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# Unequal Lives in London: Ruth Glass, *London's Newcomers*, and the Roots/Routes of Inequality in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

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This article is concerned with understanding the causes and consequences of urban inequalities in London today. Focusing on the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea specifically, it explores the rootedness of inequalities in the borough. It does so through two interlocutors. The first is the urban scholar Ruth Glass, specifically re-visiting her 1961 book *Newcomers* for what it can contribute to our understandings of racial prejudice today. The second is Neville, a long-time resident of the borough who migrated to the borough from the Caribbean in 1961. By presenting the shifting contours of his life-world, the article reveals the value of historically deep and geographically situated accounts of inequality that surpass the empirical reach of more traditional quantitative methods. It concludes by calling for accounts of London that more directly place privilege and suffering, and poverty and profit, as interconnected phenomena.

KEYWORDS inequality; migration; race; relationality; gentrification; Ruth Glass

On 14 June 2017, a fire swept through the Grenfell Tower block in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, claiming the lives of seventy-two residents, leaving hundreds homeless and a community traumatised. Many of the residents of the Tower were amongst the most socially and economically disadvantaged in

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London. Those who lost their lives in the disaster were overwhelmingly asylum seekers, ethnic minorities, Muslim, African, and/or Arab—'a roll call of the marginalised, the maligned and the disenfranchised'.[1] Initially ignited by a faulty fridge, the fire spread through the building via the combustible cladding that had been placed on the exterior as part of a refurbishment project in previous years. To clad the building in safer, non-combustible cladding would have cost roughly £300,000: to date, the cost of the disaster, in merely financial terms, is now predicted to be in excess of £1.2 billion.[2]

The public inquiry into the fire is yet to publish its final report, but has noted that the risks posed to the residents of the Tower were known. Indeed, the Grenfell Action Group of local residents raised worries about fire safety directly—and frequently—to relevant authorities in the borough. However, these were not only ignored: residents were threatened with legal action if they did not back down.[3] While the fridge may have provided the initial spark, it has been argued that the roots of the fire lay in forms of structural violence,[4] social abandonment,[5] institutional racism,[6] and the politics of austerity;[7] of a local council motivated more by saving money than ensuring the fair protections of residents.[8]

What is all the more deplorable about the disaster is that these underpinnings of austerity and abandonment—the production of a corporeal vulnerability with atrocious consequences—existed (and continue to exist) alongside staggering wealth. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is, statistically, the most affluent borough in the country; it maintains the highest mean average household income and life expectancy in the UK. The Grenfell atrocity thus laid bare the extent, and consequences, of urban inequalities: the fire raised fundamental questions around the cost and value of protections afforded (or not) to London's most marginalised communities.

There is a need, to borrow from Susan Sontag, to put privilege and suffering on the same map, so as to scrutinise the wider histories and geographies animating these urban inequalities to understand them as situated processes. This article works towards this agenda by examining the roots—historical—and the routes—geographical—of urban inequalities in Kensington and Chelsea today. It does so by exploring the work of Ruth Glass, an urban scholar writing in the wake of a similar set of tragic events in the borough: the Notting Hill Riots of 1958. Arguing that the roots of the violence that summer lay not in merely the actions of a few far-right individuals, but rather the structural and social conditions of civilisation at the time, Glass suggested that prejudice, violence, and inequalities are exacerbated by society's lack of understanding of, and subsequent empathy towards, ethnic minorities.[9] *London's Newcomers*, the first detailed study of the conditions and experiences of Caribbean immigrants into London at the time, is therefore born from a view that the purpose of sociological knowledge about these groups, and urban life more generally, is to bring about social improvements. 'The keynote in the situation of the coloured minority in Britain', Glass writes in *London's Newcomers*, 'is not inflexible prejudice, harsh segregation and discrimination; it is muddle, confusion and insecurity.'[10]

The aim of this article is threefold. As part of this special issue, it contributes to wider efforts by academics of London (and beyond) to re-visit and re-vitalise the

work of Ruth Glass. Often cited merely as the coiner of the term 'gentrification', this article instead seeks to highlight her wider contributions, around issues of ethnicity, urban inequalities, and social injustice more broadly. Secondly, this article draws on Glass's 1961 *Newcomers* specifically—a study of migration, housing, inequalities, and prejudice experienced by Caribbean migrants in that period in London—to historicise and spatialise some of the inequalities that continue to animate Kensington today, and help explain the Grenfell disaster. Finally, by centring the story and experiences of one participant, Neville, this article also signals the continued importance and value of grounded, deep, and narrative accounts of urban inequalities—and their important role in the context of an overwhelming focus on quantitative approaches to rendering contemporary and historical inequalities.

