

# Equity Green Room Episode 1 Transcript

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, equity, women, industry, jackie, theatre, absolutely, happening, bullying, members, actors, talking, rehearsal room, pret, harassment, issues, speak, world, job, feel

## SPEAKERS

Maureen Beattie, Member story 3, Member story 2, Member story 1, Harriet Walter, Hywel Morgan, Charlotte Bence, Zainab Hasan, Elaine Stirrat, Jackie Clune



Jackie Clune 00:16

Welcome to the Equity Green Room podcast, a new podcast with a backstage green room kind of vibe, where you, the members talk about your lives as creative professionals, activists, equity members.



Jackie Clune 00:30

I'm Jackie clune. And every fortnight or so, I'll be interviewing Equity members in our virtual green room about the issues affecting them right now. Perhaps inspired by events either in the industry or the world at large. For this first episode, I'll be focusing on the issue of women's safety. Our profession often means late night travel, unsocial hours, and all the challenges other late night workers face.



Jackie Clune 00:58

The recent tragic murder of Sarah Everard, who was just walking home at 9:30pm has reopened the wider issue of how safe women feel on the streets at night. I'm sure most, if not all female Equity members, will be familiar with the tips and tricks we all use in order to feel safer getting home at night. Keys in your hand, stick to brightly lit streets. Have your phone at the ready, pretend to be talking to someone on it if need be. Don't get in an empty train carriage and sit near the driver on buses. Don't speak to anyone. Don't make

eye contact. Don't stand out, text someone to let them know where you are, and when you're likely to be home. All those little adaptations we make to mitigate our daring to be out after dark to decrease our risk of being attacked.



### Jackie Clune 01:49

Women in the creative industries who often work at night are victims of sexual and verbal harassment regularly. Here's just a sample of responses I received after a simple shout out on Ensemble, the Facebook group for musical theatre performers, and the website for Era 5050. The campaign for equal representation for actresses. I should warn you that the following content includes stories of harassment, sexual assault and stalking, as well as language some listeners may find offensive.



### Member story 1 02:20

I remember thinking Glasgow was pretty bad as far as catcalling and harassment goes by I spent a month in London with Glasgow girls in 2017, I think and holy crap, London is a totally different ballgame. I was harassed every night walking home from the theatre. There was a group of men who would hang outside the tube I needed. And every night they would yell at me, tell me to smile. Tell them the things they'd do to me. And some nights even follow me into the station. But what used to upset me the most was that the tube was always busy. There were always other people. And no one ever said anything or even intervened. I was totally on my own. I ended up stopping going out in London. If we were having cast drinks or anything, I just went straight back to digs because I didn't feel safe. Even as a group of seven women we were still harassed. There was also a lot more of being groped on the tube, then pushing up against you to get past, your ass being grabbed as a man got off the tube, way more than I ever experienced in Scotland.



### Member story 2 03:27

About 10 years ago a random man managed to get my number off the contact sheet by stage door. When I was on tour in Manchester. He started calling me in the middle of the night. This went on for the entire time that we were in Manchester. 12 weeks. On these calls, he would make sexual noises and I can only assume that he was masturbating. When we moved the show back to London, I assume that he would stop calling me as I assumed that he was a Manchester based person. I was very wrong. On two occasions, I was followed home by this guy. Unfortunately, I never saw him follow me and it wasn't until I got back to my studio flat I lived alone in and I'd get calls telling me that I looked good and that he liked what I was wearing. And he would then describe it. On one of these occasions, it wasn't a show day, it was actually a Sunday and my 30th birthday

party. It was the middle of the afternoon. I was getting ready and I dressed up in a really long, beautiful backless dress. He called me and told me that you liked my dress. I looked out the window and I saw a man standing looking up at my first floor flat. At this point I contacted the police, who could do nothing as the guy would always call me from a no caller ID. Shortly after this, my then boyfriend and I moved to Hong Kong for two years for his job. I never used my UK mobile phone in Hong Kong. But whenever I would come back to the UK every few months, I would have voicemails off this guy where he would either be making sexual noises or telling me what he wanted to do to me. This went on for years. Eventually it did stop but anytime I was in a show, I would always worry that this guy would be stood outside the stage door waiting for me and would follow me home and I wouldn't even know it. Anytime I get a call from a no caller ID, it makes me shiver, wondering if I will pick up the phone and it will be him.

M

### Member story 3 05:17

When I was working in town a few years ago, it was a boiling hot summer, and I was wearing shorts and sandals. After the show when I travelled to Victoria to begin my commute home. As I got onto the concourse a man, I'd say was in his 50s, started yelling at me. I bet you're a right fucking slut, look at you. Just carried on. I literally had a T-shirt and shorts on with sandals. I was incensed and raging with anger. But the best that came out of my mouth was oh, that's lovely, isn't it? You're delightful. He carried on and on following me across the concourse and yelling. Thankfully, it was relatively busy but no one stepped in, no station staff. No-one. I eventually got to my platform and through the barriers where he stopped following me but the vile spewing out of his mouth was disgusting.

J

### Jackie Clune 06:10

Just a few contributions I received and whilst some issues are specific to our industry - call sheets at the stage door should be private - most words depressingly all on the same theme of feeling and being unsafe on the streets. So what is the answer? The government announced new safety measures following Sarah Everard's murder, including an additional 25 million pounds for better lighting and CCTV, as well as piloting plain clothes officers in pubs and clubs. But campaigners say the money is not enough. And the measures won't help to change the attitudes that drive violence against women. I'm joined now in the Equity Green Room by Equity's Industrial Theatre Official, the wonderful Charlotte Bence. Welcome to the green room, Charlotte.

C

### Charlotte Bence 07:02

Hey, Jackie, thank you for having me.

J

Jackie Clune 07:04

This is sort of like a cast visit for you, isn't it? You're allowed in the green room just today?

C

Charlotte Bence 07:08

Just today

J

Jackie Clune 07:10

So we've been talking about the safety of our members, specifically those who work in the nighttime economy. Charlotte, is the Government response adequate?

C

Charlotte Bence 07:28

I'm not really sure that it is. To be honest, I'm not really sure that the government response is adequate. Because I think what the government response fails to do is acknowledge that when we talk about personal safety, and when we talk about safety in the nighttime economy, we're not just talking about women. And I don't want to, you know, I'm a very similar age to Sarah Everard. I walk the streets that she walked, my friends are the same age as her, we look and we sound like Sarah Everard did. But I don't want to minimize the kind of fears that people have. But I do think that when we're talking about questions of personal safety, we have to remember that the measures that we put in place, and the things that we fight for have to encompass everybody, because we talk about women's safety and the measures that we need to improve safety for women, but we also have to consider things that would make visibly trans or queer people safer on our streets, we have to talk about the things that would make people with disabilities safer on our streets, black people and other people of color. You know, creating the kind of society and the kind of world in which all of us are safe, is not about having these kind of slightly siloed considerations, by protected characteristic, but it's about thinking around the environments we need, and the measures we have to put in place for everybody. And this is borne out when you look at where violence against women occurs, and where what the primary site of danger is for women. The information available from the Office of National Statistics shows you that the primary site of violence for women is the home. And it is in fact men who are far more likely to be attacked on the streets than women. So this kind of, you know, this kind of narrative that we've seen emerging around women as these sort of very vulnerable, very cowed, very delicate and fragile creatures has filled me with this sort of boiling hot rage. Because we have this line that we should stay at home, we should

be careful. More so than anybody else in society is required to be careful. And that's wholly inadequate. Because it's not the responsibility of women to change and address our behavior. It's the responsibility of society to address the problems that cause violent behavior in people of all genders, but predominantly men.

