

Remembering Tony Benn, 1925–2014

I. Growing up with a Giant by Susie Orbach

Tony Benn's political endeavours were stand-out moments from my adolescence. In a never-been-done-before action, in a country that felt asleep with 1950s complacency, Tony Benn was resigning his peerage and contesting his seat in parliament. Here was the older generation opposing the status quo from the position of privilege. Along with Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Vanessa Redgrave, Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Joe Slovo, Ruth First, he peopled my imagination in the 1960s; the critical decade in which the democratic process was exposed for its appalling injustices. He was a crucial part of waking up my generation all over the world, and I went to hear him speak when ever I could.

Tony Benn challenged class in its deepest sense. His desire to dismantle social inequality has been a vibrant part of the peculiarly English fetish. Class is, of course, alive and well in Britain. The establishment of an International Super Rich in the 21st century was something that Tony highlighted. Meanwhile the demonization of the working class in Britain, who have been recast as either the hard working family or the feckless, has instituted class as something shameful rather than a consequence of capitalism in later modernity. His work, our work, remains undone.

What has so inspired me about Tony Benn was his dedication, his commitment, his radicalism and his authenticity. To be a political activist, a chronicler, a loving father and a radical who just kept on getting more so as he aged is no trivial accomplishment. We've become so accustomed to stories of lefties who turn right, or public figures with difficult relationships at home. Not so Tony Benn.

His exemplary example was to be his own man. He never came across as belligerent, but as passionate and thoughtful, while conveying a sense of the rightness of his opinion. Perhaps he got this confidence from his own privileged background, but it wasn't a paternalistic confidence. It was a confidence that meant he would listen, debate, engage and orate in ways that have inspired so many of us.

Thank you, Tony Benn. I never knew you personally, but it has been so important to have your politics and your actions in my mind.

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II. Daring to Stand Alone, Daring to Stand Together: A Personal–Political Appreciation of Tony Benn (1925–2014) by Keith Tudor

In 2009 I emigrated/immigrated to Aotearoa New Zealand, since which time I have been fully immersed in settling in my new homeland: working, making new friends, and learning about politics from a different perspective. Whilst I keep up with world news, I do not specifically check the news in the UK on a regular basis, and so it was a few days after the 14th March this year that I heard the news of Tony Benn's death. When I did, my response was one of genuine sadness and a profound sense of loss, heightened by the distance especially from old comrades in the UK.

As a political activist, especially active in the 1980s, I marched on many demonstrations and saw Tony Benn speak on a number of occasions. Whilst I didn't always agree with his politics, I was always in awe of his oratory, and appreciative of his passion, a passion which seemed to increase with age. For those of us of a certain era who are also ageing and also still passionate about politics, he was inspirational, and the more so when, in 2001, he left the UK Parliament; as he put it: 'I was giving up Parliament to spend more time on politics', a phrase he attributed to his wife, Caroline, who predeceased him by nearly 15 years. His engagement with grass-roots politics echoed T.S. Eliot's (1927) sentiment that: 'Politics has become too serious a matter to be left to politicians!' (p. 386)

I wanted to write something about Tony Benn for this journal as he was a humanist, not in a psychological sense, but in a social and a Christian sense, a background I have in common with him as his family were Congregationalist, and mine Unitarian. I think he would have been somewhat amused by being the subject of appreciations which are appearing in a journal of psychology as I suspect he was somewhat cautious about the individualistic nature of psychology and of (psycho)analysis. I remember hearing him on the radio (in 1995) 'In the Psychiatrist's Chair', with Dr Anthony Clare, a programme, the recording of which is available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImLT1pqBLDk>), and which provided a fascinating insight into Benn's background and personality, as well as his ability to keep Clare at arm's length, hardly allowing him to offer any insight.

Being a Daniel

The title of this appreciation is taken from one of his books *Dare to be a Daniel* (Benn, 2004), a phrase which, in turn, was taken from a