Stories from London's Docklands: Heritage Encounters, Deindustrialization, and the End of Empire

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Abstract This article analyzes the activism of Eastside Community Heritage in London's Docklands, circa 1997 to 2003, following its establishment by community activists concerned by the British National Party's electoral success in the postindustrial area. Eastside attributed local racism to deindustrialization and unaccountable, exclusionary redevelopment. Aiming to recenter solidarity against economic injustice—thereby countering racism—and to challenge redevelopers' neglect, the group published booklets celebrating the area's working-class past. But the project's archived oral histories show that residents remembered an area forged by different ideals. Their nostalgia was for participation in empire through the docks as much as for an idealized working-class community. Residents rarely distinguished between the interconnected losses of imperial purpose and social cohesion. I frame these tensions as a heritage encounters, making three key arguments. First, memories of youth in the imperial metropole informed residents' perceptions of the late twentieth-century nation, despite recent scholarly efforts to separate them temporally and conceptually. Second, contrary to their predominance within histories of postwar class identity, deindustrialization and urban change were popularly understood within a larger, postimperial narrative of local and national decline. Finally, a close reading of this project offers a vivid case study into the fragility of British multiculturalism in the 1990s and 2000s.

The modern histories of East London and the British Empire are intimately connected. Rapidly growing trade with the empire and the world, serviced by nine dock complexes built on the River Thames between 1802 and 1921, led to the development of reliant, pollutant industries and cheap housing in the area, staffed and inhabited, respectively, by migrant workers fleeing the Irish famine and the English countryside, while the port equally made visible within the metropole visiting colonial merchants and smaller numbers of permanent migrants from the empire.[1] The area's industrial, impoverished, and multiracial character made it prominent within late nineteenth-century panics around the "condition

[1] Colin Davis, "Formation and Reproduction of Dockers as an Occupational Group," in *Dock Workers: International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790–1970*, ed. Sam Davies et al., vol. 1 (Abingdon, 2017), 542–59, at 545.

970

of England."[2] Between that stigmatization and the area's geopolitical and commercial significance, East London occupied an ambiguous position in Victorian and Edwardian culture.

Decades of housing neglect were then exacerbated by the heavy damage the area sustained during the Blitz, creating an acute shortage that was met by the rapid construction of more cheap, low-quality lodging. The particular unpopularity of modernist high-rise estates built between the late 1950s and the 1970s accelerated with disinvestment, rapid deterioration, and the concentration of vulnerable families in undesirable housing. Local postwar urban change was marked by the end of empire. Newham's relative proximity to Tilbury Docks (until the 1960s, the primary site of Commonwealth migrants' arrival in the capital) and the more modest influx through its own Royal Docks meant that the area housed a rapidly changing population.[3] Further, Britain's diminishing share of global trade and the port's labor-intensive methods and its inaccessibility downriver led to the closure between 1967 and 1981 of every dock except Tilbury.[4] Related industry suffered accordingly; sugar giant Tate and Lyle, rooted in local communities and reliant on colonial markets, laid off three thousand staff in southern Newham between 1975 and 1981.[5] From postwar ambitions of a new world, the late 1960s brought rising unemployment, a deteriorating built environment, and crime.[6] East London became the epicenter of the so-called crisis of Britain's inner cities, the complexion of which was both local and profoundly global. The London Docklands Development Corporation was established in 1981 to stimulate service-based regeneration through liberalized planning laws and tax exemptions. Answerable only to Whitehall, it requisitioned large swathes of derelict land from Newham, Tower Hamlets, and Southwark councils.[7] Newham's redevelopment was comparatively slow, and those initiatives that were undertaken there were criticized for offering residents few secure or skilled jobs.

Changing cities like London were a central site of the racism rife in postwar Britain. The *Empire Windrush*'s arrival in 1948 in Tilbury from Kingston, Jamaica, marked the beginning of mass Commonwealth migration as Caribbean and, later, South Asian migrants arrived in what they had been taught to think of as the imperial mother country.[8] Yet these claims to belonging were continuously rebuffed. In 1958, in Notting Hill and Nottingham, the homes of recently settled Black residents were attacked by large crowds.[9] In 1968, Enoch Powell warned of the apparently

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[2] Bruce Wheeler, "Language and Landscape: The Construction of Place in an East London Borough," in *Seeing History: Public History in Britain Now*, ed. Hilda Kean, Paul Martin, and Sally J. Morgan (London, 2000), 105–21, at 116.

[3] John Marriott, *Beyond the Tower: A History of East London* (New Haven, 2011), 325–42.

[4] Janet Foster, *Docklands: Cultures in Conflict, Worlds in Collision* (London, 1999), 36.

[5] Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth-Century: A City and Its People* (London, 2001), 206–7.

[6] Otto Saumarez Smith, "The Inner-City Crisis and the End of Urban Modernism in 1970s Britain," *Twentieth Century British History* 27, no. 4 (2016): 578–98.

[7] White, *London in the Twentieth Century*, 78.

[8] Kennetta Hammond-Perry, *London Is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship and the Politics of Race* (Oxford, 2015), 1–16.

[9] Camilla Schofield and Ben Jones, "'Whatever Community Is, This Is Not It': Notting Hill and the Reconstruction of 'Race' in Britain after 1958," *Journal of British Studies* 58, no. 1 (2019): 142–73, at 142–43.

inevitable violence between white Britons and immigrants who, he claimed, held the white majority in contempt and enjoyed preferential treatment from the state.[10] Powell was dismissed from the shadow cabinet for the speech but remained a figure-head as anti-immigrant sentiment rose dramatically throughout the following decade.[11]

Among Powell's most prominent defenders were dockworkers in East London, who downed tools to protest his dismissal.[12] Indeed, the East End was among the most prevalent sites of the racism of these decades. While the National Front was active throughout Britain in the 1970s, Spitalfields saw at least forty-three incidents of racially motivated property damage, robbery, and assault between January and March 1970, culminating in the murder of kitchen porter Tosir Ali.[13] In the 1980s, the Liberal Party in Tower Hamlets pursued a policy of prioritizing the housing of "local" (a coded term for white) people, given their longer history of res-idence, locking many Bengalis out of council tenancies.[14] Those who were offered council houses were coerced by the borough's "one-offer" policy to accept "hard to let" flats, often in hostile white areas.[15] This left many with a choice between homelessness and a dangerous, isolated existence. Newham, too, saw frequent stab-bings, beatings, and arson attacks on Black and Asian residents following its estab-lishment in 1965. In the 1974 local elections, support for the National Front reached 29 percent in Hudson's Ward and 25 percent in Canning Town, while in the general election of October that year, the party won five thousand votes in the borough.[16] In both boroughs, housing was a central issue as white residents and pol-iticians reacted against a racialized sense of their loss of ownership over what was called a "declining" area.

This pattern continued in the 1990s with the electoral success of the British National Party. Eschewing so-called race science and street confrontation, the party aimed instead for respectability within and integration into local white communities through extensive canvassing and participation in grassroots campaigns. Nigel Copsey has argued that the party aimed to "get among the downtrodden white pop-ulation," "neutralize the Nazi "smear," and position themselves as defenders of "rights for whites."[17] In the vacuum left by the lack of accountability of the London Docklands Development Corporation and the disempowerment of local councils, the British National Party was highly visible. It constructed a "common-sense" account of state multiculturalism and disinvestment in services as analogous parts of the liberal state's betrayal of "authentic" East Enders.[18] Its candidate, Derek Beackon, was elected to Tower Hamlets Council in Millwall in 1993, while

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[10] Amy Whipple, "Revisiting the 'Rivers of Blood' Controversy: Letters to Enoch Powell," *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 3 (2009): 717–35, at 718.

[11] Whipple, "Revisiting the 'Rivers of Blood' Controversy," 718.

[12] Whipple, 717.

[13] Stephen Ashe, Satnam Virdee, and Laurence Brown, "Striking Back against Racist Violence in the East End of London, 1968–1970," *Race and Class* 58, no. 1 (2016): 34–54, at 38–39.

[14] Foster, *Docklands*, 221.

[15] Foster, 259.

[16] Marriott, *Beyond the Tower*, 340–41.

[17] Nigel Copsey, *Contemporary British Fascism: The British National Party and the Quest for Legitimacy*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke, 2008), 56, 57.

