes of a green space. Zac has lived next door to Richmond Park, and undoubtedly understands how wonderful it is to be able to access green spaces, and that it does a lot of good.

He wants schools to have high quality meals. Schools in his patch have already got gold star quality meals, and his aspiration is to roll that level of provision out across the whole of London. He wants schools to have pocket farms. Yet another fantastic idea – that must have been inspired by his trips with his children to his own farm that he's now sold. His pocket farms idea is especially important in the light of the new research that shows that a third of children in the UK spend less time outdoors than prison inmates.

Estate regeneration – not demolition (a scary word that some chose to use to undermine the proposal) – is an absolutely fantastic idea, if done well – i.e: with tenants' consent. Zac wants to lift people out of living conditions that are below average, because he knows that a beautiful living environment is important. If his background has helped him to make this a priority for everyone, then that's a positive. Those who are against it need to imagine what they would have thought of this policy had a Labour politician produced it: they would have said that the person in question was trying to help. Well, so is Zac.

The truth is that Zac and Khan have a similar background of having to work hard to overcome where they came from. They have both come far from where they started. They are both strong in their own ways. For that, they both deserve respect. Zac is rare for where he comes from. Unfortunately, a lot of people with a background similar to him can indeed be stereotyped in the way that he has been, and in the case of many this would be justified. Both men are an exception to their backgrounds, not the rule. The only difference is that one keeps his word and is consistent, and the other one doesn't and isn't.

It will be a very close battle, and every vote will count. If you live in London, don't ignore this election. Boris only won with a small margin in each borough. I've never canvassed for anyone, and I've chosen to canvas for Zac at this election simply because I believe that he is the kind of guy who will not respect himself unless he delivers what he's promised to his voters.

Zac is a politician, no doubt, but he is one with a heart for whom power is the means, not the end. I want a world where only politicians genuinely able to empathise with others reach office. I hope this is the world that London votes for on May 5th.

 [LONDON MAYORAL ELECTION 2016](#) [SADIQ KHAN MP](#) [ZAC GOLDSMITH MP](#)

Share this article:

 Tweet

 Like 22