

The GLC Story Oral History Project

Interviewee: Ndaizivei Paul

Interviewer: Sekai Makoni

Date of interview: 9 March 2017

Location: Ely

SM: My name is Sekai Makoni I am the interviewer, today's date is Thursday the 9th of March 2017, we're recording this at Scholastic Gwaze's house / Ndaizevei Paul in March Ely

NP: Chatteris

SM: Chatteris – sorry! The name of the interviewee is

NP: Scholastica Ndaizevei Paul

SM: Who at the time... was known as

NP: Scholastica Gwaze

SM: and the name of this project is the Greater London Council 1981-86: Retelling a Forgotten History... Okay so I'm gonna start with my first question. Could you tell me about your relationship to the GLC?

NP: For the centre it is the organisation that gave Haringey Women's Training and Education Centre (HWTEC) the first money for setting up. So really I suppose if the GLC had not given the money the organisation would never have existed

SM: Could you explain to me exactly what the HWTEC was?

NP: It was roughly training mature women, women who were 25 years and older and training them in areas where they were under represented in further education and in jobs. So we had women who were looked at as priority for the centre depending on the kind of disadvantage they actually were suffering in terms of education, training and jobs

SM: What type of disadvantaged backgrounds would the mature women that were coming to the centre come from?

NP: We had really in a way a list of women but it was like black women, Asian women, working class women and then we had more break downs of disadvantaged communities within Haringey

SM: Did you have to live in the borough?

NP: For training - the ones who were being trained, had to be in the borough

SM: Were there people who came to the centre not for training?

NP: Well it was for training or education that's why it was called education and training centre. So again the women who came in, in this case because the Haringey Borough was involved this was set up specifically for those in Haringey so again the priority groups depended on what was looked at as priority groups within Haringey rather than nationally or outside Haringey

SM: Would you be able to describe to me how you initially got involved in the project?

NP: I got involved because I saw an advert for a job. I was then working as a design and development engineer at Phillips in Cambridge and then saw an advert for an electronics tutor and I applied

SM: When you applied had the centre already been set up and been given funding?

NP: No I applied in... '84 which was... before any courses had been run so I was part of the team that took part in terms of setting up the centre and there was quite a bit of building and setting up at the beginning

SM: Would you be able to explain to me exactly how the GLC connected to HWTEC?

NP: At the beginning... either there was a women's group conducted a survey in Haringey and the survey was to see the shortcomings in education, training and jobs in Haringey for women and it was that research that it was then identified that there were certain groups that needed more support and training. So whether it was that group that asked for money from the GLC to set up a centre. The money, there was a school that was no longer operating and this school could be converted into a training centre... but in order to do that they needed money and the GLC offered the money to start converting that school into a training and education centre for women

SM: Do you know what the name of that school was?

NP: ...I think it used to be called Somerset Lower School... and that was then converted into a training centre. And part of the work was to actually convert that into a training centre. Although we paid people to come in and do some of the work, we as the workers were actually involved in doing the work because the courses were on carpentry, building, painting and decorating so those who ended up teaching took on the actual work of converting the school. Otherwise we wouldn't have had enough money

SM: And was it all women that were working there?

NP: It was all women yes

SM: Would you be able to explain the process by which you got funding from the GLC?

NP: I don't know whether the process... the funding from GLC did not continue year to year it was just like setting up and then we would then try and get money from the European Social Fund (ESF) for running the courses. Once we had the building to run the courses we could then apply for money from the ESF...

SM: What was it like working there? Like how did you feel working with women in this area?

NP: It was really quite to me a very interesting time in terms of education. And I think for me coming from working in industry as a designer. As a Design Engineer it was also quite something that the involvement with issues about education and about women were issues that were never really addressed when you are doing design, Engineering Design within big companies because literally you simply have to design an item to do what it is supposed to do. Whereas at the centre the whole issue, it was almost a holistic way of looking at education. So we looked at disadvantage, we also had discussion groups which would depend on what the women were interested in. Anti-racist teaching was something that was also being developed and to see how that can be applied to the teaching. So I think for me it really was quite an interesting step and something you'd gain a lot of knowledge and involvement from. For me something that really would build you up in terms of looking at people and what might be needed in education. I just found it really quite interesting, it was a pity that it didn't continue

SM: What were the demographics like of the people you were working with? Was it majority women

of colour, was it quite a mix?