## Urban Inequalities in London: Situating Ruth Glass

Inequalities have marked cities since their existence: London is no different. Cycles of economic, political, and social change have altered the contours on which the city has functioned, both materially and demographically, opening new vistas for inequity and injustice. Inequality has therefore likewise been a topic of consistent concern for urban scholars of London. Most renowned was Charles Booth's mapping of the conditions of London in the late nineteenth century—the first study to rigorously classify, compare, and map the different features and aspects of urban life across London. Hubert Llewellyn Smith undertook to update and improve Booth's efforts in *The New Survey of London Life and Labour*, undertaken at the London School of Economics in the early 1930s.

It was around this time that Ruth Glass began to establish herself as a notable urban scholar in the UK, and especially London. She was influenced by these previous attempts to map difference in London; though it never came to fruition, she was motivated throughout her career to try and complete a third such survey of life in London.[11] Writing across town planning, urban studies, sociology, and human geography, her rich oeuvre often pivots towards the topical urban issues of her times—post-World War Two regeneration, migration and its social effects, conflict in cities, urban demographics, infrastructure, housing provision, and shifting structures of urban difference. She achieved important work in the 1930s[12] and 1940s,[13] surveying life in London and beyond; founded the Centre for Urban Studies at University College London (UCL) in 1958; and went on to make a range of conceptual contributions—not least her theorisation of urban imaginaries, representations, and moods that pre-dated the post-structural turn in urban studies by several decades.[14]

At the same time as Glass was developing these approaches to studying London, the academic field of 'race relations' was rapidly growing, responding directly to a city changed by rising immigration, particularly from (former) colonies. The sociologist John Rex was amongst the first to advance theoretical and empirical accounts of race and UK society[15]—what he termed the 'sociology of race relations'[16]—and to explore the relationship between race, migration, and cities

through an explicitly *urban* sociology of race.[17] Later, Ambalavaner Sivanandan developed pathbreaking work on the relationships between racism, class, and the state,[18] and the multitude forms of resistance to it from Black communities.[19] Stuart Hall, and others from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, brought the topic of race into further theoretical conversation[20]—drawing together Marxist, post-structural, feminist, and postcolonial theory in the founding of what was to be termed 'cultural studies'.[21] Elsewhere, the Institute of Race Relations was formed in London in 1958. Supporting research into domestic and global race relations, the Institute undertook numerous surveys and studies of race in the UK through this period. Moreover, the Institute was quick to respond to the conflicts that marked that time.[22] Illustratively, the Institute produced the first study of domestic race relations in response to the 'race riots' experienced in Notting Dale and Nottingham in 1958.[23]

## *London's Newcomers*

Glass's own writing in the aftermath of the 1958 race riots in Notting Dale was therefore both a product of, and contribution to, a particular intellectual and political moment in which the issue of race was a site of growing attention. Her book, *Newcomers: The West Indians in London* (first published in 1960 by the Centre for Urban Studies before wider dissemination in 1961 by Harvard University Press as *London's Newcomers: The West Indian Migrants*), examines the experiences of Caribbean communities' arrival and settling in London. The first study to chart Caribbean immigration to London in a detailed fashion, Glass begins the book with a particular epistemological position: that in order to address prejudice, we must do two things in our scholarship. The first is to better understand and explain phenomena; the second is to approach prejudice not merely from the position of the victim, but to place it within the context of society as a whole. The former objective takes the shape of a detailed and extensive bricolage of social survey and census data in chapter one of *Newcomers*—the first of its kind to draw together substantive demographic data about Caribbean migrants in London, and the conditions in which they resided. But while building a fuller account of their employment, education, housing situations, social lives, and institutional experiences was, and remains, valuable, the more important, and enduring, influence of the book is to understand the drivers of prejudice in urban life more broadly. As Glass writes in the original preface:

