

The Class Ceiling - Part 2

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SPEAKERS

David John, Valerie Edmond, Paul Valentine, Louise McMullan, Jackie Clune, Stephanie Greer

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-  Jackie Clune 00:16
Hello, I'm Jackie clune. And welcome back to the second part of the Equity Green Room podcast on the issue of the class ceiling. In part one, we discussed the policies Equity are coming up with to address these issues and we talked to Stephanie Greer and Valerie Edmond. And we heard testimony from Equity members around how classes impacted either their training or their career in the creative industries.
 -  Jackie Clune 00:42
Welcome to part two, we've got more exciting stuff to talk about with our guests who are joining me in just a moment, David John and Paul Valentine.
 -  Jackie Clune 00:51
They're joining me in the Equity Green Room this evening, our audio councillor, David John, and Equity councillor, and all round good guy and green activist Paul Valentine. Welcome, guys.
 -  Jackie Clune 01:11
Now, David, you've been listening to all this? What's your take on it? And how do you identify as a working class performer? What got you into this crazy industry despite your

class routes?

D David John 01:23
Well, I have to say I was incredibly privileged, bearing in mind where I came from, because I came up in a time where we were funded by the state. So I received a training for this industry that without which I would have had no chance. So it was all timing. And that's really one of the things that's fired me up about this, I was having the same thoughts as Stephanie, around the same time, and I put it in my kind of statement when I was elected as Audio Councillor about working class representation, etc. And it's harder now, for kids in my, I'm just from suburban Enfield, kind of classic, you know, working class background.

D David John 02:08
But I was funded by the government, you can't get those grants now. They don't exist. So where do those kids go? No, sorry, you can't go. I went to stage school from age 11, where they really tried to stop me talking like I talk. Some brilliant stories about them, me walking in the room and them saying, 'Oh, where are you going to learn to speak properly?' So that was at stage school so imagine that?

J Jackie Clune 02:35
Yeah, I was gonna ask you actually, as as audio councillor I mean, that the working class voice? That's sort of not quite as taboo as it once was is it? Is that your experience in audio work? People want your authentic working class voices now?

D David John 02:55
Absolutely right and that goes across the board. I mean, originally, you would have, you know, your kind of white middle class voice doing all the accents. Well we're going back a few years now.

J Jackie Clune 03:06
With varying degrees of success.

D David John 03:08
Yeah, not so good. But really, since then, you know, when I was coming up and working a lot in theatre and telly in the kind of 80s, there were a lot of great working class actors

coming out of various places, but including stage school, because we went through stage school back then. There were the rich kids there, who actually most of them really shouldn't have been there. Because they didn't really have what it took to be in the industry, or the ones that have come through and then worked in the business mainly came from our kind of background. And I just wonder what happens to those kids now. You know, if they're, if they're told, 'sorry, you can't go to state school'. And the same thing, as Valerie said, 'no, you can't be an actor, how can you think you could be an actor or a performer or a stage manager or a director or whatever? No, you can't work in that industry.' Our industry provides so many jobs across the board for working class people that need to be taken by working class people, because how can you tell kids of that age - 'No, sorry'. So I don't know how we get back to that. I don't know if it's even possible with this government at the moment even to think about it. But it's something that I really strive for more support or more bursaries or, you know, if you've passed the kind of audition, which I had to pass back then, and they say 'Yeah, you've got a chance, you've got a bit of talent'. And then you're told 'no, sorry, you can't afford it, that's going to someone whose mum and dad have got the money', that's grossly unfair. And for me, it's all about fairness.

J Jackie Clune 04:44

Yeah. Well, you've hit the nail on the head. We've talked a lot in the past, haven't we, about the leaky pipe of the education system? We're going to be talking a bit more to Paul about that in a bit. But you know, part of the huge barrier is economics, isn't it? It is the economic barrier that stops working class people accessing training, accessing internships, you know, that might get them work, accessing schemes where they train unofficially, for a year in situ. You know, all of these things are huge barriers to working class people who can't rely on the bank of mum and dad to get them a leg up in the industry.

D David John 05:20

A couple of years, Jackie, in the industry, when you're out auditioning, trying to get that first job. If you're, you know, you haven't got money behind you, you're working, you're working in the pub or the bar or wherever. And then someone says, okay, auditions, this afternoon, two o'clock, and you can't make it, can't get off my shift. That happens a lot.