NP: Majority women of colour. I think in terms of both trainees and staff members, it was mixed... but the majority the area, our focus for the women we wanted to be involved... came from mostly women of colour

SM: Would you be able to speak a bit more about the dynamic between - you've got an all women staff and all women that were benefitting from the services that were offered. Was there a hierarchy as such? Was it quite cooperative? What were those relationships like?

NP: We had decided that we wanted to run the centre as a cooperative. So that meant everyone that was working would be at the same salary. So you might be a childminder, electronics, tutor, science, it didn't matter what you were doing you would be at the same salary. We also made sure that reception work, everyone one at some point - they would do reception work. For the women, it was also important that we had someone who it was their job to be there for the women. We looked at it as - women act as support for their families. So issues like when to start lessons. We made sure that we would start lessons a little but later than 9 o'clock, I think we started 10 o'clock. This would give women a chance either to take children to a childminder and then come to the centre or to take children to school and then come to centre so we actually started a little bit later than schools would. If that was not done then all you would end up with is women coming later to courses and at the end it's like "oh women they don't come up to time. they come late what do they expect". But because they are working as support for the family, what we observed was then they will come late because they have to take their children to nursery or to school and then come to the centre. So we had to change that time. We also worked, we had someone who worked specifically with the women who came to centre to find places. Because we had a nursery but the nursery could not take all the children for the women who were coming. So some of the children had to go to childminders. So the worker responsible for that would find places, placements for the children of those women who were coming for training and place them with the childminders within the borough. So that worker would be liaising with childminders in the borough to connect and place children to those childminders. So that was like again one of the areas for the women we then had also subjects like return to work return to study lessons which would mean that women who had been out of education for a long time would get that training so again that helps them to perform better within their main areas. we had discussion groups, we invited writers. We were involved in terms of what was happening within the borough what was happening, I think that was the time when coal mines were being closed in Wales so we had all those discussions going on which is quite unusual at least I had never been to a training centre where these issues would be discussed on a regular basis. And the women would actually arrange, they would do ask and then it would happen so there were lots of things that were being done in order to try and facilitate the training for those women

SM: But just going back to that - what was the dynamic like between the staff and trainees? Was it quite a balanced relationship?

NP: Literally what we had a common room and the common room was for both trainees and for staff. So we didn't have like a common room staff and a common room for trainees, it was a common room for both staff and trainees. That again because literally we were all grown up women, these were grown up women they've got families of their own. They were in no way different to us apart from maybe some were being looked at as staff and the others as trainees but as women, were just women. I suppose within the society if someone saw us from outside you wouldn't be able to tell who is the trainee and who is the staff member... we consciously... that's why we had said we had wanted to work as a collective and the other issue was to actually let the women arrange and manage, say when we have speakers coming in, they were quite capable of arranging that

themselves

SM: Were you aware of any other organisations doing anything like this at the time? Because it seems quite unique

NP: There were organisations that were running centres from different parts of Britain but whether they were exactly the same as ours, I don't think so. Especially for areas that were identified as disadvantaged areas because they could get money from the ESF but I suppose each area had its own priority as to which groups they would be given money for but for this one was specifically for women

SM: Would you be able to tell me a little more about what your role as an electronics tutor looked like? Like what would a day look like for you?