[18] Copsey, *Contemporary British Fascism*, 58.

the 1994 local elections saw the party average 13 percent of the vote in Newham and narrowly miss election in multiple wards.[19]

Canvassing locally for Labour, the activist Judith Garfield became alarmed by residents' disaffection and resentment. Her involvement built on her experience working at the local redevelopment quango Stratford City Challenge, where her job was to promote residents' voices in the redevelopment process by presenting the findings of interviews with them. Garfield consistently argued for greater investment in industrial employment and social housing, suggestions that the quango leadership disregarded. She developed an analysis of racism as the result of alienation arising from deindustrialization and neglect by free-market redevelopers like Stratford City Challenge and the London Docklands Development Corporation. This neglect, Garfield thought, could be overcome by establishing a sustained dialogue with residents. Indeed, she understood the eventual defeat of the British National Party as resulting from Labour's reconstruction of their relationship with residents through intensified local canvassing. Garfield applied for and received a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant to continue her oral history work, establishing Eastside Community Heritage as an independent charity in 1997.[20]

My analysis of Eastside's inaugural projects in Silvertown and North Woolwich, by Newham's Royal Docks, based on thirty-seven archived life history interviews, two published illustrated booklets, and an interview with Garfield, offers a new analysis of working-class identity in relation to race, empire, and nation. The interviews are a rich record of residents' complex experiences of a period of profound upheaval. The sample included twenty women and seventeen men. Thirteen were born in the 1910s and 1920s, while fifteen were born between the 1930s and early 1950s. Interviewees' personal details were not always captured on recordings, and so nine respondents' age range could not be identified beyond doubt, though their testimony suggests most were born between the 1930s and 1950s. Twenty-three had lived in areas neighboring the Royal Docks since childhood, while six were raised elsewhere in Newham or Tower Hamlets. Three were from outside these boroughs, and five respondents did not disclose their birthplace. Of the fourteen not explicitly raised locally, only two had lived in Newham for fewer than five years, and six were resident there for between five and thirty years. Six had moved to the area more than thirty years previously, and of these, four had lived locally for more than forty years.[21] Eastside's use of the snowball method of recruitment helped develop relationships with networks of residents, allowing valuable integration within the wider community. However, it also led interviewees to recommend acquaintances with similar demographic profiles, inadvertently creating an image of the community and its experiences that was limited to older white residents, most of whom had lived locally for most of their adult lives.[22] Though this definition of community was reductive, I also use the term to refer to this group in order to reflect the parameters of Eastside's

[19] Copsey, 59.

[20] Judith Garfield (activist, oral historian, founder and director of Eastside Community Heritage), interview with the author, Ilford, Essex, 27 March 2019.

[21] Silvertown Oral Histories (audio recordings), 2000_ESCH_SILV, East London's People Archive (all subsequent citations to audio recordings of oral histories are from this repository); North Woolwich Oral Histories, 2002_ESCH_NOWO; 2003_ESCH_NOWO.

[22] Garfield, interview.

work. The organization did not interview any Black or Asian adult residents. This sample's insights into working-class identity are thus limited to an older generation of long-standing white residents. Reanalysis facilitates a reframing of these shortcomings, drawing attention to the racialized, gendered, and generational dimensions of these constructions of class identity and "community."

The interviews were the basis of two publications, *Stories from Silvertown* (2001) and *North Woolwich: Stories from the Riverside* (2003), thirty and fifty-nine pages, respectively.[23] The booklets were produced for both residents and redevelopers, with differing aims for each group. For residents, it was hoped that the booklets would provide a coherent narrative of deindustrialization and economic neglect. The interviews would "listen to people and acknowledge, respect and give voice to their history," a cathartic process that would "gently move people on" from the past.[24] This expectation was predicated on a belief that racism and alienation derived from the economic experiences of the 1980s. In organizing their account of change around this already familiar left-wing narrative of recent economic injustice, Eastside were inattentive to the influence of decades of racialized encounters over entire lifetimes in the first port of empire. Eastside also sought to promote the booklets with redevelopers to "challenge the quangos doing things for people, rather than listening to what they wanted." Though "generations" had been "totally forgotten about . . . since the docks closed," Garfield hoped that the booklets could lead redevelopers to acknowledge residents' plight.[25] There was real social value in Eastside's efforts to promote residents' voices in the face of an undemocratic regeneration process that had exacerbated the diminishment of secure, skilled employment, but this effort to present the community sympathetically and advocate for it again led the organization to obscure the emotional investment many had in empire.

In interviews, many residents proudly remembered the area's former position as an industrial base and gateway to the British Empire, linking local identities with national, imperial, and racial ones and articulating a vernacular narrative of postimperial decline.[26] This common thread suggests popular support for a high cultural phenomenon identified by Gareth Stedman-Jones, whereby "cockneys" became a "portent of the destiny of Empire" around the time of the Second World War. They were discursively cast as defenders of patriotism, monarchy, and "tradition," embodying the popular conservatism of the 1930s and national sacrifice in the Blitz before enjoying an "Indian summer" in this role during the "family Britain" of the 1950s.[27] East Enders mourned their former facilitation of maritime strength

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[23] Judith Garfield, *Stories from Silvertown: An Eastside Community Heritage Publication* (London, 2001); Judith Garfield and Richard Bolt, *North Woolwich: Stories from the Riverside* (London, 2003).

[24] Garfield, interview.

[25] Garfield, interview.

[26] Historians have criticized politicians and commentators' construction of a simplistic and tendentious declinist account of postwar British history. See, for example, Jim Tomlinson, "Deindustrialization, Not Decline: A New Meta-Narrative for Post-war British History," *Twentieth Century British History* 27, no. 1 (2016): 76–99. As I go on to show here, a vernacular version of this discourse was popular among East Enders.

[27] Gareth Stedman-Jones, "The "Cockney" and the Nation, 1780–1988," in *Metropolis London: Histories and Representations since 1800*, ed. David Feldman and Gareth Stedman-Jones (London, 1989), 272–324, at 301, 302, 315.

and the loss of a paternalistic, homogenous social order, both of which countered the stigma and deprivation of poverty. In this, residents embodied what Jon Lawrence calls "conservative modernity," measuring subsequent decline against the final flourishing of these ideals in the 1950s.[28]

The apparent loss or corrosion of working-class identity has become a major theme of the historiography of postwar Britain. East Enders are central to this discourse. They have been reified as an archetypal example of the so-called traditional working-class community, and their experiences made emblematic of national anxieties about the alienating effects of postwar social and economic changes.[29] Recent work has sought to temper this national narrative. Lawrence challenges the assumption that community, the imagined social unit of the working class, was eroded in postwar England by suburbanization, affluence, and an ascendant individualism.[30] Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, likewise, argues that the period saw not the decline of working-class identities but the decline of deference within changing but persistent class identities.[31] A related but distinct body of work considers the construction of class identity through arts and heritage activism reacting to deindustrialization and urban change.[32] That scholarship explores activists' efforts to protest or come to terms with loss by crafting a unifying narrative of displacement and injustice. It frequently points to local residents' more complex, divergent experiences. The interviews forming the basis of this essay corroborate many of these scholars' findings, demonstrating residents' skepticism toward Eastside's narrative of deindustrialization and displacement.

One contribution to this literature is particularly significant here. Bella Dicks's *Heritage, Place and Community* considers the relationship between heritage and working-class identity in Wales's deindustrialized coalfields, focusing on the Rhondda Heritage Park.[33] Like Eastside, the park was staffed by sympathetic left-wing activists aiming to tell the area's industrial history. These activists benefited, at a policy level, from the Major and Blair governments' large increases in funding for inclusive heritage projects that aimed to serve and represent deprived areas.

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[28] Jon Lawrence, "Paternalism, Class, and the British Path to Modernity," in *The Peculiarities of Liberal Modernity in Imperial Britain*, ed. Simon Gunn and James Vernon (Berkeley, 2011), 147–165, at 147.

[29] For example, Michael Young and Peter Wilmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (London, 1957); *East Enders* (BBC Studios, 1985–present). On their cultural impact, see, respectively, Jon Lawrence, "Inventing the "Traditional Working Class": A Re-analysis of Interview Notes from Young and Wilmott's *Family and Kinship in East London*," *Historical Journal* 59, no. 2 (2016): 567–93, at 572–73; Bill Schwarz, "Where Horses Shit a Hundred Sparrows Feed: Docklands and East London during the Thatcher Years," in *Enterprise and Heritage: Crosscurrents of National Culture*, ed. Sylvia Harvey and John Corner (London, 1991), 74–80, at 79–80.

[30] Jon Lawrence, *Me, Me, Me? The Search for Community in Postwar England* (Oxford, 2019).

[31] Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics and the Decline of Deference in England, 1968–2000* (Oxford, 2018).

[32] On deindustrialization, see Laura Carter, "Rethinking Folk Culture in Twentieth Century Britain," *Twentieth Century British History* 28, no. 4 (2017): 543–69; Ewan Gibbs, *Coal Country: The Meaning and Memory of Deindustrialization in Postwar Scotland* (London, 2021), 251–58. On urban change, see Ben Jones, "The Uses of Nostalgia: Autobiography, Community Publishing and Working-Class Neighbourhoods in Post-war England," *Cultural and Social History* 7, no. 3 (2010): 355–74; Sam Wetherell, "Painting the Crisis: Community Arts and the Search for the 'Ordinary' in 1970s and '80s London," *History Workshop Journal* 76, no. 1 (2013): 235–49.

[33] Bella Dicks, *Heritage, Place and Community* (Cardiff, 2000), 153.

This logic equated deprivation and underrepresentation. It sought to ameliorate poverty by investing in localized creative industries that boosted employment and tourism, producing culture that represented and thus enfranchised residents.[34] Dicks's chapter on local, place-based identities includes several extended quotes from residents expressing pride in the global exportation of local coal and the resulting fame of their communities worldwide.[35] In the testimony selected for publication, residents clearly appropriated a discourse of national industrial preeminence with heavy allusions to imperial trade in order to demonstrate the significance of their own lives. Yet neither Dicks nor the Park's activist staff used the frequency of these testimonies to reconcile their deindustrialization narrative with residents' pride in an industrial and perhaps imperial nationhood.[36] I build on this critique to provide another case study where class identity was closely informed by nation and empire. I argue that residents understood deindustrialization and urban change, and the loss they brought, within a larger framework of postimperial decline.