**J** Jackie Clune 10:00

Yes, I've heard you talk about this subject before and it is always really important to be reminded that as Equity members, as trade unionists, we need to be aware of an industrial response. Of course, we're all sort of part of the feminist campaign to reclaim the night and to support women in all areas of their lives. But what we need to keep a focus on is what can we do industrially? So is it about marshals in nightclubs and better street lighting? Partially probably, but what is Equity's position on increasing the safety across all the diversities as you've just outlined.

**C** Charlotte Bence 10:42

I just want to kind of touch on the first thing he said there around marshals and in nightclubs, which, personally I'm entirely against, because, most women, most trans people, most black people I know, who have been to nightclubs and enjoy pubs and clubs and that kind of thing, have also been harassed by bouncers, have also experienced by violence from bouncers and that kind of thing. So I don't really see how increasing those presences keeps people safe. Now, industrially, I think what we have to look at is those circumstances where people become vulnerable. And that will look different from sector to sector. So if we take theatre, for example, I think one of the industrial priorities has to be looking at digs. We know that it makes people unsafe when they are required to stay in accommodation in the spare room of somebody they've ever met, that's three miles away from the theatre and buses stop in this particular town or city at 9, 10 o'clock at night. So when you leave the theater at 1030, 11 o'clock, all you can do is walk home.

**J** Jackie Clune 11:51

Yeah, that's a really good example, isn't it of where the agreements come into play. So the commercial theatre agreement or the touring agreements, where you can just demand that managers and producers actually provide accommodation that's safe and secure.

**C** Charlotte Bence 12:06

Totally. And I think that has to be a really important priority. But it's also stuff like some people who work in variety. You know, we've had some really interesting conversations

with women who are part of the Equity comedians network, for example, which is a group of our members I'm really fortunate to work with. And one of the issues that they've come across is, there is inadequate information provided to people about how to get to venues. So you're sort of wandering around the streets quite late at night on your own, with no real clear idea of where you're going. One of our members said that when she organizes gigs, when she acts as a promoter, she collects people from the nearest tube station and takes them there. And that's a really good thing that it's quite simple, but encourages people to have that conversation about safety, and thinking about the safety of the people that they're working with. There's also questions in variety, and indeed, in certain parts of theatre, where we're talking about the facilities that are required for people to change in. I've had a lot of conversations with variety performers, theatre workers, about being told to go and get changed in a public toilet.

**J** Jackie Clune 13:16  
Oh, Charlotte, I've got some stories about that.

**C** Charlotte Bence 13:19  
I bet you have! And one of the really quite sad things is I bet that, you know, Jackie, we could speak to literally any Equity member, women in particular and people beyond the gender binary, and there would be a tale about terrible, terrible situations in which they've been required to change. I've heard horror stories from people where there's no private space provided and when people have been getting changed, they've just had to sort of tell everybody to look the other way while they're taking their bra off. And you just thought, I think, well, in what kind of world is that acceptable? It's not.

**J** Jackie Clune 13:59  
Once I was doing a Karen Carpenter tribute act in a gay bar somewhere in West London and I turned up and I always had to tongue my hair as Karen would have wanted. And I was sharing the dressing room, which was the male toilets - I don't think there were any female toilets - with the male stripper. Who was, shall we say, preparing himself for his act (laughs)

**C** Charlotte Bence 14:24  
But it's funny now, but it's easy to see how those kinds of situations make people incredibly vulnerable, right. And it's easy to see how those sorts of situations can quite easily spill into environments where people not only feel but are unsafe.

J Jackie Clune 14:40  
Absolutely.

C Charlotte Bence 14:41  
One of the things that we have to be quite clear on is that safety is not an objective thing all the time. You know, there are things that are objectively not safe. There are things that anybody would look at and say, this is not a safe situation or I don't feel safe in that environment. But so much around personal safety is also subjective. It's also about how people feel, and what might be okay for one person isn't necessarily the same for somebody else. And it's about creating the space in which people feel able to say to the producer, I'm not happy with this, we need to have another look at what else can be put in place because I don't feel that this accommodation is suitable. I don't feel that this changing room is suitable. And it's not okay for someone to turn around and be like, "well, we had another woman in last week and she got changed in the toilets. It's fine for her. It's fine for you." But people have to be able to have that conversation. And producers and venue owners and other engages of our members, irrespective of what part of the industry they operate in, need to engage in those conversations in good faith, so that people aren't sort of weirdly pressurised into doing stuff that they're not comfortable with.

J Jackie Clune 15:53  
Yes. We all need to stand together. And that's why being a member of Equity is so important. Especially we have such wonderful staff as you, Charlotte. Thank you so much for joining me today. If you had a snack in the fridge in the green room, what would it be?

C Charlotte Bence 16:08  
I would go for one of two things. I mean, bear in mind, trade union officials don't tend to go into real green rooms that often, but if I were ever a point that I was allowed to store snacks in the green room fridge, item number one would be satsumas because they're my favorite, and I adore them. And in satsuma season, I can quite easily get through four or five in a day, or item number two would be those chocolate bars in Pret that are sort of like fridge cakes. Biscuit and bits of fruit in and all that kind of thing.

J Jackie Clune 16:45  
That's two shout outs for Pret now. There are others shops available.

**C** Charlotte Bence 16:53  
Actually I would really like Greg's steak bake.

**J** Jackie Clune 16:57  
Come on, now you're talking my language!

**C** Charlotte Bence 16:59  
Yeah, totally. And those vegan sausage rolls.

**J** Jackie Clune 17:03  
Charlotte, thank you so much.

**C** Charlotte Bence 17:05  
Thanks, Jackie.

**J** Jackie Clune 17:18  
Now it's not just on the streets that women members feel vulnerable, Equity's safe spaces campaign launched in 2018 has recently undergone a reboot. And here to talk about safety both outside and inside the rehearsal room is none other than Equity president Maureen Beattie. Welcome to the Equity Green Room Maureen.