NP: With electronics again... we would teach in pairs because one of the support subjects was English as a second language (ESL) because you had women who needed English as a second language... I would plan an electronics lesson then that plan was given to the teacher that does ESL so that when we actually go in, those trainees that needed support could get support in the lesson. Again, it's difficult to say - you need to learn all the English and then when you finish... Start learning all the English then you start learning all the maths... the issue is like, is it possible to actually make it easier? Because learning carpentry then can still take in the issues of carpentry in any language. They could be learning English but at the same time they are learning the subject that they want to learn. So that was like one area, but in terms of electronics - the other goal we would be looking at was the mathematics, because most of the returners did not have the level of mathematics to be able to go into an adult education centre without that maths so it was really filling in the gaps for the mathematics so that by the time they leave the centre they would have the mathematics they need to be able to go to an ordinary training centre to do a BTEC which was one of the ones they were doing at the time... There was the basic DC-AC electricity issues that they needed to learn and eventually what they could do after the centre. We could register them to go and take an ordinary BTEC exam. They would not have been able to do that, so in a way the centre fed into the BTEC for those who wanted to go and do further education. For those who didn't we also had a worker who specifically... was in contact with most of... say the building organisations to put those trainees into their centre. I think we used to have something like some weeks of practical training and it would be up to the centre to make sure that the women can go plumbing, painting and decorating, brickwork... So there could actually be places - somewhere to do practical work. Some would be taken in if they felt that they wanted to keep them.

SM: What were your views or opinions of the GLC?

NP: For us I think we felt that this was quite important in terms of education perhaps what I would call in my view, appropriate education because it really was education that would be suitable for these women, for this group of women with specific needs. But also they are members of families, they needed to understand not that you've just come here to learn electronics... but the environment is much wider than just electronics. Electronics is working within a much wider environment. Whether that environment is politics - if some miners are losing their jobs in Wales because the mines have been closed it was important that the issues were discussed. Perhaps get someone from Wales to come and address them. Those issues are very relevant education for people who do Science and who do the kinds of courses that we do like plumbing and painting and decorating. They still need to participate within their own community

SM: How was the GLC's support in relation to HWTEC perceived?

NP: It was quite essential I think that even though the centre was there up until '91 it still contributed quite a lot to education especially adult education. I think the view of what adult education is. People now feel that education is something that you do all your life, I think at that time people didn't feel like that. Also, I think colleges and universities during that that time, there were very few who had an adult education department they really didn't feel that adults were part of schools, college or universities but after that the while things changed and they were now taking in adults. So those institutions... what we were then doing ended up being which to me is a very, very good thing because in the end that's where the training needed to be done but in the some of the aspects we were doing are still not there. But at least the institutions have now opened up, that adults need to be part of their students and clients in their colleges

SM: What were some of your highlights of your time working at the centre? Things that stick out in your memory?

NP: I think probably the most important point like when at the end of the first courses which would have been '85 because for the first time you would have the women who would have completed their courses being able to show you what they have done. The technicians course, science and tech, they would have done some experiments about I don't know there was one about the strength of hair but after they've done that and they can present it to you and say this is what we did and this is what we found out. They made something, carpentry they've produced something they can actually see and for the people who were doing building trades, you can actually see from foundation to wall and those who had done plumbing and these women had done it. And before you wouldn't really have thought they would have done it, you can see the wall and yes it was possible. These women could build a house completely, we didn't have anyone for roofing but they could build the house from foundation and the interesting thing was that these women did go and do some of this work. They would be able to go to work with someone like Haringey Council - like to go and do plumbing work together. It's unusual to see women to come in as a plumber, I think it really is quite interesting to see that these women can come and they can do it

SM: Was there any opposition?

NP: Oh the opposition was this idea of *women only*, I think for some men it really was like... I think some of them used to call us names. Like the bus stop where all these women would take the buses and come down – they called it pink lady or something! But it was this idea that it can't be *all* women, that they didn't like and it was kind of saying they are only here as training, this is the only time they are here as women only. But also there have been organisations where it has been all men and no one has complained! Definitely it was shock... like we should be doing it but not *all* women, we should allow men. But we thought it was important that the environment should be all women

SM: How did you feel as a migrant yourself? As a Zimbabwean woman, as a mother? Could you describe the impact it had on you?

NP: The impact was more just realising... I think in some ways how much disadvantage certain groups and my groups and others had to actually overcome in order to start gaining something from the facilities that are available. Whether it was in education in work, I think that is something that really suddenly you realise there is a lot. Perhaps we shouldn't be looking at it all the time as oh we are so disadvantaged. The issue is not just looking at the disadvantage on its own but its realising how much people have done without the kind of help and support that other groups have got. I think that to me is like then you being able to appreciate that, you know these 'so called' disadvantaged groups are really very productive. Because I really do believe to overcome to them, to

be able to achieve something just shows that these people really in a way are extremely productive. They are not dumb they are intelligent to go through that and do something, otherwise we would all just be sitting around doing nothing and falling apart

SM: What happened to the centre?

