

ECONOMIC (IN)JUSTICE

FACTSHEET - EXPLAINER

Name	Tessa Gray
Details, area of experience	A lawyer and activist. For 20+ years, senior legal adviser at the Hub Drop-In project (Newcastle & NE), for migrants; Chair of 'Recovering Justice', organisation in NE to promote changes to drugs policy and stigmatisation of drug users.
Interview date	November 2020
Issues addressed	Economic justice for migrants and vulnerable people; chronic unemployment in NE since 1980s since closure of shipyards and mines; current employment conditions; wages and benefits not enough for people to live on. Present economy punishes the poor.
Injustice category (linked to economic injustice)	ability <input type="checkbox"/> age <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> class <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> faith <input type="checkbox"/> gender <input type="checkbox"/> neuro-diversity <input type="checkbox"/> race <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> sexuality <input type="checkbox"/>
Key words	Chronic unemployment Living Wage Basic Minimum Income (BMI) No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Universal Credit Asylum Seekers Refugees Migrants Wealth inheritance

Brief summary (key points)	Tessa Gray explains the different types of employment in the UK, the need for a living wage on top of a basic minimum wage, and
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what changes are necessary in order to bring about economic justice. In our podcast series she explores how economic injustice affects refugees and asylum seekers and other historically excluded people.

Addressing economic injustice

In order to address economic injustice, Tessa advocates for: the end of wealth inheritance; a decent Basic Minimum Income for all; a cap on maximum income; a Living Wage on top of basic minimum wage; job conditions being as important as wages; investment in children and their parents, especially young mothers; free education from cradle to grave.

Refugees and asylum seekers in the economic system

Tessa explains that refugees and asylum seekers are victims of the West's policies and actions and the West seems to feel no guilt about this. Actions such as foreign policy (e.g. the War in Iraq), imperialism, political meddling and international theft cause people to become refugees. Global capitalism takes no responsibility for the victims it produces.

Some asylum seekers have no recourse to public funds (NRPF) so have no money at all, no safety net. Others have asylum support and housing but not enough money to live on and the housing provided is often unfit to live in. Private landlords benefit from government funding here.

Asylum seekers not allowed to work. Tessa explains this is not an economic decision but rather policy of isolating people, discouraging them from belonging and gaining a sense of community. Deportation decisions may and can be overturned because asylum seekers have friends/a community who support their leave to remain.

Many have fallen through the cracks of the economic system. They expected that government benefits would give them enough money to live on. They didn't realise that Universal Credit was not going to be enough. Tessa hopes that the people affected will start to recognise the injustice of the present economic system.

Post-Covid 19 impact

The future will be devastating for poor people. The national debt following the end of the pandemic will be used as an excuse to punish poor people. It doesn't have to be like this. The government can manage the economy differently.

It's important to treasure the generosity shown by those who haven't got much. Tessa talks warmly of a small organisation called Tax Aid, 'accountants with a conscience' who support low-paid, self-employed workers, e.g. Big Issue sellers, with their tax

	<p>returns and reduction in fines for late payment. Economic justice can take different forms.</p> <p>Positive activism You can't be too young to be an activist. Tessa feels very optimistic about young people's activism, particularly for climate change. Activism can be a lot of fun.</p>
<p>Stand-out quotations</p>	<p>"Economic Injustice and employment is partly about wages; it's about the conditions of employment and it's about freedom in employment."</p> <p>"Education cradle to the grave ... education can be a real driver for justice."</p> <p>"You invade my country, you steal my oil, and now I see, in your car, you are enjoying my petrol." Iraqi migrant speaking to Tessa.</p> <p>"I see global capitalism is mirrored in our little office on a Tuesday because (it) produces victims that it takes no responsibility for at all."</p> <p>"... (Covid pandemic) has opened up the true horror of economic injustice. Loads of people have fallen through the cracks."</p> <p>"... (People) didn't really think that you only got £74 a week (on Universal Credit)."</p> <p>"The (national) debt is going to be an excuse to punish poor people."</p> <p>"I don't think you can start activism too young."</p>
<p>Main themes for learners</p>	<p>How does economic injustice affect migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and other vulnerable people.</p> <p>What changes are needed to bring about economic justice?</p> <p>How do Western government policies and imperialism create victims?</p> <p>Are wages the most important aspect of economic injustice?</p> <p>Should people expect to be supported sufficiently by the government?</p> <p>Activism can start when you're young and doesn't have to be big.</p>