J Jackie Clune 05:38

So at the moment in the class network, we're trying to establish what our agenda is, aren't we? So one of the problems that we highlighted at the beginning of this was talking to

Louise about how you define class, and we're putting together a survey, aren't we? Can you just tell us a little bit about that, David?

D

David John 05:57

Yeah, I mean, this will be going out, I think, quite soon, probably in the next month or so, to members, members who are interested in - all these surveys are voluntary, of course, to members - but it's to find out more. We've got a great group amongst ourselves, we've also spoken to a lot of other people at the launches, and got lots of feedback and ideas. But if we get this out to members, just asking what are your experiences? What did you come up against in the industry? Or did you come up against trying to get into it? What do you want us to do? How do you want us to represent you? We may find out quite a lot. Well, you know, we're still writing the questions, aren't we? We're still trying to do that. But when we do, it will be really interesting to hear. As I say, we've had loads of ideas from our group. But there are so many members out there who have reacted so positively, as Steph said, 'oh god, this is great. I've always wanted something like this to represent working class people in the Union, in the industry' you know, just for support.

D

David John 07:04

We're going to talk about the support pack, people want support when they're sometimes isolated, not getting any work, you know, thinking of giving up, just offer that kind of support.

J

Jackie Clune 07:16

So what sort of things will be in the support pack?

D

David John 07:19

Right, well the support pack, we go from all sorts of advice. First of all, there's things like, what kind of grants are available, bursaries, things like that. There's all sorts of organizations that you can go to, for even charitable organizations like the Equity, charitable trust, and all sorts of things like that when you're in the industry that is, and then we offer advice on financial situations you may find yourself in, all sorts of foundations that are out there that most people don't know about. Also, financial management, you know, we have to pay our tax, we're all schedule D, we will get a scary tax bill, sometimes at the end of the year, just give people a heads up, watch out for this. You don't want to be stitched up by a surprising tax bill. Support for carers, there's a mental health section, where we will look at imposter syndrome. And knowing about

imposter syndrome is a great thing. Because then it can I help you alleviate the kind of debilitating effects of it.

J Jackie Clune 08:22

Yeah, and that is a big thing for working class people, isn't it because you don't have that sort of privileged confident upbringing of excellent schools and people constantly telling you how great you are and how the world belongs to you.

D David John 08:35

Yeah, we've all felt that, we've all walked in a room and thought how did I get in here?

J Jackie Clune 08:40

I was laughing to myself when you were talking about accent because I remember going to uni at the age of 18. I sound sort of probably fairly middle class now. Well, probably in this group. But like when I'm at the RSC, then people spot my estuary vowels a mile off. But I remember going to university and thinking, I can't talk like, like my brothers talk, talk like that, because you can't do that at uni and be clever. So I adapted my accent. Yeah, as a lot of actors do, a lot of people do. And started to talk a lot more like this, until I got to the third year when I became sort of more radicalized and I was really into politics and stuff. And I was in a feminist theatre seminar. And I was talking really passionately about something in my Harlow twang and the lecturer said, 'You never used to speak like that when you first came here. You didn't sound like that. Why are you adopting this radical working class chic accent now?' And I was so gobsmacked I was like, what!?! this is how I really sound it's only because it's taken me three years to feel like I'm allowed to be here to talk how I really talk. I think that it was the first time I really acknowledged oh god, I'm working class. It hadn't even really occurred to me, because I'd always just lived amongst people like me until I've gone to uni. Yeah, yeah. It's a strange thing to be confronted with prejudice at that age, isn't it when you've lived it, but not really been aware of it?

D David John 10:14

Yeah. And they try and knock you into shape kind of thing. I mean, that happens at drama school. I think less now, I don't know, it's 10 years ago, you know, you can't go out into the business with that accent. When are you going to learn to speak properly? And it's fine. Yeah, teach me to do RP great for work. But don't make me do that all day long, which is what I felt I had to do. When I was going to my first interviews and auditions at the RSC and things like that. I felt I had to walk in there and say, 'Hello', you know, not 'Hi,

how you doing?' You know, just, it's a strange thing. You have a bit of an identity crisis.

