

Women and homelessness



LORRAINE DOUGLAS

THE HOUSING CRISIS In Britain saw a trebling of homeless cases in the ten years to December 2019, with over 33,000 homeless applications accepted in the final quarter of that year.

Women have been particularly hard hit by the increase in homelessness.

Since Labour's 2010 election defeat the number of households

in temporary accommodation jumped from 51,000 to 93,500 by September 2020; 59,000 of which were London families – 21,500 accommodated outside their home borough.

Single mothers and single women account for half the total number of households in temporary accommodation with 72% including an adult woman against 37% containing a man.

Out of borough placements are especially hard on women with

children; separated from support networks and children's education invariably disrupted. This has been forced on London Boroughs because of the lack of affordable self-contained accommodation compounding an already wretched situation damaging the well-being and mental health of thousands of families.

Between January and September 2020 14,860 people were homeless as a result of domestic violence, a 15% increase on the same period in 2019, before Covid lockdowns.

Council spending on refuge services was cut by £7million between 2010 and 2017 and one in six refuges closed over the same period. 10,000 refuge referrals, around 60% of the total, are rejected annually because of the lack of provision.

Evictions from private rented accommodation remain the single largest cause of homelessness despite the temporary ban implemented by the government under Covid, with 23,400 private tenants made homeless in the first three quarters of 2020, nearly 12,000 of which were after the evictions ban was introduced.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 permitted local authorities to end the homelessness duty with an offer of a private sector tenancy, with or without the agreement of the applicant. This has condemned homeless households to a revolving door of homelessness with increasing periods in temporary accommodation because they do not have access to secure or long-term tenancies.

It is worth noting that around 40% of all council homes sold under the right to buy are now owned by private, buy-to-let landlords. In London around half of all families in temporary accommodation are in ex-Council properties – at 3 times the rent the Council would have charged, subsidised by our income tax and Council Tax.

The private sector offers no solutions to the endemic problem of homelessness in Britain.

The time has come for a huge building programme of council housing. ★

LORRAINE DOUGLAS IS THE CONVENOR OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S HOUSING COMMISSION

CAROL STAVRIS

Communist Women Rising!

ON 8 MAY this year, women of the CPB will be in conference, in a free on-line event open to both men and women.

It takes place within the 150th anniversary celebrations of the Paris Commune, in which women played a prominent part and on the day when victory over fascism in Europe in 1945 is celebrated.

Sisterhood, Socialism and Struggle aims to bring together women in struggle from Britain and around the world to debate and discuss the most crucial issues facing us today and to look at ways in which we can unite and organise the fight back to reclaim our lives.

Marxist feminist analysis will centre on the double oppression of women as an intrinsic feature of class exploitation in a capitalist society and link it with the struggle for change to the socialist system we so desperately need, a stride towards our full liberation.

Speakers will highlight the additional oppression Black and Asian sisters face through the racism that is endemic to capitalist society.

There is a crucial connection between ending systemic racism and women's liberation. It is imperative that our struggle includes combining all progressive forces in the fight to eradicate racism.

Sisters from the international communist movement will tell us how the legacy of imperialism continues to dominate and blight their lives in so many ways and how we can stand with them in their fight for their rights and for their survival.

Highlighting the demands in the Charter for Women, the National Assembly of Women's campaigning brief which exposes and elevates central issues affecting women in society; in the

workplace; in the labour movement, the conference will tackle fundamental topics on which we need to confront and challenge the system - poverty, women's right to equal pay, childcare, abortion and for an end to discrimination, harassment and violence including the rising tide of femicide.

Women face huge barriers to equality in many areas of society. The Covid-19 crisis has made this worse for working-class women who are experiencing loss of their jobs on an unprecedented scale. Cleaning jobs, which tend to be done mainly by women, have been badly hit - a third of those working in this sector face unemployment or reduced earnings. Affordable housing is out of reach for most single women because the gender pay gap depresses their earnings. Inequality, discrimination, gender stereotyping at all levels are

barriers to women's right to access quality education and the situation is far worse for those living with disability or from BAME backgrounds.

The unifying theme throughout all the sessions will be our Party's policy and strategy in the struggle for Socialism - how we have developed and understand the Woman Question in capitalist society and how our fight for liberation is linked to attaining a sustainable, non-exploitative alternative.

We'll be calling on everyone in their communities, environmental campaigns, the labour and progressive movements in Britain to join us in that struggle. ★

CAROL STAVRIS, IS THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S NATIONAL WOMEN'S ORGANISER. Registration via the Party's website. Details to follow.

One mental health service in the pandemic

HEALTH

BY ELLEZ.

WE ARE A year or more into the Covid 19 Pandemic and as a former teacher who has returned to the NHS as a mental health clinical practitioner for the FRS/Crisis team, there is no doubt about the devastation that this virus has created. We have had over 10 years of a Tory government so we are witness to deterioration in peoples' lives; in terms of social and economic capital, so this latest wave of deprivation and inequality is not new.

Peoples' emotional wellbeing is being seriously compromised to the extent that the new pandemic is mental health.

