

Angela Ampomah 50 Wingrave, 1983 – 2008

I moved into our flat on the Heygate with my husband and two children in the early eighties. There were many elderly people on the estate who had lived here since the 70s. A lot of them ended up being put into sheltered housing. Many went to Peckham, and I know some that went over to Myatts Fields and some that went to Bermondsey. They are nice little units but very small, and nobody sits outside like they used to do at the Heygate. They were originally promised a new ground floor flat with a garden but they never got all that. They were promised many things but never got them.

I knew an elderly woman who went to the Bermondsey one but she has died now. I don't think they should have moved the elderly people because it was all such a shock to them. Some have died because they had to be moved. Even when they have moved and gone into other places they have lived about a year afterwards and then

died: because they wish they were back at the Heygate - they missed it.

Many were old and worried about where they were going to go and what was going to happen to them, it was stressful for many of them. They were very frightened. My husband died. It was stressful for him - over the years with all the letters. Because he more or less took on everything at the time, and I think everything just got too much for

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him. He started to drink, he started to get ill with depression – he suffered manic depression it got so bad. He had a breakdown with the mental stress of all that was going on, and then he was made redundant because of his illness. On top of that he started to drink, on top of that he was on tablets for depression. I don't know what it was – where was he going to go? What was going to happen to us?

We were told we would be able to come back to the Heygate when the new homes had been built, but I wasn't given anything in writing. I can't see a lot of people coming back to be honest.

Out of the 1,000 families how many would come back and pay the rent that they are going to demand now. And what are these 'affordable' rents going to be, and what about the service charges and council taxes in the

new places? Some tenants are already struggling to pay higher rents where they are now than they used to pay on the Heygate.



Nobody wanted to move – we were pressurised to get out or taken to court. I said to them [the council] “well find me a decent home then with affordable rent”. Because I have got to watch the rent – if it's 200 pounds then I couldn't afford that rent. The place where I live now is the same rent but it is that much smaller than my Heygate home.

My new neighbours don't seem to stay around long, they seem to be in and out with suitcases all the time. Someone will move in and then they stay 3 months before moving out – I am not used to that. It's like a dos house the way they are coming in and out. I didn't

have that on the Heygate, people moving in and out; the majority of people had been there over 30 years. They had their children there, the children grew up

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there, their grannies were there. It was like a family community. Over where I am now it's not a family community of people – I just don't like living there. I have been there 4 years now, but

there is no communication with neighbours, and when nobody wants to mix then you don't know what's going on with people, I like to mix and I like to know – at least you had that warm feeling on the Heygate, like a communal spirit.

I had to take the flat I am in now because it was my third offer, and if I hadn't taken it then I would have gone to court. They [the council] said if I don't take this place then I am sorry but we will have to take you to court, and the courts won't have pity on you – they will tell you to take something and you could end up with a worse flat than this. It was threatening behaviour from this council worker talking to me like this.

People didn't fight because a lot of the community were elderly and the communication wasn't there to stand up together and fight. If they would have got together and said look we are not going to go then it might have been different. I was one of the five that held out [on the Wingrave block], and it is only because they starting threatening to take me to court and then they started drawing on the walls, breaking windows and rubbish was left everywhere because the cleaners weren't going round cleaning up. Then they turned the heating off. It de-spirited a lot of people and they just gave up. It is very disheartening and you can't fight against it.



All this community of people it destroyed their spirit – they have lost hope: you see them now after they have gone into these places, they have lost their strength, their hope, their spirit. It is all because they were too frightened to stand up for themselves and to say “well you can't treat us like this, you can't talk to us like this, you can't do this to us. We have been here for so long we have had our children here, and now you want to just throw us out like an empty bag of crisps.”

When you see them now, some of them have got depressed, they look terrible, they are neglecting themselves and their health. Even one said “I don't care if I don't live any more”. I know one man who was forced to move to the 3rd floor of a block who has got a walking stick and is struggling to get up and down the stairs. And now because of holding the banisters to get up and down he has got an arthritic hand. And they won't give him another place on the ground floor because there is nothing there for him.

I don't think there will be many working class people in this area in the future, because they

want people struggling on pensions or low paid work, they want to push us out. We won't be able to afford the rent. We will have to move outside London because they want London as a rich domain now like in certain parts of America

Even the leaseholders were affected because they weren't happy with the money they got. Because it didn't cover for buying another house in this area, I know a nurse who had to move to Plumstead because that was the cheapest place, but she really didn't want to go over there. They gave her this money but she couldn't buy a place around here with it. And because she had the money they wouldn't give her a council flat – she had enough to buy a place, that's what they said. Not around this area though, because all of a sudden the money has jumped up on property so she had to move to Plumstead, and where she is working at St Thomas's hospital she now has to travel back and forth every day. She wanted to stay in this area where she had lived for over 30 years, where her children had grown up, but she was a nurse and couldn't afford it. She is not the only one that has moved out, some moved out to Kent.

This regeneration has been a crime against the people who lived here: it has killed their livelihoods, their moral and their spirit. If people wanted to stay in this area then the council should have helped them find a property here.