J Jackie Clune 10:50

I'd be really interested to talk to members of crew like stage management and so on about what it's like being working class in that sector of the industry, because I'm sure there's a lot of sort of privilege, snapping of fingers and 'stage manager fetch me this fetch me that', I'm sure that's a big deal. So also joining us, as I said before, is Paul Valentine, who's an Equity councillor and is a big driving force behind the Equity Green, New Deal for Equity. I've probably said that all wrong Paul, can you put it a bit more eloquently?

P Paul Valentine 11:23

No, that was pretty much perfect. Yeah. Equity for a Green New Deal.

J Jackie Clune 11:27

Yeah, that's the one I couldn't remember which which order the words went.

P Paul Valentine 11:33

It's a funny one, though, because it's sort of running parallel to the class network in a lot of respects in the fact that there are two sort of flourishing networks that sort of were set up at roughly the same time. And they've been very grassroots. So we're all trying to make sure that these networks are for everyone, which is what our industry should be for as well. So it's all trying to mirror what we want to see the world to be. That sounds a bit ridiculous. But yeah, you know, what I mean.

J Jackie Clune 12:01

I do and you're one of the most hard working out of work actors during the pandemic that I think I've spoken to, because I think you've worked on just about every frontline job, haven't you?

P Paul Valentine 12:12

Yeah, I've done a few.

J Jackie Clune 12:14
Tell us what you've been doing

P Paul Valentine 12:16
I did some shelf stacking in Tesco for a few months. And then I managed to do some online murder mysteries. So that was good. There was a bit of acting work that intersected it. And then most recently, I'm now working at a vaccination centre, which by pure fluke just happens to be the Battersea Arts Centre. I've always done like, front of house at the theatre as day jobby stuff. But I'm actually working for the NHS now. But I'm in a theatre.

J Jackie Clune 12:45
What's that like when you tell your co workers that you're an actor? Is there a sense in which you feel like a bit of a phony talking about yourself being working class amongst sort of real working class people in real working class professions, if you like?

P Paul Valentine 13:00
To an extent I suppose, more at Tesco I would say than at the NHS, because I think, coming into Tesco, I was working shelf stacking in in Tesco Brixton. So I was pretty much the only white guy working on the night shift. And so these are proper, like working class, people of color, with roots in the immigration system, all that sort of stuff, to me that's proper, hard working, you know, that puts what I do in complete perspective, that these guys, sleep by day, work by night pile in all the hours. Essentially, they guys put the food on the table for us by putting the food on the shelves. But you know what, I absolutely loved it. Because there was such a sense of camaraderie to it, there was no pretense at all. And you just came in, and we used to, like, we'd get on with it. I really respected the hard work because some of the temps were sort of let go after a week and a half. Some of them weren't really, to be perfectly frank pulling their weight. But I stayed the longest possible duration. And they were like, yeah, Paul you just get on with it. And I was like, yeah, that's life, which is kind of maybe that is a kind of, I don't know, working class trait in itself, because I've always been, I always just like, get on with it. Which is similar to when you asked Steph earlier about the kind of 'what do your parents think question?' And I think a lot of people expect from an actor to have a dramatic story of how I came out the womb and was dancing on the tables and and then my parents said, I couldn't do it. You know, all that sort of stuff. Nothing like that at all. It was just, oh yeah, mum and dad, I want to be an actor and they're like, alright then, well get on with it. Make sure you're financially secure. We'll see you later. It was just that, that was it.

J

Jackie Clune 14:49

Yeah, I think one of the difficulties that I find talking to fellow Equity members about class and about our position as workers in the economy is that we do see ourselves as sort of different from other workers and okay, we may not be employees 365 days a year, we go from contract to contract, but we are still working people. And you know, a lot of us are working class. And if you take away the, you know, the lights and the costume and they gin and tonics at the interval, working in the theatre is like working in any other job really, isn't it? I mean, we just happen to be good at different things. That's how I like to explain it. I don't think we're special people.

