

CIARA LEEMING

Freelance Journalist

07886 532719

info@ciaraleeming.co.uk

www.ciaraleeming.co.uk

STREET FIGHTERS

BARBARA & JOHN YAFANO, ST HILDA'S, MIDDLESBROUGH

“Over the last five years, we have put up with....oh God....

We had empty properties, we've put up with druggers, they were squatting in the houses, urinating up the street, drinking, needles all over...we've had everything thrown at us. And then they said: 'we'll demolish them'. And we had to sit in here while they demolished. And you can see how far I am. There's my house, and an empty house - boarded up - the rest of them have gone, demolished. On the other side they're all demolished and there's three houses, but there's only one lady living in the middle. It reminds me a bit of a war zone.

I've been in this house for 30 years and I was born round the corner from where I live now. It'll be five and a half years now since mayor Ray Mallon called a meeting for all the residents in St Hilda's, and he just came out and said 'you're all coming down. I'm flattening the lot.'

'WHAT?'

People were like 'what's he talking about?' Absolute shock...could not believe what he was talking about. And that was it.

Initially they offered me £29,500. My fight with them has always been - it's you that's taking my house, it's you that's got to get me another one. I don't want to go, it's you that's doing it. So, of course there is nowhere for £29,500 anyway. So over the years, over the years, it went to 45. I said I still can't do anything with £45,000. I said, he's 62 and I'm 57 nearly. We're not taking a mortgage on....we couldn't take a mortgage on anyway as we wouldn't get one. And why should we? I said I want a house for a house.

I got £45,000 for my house, I got £20,000 MIDAS, I've had to put my £4,700 disturbance money...that's had to go in it. And the house I've got was £120,000. So they've come and said they will put £50,300 in. We haven't caved in. I don't look at it as caving in. We haven't. We've got a decent..a good deal I think, but by God we've had to fight for it.”