**M** Maureen Beattie 17:39  
How fabulous Thank you very much, tis tea is delicious.

**J** Jackie Clune 17:43  
Oh, yes, I sent stage management out to buy the milk.

**M** Maureen Beattie 17:46  
I don't know if you can get away with that anymore



Jackie Clune 17:49

I'm one of those actors (laughing). No, no, I'm really I'm not (laughing). Maureen, safe spaces, it was kind of your baby, wasn't it when you when you took over the presidency? What prompted you to prioritize this issue?



Maureen Beattie 18:06

In fact, I wasn't president, when I took it over, I think I was president in waiting. Because I knew I would be president because nobody was daft enough to stand against me. That's what I like to think. But it was really the Harvey Weinstein scandal that absolutely rocked the world and it was just that whole thing of a boil that was just lurking under the surface that was waiting to come to the surface of the skin and ruptured, and suddenly, we were all able to see "I've had that kind of experience". "Oh, yes, I'd heard about that". We all knew all of those things that were going on and it just stopped myself and then General Secretary Christine Pain, that we as Equity as the largest entertainment workers union in the UK, and one of the most powerful entertainment unions in the world, in fact, with many affiliations, you know, across the globe, that we absolutely had to be at the forefront, right up at the vanguard of a movement that was going to challenge this behavior.



Maureen Beattie 19:10

So I won't I won't go on too long about what we came up with but it was basically a three pronged attack. There's an affirmation, which many people will be au fait with, which is the spoken word at the beginning of any project that you start on, which is how are we going to behave with one another? There was a visual image which was a poster, which was the Equity logo, with the harassment helplines on it, etc. And there was our Agenda for Change, which was - what are we going to do? And who have we been speaking to and what are our demands of all the other organizations that we work with? So we can all move forward as a as a team. I believe that it had a real impact. I heard good stories coming back. Not in every way and it wasn't perfect. But it did work.



Maureen Beattie 20:04

But what we also knew from the very start was, that there would be a lull, and then they would start slithering out from under their slimy stones again. And that, of course has never stopped. But as recently, no doubt, we will speak about this, you suddenly realized that the people who behave in this fashion don't go away. They're just waiting for their chance. So that's why we said, we have got to reboot this. And in fact, we've started that process as Jackie you know, you're very much part of that. And indeed, I've been talking to

Elaine, because she's been doing great work, which I know we will speak about later, about how do we take what we had, find out what worked, what didn't work, how we can reboot it, and how can we make it better? And one of the things that I think is really, really key here, well, there's two things. One is we have to get this, in answer to something you said Jackie, in the reboot meeting we had, you said "we have got to get this right into the DNA of our agreements". This has got to be a clause in our agreements. You will sign this contract and you sign something that says how you will behave as opposed to some wishy washy "oh yes, it'll all be fine, everybody will just start behaving well, because somebody asked nicely."

J

Jackie Clune 21:25

I think that's, I think that's one of the problems, isn't it? Especially in theatre. In film, we're used to sort of a certain level of mogul, bad behavior, and it's kind of been excused as just power, it's just money. But you know, in the sort of touchy feely world of the subsidized theatre sector, or even in commercial theatre to an extent, was there some sort of resistance to this idea that there are perpetrators lurking in the wings?

M

Maureen Beattie 21:50

Oh, absolutely. "Shock horror. I don't know what you mean"

J

Jackie Clune 21:55

"We've all lovely, liberal, lovely people."

M

Maureen Beattie 21:58

"We've always started off from the place of total respect for everybody." And you're like "excuse me!?" The one that absolutely just blew my brains out of my ears was colleges of drama, training colleges, dance schools, and technical colleges (saying) "oh, no, we're great. We've got everything in place." I mean, excuse me?!

J

Jackie Clune 22:25

Some of the worst stories have come out of those institutions.

M

Maureen Beattie 22:28

Absolutely. And, in fact, my old alma mater, now known as the Royal Conservatoire of

Scotland - I suppose I should be careful, well, it was just a fact, actually this is praise in a way - they did the most fantastic work on the back of our safe spaces campaign. They looked at how people were behaving, both staff to pupil, and also pupil to pupil, particularly, and they came up with this really fantastic series of points that everybody has to sign up to, and everyone agreed to, and there were workshops on it, it was absolutely fantastic. When that was embedded, and I was completely thrilled, I thought, oh, god, this is great. This is changing everything around. What was in a blink of an eye, was one of the lecturers was caught behaving so badly, and was fired. And you just go, well, how, how do you fix this? And of course, we've just got to keep on keeping on until we do.

**J** Jackie Clune 23:28  
Definitely. And on that note, I'd like to now introduce the Glasgow chair. Elaine Stirrat. Welcome to the Equity Green Room Elaine.

**E** Elaine Stirrat 23:36  
Thank you for having me

**J** Jackie Clune 23:37  
You're an experienced podcaster yourself aren't you? With your brilliant podcast Persistent and Nasty, so I'll be on my best behavior now and trying to impress you.

**E** Elaine Stirrat 23:49  
I just ramble

**J** Jackie Clune 23:50  
Well, that's what we all do, for a living, sometimes for money if we're lucky. Not now, obviously. So it's not just people in positions of power, is it?, that can be perpetrators of this kind of abuse of women and and of men and any non binary people that have experienced bullying or harassment of any kind. What about when the perpetrator is somebody in the cast? I mean, they've been massive revelations just this week and a big case in Scotland, I understand a couple of weeks ago. And how do we navigate that?

E

Elaine Stirrat 24:21

It's a systemic issue. We can't fix it overnight. It's a constant conversation and everything has to change when things come up. And you touched on it earlier about people's reactions to finding out things. Even yesterday, Persistent and Nasty were in a meeting with the Federation of Scottish Theatre, an amazing woman called Lisa Sangster. I mean, the amount of work that she's put into her dissertation on sexual harassment within Scottish theatres is incredible. The detail is outstanding. Equity were there as well, Adam and Marlene from Scotland and Northern Ireland where they are, and it was really fascinating because the lovely Fiona Sturgeon she of FST knew about stuff but didn't know about it to the level that it's at. And all we as Persistent and Nasty is doing is giving anecdotes from our community. The people who are out there working, freelancers who don't have the support and who are really vulnerable, because even when you're not in a building, these things happen. They don't just happen in the rehearsal room, though. And I think that's the thing, we have to find a way of how we re-educate everyone from the very beginning, because it happens in the pub afterwards. I mean we all (laughs)- and I laugh at that because it's the utter ridiculousness of it - is that we all have a story.

