

GENTRIFICATION AND THE
SIGNIFICANCE OF RACIAL
AND CLASS INEQUALITIES IN
KENSINGTON ON THE
GRENFELL TOWER TRAGEDY

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RUTH GLASS, GENTRIFICATION AND NORTH KENSINGTON

- Glass first coined the term 'gentrification' in 1964.
- In 1965, 'London's Housing Needs', Glass exposed the class and racial inequalities of housing in North Kensington.
- A 'newcomer's tax' and foreigner's levy.
- Rents determined by the 'the date of tenant's arrival at the landlord's doorstep, his origin, and his colour' (Glass 1965, p. 9).
- The lowest income groups wedged in between those who were more prosperous.

'RACHMANISM'

- Landlord Peter Rachman.
- Rachmanism: the exploitation and intimidation of tenants by corrupt and dishonest landlords.
- Exploiting post-war housing shortage and poorer tenants, the majority of whom were from the West Indies.
- Loretta Lees (2014): 'the council has become London's new Rachman' on methods used on the Aylesbury Estate.



SLOW VIOLENCE

- A tool used in gentrification which is designed to displace people that are not economically or socially desirable.
- Rob Nixon (2011): 'A violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, it's calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales.'
- Leslie Kern (2016): the 'non-events.'
- Neglect of the building and residents is also a form of slow violence.

SAFETY WARNINGS

'It is a truly terrifying thought but the Grenfell Action Group firmly believe that only a catastrophic event will expose the ineptitude and incompetence of our landlord, the KCTMO, and bring an end to the dangerous living conditions and neglect of health and safety legislations that they inflict upon their tenants and leaseholders.'

November 20th 2016. Grenfell Action Group Blog.

[HTTPS://GRENFELLACTIONGROUP.WORDPRESS.COM/2016/11/20/KCTMO-PLAYING-WITH-FIRE/](https://grenfellaactiongroup.wordpress.com/2016/11/20/kctmo-playing-with-fire/)

Documentary play, *Dictating to the Estate*.