> The paucity of knowledge about the coloured minority—and even more the lack of self-awareness in the reactions of the white majority towards them—is both a symptom and a contributory cause of negative features in the situation of the newcomers.[24]

Addressing prejudice therefore requires that 'the question marks are removed', not only about the conditions of newcomers, but also of society more broadly.[25] By extension, Glass argues that such an undertaking necessitates more than can be

gathered from the traditional urban research methods of the time, which were highly quantitative and tended to view social problems in isolation. Instead, 'prejudice, whatever it is called, and whatever the motivations attributed to it, is not subject to a simple quantitative, mechanistic mode of analysis.'[26] Put another way, Glass's study of minorities simultaneously brings into view their relations with majorities—and in *Newcomers*, this is specifically along lines of ethnicity: 'if we had a diagnosis of the "colour problem," we would also have one of the "white problem" which is its core.'[27]

This particularly comes to the fore in *Newcomers* through its detailed dissection of events before, during, and after the 1958 Notting Hill Race Riots. Challenging prevailing views, from commentators and politicians across the spectrum, Glass develops an account of North Kensington that takes in its wider social conditions and structural processes—and how these shaped racial and class division at the time. Summarising, Glass notes that:

> It is, unfortunately, a classic situation. As the West Indians are wedged in and have to compete for scarce space and amenities with white tenants, many of whom have been badly housed themselves, tensions and frictions develop. And it is the newcomer who is made the scapegoat for physical and social claustrophobia—especially if he is coloured.[28]

Developing this argument further, Glass insists that prejudice can thus only be understood in relation to *tolerance*—specifically, why tolerance failed to prevail in Kensington at that time. In Britain's urban settlements, Glass suggests, 'there are strong built-in tendencies permissive of prejudice', where 'social segregation is the accepted norm'. Prejudice can thrive—often with explosively violent results, such as in 1958—because tolerance remains inert.[29] For Glass, therefore, the racial inequalities experienced by London's 'newcomers' were not simply because intolerance is strong but also that tolerance is weak.

Studying *both* prejudice and tolerance thus requires a broader approach, both empirically and conceptually. *Newcomers* is therefore concerned with using the treatment of 'minorities' 'as an index of the state of the "parent society" … [that] make it possible to observe the social conditioning imposed by the parent society under a microscope'.[30] In other words, studying prejudice not only provides a vantage-point for thinking about inequalities, but the inverse is also true: the study of inequality generally, and those at the sharpest end specifically in this case, reveals crucial details on how a society regulates, governs, and produces prejudice. Pre-dating the work of postcolonial scholars including Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said, and the aforementioned Stuart Hall, therefore, Glass provides us with a critical lens for surpassing a simple view of 'insiders' and 'outsiders':

> Minorities would not for long be visible as such if the parent society did not need them—to do the dirty work; as scapegoats and punch bags; to assist both in camouflaging and in exploiting social conflict; to maintain, by the juxtaposition of their apparent distinctiveness, illusions of national unity and superiority. The more the minorities' role as outsiders is stressed, the more they are in fact insiders … A society which needs such illusions has a

> vested interest in keeping minorities as an essential element for the maintenance of its class structure.[31]

In her later work, and as suggested in *Newcomers*'s attention to political and media representations, Glass maintains a focus on how population change can only be understood through the wider prism of the politics of urban life. Urban inequalities are not only produced by economic structures and legacies of empire, but they are also productions in a *dramaturgical* sense—where urban demographic change is 'a handy peg on which to hang publicly grievances, fears and occasionally hopes … altogether, a subject for emotive soliloquies rather than for reasoned discussion'.[32] Or, as Glass notes elsewhere:

> The very existence of such divisions helps to conceal them, and thus to perpetuate them. When social groups live in separate compartments, their perception is liable to be partial—their perception of other groups, of the whole universe to which they belong, and not least their awareness of their own position or enclosure.[33]

Together, all these iterations of urban inequalities—the material, economic, structural, demographic, representational—can come to be explained, for Glass at least, through one core driving logic: 'competition for space'.[34] Unequal in nature and always with winners and losers, groups thus do not neatly co-exist in the city. Cycles of migration, such as those charted and mapped in *Newcomers*, therefore interact with, and exacerbate, pre-existing inequalities. To put this critical account of urban inequalities and migration to work, this article now turns to its specific case study: the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

## Unequal Lives in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is, statistically speaking, the most affluent part of London, boasting the greatest mean average household income (£140,000/year), along with the highest average life expectancy.[35] Scenes of bohemian city life in the Hollywood blockbuster *Notting Hill* (1999), and hedonistic excess in the more recent structured reality television series *Made in Chelsea* (2011–), seem to confirm these statistics of an enriched borough.