J

Jackie Clune 26:00

Yeah, absolutely. I'm sitting here thinking about times, when I do think things have improved. And I do think, even at the very least, management are scared now to have any cases like this. Because it may mean they lose face, it may mean they have to hold production, you know, which would cost them money. And that's where you really can hurt people. But it just seems to me that things have changed a bit. Not so long ago, I can remember stories of being in a cast, when you sort of feel that, especially if you're a performer and you're a woman, you feel like you're not allowed to be that actress who says, "Oh, stop touch me not" . It's all about trust and being liberal and being open and being, you know, free with your feelings. And there's a really big line that a lot of people cross there, isn't there. And it's very difficult sometimes to say, "Actually, no, that crosses my line and you're now abusing that trust." Because we are in the moment,

E

Elaine Stirrat 26:57

We're trained to say yes to everything. You say yes to any job that comes up because you never know when your next one's coming. You say yes to anything that happens in the rehearsal room because, and especially as a woman, you don't want to be tarred with the she's difficult to work with brush. Or she's a bit of a bitch, or - I said it wasn't gonna swear. It was in quotes! Or she's no ensemble player. She brings the energy of the room down. A men do it in really different ways. They don't do it like that, you know, they will have their temper tantrum about something. And everybody in the rooms like, "oh, okay, well, we'll

all just sit here and wait till he's had his moment". But that never gets talked about about him being difficult to work with.

J

Jackie Clune 27:47

Because "that's just artistic temperament and genius" isn't it? When we do it, we're the B word.

E

Elaine Stirrat 27:52

Yeah.

M

Maureen Beattie 27:55

One of the things that I thought was very interesting was that there were these revelations recently, is this thing that women do very much which an old partner of mine used to describe as in my case, was what he called hahaha. Which is when men do or say something, and you don't want to be the woman who goes, "I'm sorry, seriously? Why do you think that's..." I mean, there's a clip of one of these guys doing this wanky thing with a microphone pretending to wank over the two women that is having a conversation with. And you can see both the women going "ha ha ha" because they don't know what to do, but they don't want to make a fuss. Just what you're saying, Elaine, they want everything to be nice and they don't want to be the one. There's that whole "Come on, catch a grip, loosen up". I've told the story before, which you may or may not remember. But when I was in college of drama myself right at the very end of my three years, one of the senior lecturers said to me, "you know, your work, Maureen, it lacks depth. It's, you're quite good, but you lack depth. And I think one of the reasons might be because you're still a virgin." Oh, yep. There you go. Now I of course know realize in my very long tooth, grey hair days is that what he was actually saying was, I can help you with this. Thank God. I didn't but I realize that now, but at the time, so naive was I that I took him literally, I was like "Oh, my goodness, that's terrible. I said thank you very much." I said, "I am obviously going to have to go and do something about that. Thank you." And I walked off into the night. So I don't know what he did with what was happening in his body at the time, but I hope it was deeply disappointing for him.

J

Jackie Clune 29:47

All the women listening and probably some of the men have stories similar to that. I know I do. I remember being on a returning drama coming in for one episode, and one of the regular actors knocked on my dressing room door. This is a long time ago I hasten to add,

they more or less said, "you know, it's sort of tradition that guest artists sleep with me, you know, how you fixed?" Yeah, outrageous.

J

Jackie Clune 30:16

What do you think the reboot is going to achieve? What do we need to double down on now to make sure this message is really getting across?

M

Maureen Beattie 30:25

Well I think we need to just get very, very, very angry. I think that the time for us to be diplomatic and calm, drink tea and keep calm and carry on - it's too late for that. I had a meeting yesterday with two fantastic women from Arts Council England about gender equality, it's still not there. They ask that they are making to the companies that they give money to, even though we're still 51% of the population. I just find myself saying, you know what, I'm really sorry, but I don't know what I'm doing here. Because we had meetings with you before, and you nodded and smiled. And here we are again, and absolutely nothing has happened. And you know, what, I don't think anything is going to happen. Because the patriarchy, let's say the word out loud - that whole patriarchy - the Arts Council England and all the big funding bodies exist within the patriarchy. The reason why these people are being paid these shitloads of money, and are in these positions of power is because of the patriarchy. And until they can take an axe and hack the shackles of the patriarchy that they are stuck in, locked into, we're never going to make a difference. So that's what we've got to go do. We've got to get out there with our axes. Sorry I don't mean this literally. Anyone listening, please do not take this seriously. Anyone who's seen the film *The Fisher King* I do not mean it. But take that metaphorical axe and cut off those metaphorical shackles and get angry. I feel that one of the things we can do and Jackie we might have spoken about this as well, is to actually get a guardian angel thing going where people say "Yes, I am". And there's a you'll get a badge, it will be a very, very nicely designed badge, it won't be something horrible to wear, it will go with all your outfits. And it will say "I am a guardian angel" or spider woman. Elaine and I were talking about this idea and Elaine gave me a very fab spider brooch. But the idea being that somebody walks into that rehearsal room and declares at the very beginning, "I am the spider woman". And if you have any problem at all, you come to me and I am going to, not that you suddenly turn into somebody who can who can give you all the answers, but "I will take that and I will take it to the right person. I will back you."

J

Jackie Clune 32:56

It's no time to be getting tired and fed up. It's time to be persistent and nasty, isn't it

Elaine? We've been nice. We've played nice. We've asked nicely. We've said our little incantation at the beginning of rehearsals. And still this rubbish goes on. So watch out because we're coming to get you. Well, what are your recommendations Elaine?

E

Elaine Stirrat 33:14

It's really interesting that Maureen talks about the guardian angel and the spiderwoman because this is one of the things that we have thought about at Persistent and Nasty. I know that the Old Vic put in this guardian role after the Kevin Spacey thing. I actually am really interested to know what the statistics are. And if it's actually worked, because I think there's a big thing about we put these rules in place, but we need to know if they're working. I think it's vital that we have cross sector conversations as well. It can't just be theatre doing one thing, film doing another, dance doing something else, music doing something else, it has to all come together. And it has to all be from the same starting point.

J

Jackie Clune 33:53

Variety as well.

E

Elaine Stirrat 33:53

Many issues there as well, obviously, and it all has to come into that. And we have to start from one point. But actually, it's also about all of us checking ourselves as well, because we all have unconscious bias in everything that we do. We all need to be aware of the situations that are happening across the UK, not just in our little pockets. So when statements get made they should be getting made about everything, not just about it happening in London or it happening in Glasgow. It has to be aware. And that's something that the union can do as well. But there's definitely the idea of having someone in the room is really important because it takes away the pressure for the person who wants to explain and tell their story without repercussion.

J

Jackie Clune 34:48

Nobody is above being held to account no matter what they've achieved in their career. No matter who they are, no matter what good work they've done. You know, this stuff cuts through all of that.

E

Elaine Stirrat 34:58

Yeah. I I think that's even, we said this yesterday in our meeting, and it was one of the women that was in the meeting, made this brilliant point. Over the next few weeks, months, people are going to have really difficult conversations with people of possible friendships of 20/30 years, and it's going to be hard. And a lot of that is that people aren't quite ready to do that work. It is also for the people that are coming forward and those of us that are doing the work, there are many of us, it's triggering, it's exhausting, it's tiring. And what needs to happen is there needs to be a real cushion round all of that, so that everybody feels that they are supported. I have to say I emailed all of our theatres in Scotland last week in regards to the situation that's been happening in Scotland and the reaction that that had online, and the majority of them have been extremely positive and we are having meetings soon. And I think what's really important is that we then have it across the board because everything feels very much like it's intersecting on everybody's thoughts. There's no point in us all trying to reinvent the wheel the same way. We need to work together and share the workload because it's hard work.