In doing so, I challenge the skepticism of David Edgerton and John Darwin of the relationship between empire and late twentieth-century racism.[37] Edgerton argues that British nationalism emerged in policy and economics between 1945 and 1970 in order to replace imperial identities, and that to conflate the two is an anachronism and a conceptual failing.[38] Edgerton and Darwin both suggest that racist policy, particularly around welfare, is better understood as a symptom of the exclusionary nature of this new, narrowly national community and not a legacy of empire.[39] These texts' elite source bases and high political foci cannot capture the wider population's lived experiences of empire, or those experiences' ongoing emotional resonance decades later—a project beyond my scope here. Further local case studies such as this, however, can begin to develop such an understanding. Recounting their experiences of the twentieth century, East Enders did not consider conceptual distinctions between empire and nation or the minutiae of periodization. Their experience of youth in the imperial metropole stayed with them, influencing their attitudes toward the postimperial nation.

The embarrassment these attitudes caused Eastside, and the group's subsequent obfuscation of them, offers a vital case study into a broader failure to address this history or its persistent racialized legacies in late twentieth and early twenty-first century Britain. The entry into local government of many activists from Britain's

[34] John Major, *John Major: The Autobiography* (London, 1999), 401–14; Jonathan Gross, "The Birth of the Creative Industries Revisited: An Oral History of the 1998 DCMS Mapping Document" (London, 2008), www.kcl.ac.uk/cmci/assets/report.pdf.

[35] Dicks, *Heritage, Place and Community,* 110, 112, 113, 116. A similar narrative is in the introduction, 3.

[36] Another case study in my current research project, focusing on the similar case study of the Island History Trust, has remarkably similar findings. Telling the history of the nearby Isle of Dogs in the 1990s, the trust was overwhelmed by the centrality both of racism and imperial identification among residents. The distress this caused their practitioners led the trust to obscure these histories and favor a deindustrialization narrative.

[37] John Darwin, "Memory of Empire in Britain: A Preliminary View," in *Memories of Post-imperial Nations: The Aftermath of Decolonization, 1945–2013*, ed, Dietmar Rothmund (Cambridge, 2015), 18–37 at 31–2; David Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation: A Twentieth Century History* (London, 2018), xxx, xxxvi.

[38] Edgerton, *Rise and Fall of the British Nation*, xxx, xxxvi.

[39] Darwin, "Memory of Empire in Britain," 32; Edgerton, *Rise and Fall of the British Nation*, xxxvi.

Black Power movement saw earlier critiques of structural inequality increasingly supplanted by an individualistic focus on interpersonal discrimination and the visibility of ethnic minorities in public life.[40] Jo Littler and Roshi Naidoo call that emerging approach "liberal multiculturalism," understanding "liberal" as an emphasis on the success of and tolerance granted to individuals from marginalized backgrounds.[41] Under New Labour, Paul Gilroy argues, the obfuscation of structural racism was possible precisely because of the ascent of statistically small numbers of Black people to the top of those structures.[42] Georgie Wemyss argues that the ideal of tolerance framed minorities not as truly belonging in Britain but as being charitably and conditionally accepted by the benevolent majority.[43] These scholars critiqued these individualistic approaches and argued that true change had to reckon with the structural nature of racial inequality in Britain, rooted ultimately in the imperial past. They argued that any approach that failed to address this history could not grasp the roots of the problem or its deep inculcation in British life.[44] Both Eastside and the Rhondda project received funding from state agencies in a 1990s cultural policy climate committed to this liberal multiculturalism.[45] As shown, they also reflected the related contemporary pursuit of harmony through inclusion. Their assumption that sympathetic cultural representation would counter alienation dovetailed with the individualism of liberal multiculturalism to discourage a more sustained engagement with the national and imperial dimensions of local identities. Both projects foregrounded residents' economic loss in order to explain contemporary resentment and alienation and in doing so overlooked their subjects' nostalgia for a globally assertive, industrially preeminent Britain.

The Haitian American anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot identifies "four crucial moments" at which, as history is produced, silences emerge that further the interests of its creators. At three of Trouillot's "moments"—the creation of sources, the construction of narratives, and the retrospective assignment of political significance—Eastside silenced imperial histories.[46] As such, it constructed a deindustrialization narrative it believed would ameliorate economic resentment and encourage interpersonal harmony. I scrutinize the discomfort that Eastside betrayed in interviews and the conspicuous omissions in the booklets, framing the tension between interviewers and interviewees as what I call a *heritage encounter*. A close reading of this encounter demonstrates that memories of empire remained salient in informing

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[40] Anandi Ramamurthy, "The Politics of Britain's Asian Youth Movements," *Race and Class* 48, no. 2 (2006): 38–60 at 56. See also Adam Lent, "The Labour Left, Local Authorities and New Social Movements in the Eighties," *Contemporary Politics* 7, no. 1 (2001): 7–25, at 21.

[41] Jo Littler and Roshi Naidoo, "White Past, Multicultural Present: Heritage and Nation Stories," in *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain*, ed. Helen Brocklehurst and Robert Phillips (London, 2004), 330–41, at 334.

[42] Paul Gilroy, "'We Got to Get Over before We Go Under': Fragments for a History of Black Vernacular Neoliberalism," *New Formations*, no. 80–81 (2013): 23–38, at 25.

[43] Georgie Wemyss, "The Power to Tolerate: Contests over Britishness and Belonging in East London," *Patterns of Prejudice* 40, no. 3 (2006): 215–36.

[44] Paul Gilroy, "Multiculture in Times of War: An Inaugural Lecture Given at the London School of Economics," *Critical Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (2006): 27–45, at 27; Wemyss, "Power to Tolerate," 36; Littler and Naidoo, "White Past, Multicultural Present," 339.

[45] Major, *Autobiography*, 405; Gross, "Birth of the Creative Industries Revisited," 5.

[46] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995; repr., Boston, 2015), 26.

class identities into the late twentieth century. Eastside's account of deindustrialization and urban change is insufficient without acknowledging this fact, yet the organization actively obscured it. In framing racism as a symptom of individuals' economic neglect, Eastside obscured the historic presence of a (racialized, imperial) nationalism as a force structuring residents' entire life narratives. That framing constituted a mischaracterization of local identities and a misdiagnosis of the roots of racism. Here, in miniature, was liberal multiculturalism's failure to confront the racialized legacies of empire even as it was confronted by these legacies directly.

DEINDUSTRIALIZATION NARRATIVES

"The sharp rise in unemployment has been reflected in the area's increased level of poverty, vandalism and . . . racism, coupled with deteriorating housing and health. A rundown and neglected area, the local communities have seen little benefit from the developments around it."[47] These sentences from *Stories from Silvertown* encapsulate Eastside's presentation of disharmony and racism as deriving essentially from economic downturn. This framing specifically highlighted the alienation caused by a recovery based on financial services that stimulated physical redevelopment while offering residents little. Eastside's construction of an earlier, socialistic community ethos offered fulfilment and support and contrasted didactically with the alienation and hostility of the present. Garfield sought to value and amplify residents' criticisms of the redevelopment process. The interviews, however, demonstrate residents' ambivalence toward these changes, revealing the silences created as this narrative was constructed at what Trouillot calls the "moment of fact retrieval."[48] Few questioned that change had been profound, but many criticized the community's exclusionary nature, its hostility toward outsiders, and the pressures it placed—particularly on women—to adhere to a restrictive respectability. Many also welcomed the new jobs and transport connections that redevelopment offered. This disparity was reflected in the Silvertown booklet, where an editorial panel composed of tenants' association members contradicted Garfield's critiques by including endorsements of aspects of redevelopment. Residents spoke of change and sometimes loss, but their stories were not of straightforward displacement. That disparity necessitates a new approach to understanding change in the area.

The accounts of community in Garfield and Bolt's booklets centered on family, the built environment, and the sharing of leisure time and resources. *North Woolwich* traced the area's industrial development through the life histories of respondents' ancestors. The opening of the King George V dock in 1921 led to substantial population growth, communicated through the story of the arrival of Doreen Harvey's uncle. Industrialization more broadly, meanwhile, was represented through the economic migration of Owen McComish's father to the area.[49] These residents embodied North Woolwich's growth, while the duration of their families' residence helped forge its communal value system. Harvey repeatedly asserted "this was a family place," while McComish reflected, "I've given it a lot of thought what it was like

[47] Garfield *Stories from Silvertown*, 2.
[48] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 26.
[49] Garfield and Bolt, *North Woolwich*, 1.

being brought up and living round here and I honestly believe that we had the best of times."[50] Thus, the *published* interviews collectively suggest that the cohesive, stable social relations contributed to the longevity of families' residence. As Lise Butler argues, the centrality of kinship in left discourses of community helped to construct an organic, vernacular socialism that was inherent in local cultures and independent of the masculine, official world of the labor movement.[51] Yet the memories recalled following redevelopment had acquired a mournful tone. Respondents' nostalgia was framed by the subsequent experience of loss and displacement, becoming defined by its contrast with the present.

