

Failed by the State co-writer and presenter Ish: “I wasn’t trying to push agendas, I was just trying to tell the truth about Grenfell.”

Robert Stevens
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Ish is the co-writer and presenter of *Failed by the State: The Struggle in the Shadow of Grenfell*. He was born in Grenfell Tower and lived there for 25 years. Ish collaborated on the three-part documentary available here on YouTube with film maker Daniel Renwick. Renwick is interviewed by the WSWs here.

The World Socialist Web Site interviewed Ish this week about the making of their documentary on the Grenfell Fire and the attack on it by the *Daily Beast* and right-wing newspapers in Britain for being funded by a subsidiary of Russia’s RT network.

WSWS: What do you think of the attack that has been launched on the film?

Ish: You know what, I find this preposterous. Excuse me! That they could do that without even speaking to someone like Daniel or myself and the people who made the film.

I turned down £8,000 to make a film with Channel 4 because we did it to control the edit. The only reason this film was made by Redfish was because they agreed to all of our requests. We controlled the edit, and North Kensington can use all the footage for non-commercial purposes. They had no input. They can’t even cut a 10-second promo off our film without me and Daniel signing for it.

I didn’t know Redfish. Daniel had relationships with some of the people at Redfish before. After what the mainstream media did, after what the BBC and ITV did in the immediate aftermath of the fire, I said I would never talk to them. They were shoving cameras in people’s faces as they’re getting news that people are dying. In the weeks after the fire, the mainstream media were appalling, and even after that. And I wouldn’t go through them.

After the fire, the second time Prime Minister Theresa May came to Latimer Road, she snuck in and ITV News came and interviewed me. They put two interviews together—two different ones. I was talking about Theresa May, and they made me look like an idiot. After that, I said I won’t talk to the media. They phone me all the time, and I have nothing to say to them.

WSWS: Have they tried to talk to you since they started attacking the film?

Ish: I don’t need to talk to the media. I made that film for Latimer Road. Everything I put into that film was for the people of Latimer Road. Of course, I want other people to see it, but it was for those people, my peers. Everything in that film, I learned after Grenfell. I thought, how could we get this so my friends and people who know me can find out about this as well? So, me and Dan got together and we did the film.

We were talking about a blog, and then this opportunity came up and we filmed *Failed by the State* in four days. I was a replacement for Lowkey [the musician], who couldn’t do it.

WSWS: How did you get to know Daniel?

Ish: I was introduced to him through a friend at the Harrow Club. He said, ‘You two need to meet’. And he sat us down. We’ve got a lot in common. Daniel asked ‘What do you want me to do?’ And I just said ‘Mate, I just want people to know what is going on down here.’

I tweeted Lara Keay [the journalist who wrote the *Daily Mail* attack] on Twitter and got no response. I said the least you could have done is address some of the issues in the film. They didn’t talk about anything in the film, not one issue.

I don't watch the BBC, ever. I don't watch RT News either, but as far as I am concerned they let me and Dan make the film we wanted to make and they backed us. To me it's funny because anybody who knows me—Russia? The Kremlin?—Please!

I was with Daniel on Friday, and I was saying to him, 'I feel like we've been blackballed because it's a very good film.' Wherever we have shown it, they have said to us, 'Mate this is a very good film.' Redfish begged me to let them put burning shots of the Tower in it. I told them there would be no film if there were burning shots of the Tower, so they just stepped away and left me and Dan to do it the way we wanted to.

WSWS: *Failed by the State* raises about Grenfell being a global issue, and it examines the corporate entities involved and social cleansing, gentrification and the class questions. They are powerful aspects of the film.

Ish: They are *the* issues. We have shown our film in Hackney, in Kentish Town and a couple of other places, and it's the same everywhere. I can't understand how they have got away with this for so long. Grenfell could be the start of changing everything. People have had enough.

I live on the Lancaster West estate. I went from the Grenfell Tower to the estate. After Grenfell, they are having consultations with us on changes. I said to them, 'This looks really nice, but how much are the service charges going to go up? Where do we fit in on this?'

They are showing us balconies and making everything glass. We don't need all that. We just need decent safe homes and space for our kids to play in.

WSWS: What would you like people to take away from watching *Failed by the State* ?

Ish: The main issue is for people to wake up! It's not just about one thing, it's about everything. In the town hall, we are dealing with people who don't care about us.

Everyone is so busy just trying to survive and live their own lives, they don't have time. We've all got to pay our rent, take the kids to school. Everyone is under so much pressure, they don't realise what's going on.

We need to start communicating more with each other, not just in our own area. We need to start sharing information and seeing what's going on. It happened here, and it's more than likely going to happen somewhere else. We've got to hold people to account.

They [the press] could at least have reviewed the film and said it's either a good film or a rubbish film. I wasn't trying to push agendas, I was just trying to tell the truth about Grenfell. There are no lies in my film. I was trying to combat every lie that's been told so far.

At its next meeting on Saturday, February 17, at the Maxilla Social Club, the Grenfell Fire Forum will discuss these issues and show clips from the film.

Grenfell Fire Forum meeting

Saturday February 17, 2 p.m.

Maxilla Hall Social Club

2 Maxilla Walk, London, W10 6SW (*nearest tube—Latimer Road*)

For further information, visit the Grenfell Fire Forum Facebook page.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact