
LIFE ON A LOW INCOME IN AUSTERE TIMES – PART TWO

The video testimonies in this film were collected in Birmingham, Glasgow and Gloucestershire during 2012 and 2013.

SHAME, GUILT AND EMBARRASSMENT

Yeah, really embarrassed. Like I said the situation with my kids you know if they want something and they see that like I'm with my friends and their children have something and I haven't got any money at that time and they've got some then and yeah it makes me feel very guilty and you know embarrassed and horrible or you know or I've had to say – if they say 'oh do you want to come into town today?' and I'm like 'no I can't because I've got no money.' So yes it is hard. It is horrible.

You see them going into these big fancy restaurants. I can't do that. We've had one or two people say 'oh come out for a meal it's only twenty-five pound a head' and where the flaming hell am I gonna find that from? So I have to say no.

Interviewer

And how does that make you feel in that situation

A bit guilty because I'm turning people down and then they'll say 'oh you've not got the money then?' I mean you know it's just one of them things.

I think the main thing is you know being able to provide as a parent you know I was very lucky as a child and have both parents and had a very secure family unit. I've always tended to try and over compensate you know when it comes to providing

LIFE ON A LOW INCOME IN AUSTERE TIMES – PART TWO

for my children because in my mind they've only got me to provide for them you know. They've got nobody else to turn to. So yeah it's sort of you know I don't want to let my children down sort of thing not being able to give them what they need especially now with the education side of it - it does affect me and it does get me down you know.

Oh yes I've been embarrassed yes plenty of things. I've been embarrassed going out with my brother. We used to go on a Friday night with another guy who was at his work and embarrassed that he'd be paying for my meal you know and in fact it got – I stopped going on a Friday night. I don't go out any more because I can't afford to pay. I don't like it.

I absolutely hate it. I hate it. When I have to put a brave face on for everybody and if you speak to anybody.... They've got me up there – they've got me on a pedestal but they don't know what's going on in here. I hate it. It's demoralising. There's been many times I've picked the children up from school and oh mum can we go to the Square – that's where the shop is – and I'm no money I've got no money going on. Okay.

Interviewer

And do you always feel like that? Are some days better than others or –

I always feel like that. I just I've just learnt how to hide it.

STIGMA AND DISRESPECT

I feel like that every single time I mention ...job centre I feel like that when I go for any anybody asking for job opportunities

LIFE ON A LOW INCOME IN AUSTERE TIMES – PART TWO

because they just think that because you're not in a job you're not trying like I'm not don't push me in a statistic before you get to know me you know what I mean like learn about my aspirations before you make an assumption on me which is very frustrating like its like I was talking about an incident today where I'd gone into the Job Centre to sign on and a guy was talking to a guy that works at front of house and he was saying to him well I've been in isolation for so long now when will I get dealt with? And then this guy had turned to me and was like 'next please' and I looked at him and I goes 'it's fine. You know I'm early to sign any way. It's fine. I'll wait until you deal with his enquiry.' And he's gone 'okay' and he's called the guy behind me and just kept on going through the line and just completely ignored me and I was thinking how can an employer ask me for things like communication skills, people skills when you Job Centre workers don't even have those. And it's like they're setting the bar too high and people like you know the guy he's slipping through the system and it's people like him that would look at me as a statistic

But yeah I know I've found it when I've been out and about or maybe going in to different places maybe even meet people who consider themselves up the ladder with the class systemespecially well people I've dealt with like who are lone parents there just not welcome as well You can get people in shops, restaurants, bars they look at you as if 'what the hell are you doing in here?' It's horrible ...

Okay. When I became a single parent there was always this oh you're a single parent so you know you're a scrounger and she sits at home doing nothing. That used to really, really get to me because I used to think well hold on a minute not everybody is

LIFE ON A LOW INCOME IN AUSTERE TIMES – PART TWO

the same. We're not all in the same you know everybody has a reason as to why they are in the position they are in. To me I didn't ask to end up on my own with four children you know. Why do they just assume that we are all bad because we're single parents? So yeah it really used to get to me. It made me feel like I wasn't worth anything – through the media – you know you read things about it you know people would be judgmental because you're on benefits I mean I know this sounds really mad but you know when you watch I haven't really watched Jeremy Kyle very often but you hear so much about it anyway and I've watched it and he sits there and he says oh yeah you're on benefits and you don't do this and you don't do that and yeah maybe on Jeremy – he might be right but he's not portraying people on benefits very well because you know if you're on benefits everyone says oh Jeremy Kyle. It's wrong. You shouldn't be made to feel that way.

I shouldn't feel like you know I've aggravated you and you know I don't know what I've done or whatever in the Job Centre. That's the place where I'm meant to be feeling comfortable and the reality is these signposts in places where we're meant to go are not like that because these people because there are so many people that don't want to work or whatever it's just a big statistic around the whole employment thing where – not everybody falls into that – there are people that are trying. It would be nice if you go to this place and everybody is dealt with in a nice manner until they've shown you a different side to them that would make you feel to deal with them that way but if not then the manner of some of the places are very – they're not nice. I think the longer you are on job seekers the bad – the worse it looks but as I said that's just the shell - you're not - you're not digging deep into asking you know what I've been

LIFE ON A LOW INCOME IN AUSTERE TIMES – PART TWO

doing? Have I gone for any interviews? Have I – have I done anything? And it just makes you think that because there is so much media on people who aren't doing anything they're not focusing on I mean there was like a programme the other day talking about the benefit cheats – how to cheat the benefits – what people do at job centres. Did you interview anybody who had aspirations? Did you interview anybody who had goals that wanted to do things, that wanted to get out of the job centre. No they didn't and it's all around negative media. Why isn't anything positive? Why isn't anything positive about job searching for young people? Why isn't there anything positive for somebody who's contributed to a company for thirty-five years and made redundant. Why isn't there any cover story on their story like it's just all one sided.

Video testimonies were collected by:

Dr Simon Pemberton (University of Birmingham)

Dr Eldin Fahmy (University of Bristol)

Dr Eileen Sutton (University of Bristol)

Assisted by Dr Karen Bell (University of Bristol)

Edited by Liaket Ali (Open University)

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LIFE ON A LOW INCOME IN AUSTERE TIMES – PART TWO

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