This mournful nostalgia was reflected in the memories of the built environment. Networks of terraced streets were remembered as close-knit, communal social hubs, while the area's separation from the rest of Newham and South London by the Royal Docks and the Thames reinforced this particularity. Remarks like "the other side of the water was a foreign country to us, anywhere out of North Woolwich was foreign to us" emphasized an insular, communal self-reliance that was both geographic and imagined.[52] The local high street, Albert Road, that emerged in these stories resembled a social resource more than a site of enterprise. Glynis Webb recalled that among its myriad small traders, "no one seemed to be in competition," goods were available "on tick," and "everyone had time to stop for a natter." Webb's, a family greengrocer that had been "passed down the generations" and thus remained wedded to these social instincts, demonstrated long-standing local families' stewardship of these values.[53] One Silvertown resident recalled the convenience of having a library, hairdressers, chip shop, butchers, greengrocers, and chemists on one high street.[54] With subsequent closures, the areas lost their individual identities and were consigned to the periphery of larger, impersonal municipal formations such as Newham and Docklands after the 1965 reorganization of London government and the 1981 establishment of the London Docklands Development Corporation.[55] Silvertown and North Woolwich lost their distinctive economies, while local government looked elsewhere to stimulate market-led redevelopment. That contemporary context must be foregrounded in understanding the cooperative enterprise of the earlier high street's appeal for Eastside. Subsequent events shaped recollection, demonstrating the significance of what Ben Jones calls "the uses of nostalgia": the capacity of memory to assert pride in one's area, defying its subsequent deterioration and the stigma of poverty.[56] This reclamation was also ideological: the communality of the earlier, thriving high street offered a philosophical and practical counterweight to the area's physical deterioration and lack of basic amenities following redevelopment.

Leisure was also significant in the booklets' presentation of community, bringing together multiple generations of families in the shared spaces of the built

[50] Garfield and Bolt, 3–4.

[51] Lise Butler, "Michael Young, the Institute of Community Studies, and the Politics of Kinship," *Twentieth Century British History* 26, no. 2 (2015): 203–24, at 223–24.

[52] Garfield and Bolt, *North Woolwich*, 9.

[53] Garfield and Bolt, 22.

[54] 2000_ESCH_SILV_12, side 1, at 17 min.

[55] On the geographic inequality of Newham, see Wheeler, "Language and Landscape," 119–20.

[56] Jones, "The Uses of Nostalgia," 369.

environment. Here a closer reading of testimonies on this subject also reveals the idealization of deeply paternalistic aspects of local culture. Leisure was presented as personally and collectively fulfilling, serving an important social function, particularly as industry faltered in the 1970s. In the context of growing redundancies, both booklets turned to the Ferry Festival, named for the free passenger boat across the Thames to South Woolwich.[57] Support for the festival came throughout the early 1970s from Tate and Lyle, Standard Telephones, and Newham Council.[58] For much of the twentieth century, such large local firms employed multiple generations of the same families, often straight from school and for much of their working lives, and in addition provided leisure spaces for workers. Employers fostered strong relationships with employees, and residents frequently presented them as benevolent figures embedded within the settled social order of the affluent 1950s and early 1960s.[59] Though this strong relationship was increasingly threatened by growing redundancies in the 1970s, local firms' participation in the Ferry Festival marked its final flourishing.

Passages relating to the festival in *Stories from Silvertown* and *North Woolwich* celebrated residents' collective pride and their capacity for effective organization despite economic tumult; attendances of 10,000 were estimated at the annual event's peak.[60] Its position within the booklets' narratives is telling, following accounts of acute poverty and offering the reverse perspective on the same period.[61] A negotiation over the memory of the 1970s was visibly played out here, demonstrating the rhetorical use of leisure in contesting prevailing narratives of stigmatization and poverty. Yet equally significantly, the working-class identity these passages articulated was facilitated and supported by benevolent employers, not defined in opposition to them. Accelerating redundancies were broadly contemporary with local businesses' withdrawal from the festival over the 1970s, and together these strains caused the disintegration of the relationship.[62] While Eastside framed the festival's discontinuation as resulting from the erosion of collective organization and endeavor, in reality the breakdown of this prominent feature of community life owed as much to the strains on residents' close relationship with their employers.

Eastside presented the greater material comfort of these decades as resulting from the struggle of trade unionists against class exploitation. The organization of the booklets progressed logically from documenting dockworkers' harsh conditions to sympathetically presenting their militancy in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to poor pay and a lack of sanitation or amenities, the persistent cruelty of the call-on—the practice whereby laborers competed for one or even half a day's work each morning—was particularly prominent in both publications. Sheila Sloan remembered watching from her window "the groups of men outside the foreman's hut . . . seeing just four or five picked for work, I always looked away as the rest drifted off."[63] If this indignity was hard for Sloan to watch, it was exacerbated by unscrupulous management. George Gibbs remembered, "The foreman used to

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[57] Garfield, *Stories from Silvertown*, 49–51; Garfield and Bolt, *North Woolwich*, 21–22.
[58] 2002_ESCH_NOWO_01, disk 2, at 8–9 min.
[59] Garfield and Bolt, *North Woolwich*, 28, 32.
[60] Garfield and Bolt, 49–51.
[61] Garfield and Bolt, *North Woolwich*, 46–51; Garfield, *Stories from Silvertown*, 21–22.
[62] 2002_ESCH_NOWO_01, disk 2, at 8–9 min.
[63] Garfield and Bolt, *North Woolwich*, 34.

come out and pick his regular gangs and what he had left he used to throw cheques up in the air and those that got them went to work."[64] Another resident stated that such practices were commonplace throughout Newham in the 1930s.[65]

According to Garfield, residents would not accept such treatment and "united to improve working conditions." Gibbs's experiences led him to become increasingly militant, asserting "we never, ever went out on strike . . . for money, we went out on strike for conditions." His grievances included the lack of refreshments, the cruelty of foremen, and the indignity of handling "filthy" jobs without adequate equipment.[66] This prioritizing of an immaterial pursuit of dignity over money was significant, imbuing workers with a fundamental respect for themselves and one another. Garfield legitimized these struggles by highlighting the support they enjoyed among prominent contemporaries within the labor movement and the broader left, such as Eleanor Marx, Keir Hardie, and Ernest Bevin.[67] Garfield and Bolt's profiles of these figures underlined the area's radical heritage, facilitating discussions of the 1889 Great Dock Strike, the election of the country's first Labour council, and Bevin's orchestration of postwar decasualization.[68] Eastside also included testimonies from a local Labour politician, Bill Dunlop, and former shop steward Vic Turner, whose 1972 arrest for protesting containerization as one of the "Pentonville Five" became a *cause célèbre* in the defeat of Ted Heath's restrictive 1972 Industrial Relations Bill.[69] Bevin's profile particularly emphasized his avuncular relationship with residents, who knew him as "Ernie" and remembered him as a "shrewd, hardworking and greatly respected man."[70] The reverence shown to Bevin and similar titans of the labor movement suggests that acceptance of seemingly natural, eminent leaders was as much characteristic of the area's labor politics as it was of residents' relationship with employers. Through these images, Garfield presented the workplace culture of the dock as an exemplar of a solidary class-based response to economic injustice. Yet the booklets also suggest a deference to political leadership and a belief that the comfort and stability of mid-century was delivered by the benevolent, paternalistic labor movement.

Eastside emphasized female agency within trade unionism as well. Interviewees discussed women's industrial organization at length and legitimized it through association with significant moments including the Ford machinists strike in Dagenham (1968), the National Joint Action for Women's Equal Rights (1969), and the passing of the Equal Pay Act (1970). Iris Turner's recollection of the banality of women's factory work foregrounded her later triumphant account of the improvement of conditions through collective bargaining.[71] Eastside portrayed female trade unionists as triumphing over adversity, having experienced support (not exclusion) from the broader labor movement. This allowed Garfield to neatly and prescriptively cohere

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[64] Garfield and Bolt, 35.
[65] 2001_ESCH_SILV_10, disk 1, at 24–27 min.
[66] Garfield and Bolt, *North Woolwich*, 38.
[67] Garfield and Bolt, *North Woolwich*, 40–41; Garfield, *Silvertown*, 13–15.
[68] Garfield, *Silvertown*, 13–15.
[69] Garfield, *Silvertown*, 5, 15. See also Dave Lyddon, "'Glorious Summer, 1972': The High Tide of Rank and File Militancy," in *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics: The High Tide of Trade Unionism, 1964–1979*, ed. Alan Campbell, Nina Fishman, and John McIlroy, (Aldershot, 1999), 326–62.
[70] Garfield and Bolt, *North Woolwich*, 40.
[71] Garfield, *Silvertown*, 12.

the area's class politics with the organization's own focus on liberal inclusion. Yet projecting harmony between these ideals obscured the restrictiveness that many women associated with what they referred to as the "community."

The contrast of this idealized past with the unjust present became explicit as the booklets turned to deindustrialization. Garfield's assertion that "the declining amount of trade passing through the Royal Docks had a profound impact on North Woolwich" signaled this shift, ending the period when residents perceived they could "get a job anywhere" and "no one . . . was out of work."[72] Connie Hunt reflected that North Woolwich had become "the forgotten land . . . when they shut the docks they killed the East End," while Barlow argued that the closures "changed the community," taking the "stuffing out" of residents and the area.[73] This framing of epochal change and the area's death communicated a fundamental shift from proud urban center to economic vacuum. Residents internalized the stigmatization of unemployment, affecting their conceptions of themselves and one another; one woman linked local experiences more explicitly to the national transformations of the late twentieth century. Noting that "suddenly it was only good if you were in an office, it wasn't good if you were working with your hands or your body," she lamented the impact of "that whole era of . . . Margaret Thatcher and what have you."[74] Elsewhere, Jane Graves attributed factories' closure to the "very brutal attitudes" of "the management style of the 1980s."[75]

Thatcherism lurks behind these testimonies as a vague but pervasive specter, signifying not a clearly defined set of policies but a contempt for local people and an experience of redundant impotence. Another resident simply stated, "We don't count," noting that she had resigned herself to the inexorable march of "progress" and the reality that "you can contest, you can fight, but at the end of the day, they will win."[76] Laura Carter's argument that this kind of participatory memory work actively supported the changing needs of the democracy is useful. For Carter, the recording and publication of experiences was significant because it was therapeutic, providing solace and smoothing the polity's adjustment to deindustrialization.[77] These testimonies completed Eastside's narrative, cohering the lost past and the lamented present through an account of deindustrialization that decentered racism. Documenting the essential injustice of deindustrialization allowed Eastside both to amplify residents' experience and facilitate mourning and to garner the attention of local government and redevelopers. As Carter argues, recording the testimony carried great value. It offered residents a platform to address the absence of democracy and accountability within redevelopment, rectifying their exclusion from planning debates and ameliorating the alienation that some felt.

