



Social housing and working class heritage

Social housing: sense of place

Violet Sloane was a resident of the original Carpenters Estate.

Violet Sloane:

We first moved to the Carpenters Estate when I was 11 – that was Mum, Dad and my brother, myself, and my Mum's brother. There was four of us and we moved into a terraced house and then the war, of course, damaged a lot of the property. They decided that it was uninhabitable so they decided then that the estate would have to be demolished.

Violet Sloane:

When the flats were built first we were all moved into the flats and that's where we've been ever since. My Mum was alive when they started changing this estate, building like, and she was so, well we were, we were so excited to think that we would be moving and we would have a bathroom.

Violet Sloane:

We were more or less told that we had to come in here, right. Unfortunately my Mum died before we moved in here, so I moved in here with my Dad and he lived for about two years and then he died. The flat was lovely and we really did love it. I mean for a start we had even walls which in the old houses with the bomb damage all the walls, I mean we had some walls with big bulges in and you tried to paper over big bulges, you know. We had all the neighbours moving in. Everybody moved on the Carpenters Estate that were in the houses they nearly all, some didn't, some moved away, but the majority of people moved into the flats and houses, nearly all of us, so in here we knew everybody. And you had a bar and apparently the drinks were cheaper there as well, you know, so that did quite a trade.

Violet Sloane:

When I walk down the road it's as though I'm a teenager again and if Elsie is here and Renee, another two that used to live on the estate we do say, you know, remember when it was like this, the shops and, or so and so, do you remember that lady who had that shop there, and do you remember the little Co-op or it's often in my mind what it was like 'cos it was lovely. Well it is my life, my life has been spent, it's where I played, it's where I got hurt falling over, my courting, I mean I went out with boys on this estate, so it was all, my life has been this estate.

Carmen Grimes campaigns for the estate despite having left it.

Carmen Grimes:

I moved into James Riley at the age of 19, I had my first daughter then. We then were decanted, as I said, some of us were able to move back onto the estate – I, unfortunately, wasn't able to move onto the estate and had to look elsewhere – I was offered a property in Maryland, which is about maybe ten minutes from the Carpenters, which I accepted.

Carmen Grimes:

I certainly do miss living there, I do miss the absolutely fantastic community spirit we had there, bearing in mind it was nearly twenty years that I lived there for, I mean that was my formative years, I did genuinely enjoy it there. I still visit the estate very often, at least four times a week. I've been asked to be co-opted onto the TMO board which actually manages the housing of the, on the Carpenters, I attend meetings once a month with the rest of the board members. I am very, very actively involved, I organise Christmas lunches, fun days.

Carmen Grimes:

My memories of the boot sales, you know, the funfair, the Christmas parties, having carols sung outside in the freezing cold but then somebody coming around with a mince pie and a nice hot drink – all those things, you know we miss the lot.

Mick Aldridge spent a number of years as a TMO board member.

Mick Aldridge:

I do have a real sense that I've lived a lot of my life here because, you know frankly I have, I mean I'm going to be fifty in a couple of months' time and so I will have lived here – what's that, you know forty percent of my life, twenty years. What I like about being here is that there is a definite sense of community and people are friendly towards one another, don't get the feeling that there's a lot of crime or tension, everybody's pretty relaxed, and it's a very pleasant area compared to other parts of even Newham that I've lived in, because it's a bit more hectic but more impersonal.

Mick Aldridge:

In the time that I've lived here there have been probably several waves of newcomers to the estate and each wave that comes through leaves some new imprint. I've got all sorts of memories about living here, perhaps part of my attachment is due to the fact that my previous partner, with whom I originally lived here, died here but above and beyond that I've got other, you know, memories too, you know probably more pleasant ones – looking out the window watching London change, watching the seasons change, the beautiful sunrises and sunsets. It's just nice living up in the air. It's not just a place to live – it is my home.

Ben and Paul lived in the tower block that now stands almost empty.

Paul Akinrinlola Ben Soyemi

Ben Soyemi:

Both of us used to live in James Riley Point, James Riley, back there the best of the three tower blocks. (Yep). We used to live; I used to live on the 15th floor.

Paul Akinrinlola:

And I used to live on a higher floor because it was a better floor, 19, yeah it was, it was a, I used to go down to his house all the time, you know, steal some of his food....yeah, it was great, it was a good experience.

Ben Soyemi:

If people asked me where did I grow up I'd specifically tell them I grew up in East London, Stratford, the Carpenters Estate – I'd specifically tell them that place where I grew up. Growing up here's been such a major influence in my life I think it's made me become a better person, I'd honestly say that, I'd honestly say that. I have a respect for different types of people because there are so many different types of people here.

Paul Akinrinlola:

Basically we got shifted by Newham Council. I got moved to Forest Gate and it's a nice area, though it's not quite the same as the Carpenters Estate 'cos the people aren't as warm, you know, because this was more of a community. There it's just kind of like you, and you.

Ben Soyemi:

I got moved to Custom House, yeah again my area's not really as a community as you can say the Carpenters Estate was, like there's only a few people that would stop and say hello, whereas if you were around here you'd get it all the time like...

Paul Akinrinlola:

How's your Mum?

Ben Soyemi:

...you see everyone and stuff like that here, questions like that all the time, and it's just nice that, to know that people that live around you just want, it's nice to know...

Paul Akinrinlola:

People care.

Ben Soyemi:

...yeah, people care.

Ben Soyemi:

That was funny.

Paul Akinrinlola:

That was very funny.

Ben Soyemi:

That roof brings back memories. We used to go and play cards, and eat McDonald's there.

Paul Akinrinlola:

It was like, you know you couldn't really get a tree house, so we kind of like made that our tree house, minus the tree.

Ben Soyemi:

Over there in the TMO office they used to have another separate section for a TV channel that they had here called...

Paul Akinrinlola:

Home 2 Home.

Ben Soyemi:

Home 2 Home, and we used to help them out with making videos for the estate, like estate issues, what was going on, about the Mosque, the planners when they were moving us out, and stuff like that. We used to go there like all the time after school to help them out, obviously to use the computers as well and that, mess around on the internet and stuff like that, and that was like good fun memories.

Paul Akinrinlola:

Yeah it was, it was a good time.

Ben Soyemi:

Good fun memories.

Ben's

Price

Check

Ben Soyemi (young):

I went to three local shops on the estate – Londis, Sainsbury's, and the corner shop across the road – and I bought these same four items from each of those shops.

Ben Soyemi:

James Riley Point Garden.

Paul Akinrinlola:

Yeah, tons of memories.

Ben Soyemi:

I remember this door always being locked and no surprise ...

Paul Akinrinlola:

It's locked.

Ben Soyemi:

It still is. Yeah we used to have to go like where the ramp is and lift our bikes over because obviously this door was never open, never open, and then having to lift all the little ones that couldn't, that couldn't jump over as well.

Paul Akinrinlola:

That was fun.

Ben Soyemi:

That was fun, yeah; just lying down on the grass on a hot day was the best. Loads of memories still.