NP: The centre just closed down. Again this is funding that we had to obtain every year, I think we just found ourselves with less staff to be able to carry out the work that we needed to and if we didn't apply for money then there was no way - we would just start going into debt because we have no money and I think we ended up with I think 5 or 6 staff That's not enough to run the centre and that's how it closed but I think they were also going to build something – it wasn't that we could keep this former school for much longer but we had kept it from '83 to '91 so that was quite long enough

SM: Do you have any contact with any of the women that you used to work with?

NP: No, I think for me because of living in Cambridge, I think those living in London would probably quite easily have got in touch

SM: Thinking about the GLC and erasure, lots of younger people today don't seem to know that much about the GLC, why do you think that might be?

NP: I would have thought it was mostly politics. It was all the politics of the GLC. I do believe for me, I feel that the GLC then - if it was doing something similar things in other boroughs as it was doing in Haringey - then politically I'm not sure that it would have always been supported for doing so. There seems to be a tendency to say the GLC wasn't really operating well when it was under Ken Livingston. I think it's politics rather than anything else but for me I really do think something was done with centres like the one I was involved in. Something *really important* was being done. You don't see the value of it from one point, you see it holistically and perhaps I think it's something more and more people involved in education should look into

SM: Could you expand on what you mean by the politics of the GLC?

NP: Well I suppose mostly to do with Labour party, the main parties. Who controls London, who is Mayor of London. At each stage I think that is something that is likely to always have this see-saw type of change. It means that if you have this person from this party, doing this then the other party has to find something wrong with it and then the other party will do something different. In some ways, we all have that right to change our minds but in the end in terms of what the population wants is always there. It doesn't matter which party is controlling - the people who are there, they need certain education and training *all* the time. It shouldn't be changed because there is a change of who is in charge. It is sad in some ways that even the names of trainings change every time. This party calls it this, this other one calls it that. If youngsters need training, if women need training, if men need training. This idea that changing names, changing management, structures and so on - I think for me is just a waste of time. I think that's one of the reasons that things change, not particularly that something's wrong

SM: Why do you think the see-saw politics you're talking about would impact young people not knowing about the GLC?

NP: Because I think in the end if you don't know something, you may still go through the same process again.. The only example perhaps I can give is if you are in an organisation and you stay let's

say for 8 years. That organisation if it had a certain purpose it wanted to do, you would see within those 8 years certain things would have been talked about, certain things they wanted to do, what should we do about it? They changed it and so on and so forth. But when a new member comes in after 8 years... they would raise the same problems that were raised 6 years ago and people had spent a year talking about that problem. So it is very important to know at least, that this point was discussed and this is what came out of this point. Whether what came out you accept or you don't accept it is very important to know that these things have already been talked about, have already been looked into and after looking at this, they then moved onto this because that's the important thing for the young ones. Knowing what happened before. Otherwise they will be repeating the same thing again and going through the same motions again because they don't know that people did try it and then found out it didn't work because of this or because of that. It is very important to know that history, so at least you know where you are moving forward not just starting back again in ten years. So I think it is very important for people to know what sort of programmes were run, why were they run, what were the good things that came out of those programmes? What were the things that did not work out? Perhaps then we can say that is something that we can do today. So I think it is really quite important to know what was done, why it was being done and what was the outcome so today what can be done

SM: What were your political opinions of the GLC at the time?

NP: For us we didn't have a picture of the GLC at the time. The only thing that we knew was that it had allowed us to do something. They were not there every day to say this is what we want you to do. What they did was they said oh we've looked at your programme we can give you the money start up and then you get on with it. The way that programme involved companies in Haringey, Colleges in Haringey, women's groups in Haringey, you know Haringey Council it really did allow that kind of cross work. That was very, very good so if that could be done with HWTEC, surely there must be other ways this can be done

SM: I'm wondering in terms of the timing - Broadwater Farm is in Haringey - were the uprisings before the opening of HWTEC?