J

Jackie Clune 36:23

Yes, and I can't think of any better fellow spider women to be moving forward with all this stuff with so thank you so much, Maureen Beattie and Elaine Stirrat. Before we go, I'm asking the same question to all of the guests in the Equity Green Room. When you're in a green room and you stop your little snacks in the fridge, do you bring your lunch in a Tupperware? Or do you pop out to a well-known sandwich store near you?

M

Maureen Beattie 36:51

Shall I answer first? Well, I'm a vegetarian. So it would always be something like - this is going to sound so like "actors looking after the bodies". I'm saying that we do have to look after our bodies! - but it will always be something like cut up tasty crudities and I'll have with some lovely houmous or something like that. I'm trying very hard - I'm sure this will be another podcast you'll do Jackie with with our fabulous younger members particularly who are doing green New Deal with us. And really green greening up Equity big time. Fantastic. - but I'm trying to cut back on my plastic so I haven't quite got to the thing of not buying houmous in a little plastic thing, but I'm building up to a crescendo and hopefully I'll get to that front line.

E

Elaine Stirrat 37:42

I would like to see that I take my lunch with me, but I am never organized to do that.

- J** Jackie Clune 37:47  
You're that girl?
- E** Elaine Stirrat 37:48  
I am that girl. Yep. I really want to be the one that is organized and have my lunch but no, I go out, I probably go out...
- J** Jackie Clune 38:00  
Marvelous, there's no right answer. You know, we all do what we do.
- E** Elaine Stirrat 38:04  
As long as there is some form of milk - I don't care what kind - in the fridge that I can put in my tea.
- J** Jackie Clune 38:11  
Packet of biscuits that you hide from everyone else.
- E** Elaine Stirrat 38:14  
That's all I really need.
- M** Maureen Beattie 38:19  
Just before we go. What's the most exotic thing anyone's said so far? I know you haven't done many of these, have you?
- J** Jackie Clune 38:26  
Well, somebody said that they went to Gregg's and got a pasty. That's sort of radical working class chic, isn't it? Going to Gregg's and get a pasty at lunchtime. I'm with you with your houmous and your carrot sticks. Thank you so much for joining me and we'll look forward to the rollout of the new Safe Spaces 2.0.
- J** Jackie Clune 38:56

I'm joined now in the Equity Green Room by the very wonderful actor and activist and writer Zainab Hasan. Welcome Zainab.

Z

Zainab Hasan 39:01

Oh, thank you, Jackie. Thank you for having me.

J

Jackie Clune 39:13

So I wanted to ask you, we've been talking as you know today about harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, poor behavior in the industry as a whole. And what are the specific challenges as far as you're concerned for people of African, Caribbean, Asian Southeast Asian descent in our industry when it comes to bullying or harassment?

Z

Zainab Hasan 39:35

Well, firstly, Jackie, I just want to make really clear that I don't really see myself as an authority voice. I think it's a delicate area and I don't claim to be an expert and I'm not certainly here to speak on behalf of anybody in particular, you know, women of color, we're not a monolith. We've all had sort of individual experiences within the industry. I think when it comes to bullying and harassment, the first thing that I would say is that I don't think that there is any one type of bullying. I think that, you know, in some ways, it's not even obvious, you know, it's insidious, it's underhand. And I don't even know if a lot of people, including myself know about the different types of bullying and abuse that exists and the nuances of it to be able to even name it, to then even be able to report it. But I think certainly, when it comes to sort of women, particularly of color in this industry, or just anybody who's marginalized, I think there is something in having to sort of work so much harder to actually be in this industry in the first place, that when you do find yourself in a situation where there is bullying, or there is harassment, I think that there is this reticence of you know, when it comes to complaining about it, because there is a fear of sabotaging your career. I think again, if you if you would say you're white, and you were middle class, and you were to get harassed, you've probably got more at your disposal to be able to kind of perhaps maybe deal with it, then say, a working class actor who doesn't even know how they're going to pay next month's rent. So I think there is an issue of feeling like you can even speak about it. Firstly, to begin with, if you find yourself marginalized in this industry in some way.

Z

Zainab Hasan 41:28

I think that also, there are - again, I'm not here to speak on behalf of women of color more

generally - but misogynoir means that there is a particular sexism that is faced by black women in this industry, who often, just from speaking to friends and colleagues who've been in situations where they get criminalized, and they're told that they're the bully, in situations when in fact that they have legitimate concerns and grievances. Again, the extent to which that then puts you off even feeling like you can even speak about certain issues. I've also been thinking a lot about how women of color say, are sexualized in this industry, compared to say, white women, and I don't think it's necessarily just in this industry, I think it's a more sort of societal issue anyway. But I'm thinking about the ways in which it translates itself into this industry. And when you think about expectations of intimacy, and people's boundaries, how they get pushed, and how oftentimes, that's seen as maybe perhaps part of the working process in rehearsal rooms, on set, and the ways that this can show up and how racialization means that it can show up in different ways for different women of color. I know, for example, I've spoken to South Asian actresses who have had people say strange things to them about, you know, South Asian women being repressed, and often it's felt like a really kind of seedy insinuation. It's felt like a very specific type of harassment. And I think that different women from different racialized groups find that they're on the receiving end of this, it would seem. So there's a lot of things that are, I would say, definitely unique experiences that women of color have found themselves in. As I say, I'm not here to speak on behalf of them.



Jackie Clune 43:27

So do you think that that's true? Do you think that there's an extra layer of feeling like you have to be loyal to your fellow members from different ethnic communities when there's a problem? Like you can't speak out against them? It's okay to speak up against a white boss, because that's the sort of hierarchy that's the system of power.



Zainab Hasan 43:49

I think that there definitely is an element of that, but I certainly don't think that that stops women of color from speaking out. There are numerous examples of women of color that I know in this industry who have spoken out against their own. It's not that it's never happened. It absolutely has. I think there were also questions around women of color being taken seriously and also being believed. And, again, it's not just necessarily in this industry, it's more sort of a societal thing. When we talk about women of color being taken seriously, if you look at the whole Sarah Everard thing, there's been a lot of questions around that regarding if Sarah had been a woman of color, would it have had the kind of almost seismic effect that it's had, would it have galvanized people in the same way. We know what happened to Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman last year with the police. So there are questions around that. I do understand that point and I have had

these conversations with women of color who have said the same thing that there is this sometimes... but

J Jackie Clune 45:02  
Divided loyalty almost?