These projections of affluence, however, masque the depth of urban inequalities in the borough. Charles Booth's aforementioned late-nineteenth-century mappings of the city highlighted parts of the borough as amongst the 'worst areas' in London.[36] In the interwar years, in his autobiographical accounts of destitution in the city, George Orwell wrote of the 'dreary wastes of Kensington', lodging in Notting Hill during his time 'down and out'.[37] Ruth Glass herself writes in a surprised tone when considering how gentrification in the city could stretch 'even to the "shady" parts of Notting Hill'.[38]

Writing in the 1960s and 1970s, Glass highlighted Kensington as containing 'social juxtaposition visible within a fairly narrow range', but that 'even in these places, there is usually a transition zone of bedsitter districts, interposed between affluent and poor quarters' and that 'in these areas, too, the geographical class

distances are becoming longer'.[39] While 'in and around North Kensington, in particular, such contrasts and the warnings which they imply' were 'plain' to see in the 1960s and 1970s, they are now shockingly visible.[40] Rather than a 'transition zone' between the traditionally poorer North and more affluent South Kensington, we instead see affluence and poverty much more proximately, despite wealth divides having widened.[41]

The pockets of deprivation that remain in Kensington and Chelsea are subsequently thrown into even sharper relief against this backdrop of wealth accrual. Illustratively, while the borough has the highest mean annual household income, 16% of its residents are classified as 'low paid';[42] life expectancy varies by twenty-two years over the borough as a whole;[43] and 3,291 households are on the waiting list for social housing at the same time as recent census data shows 25.2% of dwellings in the borough—22,525 housing units—are empty and unoccupied.[44]

Interpreting these urban inequalities has led commentators to Dickensian frames of a 'tale of two cities'—especially in the wake of the Grenfell Tower disaster of 2017.[45] These accounts of discrete and divided lives echo Glass's own view of Kensington and Chelsea:

> It is an amazing, still largely obscured, panorama that thus begins to be visible—a conglomeration of groups who move, so to speak, on separate tracks, even if they do meet occasionally at a station.[46]

Today, Glass's account of lives lived in isolation from one another—of two proximate but separate cities—belies the ways that communities and places are in fact connected through inequality.[47] *Unequal Lives* is an ongoing research project that explores how these shifting constellations of inequality, over time and space, have been lived, felt, and contested by residents.[48] Combining long-term ethnographic work with life history interviews with local citizens, the project grapples with diverging, yet intertwined, experiences. At the time of writing, forty interviews with residents in one particularly varied part of the borough have been completed.[49] In the remainder of this article, I want to draw upon one participant in the project: Neville.[50] Aged in his sixties, and self-defining as Black, Neville is a member of Glass's 'newcomers'—immigrating to the UK in 1961 from Grenada as a young child.

Before proceeding with Neville's story, it is crucial to note a few rejoinders of a methodological nature. First, the uniqueness of the project lies in its attempt to speak *across* difference—to come at an understanding of urban change by engaging with it from different perspectives, positions, and angles. Nevertheless, given its highly subjective, uneven, and changeable nature, it is impossible to get a full perspective on urban inequality. Indeed, the period of time that spanned this project, which included the COVID-19 pandemic, a general election, and cost of living crisis, signals the challenges in trying to narrate inequality in the context of its unfolding.

Second, while the approach I take to telling Neville's life story provides a historically deeper account of urban inequality, I am not suggesting that his

experience is universal or can stand in for the borough as a whole. My intention here is to explore how we can understand difference from an anchoring in the life world of one individual. Third, researching inequality itself hinges on unequal power relations—grounded in not only my own personal biography as a white heterosexual cis-male, but also how academic research itself has often deepened these inequalities. Histories of slumming and voyeurism, along with 'parachute ethnography' and extractive practices, mean that the process of collecting data not only empowers the researcher but can also further marginalise the researched.[51] While I attempted to balance research with other engagements in the borough, including volunteering and academic outreach work, these cannot 'solve' power imbalances. This article is therefore written from a position of not only producing urban knowledge about inequality but also through and from urban inequality itself.

