
STATEMENT OF JOSEPH KYLE JOHN

Preamble

1. I make this statement from my own personal knowledge and from matters that I have been told about by others; where the information does not come from my own personal knowledge I make this clear below. I have not provided a statement to the police or made any public statement regarding the Grenfell Tower disaster.
2. I make this statement because I was a resident of Flat 6, Grenfell Tower at the time of the fire. I lived in Flat 6 with my then partner Leanne Jackson Le-Blanc and our son [REDACTED] (D.O.B. [REDACTED].16). Flat 6 is one of the newly renovated disabled flats on the second floor. I spoke to firefighters inside the building in the early stages of the emergency response, and I had to evacuate Leanne and my son from our flat via the window when no assistance was provided. We lost our home and all of our possessions as a result of the fire. Leanne and I are both core participants of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

Personal background

3. I was born on [REDACTED] 1991. I am a Trinidadian national.
4. Back home I worked in construction. My mum and my grandma are both [REDACTED]. My grandmum had her own restaurant. She taught us all to cook. My sister works on a [REDACTED] and my auntie [REDACTED]. In my family, the women are chefs, and the men are footballers. I have a big family from all over [REDACTED]

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[redacted] and my auntie [redacted]. In my family, the women are chefs, and the men are footballers. I have a big family from all over [redacted]

5. Leanne's family are friends with my family – her mum was my next door neighbour in Trinidad. Leanne's mum and my mum and my grandma are best friends. We were kids when we first met: [redacted]

[redacted] She came to visit numerous times and we always used to stay in touch over the phone. [redacted]

6. She came to Trinidad for a year and we fell in love. [redacted]

7. I came to the UK on 19 March 2016 for the birth of my son, [redacted]. [redacted] was born on [redacted] 2016. I didn't know this until I arrived in the UK but Leanne fell when she was pregnant, and broke the tissue in her tailbone. She was left physically disabled. I decided to stay in the UK to look after [redacted] and Leanne. I was her full-time carer. There were plenty of professionals involved but Leanne wouldn't let anyone else help her because she was struggling [redacted]. She would not let the physio come. I would have to help her out of bed, I would get her in the bath, and get her out, sometimes I would have to help to wash her. I would have to help her get dressed, cook for her, and if she wanted to leave the flat I would have to go with her. Leanne used a wheelchair. She was just starting to use crutches when we moved to Grenfell Tower, so she could just about put weight on her legs but she couldn't walk.

8. Before the baby was born Leanne had permanent accommodation in Chelsea. We had to move to temporary accommodation in Portabello, but it was not suitable. Then we were offered a permanent address in Grenfell Tower. Leanne didn't want to move there but we were told that if we didn't accept it we would be making ourselves "intentionally homeless".

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9. We moved to Flat 6 Grenfell Tower in March 2017. Flat 6 is on the second floor, it is one of the renovated flats with disabled access. It was the only flat on the floor, there was also a boxing gym on the same level. It was a nice place to live: it was proper child proof for my son. We had a massive living room and there was a big play mat for him to play on. I had just finished putting child locks on all the doors. I was putting some shelves up in mine and Leanne's room. Leanne didn't like living there but I wanted to make it work. They bullied us into taking Grenfell so I wanted to make it a home, make it a nice place to live. It was working out. I used to mostly go bike riding and play football at the Westway. Some of the people from the Tower told me that they play football there every Thursday so I joined them. At the time of the fire Leanne's brother Karim was also staying with us.
10. I had got to know a couple of people in the Tower. I knew Sid Ali, he used to park his motorbike outside the Tower. I knew a couple of older people in the Tower – I would help them with their shopping and things like that. I did not know any of the people who passed away but I recognised some of their faces from seeing them around the Tower.