Z Zainab Hasan 45:07  
I don't think it's a divided loyalty within themselves, as it more necessarily is what people project onto them for them speaking out, by perhaps maybe accusing them of being disloyal or what have you. I think that when issues are wrong, when something is wrong, and it's wrong, you speak out about it because it's wrong. And that's ultimately what it comes down to.

J Jackie Clune 45:32  
And some behaviors just transgress racial boundaries, don't they? They cut through everything,

Z Zainab Hasan 45:39  
Absolutely, there are some behaviors that cross all boundaries, be it race, be it class, whatever it may well be, when something is wrong, it's wrong. But I understand that that kind of so I'm not, I don't think I'm doing a very good job of explaining it. I understand sometimes that internal conflict of feeling like you are perhaps letting down your own. But we have to be really clear that one particular individual, that isn't reflective of our entire community anyway. It's about just naming things and calling things out when they're wrong. And that's it.

J Jackie Clune 46:13  
I think what's hard is when you've had to fight harder to get where you are, and then you misbehave, it's harder for people to call you out on it. Because if they've witnessed your struggle to get there, so that abuse of power, then it's kind of really disappointing, isn't it?

Z Zainab Hasan 46:27  
Absolutely.

J

Jackie Clune 46:28

I just wanted to ask you, what do you think Equity could be doing more of to help people of color in the industry who maybe feel harassed or bullied at work? What are the systems that we should be putting in place?

Z

Zainab Hasan 46:41

That is such a big question and I don't even really know that I have all of the answers if I'm being honest

J

Jackie Clune 46:46

I did bring you here because I wanted you to come up with all the answers (laughter). It's all on your shoulders, Zainab.

Z

Zainab Hasan 46:51

Yes, it all is on my shoulders. I think just talking about that, even though I know that you weren't meaning it in that way, but just having people who are marginalized, being burdened with necessarily doing the work, I think that we have to be really aware of that, and how we think about the ways in which we need to challenge things. I do think that the point I was talking about earlier, in terms of sort of clear definitions about bullying and the nuances around it and coming up with that. I feel like there have been things like that already. You mentioned, the Equity agreements. And you've mentioned the Safe Spaces campaign that Equity were doing, I think there's been elements of that. But I think there needs to be a real kind of industry wide, and perhaps Equity, because Equity is Equity and they can be at the helm of that, in terms of coming up with really clear definitions of what that is. But also working with people to work out what those definitions actually are. And question marks about who comes up with those definitions. I think also Equity, perhaps, need to work with drama schools, because I think we need to think about preventative measures. I think a lot of what we're seeing recently, or what I've been seeing recently online and questions that I've had with people, a lot of this starts at drama school, being told you have to say yes to everything. You can't say no to anything. The agency that that takes away from you, particularly when you're young, you're vulnerable, you're a woman, you're marginalized in whatever way, I think Equity needs to do a lot of work around that.

Z

Zainab Hasan 48:33

I think one of the other things that I've been thinking about - and this is probably going to

be really idealistic - and ambitious of me, I don't know. I think that when it comes to issues around harassment, and bullying in the workplace, you know we work in an industry where someone's always willing to sort of take your place if you say no to something for those particular reasons. I think that historically, there have been industries like ours, that feel precarious, and where sometimes it doesn't really feel like there's enough worker solidarity perhaps. I've been thinking about Equity maybe building coalitions with grassroots organizations who actually have been doing a lot of work around this, because I think that coalition building is so important, especially when we're trying to address something that is actually systemic. We don't exist in a vacuum in this industry. We know that these issues are systemic and there are groups like Sisters Uncut. Imagine we linked with them and in line with pickets and things like that, how powerful that would be. I do think that institutions are only really going to change when you hit them where it really hurts. And that's our industry included and what is that - that's profit. Exploiting women is profitable and say s women, we were to withdraw our labour? What kind of message would it send to producers? The power that organized labour can have to get people listening? Maybe that could even include men joining in solidarity with us? I don't know. I don't think that we're there yet in our industry in terms of strike action. But I do think that the last couple of years, there's definitely been an appetite for change. You can go down the route of sacking a few bad apples and writing a couple of diversity and quality reports. But if you actually start organizing the labour power of the most vulnerable in the industry, what potential does that have to actually create real lasting change? Like I said, I think that's really ambitious.

J

Jackie Clune 50:40

I think you hit the nail on the head - it's systemic, isn't it? It's something that we have to progress these issues as workers generally in the world. I think you should be the next Equity President, I think we should be the next prime minister. I think you're amazing. Thanks so much. So now, before you go, I just want to ask you one thing. In the green room, what sort of an actor are you? Do you bring your lunch and stow it in the fridge? Or are you a dash out and buy something kind of a girl?

Z

Zainab Hasan 51:09

Usually I'd like to be the former but I'm more often the latter because I'm so disorganized. So yeah, that's me.

Z

Zainab Hasan 51:17

Oh, thank you so much, Brilliant to have you on.

Z Zainab Hasan 51:21  
Thank you, Jackie, pleasure.

J Jackie Clune 51:35  
Joining me now in the Equity Green Room, our virtual green room is, we all know there's nothing like a dame, and here is my favorite dame, Dame Harriet Walter. Welcome, Harriet.

H Harriet Walter 51:47  
Hello, and I am nothing like a dame.

J Jackie Clune 51:52  
Yes, well, you're your own very special kind of dame. Now your career has spanned a few decades, it's fair to say. And you have played all the Shakespearean women and some of the men rather than magnificently. The issue that we're focusing on in this podcast is obviously something that's been going on for decades. And, and to some extent, it's only now in the last few years after the #metoo movement and time's up movement that these sort of perpetrators are being brought to justice. And so I just wanted to ask you, first off, Harriet, what has been your experience in the industry of perpetrators getting away with things back in the day, if we can use that expression? What was your experience of watching men behaving badly?

H Harriet Walter 52:42  
Well, sadly, I wouldn't think that my experience of this sort of thing - when did I start? the 70s 80s? - was that different from 10 years ago. I think all the changes have happened recently, in terms of what is deemed to be acceptable. There was behavior that was just par for the course and you didn't even tell your mates - so and so tried to stick his tongue down my throat or whatever. Particularly there was a certain sense of you did feel that you had, in some way opened yourself up in a way that cleverer people wouldn't have or something. That you'd been a bit idiotic to let such a thing happen. And then you get doubly punished because you find that person, if you turn them down, never offered you a job again.

J Jackie Clune 53:46

That was something that was real lived experience in you and your contemporaries careers?