## Neville's Story

I met Neville in a café situated literally and metaphorically in the shadows of the remains of Grenfell Tower and its funereal shroud. We were put in touch by another research participant, who had suggested that Neville would be well positioned to tell me about inequality in the local area. Dressed in a flat cap, scarf, and dark jeans for our meeting, and supporting his gait with a black walking stick, the warmth of Neville's character contrasted with the weather on a cool spring afternoon. As we greeted one another, I caught sight of the large hardback book he clutched under his elbow—a well-thumbed photobook of the Notting Hill Carnival.

We sat for several hours as Neville shared his story, and shared a coffee—mine black, Neville's with a fifth sugar well stirred into the beverage, with Neville blaming his sweet tooth on his birth home: Grenada. It turns out that Neville's choice of venue was not coincidental. The up-market café we are sitting in, he tells me, was previously a popular venue for Caribbean music and was frequented by the area's previously much larger Caribbean community. The clientele is very different today: amidst busy tables of twenty or more people, Neville is the only Black person here.

The sections that follow explore and interpret Neville's experiences as a newcomer, bringing it into direct conversation with Glass's *Newcomers*. In particular, highlighted are the forms of harmony and disharmony noted by Glass as dialectics of prejudice, that characterise Neville's life story and life-world—and which Glass notes as dialectics of prejudice[52]—where racial prejudice emerges not as a straightforward picture of oppression and alienation, but as a contested, lived, and felt process.

## Disharmony? Placing Prejudice, Intolerance, and Inequality

Neville spent his early years in Grenada, where he lived with his grandparents—both his parents had migrated to the UK when he was very young. At the age of

five, he was put on a ferry to join his parents living in North Kensington. Remembering the trip itself, Neville speaks of how the changes he experienced were so stark that they came to have a magical quality:

> 1961: I came on the boat. What an experience. It took 19 days … 19 days! On the boat, I remember I met a priest—he said to come with him. I remember he walked into a room, opened the door and we went in there. And, a few seconds later, he opened the door and I came out the room—but, it wasn't like how we came in. And I thought: "he's a priest, this is some kind of magic." I believed it was magic. But you know what it was? It was a lift—I had come out on a different floor. But, at the time, I really thought it was some kind of magic from heaven. It was only years later, when I re-think, that I realise it was a lift.

Neville's sense of shock continued well beyond the end of his boat journey. He recounts the wonder of seeing snow for the first time, with visceral detail of the freezing feeling in his fingers—and the confusion, fear, and excitement accompanying a snow fight on his way to school with other local children. But other aspects of his new life and new place were not as magical: 'I had come to join my family, but it wasn't: my brother was living with white people during the week and would see us during the weekend, and my parents were separated.'

Neville thus arrived into a family situation, and an area, that was already ethnically mixed, a decade or so after the 'first wave' (or 'Windrush Generation') from the Caribbean had already settled in London and around parts of the UK. Glass paints a picture of a small but significant number of Caribbean migrants living in the UK at the time of Neville's arrival. Drawing on a bricolage of survey and census data, Glass estimates that 126,000 'coloured West Indian migrants' were living in Britain (not including children born in the UK)—but that they tended to settle in certain parts of the country: notably, North Kensington, where 12.1% of this population had settled.[53]

As the riots of 1958 in Notting Hill denote, 'the veneer of racial tolerance [was] a rather thin one' in London at the time.[54] Racism and prejudice were latent—ready to explode out in particular moments, and this remained the case for Neville in his early memories of the area marked by the military metaphors he uses for describing the social conditions he experienced:

> Remember, this was a white area when I arrived. There was turf war. The whites didn't want the Blacks coming in. And, as told by my mother, these guys that came from Grenada paved the way—and, I can give you incidents that happened in these mews here. Like, where one guy who was Black and all the rest were white—his garage got smashed up … there was a kind of black and white war.