14 June 2017

First awareness

11. I was indoors with Leanne and our son. They were both asleep and I was up watching TV. I was watching a movie but I can't remember what it was. I think it was just after 12 but I am not sure about times. I was just about to go to bed. I was hearing a lot of noise on our floor and outside the building. I looked through the window in our sitting room to see what was going on. I could see a fire engine outside.
12. I opened our front door to see what was happening. I went out onto the landing and pushed open the door to the stairs, where the noise was coming from. There was a big computer monitor on the floor. There was a firefighter kneeling down on the floor doing something on the monitor. There were 4 or 5 firefighters on our floor, they were watching what was on the monitor. There was a hose coming out of the lift stretching along the floor of the lobby. No-one was holding it or using it, it was just lying there. I asked them what was going on. One of the firefighters said "*There's a minor fire in your block. Go*

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back inside and wait for further instructions.” There was no smoke or fire at this point in our flat, on the landing, or in the stairwell. I told them “I have a young baby and a disabled person living with me. What is the procedure for getting them out?” The firefighter replied, “Go back and wait for further instructions.”

13. I went back to the flat and woke up Leanne. I told her that there is a fire in the block. She started panicking. She went into blind panic, she just wanted to get out. Our first priority was [REDACTED]. I said to her “Don’t panic, they’ve told us to stay where we are and they will come to get us.” I was trying to calm her down and reassure her but she was really panicked, she wanted to leave the flat straight away. I was telling her that they were going to come and get us and we needed to wait for them.
14. There was a smoke alarm in our kitchen but it didn’t go off while we were in the flat. I didn’t hear any alarms going off. After 20-30 minutes, no-one had come to get us and I started to smell smoke. It smelt like plastic, like burning tyres. I looked out of the window and I could see smoke and fire burning, going up the outside of the building. There was a car at the bottom of the building, I could see the reflection of the fire in the windscreen, so I could see the fire moving upwards. There were red flames, and there was a lot of dark black, thick smoke. I could hear the fire was shattering the glass of the windows in the flats above me. People were screaming, and people outside the building were calling out “Get out! Get out!”. I started panicking. I could see the people on the Walkway who were shouting at us. I don’t remember anyone in particular. There were no firefighters or police on the Walkway at this stage - the people shouting were from the community.
15. We were still waiting, and watching the fire grow in the reflection of the glass. I could see that the fire was completely out of control. I decided that we couldn’t wait any more. We got ready to go. I was in boxers and a vest, no shoes on. I put on a jacket and a pair of trousers, and a pair of trainers. Leanne had some slippers on, she was in a nightie. I helped her to put a jacket on. [REDACTED] was in a baby-grow and I put a jacket on him.

Contacting the emergency services

16. While I was putting on [REDACTED]’s jacket, Leanne called 999. She told them that she’s in Flat 6 on the second floor and that she needs help to get out. She said to them “What’s

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going on? It's been 20-30 minutes." She was crying. I asked her "What did they say?" She said they told her "Hold on, someone will be coming to get you." She was panicking, crying. My son was crying now. I thought about the window. I pushed my head out of the window and saw the flames on the side of the building. I felt that the only way out now was the window. I knew the window would open wide enough for us to climb out. I didn't know where the fire was, I didn't want to risk going into the stairwell. I knew that people would help me if we went outside the window, because I could see them shouting to me. So I decided to get out. I didn't want to risk opening our front door. I could smell smoke from inside the building and thought there would be smoke in the lobby and the stairs. It was just one flight of stairs down, but I didn't want to take that chance with [REDACTED], who was so young and so fragile. We left everything. Lost everything. We didn't take anything – just [REDACTED]'s jacket, my jacket, and a jacket for Leanne. I said to Leanne, "Let's go". I told her "If you're with me, let's go. I'll take [REDACTED] out first."

Leaving the flat

17. On our floor we had access to Grenfell Walk. There was a passageway connecting the Tower to the Walk, but it was blocked by a big gate. It's a black gate, nearly twice my height and it goes the whole way across, touching onto our short wall. I knew it was always locked but I tried it anyway. Some people tried it as well. The gate is always locked to secure access to the Tower – otherwise you would be able to get right up to the window of our sitting room. I used to hang washing out of the window. The lock on the gate was very strong, it was a big C-lock.
18. The window opens outwards a small way. I had to break the hinges to force it fully open. I took my son and climbed out. I told my partner I would come back for her. I climbed over the gate and handed my son to a complete stranger. I handed him to a Muslim lady who was wearing a headscarf. She was with a man who I presumed was her son, he was one of the people who helped me. I swung [REDACTED] over the gate, and her son reached out to take him, and then his mum took him.