H

Harriet Walter 53:51

Yes, I would say so. I would say so. But I think a lot of it was more to do with everyday minor sexism. And, on that level, it seems to me that it's going to be very hard to root that out because there's the sexism in the everyday world and then we're in some double bind, because we reflect the everyday world, that's our job. So not only are we being judged as women in the real world, but also the parts we play. So we might have made huge advances in some ways in the way women have entered into public life. Women have got more say, I'm talking, of course, in the parameters of the Western world if you like, but still there are huge changes have happened in my lifetime. But it seems to me that a lot of the roles we play are still dependent on our looks and our appeal and our relation to men because there is still huge proportion of written material that we act out that is in the classics or old, or was written decades ago, and we still play those parts. So there's going to be a huge gap between modern writing and sort of anything written in the last century and before, in terms of how we're treated now. This doesn't seem to be answering your question, but it is all tied up, because the world you're playing is also to do with how much you're respected in the rehearsal room. And for what reasons you've been cast. We're in a profession that's all about how we're viewed, how we're judged on our appearance, that's all we've got to show for it. So it's all about what what we look like, how we sound. And the historical reasons why we're under represented and very slimly represented when we are represented.

J

Jackie Clune 56:16

So in a sense, what, what you're saying is that the macrocosm, although we've made some strides is still a kind of misogynistic environment. So that's going to be replicated in the room, if you like, in the microcosm that we're using to show that world.

H

Harriet Walter 56:31

Absolutely. And I've got some male friends who are still feeling quite confused about what's acceptable, what isn't acceptable. In one way, there's a simple word, which is respect. You can make all sorts of rules about how people should behave. But if there isn't an inherent development of respect, both for the work you do - so that you can separate the work you do, because you might be playing a minor role from the person you are, and the contribution you can make as a human being, if those things are too bound up in our job, because it's part of the nature of our job. So you have less say, because you're playing

a smaller part, it's all doubly bound up. I will say that, you know, there was much more overt lackadaisical sexism in my youth, where my very first job, I met the artistic director, and he said, open your coat, you've got a good body, you're hired.

J

Jackie Clune 57:39

No?! I don't know why that shocks me. But it does.

H

Harriet Walter 57:43

Yeah. And that was my very first job and that was before I went to drama school. When I finally got into drama school, I suddenly got respect. I was suddenly no longer this sort of skivvy, or somebody to be possibly exploited. I was suddenly, oh, she's serious, she's going to be a real actress.

J

Jackie Clune 58:04

That elevation because of status of the role, that's a cloak, isn't it for perpetrators of abuse? Because the star system will protect those stars who are abusive, I mean, we've seen cases recently, we're not going to talk about specifics, but that can be a shield, because our industry is so hierarchical, still, that those in power - whether that's in front or behind the camera - or directing on stage, or on the stage, they can get away with things because it's so hierarchical, do you think that that's an issue?

H

Harriet Walter 58:37

I do think that's an issue because I think it can happen between actors. It's not always director versus actor. It's a leading actor who's sort of in a quite difficult way, because sometimes you really do like someone and you really care. They're very charismatic, and you're very thrilled to be working with them. They're not a stranger to you, you want to develop a relationship with them because it might be built into the job. But it's again, just this simple word respect, know that borderline. Know it yourself. This is what's really changed, is that we ourselves have now since the #metoo movement have got a vocabulary and a reference point and the ropes on the boxing ring where you can fall back and know that you'll be caught and there's some way in which that's all been changed for good, I hope because there's been this mega awareness, this mega focus on these issues. So I think, it's just that thing where you have to tell yourself, just because reject the the pressure, this person is putting on me, they actually can be made to answer for it, I don't have to take the entire responsibility myself. You know, the fear is, I'll never work again, the fear is I'll lose my job, the fear is I'll get a reputation for being difficult. The

fear is all those things, and in a job, in a profession where we've already got fewer chances, then than our male counterparts. It's a very real fear. But when you've got recourse now, to some kind of body of criticism, or Equity can support you or the last job, I went for a read through and we sat around the table, and there was a spokesperson from the management who said, if there's any bullying, or if you have any problems come to us. Well, I never saw that prep. But you know, there wasn't, I don't think a reason for that to be put into practice on that job. But at least that mechanism was there and was advanced. That was unprecedented.

J Jackie Clune 1:01:06

That's happening more and more, I hear that more and more on on film sets and TV sets. And that's maybe something that theatre, there needs to be a bullying, harassment, first aider if you like, who's very visible and around that can on call.

H Harriet Walter 1:01:20

Yes. And when it's announced very publicly - it's not just somebody shuffling up to you in the corner - it's announced in front of everybody, including the people who might perpetrate it, then everybody's aware that perhaps this can't go on without somebody noticing and somebody saying something?

J Jackie Clune 1:01:37

Yes. And you must have worked with quite a few people over the years who've recently been sort of, at least alluded to in conversations about perpetrators of bullying, or sexual abuse or assault, and what's that like? Because, obviously, there have been some fantastic creative people who are now on a kind of cancelled list, if you like, and that must be quite difficult when you've watched their careers over the years.

H Harriet Walter 1:02:04

I think it's very difficult because I think if things are historical, very historical, I think one should look at it within the context of what was acceptable behavior in the ethos around people up to a point. I mean, there are some people who are by any standards have been, very unacceptable and bullying and using their position in an abusive way. And those people on the whole, maybe many more are going to be named, but on the whole, they sort of stand out from the mains, from the general, sort of grabbing around the waist kind of, just treating you as a body. This is the thing that it's reinforced in the plays and the parts we do that we're there because of, when you're younger, as I said, you've got a good

body you're hired. When you first in this job, because you're the Juve lead or whatever, if you're lucky. It is about your desirability, your perceived desirability is part of what you're hired for because that's the role that that part plays for the audience in that play. Do you know what I mean? Therefore, that's what's assumed to be your function. And therefore, somebody felt that they could come and stroke your backside in the queue in the canteen. And nobody, actually nobody would have understood if you'd objected them.

J Jackie Clune 1:03:54

Yeah. And it kind of goes along with that are you an open person? Are you somebody who's going to open your heart and soul to the experience? An open person doesn't say, no, don't touch me, or don't do this, don't do that. Here's a boundary. You're labeled as not a very good actor, if you're not open to whatever anyone wants to do to you, in a way.

H Harriet Walter 1:04:15

Well also actors, it's a cliché, but it's a truism that actors want to be loved actors want to be liked. Therefore, if you say, Excuse me, can you not do that? They feel like an unliked person, and therefore they don't like you for making them feel like an unliked person. Yeah, and, you know, I'm a good egg, I'm fine. You know, people like me, I get along with everyone. That becomes part of that actors kind of whole image that they want to sell and therefore, to sort of be someone who then gets ostracized is enormous.

J Jackie Clune 1:04:59

So fascinating to talk to you. Thank you so much Harriet. When we get to the end of these interviews, we're in our virtual green room and I asked all my guests what sort of green room occupancy have you got? A little takeaway lunch stash that you've prepared for yourself carefully in the fridge? Or are you a sort of dash out and grab a sandwich sort of girl?