To use Glass's term, these forms of disharmony extended beyond just the residential place of settlement, and into other key arenas and spaces of prejudice. On education, for instance, Glass painted a more positive picture of institutions where 'migrants are surrounded by the official public opinion of this country

which rejects discrimination', and hence 'West Indian children … in general seem to belong very soon after their arrival'.[55] And yet, while Glass argued that schools were important vehicles for fostering tolerance for multi-cultural communities at the time,[56] Neville recollects how forms of racial prejudice were regularly performed in his secondary school:

> It was quite rough. When I came in, it was bad. There were fights, there were knives. There were white–black fights. One side would come in and pick on a Black. But the teachers never got involved to break up no fights … And, you know, the discipline was very lax for the white children—but not with the Black children.

Moreover, after leaving school and entering the world of work, Neville experienced further institutional racism. On one occasion, he was able to secure a job interview, via a family friend, for a security position at a large department store in the borough, and felt as though the position was secure—only for it to be offered to a white person instead:

> My aunt, she knew the head of security there and he met me—I was 17 or so. And he asked, "you want to be a security officer?" I had just left school with nothing planning to do. And I thought, this was good—a store detective. At the time, people wouldn't have expected a Black man to be a store detective. So I thought OK, done deal. But when I went for the interview, afterwards he was embarrassed to say I didn't get it. They had hired a white man … It went against me because of my colour, and categorically went against me because of my colour.

Neville also highlighted how his experience of other institutions—notably police—was similarly characterised by latent racism,[57] that held the potential to explode to the fore out of a simmering background of urban demographic change:

> The Blacks, we had the police just stopping you when we were driving our cars. They stop and searched me, stop and searched me a lot. And, our parents were always like "you're in these people's lands, just behave yourself. You're in their country." But, this is a different breed—we're not taking it, we've been taking it. We've been beaten up, locked up. They had us spending the nights in police stations for nothing. We'd get beat up. It was a kind of war.

Again, Neville returns to military metaphors in his description. Be it wars with police, turf wars between whites and Blacks, or knife fights in school—disharmony was present and ready to emerge through the violence of prejudice, signalling what Glass formulated as latent disharmony erupting in moments of conflict.

## Harmony? Placing Tolerance, Integration, and Loss

My conversation with Neville was long and punctuated by several bathroom breaks. On each occasion, Neville encouraged me to flip through his book on the Notting Hill Carnival. Its dust jacket was bright and bold, in spite of its

well-worn and torn nature. Inside were photographs—black-and-white and colour—showing scenes of revelry, music, hedonism, and celebration across different cultures, costumes, and communities: of 'whites' and 'Blacks' not in violent conflict, but instead encountering one another in scenes of friendship and conviviality. Outside the workplace and particular institutions of the state, and in the more banal everyday fabric of Kensington and Chelsea, Neville describes connection—as part of a generational shift: where children growing up together were freer of the baggage of the more violent forms of conflict that accompanied their parents' generation. Echoing the pages of Neville's carnival book are his childhood memories of mixing with other residents of North Kensington from different backgrounds:

> There was an integration. The roads I grew up on was mainly Black and whites; and I knew the whites and Blacks because all us kids were mixing. We'd all meet up together to play football and have games of whites v black, five-a-side. And, of course, the whites would hammer us 16-nil! But, you know, it was just a way of picking a team—and, there was no racism to it.

Music also served as a particular arena of cultural change through which wider inequalities were contested. Neville describes how the changing scene, locally and nationally, was co-constitutive of the changes in the borough he grew up with:

> Back then, in the '70s, it came out with the soul music—music that white boys and the Black boys liked. Because it pulls out the rhythms. And, that integration was in the local clubs—where you'd get the Black and white. Because, in the '70s as well, was a sort of divide in Blacks, down to the music. The reggae boys, who were Black, and the soul boys, who had more white friends and white girlfriends. Those with the soul, they integrated more—soul/funk music and disco music, more than the reggae. That's what brought the white people into the music.