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19. Then I went back for Leanne. It was a lot of drama to get her out. I climbed through the window with her. I took her out to the passageway. We couldn't pass through the gate because it was locked. We had to go around the gate, and I had to get help to bring her over. It was scary, frightening. I had to carry her out in my arms. The scariest part was on the corner, when we were trying to get her round the gate. We were on the second floor, so there was a big drop. One wrong move and we would have fallen. God was with us. I climbed up on the gate. I told her to go sideways on the wall. There were two Muslim men who helped me to scooch her over the wall. We kept moving over until we cleared the gate. She was terrified, frightened – she had no belief that she could do it. She was crying, telling me she can't get up on the wall, she can't climb, she's in pain. She held on tightly to the gate and then we had to take our time and slowly scooch her over until we cleared the gate, and there was people there to help us. It was risky but it was our only option.
20. We got Leanne out onto Grenfell Walk, and then I was looking for my son. The woman who took him was sat down with him. I hugged her, thanked her, and she gave me back my son. Leanne was crying. I told her to sit down. It was deep. We sat there and witnessed everything.

How the fire spread

21. The fire started emerging and getting worse and worse. I could see people in the flats starting to panic. I could see people dying. The fire was going up the building very fast. I don't know if it was the wind making it spread so fast, but after what felt like about 45 minutes it was out of control, from a small fire. They told me they had it under control, but it went way out of control. They couldn't control it. When I first saw it through the window it was small, just going up one side. The wind, or the circulation, had the fire moving up the building. It spread so fast, it went up the building and across on the right side – up, across, and down.
22. The fire had red flames and then later on I also saw blue flames. Like it was two different types of fire. The smell of the smoke was very terrible, you could smell the plastic. I've never smelt anything like that before. The blaze was massive. Things were blowing up.

Glass was breaking, popping – like if a glass gets too hot, it shatters. You could see shards of glass falling down from the building. It looked like the building was being eaten away on the outside. It looked like a death trap, no-one was going to be able to survive on the upper floors. The ones who did, they are very very blessed.

23. We saw mothers, grandmothers, kids -- Screaming. Bawling for help. They were inside the flats. I saw some of them trying to make ropes with cloths and curtains to reach down the building, but it didn't help. I could see two boys in one flat, they look like they might be Moroccan, I think they were up on the 6th or the 7th floor, on the left hand side of the Tower as I was looking at it from the Walk. They were waving with both arms above their head and shouting "*HELP*". They looked about my age, in their twenties. They were trying to tie sheets together.
24. I also saw a guy with a long sheet running down the window, he was bawling. He had a kid and a partner. He wanted to come out down the sheets with his little girl on his back, we were all shouting at him not to. Someone next to me was on the phone to the firefighters and I think the firefighters were already inside the building, they were able to tell the firefighters where this family was. I don't remember what this person looked like, but I believe it was someone who knew them. We were shouting at them to put wet towels around their heads and to try to flood the flat, that help was on its way. His flat was just to the right of the Walk, on the same side of the walk. I turned away because I didn't think they were going to be helped in time. I saw this man later in my hotel, and I was so surprised he was alive. His name is Olu, and he is now one of my best buddies.
25. There was another family that I saw, they were just waving a jersey and bawling for help. Then there were others, in a flat above them, saying that the smoke was just too much. They were shouting through the open windows. I can't remember what they looked like, but there three of them – all grownups. I could see other people in the windows. One minute I could see them and then the next minute I could only see smoke or fire. I think I saw about 15 people this happened to over the course of the night. There was nowhere for us to go, so we saw everything.