The facts are that people were lonely and isolated before the lockdown; peoples' wellbeing was severely stretched with youth and other services being cut but I am witnessing children, young people and our communities suffering like nothing before.

Suicide rates are at their highest, in particular for young people. Girls and women on the autistic spectrum are 13% more likely to end their lives through suicide than any other group, apart from a soar in numbers from men aged from 34 to 55.

This government say "we're all in this together". No, we are not.

People are experiencing severe anxiety and depression due to money concerns, loss of

employment, food poverty (4 million children in the UK in food poverty and we are the 5th richest nation in the world) and isolation.

The BBC has a new VT out stating "We're here with you". No you aren't. The BBC won't pay the mortgage/rent, pay the energy bills, feed the kids and heat the house for homeschooling each day.

To put my job into some perspective; this was a new team that has been commissioned as a result of the pandemic. We are commissioned to take 1000 calls/face to face assessments each month from people experiencing crisis and distress; be it, self-harm to psychosis. However, as a small team we are taking over 5000 monthly. The team is mainly composed of women, a significant number from the BME community.

The impact upon the team has been considerable; 12 colleagues currently off sick with Covid 19 and an office atmosphere that is sometimes tense due to staff shortage and an increasing work load.

Management have created 2 'wellbeing breaks' as well as providing access to clinical reflective practice, access to counsellors and therapies. However, as a new team, we don't yet have measureable statistics or outcomes of the impact upon ourselves to the pandemic.

Personally, I know that self-care is important as my own anxiety has increased; I live alone, I understand how making connections and finding meaning and purpose in life is crucial to good health.

leave my job and go back to being a student as I realized that I'd stopped living for me and had been sucked in by the monotonous capitalist machine.

With this new mentality, I remembered that the power is mine to make my life into what I want, I can help make my community achieve its full potential and shape our society into an amazing place for us all to live.

I learned this past year that if you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem!

For me life is all about having hope, having optimism, showing solidarity and empathy to one another. The people around us in all our communities are at the heart

Practitioners are dealing, on a daily basis, with other peoples' distress and have more interviews with management re; conducting serious incident reviews and inquests because of the increase in suicides. This of course has massive implications for NHS workers own health. As women under the pandemic and lockdown are particularly vulnerable; unwanted pregnancies, rise in domestic abuse, increase in PTSD; post traumatic stress disorder and depression; whilst access to support services in contraception, abortion clinics and DA is decreasing. This pandemic is highlighting already existing inequalities.

The culture around death; be it through Covid 19 or taking one's own life will have long lasting implications upon UK society. We must make it a priority to teach emotional intelligence (EQ) in schools for students of all ages if we are going to promote wellbeing in our communities.

NHS staffs, from paramedics, cleaners, porters to clinicians and nurses don't want empty gestures from a class driven, corrupt government telling the public to 'clap for carers'. We need a real living wage and the rebuilding of the NHS that Aneurin Bevan would be proud of; simply put, let us use this pandemic as an opportunity to build a sustainable, strong, equitable society and to seriously improve gender inequality; this means voting in a socialist government. ★

of accomplishing this.

So, I joined the Party.

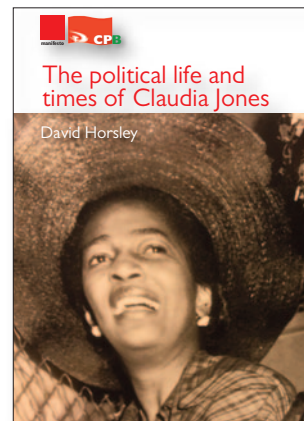
I had lost all hope but within weeks I had been invited to speak at the CPB Gala Conference. Following this, comrades from all corners of the country were speaking to me about the problems facing them and asking for my opinion on what needed to be done to make real change. I was asked to be a part of the newly formed Housing Commission and given the opportunity to facilitate the Private Rented Sector sub-committee meetings.

In essence, the CPB reminded me that I mattered, my opinions mattered and that we are all part of a wider network that can make



'Davis advances a Marxist-feminist analysis of the relationship between oppression and super-exploitation within capitalism.....it can provide the framework for much needed historical and political analysis and thus point the way forward for women'

Dr Sonya Andermahr, Morning Star, 21 September 2020.



60 pages with colour photos, written by historian David Horsley

The book charts her life from a child in Trinidad, her struggles in the USA, repression and deportation to Britain and her struggles here, against racism and imperialism.

www.comunistparty.org.uk

true change in all areas of society.

I was given the opportunity to learn and grow, gain skills, and speak to likeminded comrades who all wanted to achieve the same things as me.

The pandemic has been a time unlike any other. It has been eye opening, filled with much sadness and regret at how the world could be run differently. It can often feel as though I have nothing to offer the world as a young, female, working-class, northern lass - but we cannot let capitalism beat us down!

We must use it as a call to arms, to fire us into action, we must rise up and take back the power that's rightfully ours! ★

Calling all female comrades, the time to get active is now!

MY NAME IS JADE and I joined the party in June 2020, I have been overjoyed by the sheer amount of opportunities that have arisen for me in my local branch and nationally since joining.

I am Newcastle based and was originally on furlough during the pandemic which left me feeling very frustrated. I took the chance to