Twitter: @dtteproduction

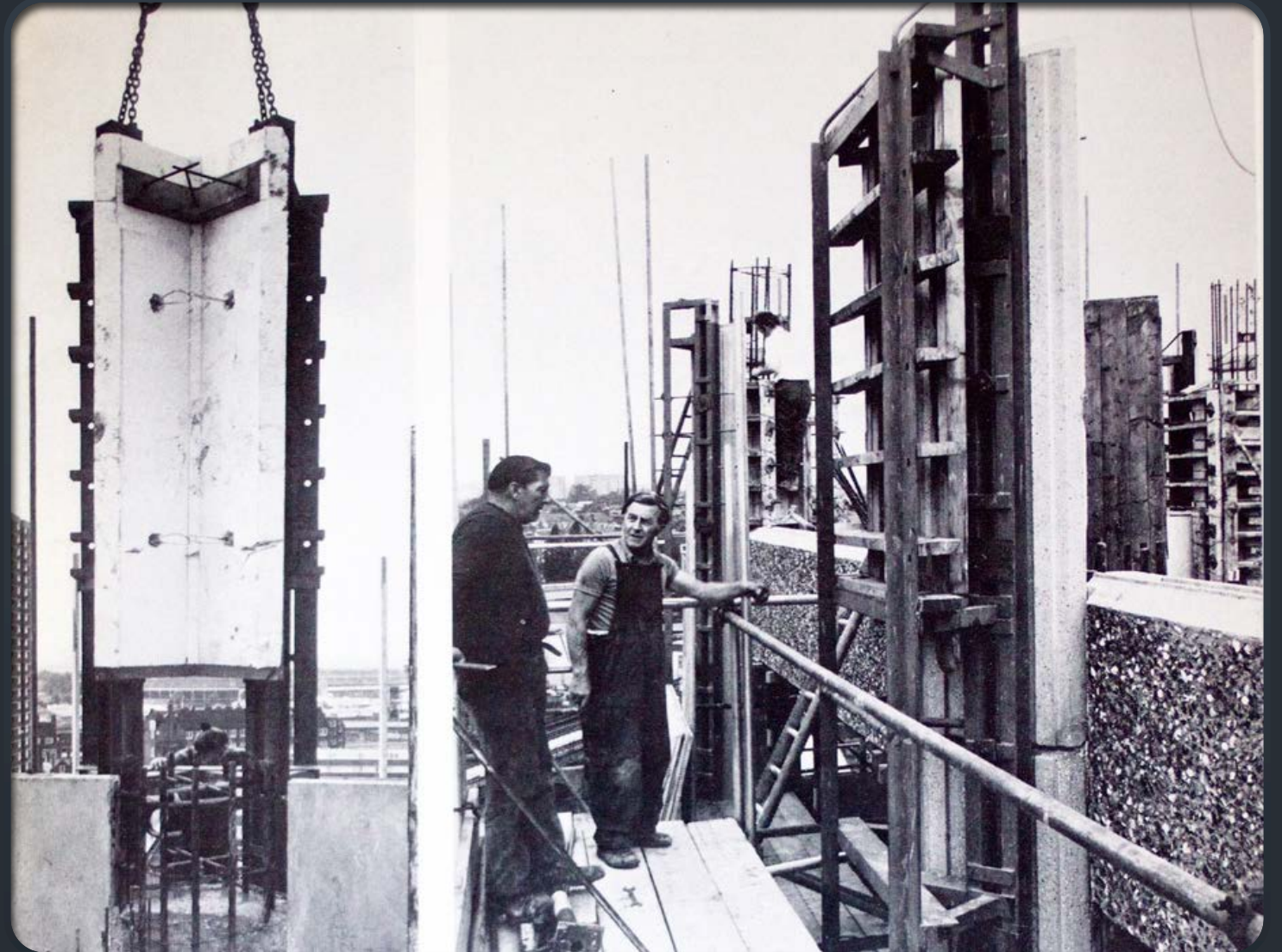
www.dictatingtotheestate.com.

'There were always fire brigades... like it was no surprise to see the lights from the fire brigade outside your house. It seemed like there was always an incident... you couldn't tell, because Grenfell Road was the main road in, a single road, so it could be in the service of people on our estate, or for the Tower, or any of the walkways but it was a regular occurrence.'

Resident of 20 years on Barandon Walk, Lancaster West Estate.

FACADISM

- Many believe that the cladding was fitted to beautify the building and make it fit in with its richer surroundings – another sign of gentrification.
- Designed to be strong especially after the Ronan Point tragedy in Newham where 17 people were injured and 4 killed after a gas explosion (1968).



RACE AND CLASS INEQUALITIES

- Ida Danewid (2019): gentrification 'the continuation of distinctively colonial techniques for organising urban space.'
- Foster (2017) 'reported failings in the run up to the disaster has a clear class element, but also a racial one.'
- Richest borough in the UK yet Kensington council failed to listen or take action that would have prevented the fire from happening.
- Gentrification and racialised displacement operates in different ways in different cities.
- Need more scholarship on the relationship between race and gentrification in the UK, but difficult to examine in complete isolation. Class is also fundamental to peoples' experience of housing.
- Just as Glass revealed in the 1960's and Grenfell tragically showed, it is predominantly poor minority ethnic groups that are most vulnerable.

CONCLUSION

- A continuation of race and class inequalities and the exploitation and neglect of poor and minority ethnic groups in North Kensington from 'Rachmanism' in the 1950s/60s to the 'slow violence' used by the KCTMO.
 - State-Rachmanism and slow violence are methods of gentrification.
 - Gentrification has continually occurred (in multiple ways) since Glass coined the term in the 1960s.
 - More scholarship needed on the relationship between race, class and gentrification in the UK. Is this a continuation of colonial governance?
 - The Grenfell Tower fire encapsulates the vast racial and class inequality in our country and the tragic consequences of gentrification.
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