

# ECONOMIC (IN)JUSTICE

## FACTSHEET - STORY

Name	Luke Aaron
Details, area of experience	Drama student
Interview date	December 2020
Issues addressed	Class, rise of the far-right in White working class communities, disability, welfare state, suicide, mental health, job opportunities in rural areas versus high social mobility, pandemic
Injustice category (linked to economic injustice)	ability <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> age <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> class <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> faith <input type="checkbox"/> gender <input type="checkbox"/> neuro-diversity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> race <input type="checkbox"/> sexuality <input type="checkbox"/>
Dates mentioned	None
Locations referenced	Forest of Dean, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama; National Youth Theatre
Campaigns, movements, protests	None
Historical context	Social, cultural and economic factors of class
Tactics	<b>Including stories of economic injustice in theatre</b>
Key words	Class Identity Theatre Rural communities and isolation Proximity to poverty line

Key points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Geography impacts how resources are distributed - lack of access to jobs and opportunities in rural areas</li> <li>● Working class people are not represented in the arts</li> <li>● You don't have to 'escape' where you're from - you can include it in your work</li> <li>● Acknowledge own class and economic privilege to ask how you can help</li> </ul>
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Story summary	<p>Luke Aaron tells his story, coming from a rural working class area in the Forest of Dean, experiencing a lack of access to jobs, housing support and opportunities. Now, as a drama student in London, Luke's experiences inform his work – he uses theatre as a means to give voice to those facing economic injustice.</p> <hr/> <p>Grew up on a council estate in the Forest of Dean where there is a specific cultural identity based on 'the Forest' – not feeling Welsh or English, just Forest. The family didn't own anything, goods in the house were on finance. One Christmas Eve his dad took his own life and this of course impacted the family hugely, especially his mum whose mental health suffered. This experience has led him to question his own position in the world, asking: why are his friends' [at University?] experience different to mine?</p> <p>Jobs: Lack of access to jobs because it is hard to get to them and/or there aren't that many to choose from. His experience of going to college and work is traveling on a bus for 48mins to get to work because the Forest is so rural. His brother and mother struggle to hold down jobs. As soon as brother with special needs turned 18, his support from the welfare system was cut off - alienation and frustration.</p> <p>He feels the isolation of living in such an urban area, particularly when his interests are in the theatre and the resources for this type of Art are always based in London. Combatting this isolation came from the 1,000 of acres of ancient woodlands that surround the council estate he grew up in and that space was his escape from whatever he was experiencing or feeling. At University he experiences chandeliers, golden handle bars, hears people that "sound like the Queen", and an etiquette associated with that place. He lacked a sense of cultural affinity (sharing tastes and interests) with the place when he first arrived. This made him feel his class quite acutely and he noticed some of his own class "snobbery", which brought with it some micro-aggressions related to not 'fitting in'.</p> <p>A high proportion of people are from a middle-class background at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. Often the productions feature largely middle-class students and this filters what is staged. This has led Luke to question the role of the</p>
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	<p>theatre in the light of the far right – is what we see on stage reflecting only one aspect of society and ignoring the rest? Victoria Wood and Julie Walters created theatre that challenged classism in the industry.</p> <p>Actively tries to bring his class identity and his related experiences of facing economic injustice into his work at university.</p> <p>Pieces of work he’s interested in have experience of class warfare and economic injustice.</p>
Stand-out quotations	<p>“I’m an experience of class, I’m not THE working class”</p> <p>“It’s part of my identity - facing economic injustice and doing my best to climb away from it and also hold onto it because you can’t just run away from everything. It’s not about escaping where I’m from.”</p> <p>“I feel my class when I go to London. I feel my rurality when I go to London.”</p> <p>“When I talk about being working class in an arts environment people are not really sure what I mean.”</p> <p>“Why are my friends' experiences different to mine?”</p> <p>“It’s something you carry into a room that other people might not necessarily even acknowledge or think about.”</p> <p>“It doesn’t take very much to push someone over the edge when they’re already in a very fragile position.”</p>
Main themes for learners	<p>Identity &amp; belonging: there is often behaviour codes that govern a sense of who fits and who belongs in particular spaces and a cultural affinity (sharing tastes and interests) associated with those codes.</p> <p>We need to ask who gets to define who ‘we’ are, and who doesn’t belong or has to prove that they belong?</p> <p>What to do? Use your experiences and knowledge to influence your work - don’t run from your past.</p> <p>Critical thinking: Educate yourself about your class and economic position.</p> <p>Nature &amp; isolation: how accessing nature can help you to feel less isolated.</p>