Yet this approach necessitated omitting many respondents' experiences of exclusion from the community. Gaining social acceptance was arduous, as the self-determined insularity celebrated in the booklets was shown in interviews to be part of a larger hostility to outsiders. One woman moved to Silvertown in 1995, remarking

[72] Garfield and Bolt, *North Woolwich*, 45, 46, and 55, respectively.
[73] Garfield and Bolt, 55, 47, respectively.
[74] 2002_ESCH_NOWO_08, at 17 min.
[75] Garfield, *Silvertown*, 17.
[76] 2000_ESCH_SILV_12, side 1, at 32–33 min.
[77] Carter, "Rethinking Folk Culture in Twentieth-Century Britain," 568.

five years later that only in recent months had she stopped feeling like an isolated outsider. A neighbor who had "only been here fourteen years" and was also therefore "relatively new" had "just recently become accepted."[78] Some interviewees were either unaware or unwilling to acknowledge the extent of their exclusion. One woman returned to Silvertown following a divorce, having left the East End as a child after winning a place at grammar school and then going on to Oxford. She married into wealth, became a lecturer, and spent much of her adult life in Wimbledon. Though she knew this experience distanced her from her neighbors, she saw herself as a welcomed novelty, recalling comically that a friend told her that the tenants' association wanted the participation of "a few members of the middle-class, but not too many."[79] The friend's account differed: "It was quite hard for her to be accepted, very hard, because of her accent. I used to say, 'try not to talk so posh' . . . and her accent has changed, since she's retired . . . and living round here that's for the good. So she is accepted now, by most people round here."[80] The tension caused by the pressure on the returning resident to conform by altering her accent was made particularly stark by her omission of this detail and her friend's hesitancy on the topic. Social acceptance in this case appeared not inevitable but dependent on changes in self-presentation.

Though the community's insularity was celebrated in Eastside's publications, occasionally it led to violence.[81] After discussing the pride in the Ferry Festival, one respondent strained to remember the reason it ended. "Was it the last Ferry Festival there was the stabbing? And the young lad was killed?" Uneasily, she continued, "There was a young lad who was an outside[r]—who was . . . visiting his girlfriend." Garfield acknowledged the choice of words before this interviewee corrected herself: "It was one of our youngsters, it definitely was. I don't think anyone was ever charged, but everyone knew who done it."[82] Commonplace in interviews as a symbol of community self-reliance, the term "outsider" jarred with Garfield in the context of a fatal stabbing. What began as a declaration of historic community pride and cohesion concluded in an admission of the withholding of information regarding a fatal stabbing. Thus, Garfield's projection of residents' insularity as fundamentally benevolent was destabilized by the community's exclusive and occasionally violent attitude toward outsiders. These testimonies help in moving beyond an idealized notion of community, reframing it as a collective manifestation of the defensive parochialism and conformist ordinariness that Mike Savage and his coauthors show were significant features of postwar working-class identity.[83]

Many women's memories of leisure undermined Eastside's characterization of the mid-century as a period of personal fulfilment. Though conspicuously absent in the North Woolwich booklet, in the interviews the public house and its gendered

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[78] 2000_ESCH_SILV_01, at 3 min.

[79] 2000_ESCH_SILV_15, at 32 min.

[80] 2000_ESCH_SILV_05, at 13–14 min. (Ellipses indicate extended pauses).

[81] 2002_ESCH_NOWO_08, at 34–35 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_23, at 1 hour, 4 min.

[82] 2002_ESCH_NOWO_08, at 34–35 min. (Ellipses indicate extended pauses.)

[83] Mike Savage, Gaynor Bagnall, and Brian Longhurst, "Ordinary, Ambivalent and Defensive: Class Identities in the Northwest of England," *Sociology* 35, no. 4 (2001): 875–92.

conventions ran throughout residents' memories of the area.[84] Pubs were frequently presented as a male space, a perception that no interviewees denied.[85] Fridays and Saturdays, however, were family nights, when wives' attendance with their husbands was permitted. Women arrived together hours later than men; port or sherry, not beer, was ordered on their behalf, and they sat in predesignated rooms.[86] Even this restricted attendance was not without judgment; one respondent remembered being forbidden by her mother to visit the pub and being afraid of disappointing her by going secretly with her partner and his family.[87] The threat that drinking posed to feminine respectability was made explicit by one male respondent, whose mother encouraged him to join her at their window to witness their neighbors coming home drunk and arguing or even physically fighting in the street. For this woman and others, such behavior was deemed transgressive because of women's participation, and a spectacle to be observed, talked about, and reviled. Men's excessive drinking was discussed casually throughout interviews.[88]

Thus, while Eastside attributed alienation to the erosion of social life and the institutions it depended on, the interviews demonstrated that the foundational gendered assumptions of sociability created restrictions on when, where, and how women could participate. In my interview with Garfield, she asserted that women's history had long been "very important" to Eastside's work.[89] One manifestation of it was the recovery of female agency, notably that of women trade unionists. Yet on encountering women's complicity in the more ingrained gendered hierarchies underwriting leisure, Eastside omitted from the North Woolwich booklet any mention of the pub—that central institution of working-class sociability. In defending the community in ways consistent with contemporary social values, Garfield followed the liberal template of celebrating individual achievement while underplaying the unequal social relations that made them remarkable at a structural level. One female respondent's assertion that "women truly were controlled . . . in those days you really did obey your husband, you wouldn't now" captured succinctly the more complex attitudes that many women had to the past.[90] Though female respondents regretted the loss of other aspects of the mid-century community, their welcoming of greater personal autonomy disrupted the nostalgic tone of their interviews, problematizing the marriage dynamics of the old, patriarchal social order. Many women's attitudes toward change were more complex than Eastside's linear narrative of dispossession, revealing tension between Garfield's desire to present the benevolence of the historic community and her wish to appeal to contemporary social liberalism. In resolving this contradiction, she obscured these women's experiences.

[84] 2002_ESCH_NOWO_02, at 44–45 min;2002_ESCH_NOWO_01, disk 2, at 2 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_06, at 8 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_05, at 44 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_23, at 21 min, 34 min, 53 min.
[85] 2002_ESCH_NOWO_02, at 44–5 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_06, at 8 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_09, at 38 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_16, at 6 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_23, at 37 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_24, at 30–31 min.
[86] 2002_ESCH_NOWO_23, at 35 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_02, at 44 min.
[87] 2002_ESCH_NOWO_06, at 11 min.
[88] 2002_ESCH_NOWO_23, at 35 min; 2002_ESCH_SILV_05, at 22 min.
[89] Garfield, interview.
[90] 2002_ESCH_NOWO_23, at 21 min.

Further disparities emerge between residents' and Eastside's accounts of deindustrialization. As shown, the booklets' account of closures owed much to Garfield's prior belief that redevelopers' disregard for Docklands' industrial past was exacerbating local communities' alienation and political resentment. This prior belief is perhaps why interviewers prompted residents to reflect on the influence that the docks' closure had on the area's deterioration in eight of twenty-one North Woolwich interviews.[91] Here, Eastside sought to shape history to suit its political project at what Trouillot calls "the moment of fact creation," or in the production of sources themselves.[92] Yet some residents resisted the narrative. Many saw their neighbors' militancy as self-defeating and entitled. One recalled a fulfilling career at the post office following redundancy from the docks. When Garfield suggested that closure "must have been devastating," he retorted that dockworkers "brought it upon themselves." He then qualified his exasperated criticism of their militancy, significantly, by requesting that these statements be omitted from the publication.[93] Michelle Mouton and Helena Pohlandt-McCormick call such moments of self-doubt "boundary-crossing," arguing that they reveal friction between interviewees' personal memories and the value system of their cultural and political context.[94] This interview captured a frustration with the contemporaneous compulsion to perform mourning for the docks and the failure to acknowledge the disruption caused by union militancy.

Others offered less-qualified criticism of their fellow residents. One interviewee who commuted into the city for decades rejected Garfield's suggestion that redevelopment condemned residents to chronic unemployment. She criticized Garfield's adopting the perspective of "a Silvertown person" who expected work "to be just up the road" and suggested instead that locals should broaden their searches to "Hackney, Tottenham, Mile End [or] Barking." She rejected Garfield's response that this insularity came from a loss of confidence following redevelopers' neglect. Her husband "certainly wasn't a person that lacked confidence," she said, yet "he expected to be able to work within walking distance of where he lived."[95] Criticism of other residents' inflexibility was not uncommon: one ex-docker scolded his former colleagues' failure to accept that ships "don't go in there anymore" and to "adapt themselves like we have done for thousands of years."[96] A disjunct similar to that between Eastside's story of residents trapped in structural poverty due to state policy and respondents' appeals to individual flexibility and reinvention can be found in testimonies on the Isle of Sheppey in the 1980s reanalyzed by Jane

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[91] 2002_ESCH_NOWO_04, at 30 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_05, at 53–54 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_07, disk 2, at 40 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_08, at 10 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_09, at 41 min; 2003_ESCH_NOWO_12, at 27 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_20, at 36 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_03, at 12 min..