Firefighters

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26. Two more fire engines arrived. They brought a ladder out from the fire engine and cut the lock on the gate. The ladder was on the ground floor and they were trying to get it up onto the Walkway. They didn't have enough firefighters with the strength to do it, so we offered to help them. The community was helping, everyone was helping. We got it up onto the Walkway and we put it flat on the ground and set it up properly. The firefighters cut the lock on the gate and we walked through the gate towards my flat and put the ladder against the wall on my flat. It only reached two storeys above my floor. It couldn't reach the two boys I described earlier, so they must have been on the 6th or 7th floor. The ladder was too short, it couldn't help anyone. It was only going as high as the 3rd or 4th floor.
27. The firefighters were trying to see how they could get access to the people inside. People had kids, they were screaming for help. It was crazy. They went back to the fire engine and got a bigger ladder, but they couldn't get it up onto the passageway. I think it was too heavy and there wasn't space to work. There was a big tree by the entrance so they couldn't get the fire engine there. The firefighters were telling the people to hold on, they were coming up to them. The only alternative was to go down to the ground floor and go up inside. I saw a couple of firefighters go inside. To me, the firefighters tried their very best, and they saved plenty of lives that night. The fire was looking terrible by this point – the glass was breaking and it looked like the building was being eaten away.
28. I saw families – mums, dads, kids – screaming. They were saying "*The smoke is too strong*". I could see the smoke, and then fire. I saw them alive and then vanish. I also saw one man, he was shouting for some time. He was on the next side of the building, where the trees are, close to the front. He was on the side where the fire was. I now know this to be the south side of the Tower. He was high up, almost on the top floor. He was shouting for help, saying "*Help me, the smoke is getting to me, I can't take any more.*" I think he was white, and I think he was older, but I don't remember anything else about his physical description or what he was wearing. I was looking up at him. The window was open and he was leaning out, his head and his chest were out of the window. I think the fire was in his flat, I could see dark grey smoke in the flat behind him and coming out of the window.

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29. The police were trying to push us away. They didn't push me but they pushed people next to me. These were police in normal uniforms, they weren't riot police. They were telling us to move back, they said "*Get back, this is your final warning*". They said it was for our safety and they thought the building was going to fall. So I was moving towards Latimer Road station and I could no longer see this man. We had reached the ramp and I heard everyone going crazy saying "*He jumped, he jumped. The same guy, he jumped.*" I didn't see it and I wouldn't want to have seen it – I would have turned away.
30. The police were pushing people away from the surroundings. They were pushing us towards Latimer Road station. They thought the building was going to collapse. It looked like the building was leaning towards us. They were shouting "*Get back! Get back!*" We wanted to help. If they had let us in we could at least have tried to help get people out. The police were physically pushing us from the Walkway down towards the station. Downstairs was where all the activity was. I had no other choice but to leave and watch it from a distance. I met my friend Radu, [REDACTED] on the ramp. He doesn't live in the Tower but he lives nearby. He had helped with the ladder. He took [REDACTED] so I took Leanne and we went down the ramp to the station. I found a seat for her and we stayed there for hours. We had nowhere to go. The fire looked the same: red and blue. There was more smoke and flames. The smoke looked like when you burn tires, the smoke you get from that. The pieces of cladding and all that stuff coming off the building were coming all the way to us, so we had to move back even further. The stuff was coming off the building in small pieces.

The immediate aftermath

31. Someone told us that they had opened the church, so we went there. We went along the road from the station to the church. There were plenty of people in that area. They gave us water, and Pampers and wipes for the baby.
32. We moved up to just in front of the church. We stayed there – we had nowhere else to go. They opened up the church and welcomed us in. My family was in a mess, but we were safe. We just had to witness it. All the people we saw in the building, the people we saw outside but hadn't seen for a few hours – I started wondering what had happened to

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them. People were crying, screaming and bawling. People wanted justice straightaway. I had 1 or 2 friends in the Tower, and there was an old lady that I used to help – her name was in the papers. It was just starting to get light by now, maybe 4 or 5am. The fire was still blazing.

33. We had nowhere to go so we stayed at the Church for 2 days and a half. Leanne's sister came and made room for us at her house near [REDACTED]. We stayed there for 2 nights. They found us a room in the [REDACTED] Hotel – 1 room for 3 of us. I asked to be moved back down by her sister as Leanne needed some space, she was feeling claustrophobic. No-one from the Government or officials came to check up on us for like 3 days. They only started finding us emergency accommodation after that time.

Medical assistance

34. I hurt my back helping Leanne out of the window – it felt like I pulled my back. I also hurt my knee trying to get her safely over the locked gate. Two days after the fire I tried to be seen in a hospital in Hayes but I didn't have any ID, I was waiting for it to be returned by the Home Office. So they told me that I wasn't eligible to be seen, and they turned me away. It's still causing me pain now – mostly my lower back, but also my right knee.

Statement of Truth

I confirm that the content of this witness statement is true.

I confirm that I am willing for this statement to form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and to be published on the Inquiry's website.

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