

A Conversation on Race and Gentrification: a response to ‘Anti-Racism at SSoA: A Call to Action’

Michael Ford with Rebecca Acheampong



Please scan or click the code to access the conversation

Introduction

My aim for this conversation is to explore and highlight some of the issues surrounding race and class within the built environment. I use my MARCH dissertation – ‘Perry Barr: An Exploration of Commercial Gentrification’, which explores issues between commercial gentrification and its effects on community and identity through lived experience. With this as a point of reflection, I aim to present and collaboratively reflect with students at Sheffield School of Architecture on issues surrounding race and equality in the hope of continuing conversation around race and acknowledging the importance of difference. Moreover, the article is used as a catalyst to gauge conversation between students of architecture in relation to race and education. Whilst my time at the School of Architecture has seen efforts to create an inclusive environment, the conversation surrounding race has not been as widely acknowledged.

This recording, a conversation between myself and Rebecca Acheampong, is generated from photos taken from my dissertation research and discusses the effects of commercial gentrification on independent Black-, Asian- and minority ethnic- (BAME) owned businesses in Perry Barr, Birmingham. Comparative case studies look at businesses that have been displaced and communities that have been impacted. These are used in conjunction with personal reflection, interviews and narratives.

Biographies

Michael Ford is a sixth year MArch student from the University of Sheffield School of Architecture. With experiences of and a special interest in social inequalities, in addition to understanding place through the lived experience of local communities and our urban environments, he wrote the dissertation, 'Perry Barr: An Exploration of Commercial Gentrification', as a catalyst to further explore ideas around race and social inequalities, commercial gentrification, its effects on community and identity through the lived experience.

Rebecca Acheampong, also a sixth year at the School of Architecture, is of Italian and Ghanaian heritage. She has been invited to respond to this dissertation highlighting her personal experiences and speaking from her own position. She has a background in community and participatory design, particularly amongst underrepresented migrating community groups and acknowledges the importance of offering her experiences within the built environment in response to the 'Call to Action'.

Fig 1. Photo of my father selling to customers from his Caribbean food van at the Birmingham Carnival. Photographer unknown, n.d.



Fig 2. Photo of myself stood eating watermelon in my father's Caribbean food van at the Birmingham Carnival. Photographer unknown, n.d.



Fig 3. Photo of my father preparing sugarcane for customers from his Caribbean food van. Photographer unknown, n.d.



Fig 4. View of independent BAME owned businesses located within Perry Barr. Photographer Michael Ford, 2020



Fig 5. Photographic survey of local BAME owned businesses in Perry Barr. Photographer Michael Ford, 2020