[92] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 89.

[93] 2002_ESCH_NOWO_03, at 14 min, ELPA.

[94] Michelle Mouton and Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, "Boundary Crossings: Oral History of Nazi Germany and Apartheid South Africa: A Comparative Perspective," *History Workshop Journal* 48, no. 1 (1999): 41–63, at 42.

[95] 2001_ESCH_SILV_05, at 53 min.

[96] 2003_ESCH_NOWO_16, at 42–43 min; see also 2002_ESCH_NOWO_11, at 56 min, ELPA.

Elliott and Jon Lawrence.[97] In both locales, a gulf emerged between incomers critiquing the rightward shifts of the 1980s and residents who showed increasing sympathy to the economic and political logic underwriting them.

The establishment of an editorial board of tenants' association members in Silvertown had an impact on the representation of contemporary redevelopment. London Docklands Development Corporation–led redevelopment was presented almost entirely negatively in the North Woolwich booklet[98]; in Silvertown, however, the tenants association's desire to work within rather than in opposition to the new service-based economy was reflected in the testimony selected for inclusion, which frequently deviated from Garfield's criticism of redevelopment quangos. Garfield framed contemporary redevelopment around the London Docklands Development Corporation's rejection of a People's Plan proposed by campaigning groups in the 1980s, advocating heavy investment in reindustrialization and social housing. For Garfield, this was a "plan . . . that included and involved local communities," while its rejection cemented residents' status as "the forgotten people [in] the forgotten island."[99] Yet Garfield's narration was accompanied by residents' more ambivalent quotes. Criticisms of redevelopers' lack of accountability and the pollution brought by the new airport were moderated by more supportive testimonies of Syd Keys and Rose Geaney, leading members of the tenants' association. Keys prioritized new jobs, declaring "anything that brings employment into the area I will back 100 percent."[100] In a rare criticism of residents within the booklets, Geaney noted, "The people here, they were born to the docks, they've grown used to it. Now the same people can't tolerate the airport . . . and yet . . . it was much, much noisier when the docks were open . . . you haven't got the non-stop clattering and banging that you had. Also the air is much cleaner here now, we used to have all the factories belching out smoke."[101]

Much has been made of the importance in working-class memory work of authenticity. In the 1970s and 1980s, the term was invoked to counter middle-class mediation, take sole ownership of experiences, and assert radical class-based identities.[102] Indeed, Garfield asserted, the Silvertown editorial board was established to preserve authenticity.[103] But the contradictions recurring throughout the Silvertown booklet's treatment of contemporary redevelopment suggest some important community leaders' preference for working within the framework of contemporary change. Here, authenticity served to accommodate redevelopment and moderate Eastside's criticisms.

Similar disparities emerged throughout the Eastside project. The two booklets offer a linear narrative of loss through deindustrialization and economic neglect,

[97] Jane Elliott and Jon Lawrence, "The Emotional Economy of Unemployment: A Re-analysis of Testimony from a Sheppey Family, 1978–1983," *SAGE Open* 6, no. 4 (2016): 1–11.

[98] Garfield and Bolt, *North Woolwich*, 52–56. An exception appears at 53.

[99] Garfield, *Silvertown*, 24.

[100] Garfield, 24.

[101] Garfield, 24.

[102] Tom Woodin, *Working-Class Writing and Publishing in the Late Twentieth-Century: Literature, Culture and Community* (Manchester, 2018), 161–62; Chris Waters, "Autobiography, Nostalgia and the Changing Patterns of Working-Class Selfhood," in *Singular Continuities: Tradition, Nostalgia and Identity in Modern British Culture*, ed. George Behlmer and Fred Leventhal (Stanford, 2000), 178–95.

[103] Garfield, interview.

intended to initiate dialogue with redevelopment quangos and combat support for the far right. Garfield acted at what Trouillot calls the moments of "fact retrieval" and "retrospective significance" to, first, construct a narrative of deindustrialization and economic neglect, and second, use this history as the basis of a challenge to free-market redevelopment and racialized understandings of change.[104] More fundamentally, at Trouillot's "moment of fact creation,"[105] interviewers frequently asked leading questions aimed to shape the archival record of these processes. Yet in seeking to find strength in the community, Eastside encountered the patriarchy and sometimes hostile parochialism upon which it was founded; this created a tension with its liberal activists that was obscured in the booklets. Considered alongside some residents' gratitude for the opportunities that redevelopment brought, these realities create a more complex picture of change. Crucially, there was limited evidence in the interviews of the feelings of displacement, profound loss, and neglect that Eastside used to explain racism. Moreover, some of the aspects of community life that Eastside did celebrate—such as its stable social order, deference to union leaders, and close relations with benevolent employers—further corroborate residents' embodiment in their idealized mid-century moment of Lawrence's concept of "conservative modernity."[106] More than the egalitarianism and radicalism that Garfield imbued it with, the community that residents constructed was characterized by a restrictive, homogenous group identity and ordered, hierarchical forms of social organization.

VERNACULAR NARRATIVES OF THE END OF EMPIRE

A fuller understanding of local identities requires a return to southern Newham's position within the imperial, racialized British nation. Empire figured in both booklets as a distant relative of local industry, important as a destination and origin of cargo but ultimately remote.[107] For Eastside, it was an uneasy adjunct to studying the area, never fully confronted, much less assigned formative importance. But among interviewees, empire provoked nostalgia—for the area's significance in networks of exchange and distribution, for residents' facilitation of the imperial project, and for the enrichment they had derived from encounters with merchant visitors. That perspective encouraged a popular, reflexive, and unquestioned identification with empire, its significance lying in the abstract purpose it gave to menial, mundane daily realities.[108] That identification explains popular participation in a phenomenon identified by Gareth Stedman-Jones: the mid-century incorporation of the "cockney" into cultural discourses of the nation as the embodiment of a popular national conservatism.[109] As Camilla Schofield argues, historians should foreground generation in order to fully understand this demographic's experience

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[104] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 26.

[105] Trouillot, 26.

[106] Lawrence, "Paternalism, Class, and the British Path to Modernity," 147.

[107] See passing mentions of empire in Garfield and Bolt, *North Woolwich*, unpaginated front matter; Garfield, *Stories from Silvertown*, 1–2.

[108] The phenomenon identified here offers empirical support for the theoretical arguments in Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London, 1995).

[109] Stedman-Jones, "The 'Cockney' and the Nation," 301–2.

and their subsequent political positioning.[110] Many of Eastside's interviewees employed colonial-era, racialized language and lamented a subsequent decline that incorporated physical deterioration, migration, and permissiveness. Together, these anxieties created a perception of local and national malaise in residents' old age that contrasted harshly with the purpose and dignity of their earlier lives. A close reading of intersubjective interview dynamics reveals a discomfiting generational and political encounter between Eastside and their respondents, made starker by the absence of empire in the booklets. The encounters capture the flaws of liberal multiculturalism's approach toward the imperial past. Rather than confronting its tangible influence on respondents' lives and identities, Eastside's political imperatives led them to deem it altogether unmentionable in their publications. In doing so, they failed to confront the roots of residents' persistent support for a racialized nationalism.

The commercial networks connecting the Royal Docks, the empire, and the world featured prominently in respondents' childhood memories. Many remembered the incorporation of imperial shipping routes into their education, as particular companies became synonymous with specific colonies, ports, and goods.[111] Others recalled standing on the roofs of their schools watching ships arrive for repairs in dry dock.[112] Awareness of ships' imperial origins combined with the spectacle of industrial vigor at home, offering children at a formative age a vision of a globally connected, muscular British modernity in which North Woolwich and Silvertown were prominent. Other respondents referred to evenings and weekends spotting ships entering and leaving the port, marveling at their journeys to and from the "four corners of the globe."[113] These encounters directed young residents' gaze onto particular colonies and colonized peoples. One resident enthusiastically recalled watching during his 1940s childhood as animals imported from India were brought ashore. One disturbing anecdote focused on an elephant being transported by a crane. Thrashing in panic, it tore the net holding it and fell from a great height onto the concrete dock. The same respondent recalled a leopard being transported to a circus escaping and causing panic locally.[114] Another participant remembered standing outside the dock gates around Chinese New Year, mesmerized by "all the twinkling lights . . . it was like a fairy land . . . that was an experience that was . . . magical for kids."[115] These testimonies reveal the tangible, material influence that networks of commercial and cultural exchange had on childhoods lived at the imperial frontier. They show the role that empire played in forming residents' conceptions of the area as globally significant, though recollections of them were framed by the experience of their subsequent loss. Imperial commercial strength enriched local identities, offering residents both concrete economic support and an intangible sense of their own agency within a wider British world. The globally assertive nation offered a powerful counterweight to the daily experience of disempowerment and drudgery, but in respondents'

[110] Camilla Schofield, *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (Cambridge, 2013), 9–13.
[111] 2002_ESC_NOWO_02, at 7 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_18, at 19 min; 2003_ESCH_NOWO_13, at 15 min.
[112] 2002_ESCH_SILV_12, side 1, at 39 min.
[113] 2002_ESCH_NOWO_11, at 1 min; 2002_ESCH_NOWO_04, at 4 min.
[114] 2002_ESCH_SILV_03, at 13–15 min.
[115] 2002_ESCH_SILV_11, at 45–6 min.

lifetimes, the dignity it signified was lost. More, Eastside would find this nostalgia anathema and obscure the pride that empire had once offered.

