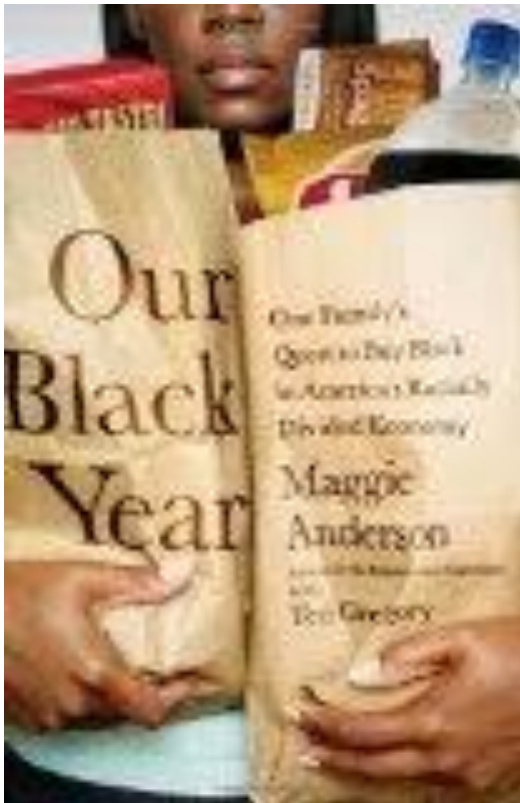


Monday, March 31, 2014

The Gentrification of Peckham and Other Black Areas



I enjoyed this event on Saturday. As I live just down the road from Peckham, South London, and have for many years, I was particularly interested in this topic.

Like pretty much all of the events held by [London Black History Walks](#), "The Gentrification of Peckham and Other Black Areas" as very well presented. It started with Tony Warner going through a short history of migration and gentrification which took in the Black history of London from Roman times to the present day, including the Elizabethan era and the two World Wars, as well as the experience of Black people in Brooklyn, including [Spike Lee](#), and in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Back in the 1950s and '60s, many Black people in London and the UK were forced to become homeowners, as this was the only way to provide accommodation for themselves and their families.

The authorities will sometimes allow local areas to become run down in order to make them more attractive to investors. This has also involved encouraging the use of drugs and guns in Black areas. There is evidence of this in the U.S., and he referred to "Operation Jackpot" in Stoke Newington in Hackney, East London.

Tony's presentations are always packed with factual details and always highly engaging.

The presentation by Charmaine Brown focused specifically on Peckham and covered the area's history as well as reviewing how much Peckham has changed.

Brown clarified the distinction between improvements and gentrification. The Council first started making improvements to the area several years ago. However, with gentrification, a new type of resident moved in - people who do not have any investment in the "social capital" of the area.

She characterised "social capital" as a personal interest and investment in, and involvement with, the local area, its people and its culture. Thus, there is often a divide between the current residents and those moving into the area. Added to this is the fact that, with property prices skyrocketing, locals often feel unable to own their own homes, and can find themselves moved out of the area completely.

Like many of the Queen Nzingha lectures, this one left me feeling sadness and frustration. Although the problem was well explained and illustrated, there was little focus on solutions.

I was particularly saddened by a short film featuring author Alex Wheatle, in which he talked about the ways in which the Brixton and Tulse Hill areas have changed. He walked around Brixton Market but did not mention that none of the shops and businesses inside the market are Black-owned. They are all owned by white and Asian business owners. It was like that more than 30 years ago, when I first came to London, and it's still like that now.

He also stated that Dick Sheppard School in Tulse Hill has been closed and replaced with a gated community. Again, this was particularly sad for me as, many years ago, I used to teach at a Saturday school based there.

We need to focus more on solutions, and on actions steps we can take today, here and now, such as, for example, those described in Maggie Anderson's Empowerment Experiment and [Our Black Year](#). We need to take ownership of our communities.

To read about The Empowerment Experiment and [Our Black Year](#), and to watch a video about them, see [Strong Black Business Community](#).

Posted by [Zhana21](#) at [10:30 AM](#) 

Labels: [African American books](#), [Black business](#), [Black Entrepreneurs](#), [Black Londoners](#), [gentrification](#), [London](#), [London Black History Walks](#), [Maggie Anderson](#), [Our Black Year](#), [Peckham](#), [South London](#)