

In spring 2017, the South London Gallery (SLG) invited artist Jessie Brennan to collaborate with residents of Pelican Estate on a project titled YOUR WORDS. Jessie spent time listening to residents' experiences which, in different ways, celebrate the value of public housing and speak to the broader challenges often faced by those on council estates.

*A broader context of the project, including Jessie's introductory text and examples of further conversations between Jessie Brennan (JB) and Pelican residents, can be found on the South London Gallery website:
<https://www.southlondongallery.org/projects/jessie-brennan-words/>.*

FATIMA (b. 1980, Sierra Leone), Pelican Estate resident

JB Tell me about your experiences on Pelican Estate?

F I'm from Africa – Sierra Leone, West Africa. And my dad was the one that came and brought us here.

When I grew up my dad was a politician. He was the adviser to the president by then. [...] Sometimes I said to my dad 'I regret you bringing me here'. He say, 'why?' I say, 'the only thing I don't regret is the kids I have'. But if anything, I regret [coming] because when our dad was in government there's nothing we want that we don't have. They give us everything, before they [rebels] overthrow the government. That's why we come to London, because they overthrow the government. When I would travel to the neighbouring country just to rescue myself, so the rebels will not kill me, I become like [people from] developing [countries], their fate. [...] They don't give us respect in Guinea when we seek asylum there. [...] I stand for the people, I talk to the Guinea government. I said, listen: we never come here because we are hungry; we came here because we don't want to lose our life. [...]

I got three kids, but it's not been easy. Because in the process I lost my husband here and nobody was there to help. [...] You see, mothers like us we don't have opportunities to be like other people to sit around the house taking benefits. You have to go out there and look for work so you can make ends meet for your kids. [...] For now, I'm working with one company that sell houses and I just go there and clean the houses before the buyer come and see the houses. [...] The British government need to try give us support so we can have time for our kids. [...] [We could] work like 20 hours [until] certain age of our kids so that we can have time [to] drop them in school. Because to drop [off] and pick [up] is the time when kids join bad company. [...] So that's why I'm looking for a job that starts at 4 and finish 10 in night. [...]

So we want the government to really, really help with the mothers a lot. We need help for our kids. Let them build schools not prisons.