Some narratives around residents' past relation to empire were conducive to the project's goals, however, and were included in the Eastside publications. Tessa Barlow reflected on the influence that the frequent presence of racialized sailors in her neighborhood had on her later approach to her vocation of teaching: "I think it certainly helped you to grow up and accept things, accept people. And maybe it helped me to do the job I do now, because everyone comes through the door and you're here to do a job. And it doesn't matter who the children are, what the parents are. That's what your job is and that's what you do." [116]

The connection drawn here between a local upbringing and liberal social attitudes appealed to Eastside. It suggested that the area historically carried a spirit of multi-cultural coexistence conducive to the contemporary ideal of tolerance, and that these conditions simply required rekindling. Doreen Harvey's assertion that "you got an education out of the ships, you knew where all those ships were going," reflected a belief in the port's capacity for personal enrichment. Harvey continued that the building in which her flat was located was named after one such shipping line, an indication of a proud maritime heritage that later generations were losing contact with. Here, Harvey expressed a desire for almost autodidactic self-improve-ment inextricably linked to the lost local industry.[117] Projecting an image of a com-munity whose maritime identity encouraged self-consciousness and tolerance, these testimonies appealed to Garfield, meriting inclusion in the publication.

Yet insofar as this narrative was subtextually linked to national and imperial strength, it required significant omissions to remain tenable. Garfield's perceptible enthusiasm for discussions about the cultural exposure the docks offered residents subsided when one resident began referring to the visiting sailors of her youth as "lascars," "coons," and "chinamen." Perhaps sensing disapproval, the interviewee sought to compensate, but in doing so revealed the prevalence of such language: "That wasn't derogatory, that wasn't rudeness, that was just a way of speaking."[118] Another reflected on the differing regularity with which "colored men," "chinamen," and "coolies" docked locally, while Garfield—discernibly keen to move on— responded with references to "Asian communities" and "ethnic minorities."[119] In these linguistic discrepancies and audible tensions, the crux of the difference between Garfield and her respondents emerged; while she spoke in a lexicon consis-tent with the liberal multiculturalism of contemporary cultural policy, some inter-viewees used pejorative nouns with clear colonial etymologies.[120] Employing Michael Billig's concept of "banal nationalism," Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose

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[116] Garfield and Bolt, *North Woolwich*, 18.

[117] Garfield and Bolt, 7.

[118] 2002_ESCH_NOWO_02, at 9 min.

[119] 2002_ESCH_NOWO_03, at 28 min.

[120] Though these terms will likely be familiar, *lascar* may not be. *Lascars*, sailors from the Indian subcon-tinent employed in the British merchant navy, were given the most menial and arduous jobs within a racial-ized employment hierarchy. They were seen in port cities throughout the empire (often made by employers to dress in faux-oriental garb), and in much colonial literature. Widely stereotyped as inferior workers (especially in European climates), they were still desired by employers for their apparent contentedness to submit to European authority. See Gopalan Balachandran, *Globalizing Labour? Indian Seafarers and World Shipping, c.1870–1945* (Oxford, 2012), 4, 5, 6–7, 42, 49.

argue that empire was a tangible daily presence that forged an important "common-sense" part of the basis of early twentieth-century British domestic life.[121] In interviews, the reflexive, uncritical use of racialized language that accompanied this proximity to empire became clear. Hall and Rose employ the strikingly similar example of Bob Crampsey, a child in 1930s Glasgow, who remarked that the Asian seamen seen frequently in the city's dockside districts were "simply 'the coolies,' though there was nothing whatever consciously demeaning or pejorative in our use of this word, we just knew no other."[122] In both Newham and Glasgow, residents' retrospective compulsion to defend these terms captures their experience of disorientation and displacement following a broader cultural eschewal of this imperial language and its racialized meanings. More, the audible tension in the recordings dramatizes interviewers' encounter with the enduring significance of race in framing local identities in relation to the colonial other, prefiguring Garfield's deeming them as unrepeatable in the booklets.

For the bulk of Eastside's respondents, born between the 1920s and 1940s, adolescence and early adulthood brought a destabilization of local life. The Second World War and the decades following it brought a profound rupture in residents' relationship with empire and nation, experienced and articulated through changes to the area. With its promises of expanded citizenship, the social contract struck after 1945 frequently figured as their just reward for national sacrifice. In this sense, empire was both present and absent in testimonies; while the docks led many to feel connected to Britain's global maritime strength, their specific targeting by the Luftwaffe led residents to present themselves as independently resisting German aggression. The work of Schofield and Amy Whipple is important here. Analyzing letters to Enoch Powell, they identify the recasting of the Second World War as a stark moment of indigenous working-class sacrifice to the nation. The resulting social contract was subsequently fatally undermined, in the eyes of many letter-writers, by the government's acceptance of immigrants viewed as lacking any prior relationship to the nation and now claiming access to the scarce resources of the postwar welfare state.[123] Immigration, the redevelopment of long-neglected then bombed neighborhoods, and the docks' downturn and closure from the late 1960s were transformations with global origins and profound local effects. Residents lost their sense of imperial significance and saw an area in malaise, drawing on racialized and imperial divisions learned in childhood between order and disorder and civility and backwardness to articulate this. Though the visiting colonial sailors and merchants earlier signified the area's significance in an imperial world, their descendants' permanent presence embodied the nation's decline and the liberal state's betrayal of working-class residents.

Among interviewees, this narrative centered on the Second World War, demonstrating the often-overlooked insights the conflict provides into the relationship between class-based and national identities. Chris Waters's study of working-class autobiography and identity draws on East Ender Louis Heren's comparison of the

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[121] Billig, cited in Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, introduction to *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, ed. Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose (Cambridge, 2006), 22–23.

[122] Hall and Rose, introduction to *At Home with the Empire*, 28–29.

[123] Schofield, *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain*, 192; Whipple, "Revisiting the 'Rivers of Blood' Controversy," 719–23.

area's postwar redevelopment to the Blitz; planners, Heren stated, "set out to destroy what had survived the bombing. In their arrogant ignorance they destroyed the conditions of Cockney culture, the tight little neighborhoods, the street markets, the intimate pubs and the corner shops."[124] The efficacy of Heren's words lies in their irony. Postwar reconstruction was framed as a reward for working-class sacrifice, yet it destroyed communities' social fabric, uprooting their terraced streets to build tower blocks and dispersing the residents into suburbs and new towns. But Waters overlooks the quotation's appropriation of the politics of nationhood. Heren's bitterness is directed at both the poor treatment of his tangible local community and its betrayal following sacrifice to the national, imagined community.

The war and reconstruction were remembered similarly in Silvertown. After the "community [came] under attack . . . people who lived through these hard times felt that they deserved a better future for themselves and their families."[125] The destruction sustained during the Blitz due to the docks' strategic importance occupied large portions of interviews, addressing residents' resentment at their exclusion from the elite national narratives of "the history books."[126] For Garfield's interviewees and Heren alike, the expanded citizenship implicitly promised by the postwar settlement was East Enders' just reward. As Schofield and Whipple suggest, sacrifice was here remembered in markedly local terms; the area's relationship to the commercial networks of empire were forgotten.

The Eastside interviews suggest that by the late 1960s, Commonwealth immigrants were a source of anxiety, reimagined not as subjects of an assertive Britain but as an alien incursion. Responding to questions about trade unionism in the industry, an ex-dockworker surprised his interviewer when recalling one particular strike:

Interviewee: One of the hard ones [dockworkers] comes in and says, "We don't want the wogs in the country." I was working down at just one of the basins over there, there was all coloreds, all Black men you know, with their families. So there was, "Don't touch any of their gear. We don't want 'em here! Put 'em back, or else." And he put them back, so we called a meeting, in the morning, "all these Black people coming over here, we don't want 'em here. Know what I mean? They're trouble" . . . So we called a strike, we called a march to Hyde Park, to Nelson's column. And when we get there, it was *all* brought up, people saying: "Oh, they've taken my place to live . . ." And there was, what was his name, that MP?

Interviewer: Enoch Powell.

Interviewee: *Yeah*. He said, "I'll march with you," and he did. What we did say was, "There'll never, *ever* be one working in that dock," and there wasn't.[127]

This interviewee invoked one of the most infamous episodes in East London's long history of intolerance, while his interviewer's speed and accuracy in identifying

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[124] Waters, "Autobiography, Nostalgia and the Changing Patterns of Working-Class Selfhood," 180.

[125] Garfield, *Stories from Silvertown*, 2.

[126] The quotation comes from 2002_ESCH_NOWO_02, at 2 min. The Blitz is discussed for the entirety of 2003_ESCH_NOWO_13 and also at length in 2002_ESCH_NOWO_23, beginning at 44 min.

[127] 2003_ESCH_NOWO_21, at 39 min. Italics indicate speaker's emphasis.