P

Paul Valentine 15:32

No, I often tell people the work that I've done as an actor in contrast to that kind of narrative, because most of what I've done has been outdoor touring theatre. So you put up the stage, you build the set, if it breaks you get out the drill, and you fix it. And then you perform on it. And then you do the acting thing. And then there's no time for a gin and tonic because you're putting it all away. And then you're putting it in the van. And then you are also driving the van another two hours down the road to the Travel Lodge, where you share a room with someone else. So you don't get any privacy, you don't really ever relax. And sort of three months down the line, you're like, ahhhh because it's just been been all that. When you tell people that kind of thing it's nice, because it changes people's view of what you do. They're like 'what you put up the stage?' It's like, yeah, of course, 'what you drive yourself to the venues?'. Yeah, I'm not getting a chauffeur come on.

J

Jackie Clune 16:31

Theatre's not all red carpets and glamour, is it? So you're putting the work back into working class, Paul, single handedly right now. Thank you so much. Now, Paul, you're going to tell us a little bit about the campaigns that are currently underway at Equity, you're going to keep us up to date with the main priorities. And Louise and David and Steph and Valerie are still here if you want to chip in and ask Paul any questions please feel free. So Paul, what's going on at Equity at the moment?

P

Paul Valentine 17:05

Yeah, sure. So at the moment, Equity HQ, from the likes of policy and political side of things are really kind of focusing at the moment on on three particular issues. And a lot of it actually, as you'd expect, intersects with the kind of class side of things as well.

P

Paul Valentine 17:23

So the first thing, really important thing that's been being looked at at the moment, is higher education arts course funding cuts, which ties in quite nicely with the conversation that was had with David earlier about like, state school education and getting stuff paid for it, etc, etc. But essentially, earlier on in the year, our good friend, the education secretary, Gavin Williamson, announced that the government will be cutting the funding for arts higher education courses by 50%. Because as we know, people are privileged see the arts as the preserve of the rich, and just a bit of a laugh innit. So that can that can all go because everything must be English, maths, and science, even though you speak to English people, mathematicians, and scientists and they'll be like, - Yeah, but the arts helps us imagine, you know, all that kind of stuff. But essentially, Equity are fighting these cuts in the strongest possible terms. So they're looking at the impact on arts provision in non specialist institutions, especially post 1992 universities, because often those have been institutions that have been so vital in widening out the opportunities for people to study stuff outside of the Oxbridge elite. So if you're getting these kind of funding cuts happening, that's a real problem. And then, of course, because of the way these institutions are geographically spread as well, if you start cutting 50% off of all the higher education stuff, you're going to end up with cultural kind of cold spots. And that is going to definitely be outside of London, and outside of either Manchester or Birmingham, it's gonna be outside the big cities. So what it's saying is if you're born in Burnley - It's the first one that's come into my head. I'm sort of, I think via football teams. I think what's a good working class football team as well as the mighty Crystal Palace. I've gone with Burnley. - And you're a person who's grown up in Burnley. And you think I want to study relatively locally because I haven't got money to move away. But yeah, 50% off your arts funding. Is that university going to keep trying to think about the arts? No, it's not because the universities also are in a kind of capitalistic money making sort of frame of mind. So people won't have those opportunities. So it's something that class network and of course, Equity and with support from our sister unions like Bectu, Writers Guild, Musicians Union, and indeed this sort of narrative is going through to the bigger unions like Unison, GMB and Union. All who represent the higher education workers

J

Jackie Clune 20:03

We're taking this petitioning to Parliament?

P

Paul Valentine 20:07

Yes, that's right. So essentially, there's a petition on it. And the creative unions sort of started it and led with it. And then they brought, like we often do, we bring the big boys along with us and say, come on, this is happening. And then they sign it too and you

spread it to members far and wide. So I'm sure all the information can be found on the news section of the Equity website. And if people want to sign the petition, write to their MP, write to your local Councillor even I mean, I think that's often forgotten that politics starts locally, isn't just MPs, isn't just the cabinet. There's also local councillors as well, that can help local area, assembly members, etc.

J Jackie Clune 20:53

I just wanted to bring in Stephanie and Valerie and David here and ask, you know, did you get drama in school? Was there an arts education in your school? There wasn't really in mine, but I found it in my local theatre. Do you think that, you know, you had sufficient arts education growing up? Do you think that's a big factor in why working class people experience barriers in the industry?