NP: It was after

SM: So the centre was opened after the uprisings or the uprisings happened whilst the centre was there.

NP: Whilst the centre was there, we were actually closed for a while

SM: How did that impact you guys?

NP: That's why we had to close, there was no way we would continue, we used to actually go to Broadwater Farm to buy lunch, we were very near to Broadwater Farm, so we could not continue

SM: So were some of the women who came to the centre affected by the uprisings?

NP: Oh yes! Definitely, at the time when Cynthia Jarrett died, we were at the centre and after that we did close because the atmosphere was just so not good for people to be around and we actually did send people to the funeral because we were just neighbours. We were very near to Broadwater Farm. Because again one of the things that we actually did do at the centre, one of the discussions that we had were on racism and how anti-racism could be used in terms of teaching so that again these are issues that people would - I don't know if people are doing it now. Like at the time, you

would be teaching mathematics and they would say there is no racism in mathematics and there are no gender issues, but you know there is. So those were issues at the centre that we would sit down and talk about. So how would our teaching material and methods ensure they didn't enforce racist ideas

SM: Would you be able to give me an example of how you did that?

NP: I think for nursery for instance, the choice of toys can be demonstrated quite easily. During that time you wouldn't see toys that are appropriate for children of colour. You know how many black dolls would you find? Even in terms of books, you'd find that are really appropriate that black children where they would be able to see themselves as heroes in them. And actually, say in fact you don't just say any story is ok, you need to read it and see whether this story would be a healthy story to read to children of colour. I mean with things like maths. You can get a question in maths where, yes it's a mathematical calculation but the example would be - you are going calculate how long it takes to... and it might involve a family and the father has got to mend something. You know long will it take the father to mend this and how long will it take mother to cook this. You know it just looks like it's calculation about time but it's actually telling you who is doing what. So it's quite interesting to sit down and explore what does it mean to a child that is listening to it. So these are some of the things... it's also... in terms of what is important for what you should know. Like if someone is coming from another culture their base is different, their knowledge is different and no one is going to ask them those things for them to show that they know something. So that's where this idea of English as a second language. This idea of stopping should not be so, what should happen is they should be learning English while at the same time continuing with the knowledge that they have and building on it. Because you could spend 2-3 years just trying to speak English and by then you've been out of your area of work for 3 years and you've got to go back in time to catch up. So it is important some times to actually look at things that seem you know quite ok, things that do not seem to be discriminatory in any way an what exactly do they mean?

SM: Did the centre address LGBTQ rights at the time and was sexuality explored at the centre?

NP: Sexuality was explored at the centre and I think actually lesbians were one of the priority groups. So yes, again because this was a women's centre and most of the things were geared in terms of women, yes

SM: Was there any discrimination issues around sexuality or was it quite a welcoming space?

NP: Well the issue was that just like black women were a priority group, lesbians were a priority group on the basis that they were looked at as also having a disadvantage and they therefore need the space where they can talk about those issues among the women themselves. Again the issue was there might be black women who were also lesbian. The issue was what were the things that would touch on women as a whole. And of course, the issue of class, that's why working class women were women who came

SM: Have you got anything else that you would like to add?

NP: I just think that the issue for me that when I read through what we were doing, I find a whole lot of things that are really relevant to education, especially, if that education or training is going to meaningful to women. It's like the way it had to be run, the culture behind what is being given, to establish that first but what is the culture? Say electronic design culture, what is the culture behind electronic design up to now? Because unless you know that culture... to me I look at it as a male culture and until it's changed to include the culture for women, the women will always be struggling

to work in a way that they do not work. It doesn't mean that science can only be worked in a manner of the way men work, it is very important to look at the culture of each area and therefore if everyone is going to take part then how can we start to change that culture so that it caters for everyone, at least as far as we can

SM: Brilliant, thank you very much *Gogo!

*Gogo is a term of respect used in Southern African countries – meaning grandmother - or broadly a term of respect for an older woman