Powell suggests Eastside knew racism was not a purely contemporary phenomenon. The contrast between the enrichment the earlier colonial sailors represented, and the "trouble" and disorder lurking here is stark. In light of many residents remembering childhoods elevated by their position within an imperial mid-century modernity, this quotation points to the destabilization of both the homogenous social order and wider racialized understandings of the nation. Although sailors were visitors whose presence signified residents' global importance, permanent migrants threatened their ownership of the area and their monopoly on its resources. Whiteness was a prerequisite to belonging, and so the migrants were a threat to local identity.

As the most basic signifier of residency and belonging, housing was a particularly common source of anxieties over migrants' claims to privileges imagined as exclusively for whites. Respondent X asserted that Newham Council's housing policy "made me racist," a reference to Black residents' concentration in some areas of Newham. Returning to Green Street, where she had grown up, she expressed being intimidated by seeing "Black people . . . staring at me. I must have looked alien to them." Because of this unease, she refused to return.[128] Here, the permanent presence of Black people was framed as transforming and corrupting the area. More, "alien" captured a fundamental, almost visceral assertion of alterity and outrage at her apparent relegation to a position of exteriority. Her reaction suggests that the state's admittance of racial outsiders was seen as the central means through which some white residents understood the promise of expanded citizenship to have become materially unsustainable and betrayed.

It was through this lens that residents subsequently related to the state. Respondent Y's complaints over welfare claimants centered on the perception that people who had "never worked here" received benefits, while "you never see a white person" doing so. Later, the implicit racialization of claimants within this binary became explicit, as Respondent Y said of local authority grants, "If we were Black, Indian or wanted to build a mosque, we'd have got it. But because we were white, from the community, we didn't. They didn't want to know."[129] Noting the analogous nature here of whiteness and membership of the local community helps in thinking about belonging to the imagined, national community. Both were racialized and framed in respondents' complaints in necessary opposition to the outsiders who supplanted them and the state that disregarded them. Though residents were owed grants due to their enduring residence in and service to the area, this entitlement—and the promise it encapsulated of a renewed relationship between multigenerational residents and the state—was fundamentally betrayed. A strand can be traced from these testimonies back to the earlier recollection of the Powell strike: they all articulate a nation defined by its whiteness, protesting the betrayal inherent in the state's acceptance of racial others. The latter testimonies were part of extended diatribes lasting several minutes, which were met with silence by interviewers—silence revealing a conflict between discomfort and reluctance to challenge those whom the project existed to give voice to. Having listened, Eastside omitted any mention of this sentiment from the publication, which allowed them to advocate for the community without calling its benevolence into question. Yet the

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128 2002_ESCH_NOWO_07, disk 1, at 30–32 min.
129 2002_ESCH_SILV16, tape 2, at 30–32 min and 35 min.

omissions prevented a sustained analysis of the extent of racism or the historic experiences it was rooted in.

Yet migration was the lens through which these residents understood local and national decline. Concluding her discussion of Newham's housing policy, Respondent X argued that "if something isn't done about it, this country is gonna become such a state that people won't ever want to live here."[130] Respondent Y, who worked as a contractor for Newham's housing department, referred to South Asian council tenants as "slummies," reflecting his belief that "we used to make them nice houses and now they're shit. They do make them slums, because they can't be bothered to do anything about it."[131] The term "slummies" captures a characterization of South Asian tenants as unsanitary and predisposed to overcrowding, a trope of imperial discourse that many residents were exposed to in childhood and that remained tied to migrants from the subcontinent in postwar Britain.[132] Bill Schwarz argues that Commonwealth migrants' postwar arrival in Britain led racist logics formulated in the colonies to "come home"—to be applied to discuss life in the former metropole.[133] In these interviews, we see Schwarz's analysis borne out over the course of East Enders' life narratives. The connection drawn by Respondent X between municipal housing policy and the increasing undesirability of the whole country demonstrated the intertwinement of local and national narratives of decline. After earlier deriving purpose from its facilitation of the first port of the British Empire, Newham was now a site where residents felt they experienced the racialized degeneration of the nation firsthand.

Patterns learned in childhood of discussing maritime visitors and imagining the Orient demonstrated residents' sense of their own significance within a British world in which race was foundational. When colonial visitors became Commonwealth migrants in the postwar period, they threatened the spatial divisions between imperial center and colonial periphery upon which this world was premised. Migrants were now recast as corrupting the national community, draining the resources of the postwar settlement, and precipitating deterioration and degeneracy. Racism in the 1990s, then, was not an aberration but a reaction to the disruption of an entire value system. In attempting to ameliorate racism by addressing the resentful intolerance of individuals—while obscuring those individuals' deep, material investment in imperial shipping—Eastside followed a template consistent with contemporary liberal multiculturalism. In doing so, they failed to fully grasp the nature of residents' identities or to confront the fundamental, culturally embedded, and generational roots of local racism.

CONCLUSION

Eastside sought to ameliorate the disillusionment of residents of Silvertown and North Woolwich in the late 1990s. The booklets they published articulated

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[130] 2002_ESCH_NOWO_07, disk 1, at 32 min.

[131] E2002_ESCH_SILV16, tape 2, at 36 min.

[132] John Marriott, *The Other Empire: Metropolis, India and the Colonial Imagination* (Manchester, 2003), 160–84; John Eade, *The Politics of Community: The Bangladeshi Community in East London* (Aldershot, 1989), 130–33.

[133] Bill Schwarz, "The Only White Man in There: The Re-racialization of England, 1956–1968," *Race and Class* 38, no. 1 (1996): 65–78, at 73.

and amplified residents' critiques of a redevelopment process in which consultation and their material inclusion had proven insufficient, thus addressing a measurable democratic deficit. Moreover, the archived interviews were significant for historians and for the residents afforded an opportunity to record their rich, complex accounts of a period of profound upheaval for posterity. These important achievements should not be overlooked. Yet Eastside frequently encountered resistance to its politicized narrative, as did scholars in comparable projects led by figures such as Michael Young, Peter Willmott, and Ray Pahl.[134] In the Silvertown case, residents used their editorial input to amplify voices contesting the characterization of the area as neglected and disempowered, thus undermining Eastside's essentially economic explanation of racism. Some testimonies showed a clear congruence with the market zeal of Thatcherism, bringing the longer strain of individualism identifiable in working-class identity into occasional conflict with Eastside's politics.

In resentful discussions of the area's decline and the community's betrayal, the impact of Keynesianism's failure, deindustrialization, and the rise of Thatcherism can be discerned. But contrary to their primacy in postwar histories of class identity, these processes were understood by residents within the longer context of decline from a halcyon, dignified youth within the imperial metropole. Growing up by the Royal Docks between the 1910s and 1950s, residents belonged to a community on the frontier of global commerce, finding meaning for their own lives in relation to the racialized, imperial ideal of the British nation. Race remained central in later life as the means through which many understood the postwar settlement, their new alienation from the nation, and their own area's physical and moral decline. Generationally, residents bridged the gap between the racialized "conservative modernity" that the community in many senses embodied and the liberal multiculturalism of the 1990s and 2000s.

The enduring significance of empire in local life narratives undermines Edgerton and Darwin's argument that emphasizing such memories' ongoing salience in the late twentieth century risks a vague ahistoricism. Efforts to draw firm temporal and conceptual distinctions between prewar empire and postwar nation fail to capture the way that memories of the former continued to permeate and inform perceptions of the latter long after formal decolonization. Local case studies employing sensitive, close readings of language can place recent histories of class identity within their national and global contexts and begin to offer accounts of the end of empire and its racialized legacies that are rooted in the population's lived experience. That project is beyond this article's scope, but the oversights I have identified in these literatures point to its urgency.

Eastside's response to residents' identification with empire—to listen quietly in interviews but omit any mention of it in its publications—was understandable given its desire to advocate on the community's behalf. Yet this omission prevented a full understanding of or confrontation with racism's origins and complexion, presenting it as a result of individuals' resentment. Moreover, in focusing entirely on white residents, Eastside failed to address South Asian, Caribbean, and West African residents' longer connections to Britain and to Newham itself. The presence

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[134] Lawrence, "Inventing the Traditional Working-Class"; Elliott and Lawrence, "Emotional Economy of Unemployment."

of these groups was equally constitutive of Silvertown and North Woolwich's history, but Eastside's account failed to acknowledge that reality. In all of these ways, the project was representative of liberal multiculturalism's failure to understand the roots of contemporary racism or to address its deep inculcation in the structures of British national life. This approach emerged from the 1990s' contexts of urban depression and liberal cultural policy; it encountered empire's racialized legacies, and in obscuring them, it also failed to address a vital prehistory of our present.

Yet Eastside also appears to have thought hard about the limitations of the project's approach. Following this inaugural project, Eastside focused on a more diverse range of subjects, including projects on the Ugandan Asian community and the Coloured Men's Institute.[135] That progression provokes the question of whether these early experiences demonstrated to Eastside that a focus on a normatively white working-class could not necessarily be assumed to be progressive, and that race was a category of experience with longer, constitutive significance to all of East London's diverse populations. It suggests a further value for these case studies as a starting point from which community heritage evolved in the new millennium and might provide a foundation for future research.

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[135] For a list of relevant past projects, see Eastside Community Heritage, "Hidden Histories Archive: Culture and Diaspora," accessed 26 July 2021, https://www.hidden-histories.org/hidden-histories-archive/culture-diaspora/.