H Harriet Walter 1:05:19

Well, I think you know already, I'm a dash out and shop person. I can just about boil an egg at home. So, you know, I haven't pre prepared my lunch at home. I'm very impressed by people who have, but I also actually like getting out in the street during my lunch break. Sometimes I just buy a lollipop. You know, I don't necessarily want a lunch.

J Jackie Clune 1:05:49  
Yeah, I always picture you with a tub of boiled eggs or smoked salmon or something or something fishy. Nice prawn avocado, open sandwich.

H Harriet Walter 1:05:59  
Something slightly stinky from Itsu or Pret.

J Jackie Clune 1:06:06  
Harriet, thank you so much for joining.

J Jackie Clune 1:06:14  
So in each of the Equity greenroom podcasts, I'll be inviting Equity members who are in the know to come along and give us a briefing update on what the campaigning priorities are for Equity at the moment. Joining me in our first Equity green room podcast is actor, activist and all round good guy Hywel Morgan. Hi, Hywel how you doing?

H Hywel Morgan 1:06:34  
Hello, Jackie. That's very kind of you. I'm very well, thanks you. We've got lots of campaigns going on as ever, but I wanted to focus on three today. So the first one is Brexit. So Paul Fleming, who's Equity's General Secretary has co-signed a letter to the Prime Minister from over 300 arts organisations, including musicians union and BECTU demanding action on creative visas because since Brexit, it's been difficult to get jobs abroad, because people have been saying only European passports, etc. That letter has been featured in a story in The Times Online. and in the print edition. We'll put some links in the podcast info. But you can also follow it on Equity's Twitter feed. If you aren't following us yet, then follow us. We're at @EquityUK In the coming weeks, we'll be launching Equity's next stage of lobbying on Brexit. So look out for that on social media and in the next issue of the revamped equity magazine. We've got a special section on navigating working in the EU.

J Jackie Clune 1:07:43  
Excellent, it's something that a lot of our members feel very strongly about. Because as you know, you can just sometimes be asked to go and film an advert in Budapest at the drop of the hat and you won't have the time to do all that paperwork. So the visas are

something we really need to get on top of isn't it?

**H** Hywel Morgan 1:07:58

Exactly. Boris has given a commitment that he will fix this. So all we're doing is calling on him and saying do what you said you're gonna do, get this fixed, sort it straightaway.

**J** Jackie Clune 1:08:10

Yeah, it should be easy, shouldn't it? It's not that hard. I mean, there are other industries that have these waivers already.

**H** Hywel Morgan 1:08:18

Absolutely. And there are agreements in place. We've had agreements in place in the past, this isn't something that's going to mean renegotiating the withdrawal agreement with this isn't something that's going to mean renegotiating withdrawal agreements. It's just a matter of getting those reciprocal agreements with other countries so that we can get back to work.

**J** Jackie Clune 1:08:34

Yeah. And now assuming that the visas get waved through, we then face a problem of Have we got a vaccine passport, what's equity doing about this? Sort of a civil liberties issue at the moment? What's the position?

**H** Harriet Walter 1:08:47

Well, yeah, this is a huge area of concern for members. And as well as responding to the official government consultation on what's officially called COVID status certification. We're keeping a tight eye on developments with a view to challenging any potential discrimination or civil liberties issues, because there is a chance that people are going to say, you can't come and work for us unless you got a COVID passport, which is going to discriminate against against lots of people

**J** Jackie Clune 1:09:14

There are lots of people who would not want to take a vaccine with pregnant women, it's not yet clear is it whether all the vaccines are safe for pregnant women?

**H** Harriet Walter 1:09:22  
Absolutely. And we've been in discussion with the campaign group Pregnant and Screwed to assess the impact on pregnant workers. So if anything like that is happening, the first thing is tell Equity because we can't get on to it unless we know about it.

**J** Jackie Clune 1:09:35  
Yes, very much so. And finally, Hywel, universal basic income.

**H** Harriet Walter 1:09:43  
Absolutely. So following news that up to one in five equity members have been forced to apply for Universal Credit coming out of the pandemic. You know, many are also facing problems with debt and housing costs and get this - 44% of female BAME creative workers have been forced out of the industry. Now that's not just us making figures like that up. That's according to the Office for National Statistics. That's a huge swathe of talent leaving the industry, we've got to put a stop to it. So the union is lobbying for a basic income guarantee, and reform of the social security system. Now, what is a basic income guarantee for creative workers I hear you ask? Well it's exactly what it says on the tin. It's a guarantee for creative workers that would mean that they wouldn't have to think about not taking a job because they might lose their normal job or they might lose the Universal Credit they're working on at the time. It's a safety net, it would guarantee that they wouldn't face the problems that that they're currently facing using existing welfare provisions and using the additional Coronavirus support schemes. It would give them financial stability, and it would mean that they could stay in the sector throughout the pandemic, which there is no end to at the moment.

**J** Jackie Clune 1:11:06  
This isn't something that's completely pie in the sky is it? It happens in other countries?

**Z** Zainab Hasan 1:11:12  
Yep. France has had a similar system, which dates back to the 1930s. Spain is trialing a minimum basic income for all its citizens. And in the Republic of Ireland, our sister union, Irish Equity is examining just such a recommendation. So these things are within reach and it makes common sense. So we're lobbying hard on that.



Jackie Clune 1:11:33

Can you imagine a world where culture is important and artists are supported to live? Can you imagine that?



Hywel Morgan 1:11:42

That's what we dream on. It's what we campaign for, more importantly it's what we're going to get but we need your backing



Jackie Clune 1:11:47

Well, all workers I guess, it's the same for everybody, isn't it? Hywel thank you so much for that update, lots going on. Thank you for everything that you do. And before you go, here in the Equity Green Room, we like to ask people, what sort of a green room actor are you? Do you bring your lunch in and put it in the Tupperware and leave it there to fester for six weeks? Or are you a sort of strictly Pret a Manger lunchtime guy?



Harriet Walter 1:12:13

No, sometimes better Pret if the weather is nice, but more often than not, I tend to nip off to the local supermarket and find a microwave meal, mostly a curry I suppose. I'm the one who stinks up the green room.



Jackie Clune 1:12:26

You're one of those. No, I like your style, It's very good. Hywel Morgan, thank you so much for joining us.



Jackie Clune 1:12:36

And that's it for the first Equity Green Room podcast episode. Thanks to all my guests today. Charlotte Bence, Maureen Beattie, Elaine Stirrat, Zainab Hasan, Harriet Walter, and Hywel Morgan. Our actors were Julia Kass, Alex Hannant and Madeline Hannant. Our wonderful stage manager announcements were done by the inimitable Carol Pestridge. The show is produced by Tom Greenwood. If you'd like to comment on this episode or have ideas for future episodes, please email [zellsmore@equity.org.uk](mailto:zellsmore@equity.org.uk). If you've been affected by any of the issues that we've discussed today, please refer to the links in the show notes which will point you in the right direction to get help.