Sport and music were part of the informal patterns of urban life through which integration unfolded. Glass pays particular attention to formal organisations formed in the wake of the 1958 disturbances,[58] but also to the role of shops, clubs, cafes, markets, basements, kitchens, and street corners as key spaces for the formation of Caribbean community—with these spaces becoming all the more important, Glass argues, because of the forms of prejudice that frequently excluded Caribbean newcomers from more traditional organisations and groups. 'In the summer especially', Glass suggests in *Newcomers*, 'the streets in which they live are their parlours; West Indians sit together on their doorsteps; here is a knot of people of different shades of colour'.[59]

One particularly prominent space that Glass notes writing in the 1960s in Caribbean migrant communities was 'West Indian barber shops' that 'are community centres, where West Indian newspapers can be read, and where all the latest news can be heard'.[60] But today, many of these organisations, communities, institutions, and spaces have either been lost or now cater to a different clientele, as Neville explains:

> Nowadays, the white barber in Shepherd's Bush [part of neighbouring Hammersmith and Fulham borough] charges six pounds—and the north African barber in K&C charges 13 pounds! I mean, the white barber would spend 15 minutes and I'm out, and the other one would too. So I'm not supporting the brothers there. Cuz I have it short, just a number 1—they're like snip, snip, snip, and done: 13 pounds! They say support your own, but when they're charging so much money, I'm like: soz! Why should I feel bad about a white guy cutting my hair? People might say I'm not supporting race, but you know.

These differing prices reflect not merely a changing ethnic composition in Kensington, but class changes wrought by gentrification. Along with the café we used for our interview, Neville highlights the loss of many different venues and services previously catering for the local Caribbean community:

> Before, Portabello Road used to have a lot of Black folk. They don't have that now. It's changed. The Black people, they're just totally not in the area at all now … it's become a tourist place. You walk down there, it's people speaking Spanish or French, you know. The food there, it's all different stalls. You don't find the veg as it used to be, because there's no one buying that kind of thing living there. Now there's no Black food shops as there used to be. There's nowhere to get Black products. Because, quite frankly, they wouldn't be making any business—because there's no one living there who'd go and buy it.

This also extends into a loss of community spaces that were previously key hubs for his community, both when he was growing up and in his younger adulthood:

> Now there's no community centres or things that we had as the Blacks, things we had before where we could do our thing. There's nothing like that now. And that's probably not going to change now, because there's nothing left. What there is are bars now where you have to pay; what we had before were things we could have rented out for deaths and weddings … we have big problems trying to find a venue for a death now. There's nothing. That's what we don't have now—so there's no community, no space for it, you know. The Blacks, the new generation, they've got nothing.

As numerous scholars of London have argued, and indeed Glass herself first suggested, changes to the class and ethnicity of residents driven by gentrification have extended and exacerbated inequalities in Kensington and Chelsea. For Neville, Kensington and Chelsea has always been divided in this fashion—but these conditions of difference have worsened, where rising house prices, the loss of social housing, and the intensifying costs of living locally have all made the area unaffordable for his community:

> It has always been this side against that side. It's always been the same, for years. There's always been the rich part, and then there's been this part. A lot of Caribbean people who were here—they couldn't pay the prices.

> There's probably only one or two people I know who have still got their house—or, their parents' house from before, you know. Most of them, priced out. So there's not so many Black folks in Kensington and Chelsea as there used to. It's posher people now that have crowded in.

In *Newcomers*, Glass referred to these divisions akin to a tale of two cities—where 'Kensington has been particularly unfortunate … because with its division in North and South, it is still in essence a microcosm of the "Two Nations," even in the age of the welfare state.'[61] The forms of harmony alluded to by Glass that were established in Neville's childhood—his connections to his community, his access to affordable services, have all become sites of potential disharmony: of the loss of place, community, and a feeling of being left behind and marooned.

## Theorising Unequal Lives

From reading our interlocutors Neville and Glass together, we can make three key assertions about urban inequalities. The first is that inequalities both produce, and are a product of, divisions that are deeply rooted historically. But prejudice itself is not straightforward or static: Glass invites us to understand it as dialectic between harmony and disharmony, with different structures, processes, and practices at play. Crucial here is the agency of socially excluded and marginalised groups themselves, as the case study of Caribbean newcomers reveals—forms of agency and organisation that stretch beyond 'formal' routes and into the daily social fabric of urban life. Prejudice is therefore *latent*, being held in check in the background to everyday life by these practices but also erupting in moments of violence—be it riots, unrest, or atrocities such as Grenfell Tower.

