

UK: Memorial event held 25 years after Joy Gardner's killing

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A well-attended memorial event, “Justice Denied—The Life and Times of Joy Gardner,” marked 25 years since the 1993 murder of Jamaican mother Joy Gardner by the British government’s Alien Deportation Squad (ADG).

Held in North London’s West Indian Cultural Centre, the event included a showing of Ken Fero’s documentary *Justice Denied* about Joy’s murder. The memorial was held by the United Families and Friends (UFF) campaign, set up in 1998 to expose deaths in police custody and prison.

The main speaker was Joy’s mother, Myrna Simpson, who is also interviewed extensively in the film. *Justice Denied* can be viewed on Vimeo here.

Fero’s film was made in the months between Joy’s death and the acquittal of three police officers tried for her murder. Primarily via interviews with Myrna, other members of Joy’s family and contemporary footage, the film brings out the brutality of the ADG raid and the Home Office policy behind it.

Joy arrived in Britain in 1987 legally, on a six-month visa. Her son, Graeme, was born in Britain. Joy’s visa expired, but in 1993 she applied to the then-Tory home secretary for a deportation order to be revoked on compassionate grounds. She spoke to MPs, lawyers and the Home Office asking to be allowed to stay in Britain for her own, her son’s and her family’s circumstances.

Lawyer Jane Coker explained that notice that Joy’s last applications had been refused only arrived hours after her house was raided and she was attacked and killed, in front of her son. The film shows the systematic stalling and prevarication by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service to paralyse efforts by the family to win justice.

Although the ADG was disbanded, the deportation raids continued, spreading, as intended, fear in

immigrant communities. Fero interviewed relatives of people who died either as a direct result of immigration raids or of other raids that were assumed to be immigration related. Kwanele Siziba fell to her death trying to escape police that turned out to be accompanying bailiffs. Joseph Nnalue died when police and immigration officers arrived at his house.

Twenty-five years later, Myrna Simpson once again recounted to the memorial meeting the terrible circumstances of Joy’s death:

“In 1993 on 28 July police and immigration officers went to Joy’s flat in Hornsey, broke the door down, went in, took her out of her bedroom with her young son. They were asleep. They woke them up, took them into the living room, and they decked her. They went on top of her, police officers and an immigration officer, and decked her. Put on 13 feet of tape around her face, put on a body belt, put leg irons on her feet and killed her there and then. They took her, in front of her five-year-old child, to Whittington Hospital, saying that she was not dead. But she died. She died in the flat.

“She stayed in the hospital for four days, she was rotting for four days. They had to use spray and clean out the hospital. I tell you it was horrible. I slept in the hospital for the four nights that she was there. I slept on the floor, they didn’t give me a bed. A sister of mine came up and stayed with me, so I could have a bath and get something to eat. I stayed for the four days until they had to turn off the machine. They said her kidney had failed, but I knew her kidney had failed from the time when she was in the flat.”

Myrna explained her background:

“I came to this country when I was only a young woman. My first vote was in this country. I was in the Windrush [Caribbean workers who, from 1948, answered the call from the ‘mother country’ to redress

the labour shortage after the war and come to Britain.] You hear the talk about the Windrush, I was one of them.

“[Joy] was my first child, I had her when I was only young. I was only a child myself when I had her. I left her very young to come to this country, to work for this country. I worked in the snow, the frost and the fog. I couldn’t get a proper place to live. We used to live in one room. We had to cook on the landing. People think we had life easy. We didn’t have life easy. We had it rough, really rough, but we bear it.”

Even after a quarter of century, there has been no justice. Myrna continued:

“I will get justice for Joy. I maybe won’t get it now, but I will get justice for Joy. Joy is a martyr, she set an example for others.

“And I am not just fighting for Joy, I am fighting for everybody, whether black or white. It doesn’t matter who you are, if you have been killed unlawfully, I will fight for you. I thank everyone who has come. It is 25 years since Joy was taken away from us in a brutal way. But it happened, it’s happening all the time. It’s still happening, but one day, one day there will be peace in the valley.”

Fero attended and spoke to contrast Joy’s case with that of Stephen Lawrence, the 19-year-old stabbed to death by racist thugs in April 1993. After a persistent and determined campaign by Doreen and Neville Lawrence—including a private prosecution, and an undercover police operation directed against the parents themselves—they eventually forced a public inquiry which famously found the Metropolitan Police guilty of “institutional racism.” A number of those that attacked Stephen were eventually jailed.

Fero expressed his view that “Two months apart, and if you look at the way the state has treated the family of Stephen Lawrence and the family of Joy Gardner, there is very big difference. The only difference that I can see is that the murderers that killed Joy wore a uniform. There is no other difference.”

Other speakers included Rupert Sylvester, whose son Roger was killed by the police in 1999. In 2003 an inquest jury found that Roger had been “unlawfully killed” when six police officers held him on the floor at St. Ann’s Hospital in Haringey. The verdict was overturned a year later in the High Court after an appeal by the police. Marci Rigg, whose mentally ill brother

Sean died in 2008 at the hands of the police, also spoke.

In the quarter of a century since Joy’s death, it remains the case that the only genuinely independent investigation into the murder was the Workers Inquiry held November 1995 by the International Communist Party, forerunner of the Socialist Equality Party.

Using evidence presented at the police officers’ trial and testimony from Joy’s family, including Myrna, the Workers Inquiry:

- proved that Joy’s death was the direct result of the actions of the ADG.
- drew out that her brutal treatment was the result of an offensive by the British government against the entire working class
- rejected the notion of “illegal” immigrants
- indicted the Labour Party and the trade unions and their nationalist policies for their refusal to mobilise in defence of immigrant workers
- exposed the role of the so-called “black leaders” as serving only to divide the working class
- pointed out the need for a political struggle against the capitalist system.

The record of the Workers Inquiry into Joy’s death was published as a book, *A State Murder Exposed: The Truth about the Killing of Joy Gardner*. It can be purchased here for £10, including postage (in the UK).



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