Second is the need for methodological approaches to studying inequality that capture these features of urban life. As Neville's story has revealed, inequalities shift over time and space—they come to be channelled into certain places; communities organise at a variety of scales and ways of resistance; and the experiences of different forms of inequality—ethnicity, place, age, class—all intersect. A life history approach, as exhibited in Neville's account, can signal how inequalities follow path-dependent and contextually specific routes—ones that take in intersectional differences shaping the uneven effects of social change. As Glass notes, 'not all minority groups are treated alike, nor is the treatment of any one of them consistent in all spheres and over a period of time'.[62] That Neville's key touching-points when describing a changing London were of the everyday, emotional features of social life—many of which are not captured by the traditional methods used to study inequality (ranging from Gini coefficient, to household income, life expectancy, and so on)—signals the need for methodological approaches attuned to these features. As Glass noted, 'any attempt to over-simplify or to over-dramatize the actual and emerging divisions with London can only help to underrate their quite remarkable tenacity'.[63]

Lastly, and following from the previous two points, there remains an obligation to understand and study those marginalised, excluded and disenfranchised by society—not for its own sake, but to critically contemplate the processes that

drive inequalities. This itself raises ethical questions around how to do so without merely extracting the testimony of marginalised groups. Instead, we must study disenfranchised groups *within* landscapes of inequalities—where a lack of understanding is a key feature of prejudice itself:

> The very existence of such divisions helps to conceal them, and thus to perpetuate them. When social groups live in separate compartments, their perception is liable to be partial—their perception of other groups, of the whole universe to which they belong, and not least their awareness of their own position or enclosure.[64]

Put together, what is therefore necessary is an approach to urban inequalities that is *relational*. Inequality is not something that widens or reduced unidirectionally, nor can we separate it out into distinct 'things', places, or groups. Instead, our approach must see inequality as 'neither an obliteration nor an accentuation of long-established … cleavages, but the superimposition of a criss-cross web of social divisions'.[65] Thinking in terms of what Glass describes as webs, or what the geographer Doreen Massey would term 'relationality', is therefore a useful way—to return to the opening provocation of this article—of placing inequality in the context of prejudice. Examining urban inequalities over life course and life world, as Neville's story reveals, signals that difference is both structured and open to agency—and thus aids in thinking about questions of power and inequality over time and space not as separate, but as intimately interconnected.

## Conclusion

Writing the preface to the 1989 collection of some of her writings, Glass complains that her 'criticisms … are regrettably not yet redundant'.[66] The Grenfell Tower disaster of 2017 indicates that the conditions driving such tragedies have not disappeared. Despite Glass's *Newcomers* being published over sixty years ago—and despite the extent, nature, and qualitative character of social exclusion having changed—urban inequalities have persisted, and arguably widened, in Kensington and Chelsea today. The country of origin of London's contemporary newcomers may have shifted, but they continue to be open to novel forms of abandonment, violence, and prejudice.

From Glass, this article has taken forward three key arguments: the first is that urban inequalities are co-constituted through forms of prejudice; the second is that these are not inevitable in their unfolding but are contested through everyday practices by marginalised groups; and the third is that academic research must continue to play a vital role in addressing and challenging prejudice. In the scramble to make sense of the Grenfell Tower atrocity, attention to the longer historical and structural roots of such violence must be foregrounded—and the latent characteristics of prejudice highlighted and challenged.

What has only been hinted at in this article, and where future research would be appropriate, therefore, is an account of urban inequalities that draws on different perspectives and positions. Narrating inequalities from one subject

position allows us to gain depth and detail, and to move beyond the limits of Glass's critique of quantitative methods alone for studying the city. But a full account of unequal lives must reach across different life worlds and life histories. Just as our 'sieve of differentiation has to become a finer one … and indices of differentiation have to be modified', what is also required is an understanding of the city that considers not only those marginalised groups who have 'lost out'—but also those who have benefitted.[67] Only an approach to urban change that engages *across* time and space can, to return to Susan Sontag, enable us to place privilege and suffering more explicitly on the same map of the city.[68] 'Altogether, we shall have to become more ambitious both in the perception and in the organization of urban societies.'[69] Only then might we begin to remove the question marks that characterise our understandings of an unequal London today.

## Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes

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