V Valerie Edmond 21:17

Yeah, I think that I did a sort of interview with Forbes magazine, Jackie, to talk about London becoming a ghetto of wealth. And it's really interesting to talk about class in relation to this, because it's almost as though there's a wealth class now, especially in London, because, and it's funny, with you and Paul chatting about we're not special, you know, we're not special, you know, actors. I think we're incredibly special, I hear all that, you know, I get paid for dressing up and not bumping into the furniture. I hate all that you know, to get to put the dress on, to get to walk onto the stage with the furniture is what has been so tough, to get to actually get there and do it is what has been so tough. It's incredible. So the thing is, is that more special than say somebody who works in the financial services or he's a banker, a trading person who's gambled with somebody's pension fund and that's the wealth class. And what we need in society is money in order to be able to make the choices that we have, and if you're from a working class background, and like Paul saying about the cuts is absolutely it's devastating, it will be devastating for people to be able to think from working class backgrounds to think they can join. Who knows what stories are going to be taught, it's going to be a version of the truth, that won't be the truth, a version of the truth created by a wealth class. That's how I see it.

J Jackie Clune 22:43

Yes. And Stephanie, what about you?

S Stephanie Greer 22:47

Yeah, so similar to you, Jackie, in that, if it wasn't for an amateur dramatic society where it

was a pound subs for 12 months or something like it was so affordable. And we did like a panto once a year. And there's a play you could audition for in the spring. And then it went on, there was a Youth Theatre that was slightly more expensive, but again, cheap and it if it hadn't been for that Youth Theatre, which had an agency running inside it, and that agent picked me out of that Youth Theatre and said, We will represent you, and that's where it all came from. But in Wigan where I'm from, there is no proper theatre. When I was growing up, there wasn't even a proper music venue. And so there was no way to go and even see stuff, it was quite a big deal to go to Manchester to go and see a musical or something. But in terms of being able to afford to even do any of the studying or whatever, like bringing back to what David said about grants and things, I feel really lucky now when I look at teenagers at school and things like if it hadn't been for the Labour Labour government with the EMA Education Maintenance Allowance that got me through sixth form. Then I got a grant to go and study acting at university. And they gave me money for my living allowance. Like there's just no way on this planet that I would have gone and studied past sixth form if it was now because how on earth can you afford to go?

J Jackie Clune 24:39

I know I was thinking about this the other day, it used to be that if you wanted to audition for drama school, you went to audition and if you got a place then you would audition for a grant. And it was provided by the Council. I think you've got to audition in front of a panel for a grant. Can you imagine any such a thing now?

D David John 24:58

That's what I had to do. Yeah, just just briefly coming in on that. I mean, I was incredibly lucky in that I think my dad was a bit of a frustrated performer. And he kind of helped me along, went to a local kind of song and dance school, you know, '(sings) what do you want to make those eyes at me for?', you know, kind of tap dancing and all that. And so they got me to a state where I could audition for stage school, which coming out from where I was, was just another world. And I got a grant, I got in, they were desperate for boys. I mean, there was loads of fantastically talented girls at the school. And, you know, not that many boys. And that was my way in. I mean, just getting that support off the stage door. And then I had to re-audition at Enfield Council in a council room, I'll never forget it. Bright white lights, five people behind a desk, who clearly didn't have a clue about the business. And I did a speech from Equus I don't know if you know it, when he's on the horse, and it's it wasn't really appropriate.

J Jackie Clune 26:07

Did you get the grant?

D

David John 26:10

They just looked and went, urghh, I got a grant. So yeah.

J

Jackie Clune 26:14

Probably too scared not to give you it. And thanks very much for that. And so Paul, so we've got this campaign, what else is going on Equity?

P

Paul Valentine 26:23

So the next one is the big issue of our time, of course, Brexit that has not gone away, despite the pandemic and everything. So what Equity has done is it's launched a new lobbying action for members, following the government's continuing inability to resolve the problems faced by our members traveling through the EU 27 for work, and essentially, together with a number of unions, industry bodies and MPs from across the political spectrum, we've got kind of like four main demands.

P

Paul Valentine 26:54

So demand number one is we want a bespoke visa waiver agreement with the EU for the creative sector. We want bilateral agreements with key individual EU member states. We want emergency funding to cover additional costs when undertaking work in Europe. And we want to reduce the impact of new road haulage and cross trade rules. So they're the kind of big four things in relation to Brexit. And it's, it's kind of crucial really, that Equity members take part in in this lobby. So because we know like, for example, last week, Lord Frost, who's the UK's chief Brexit negotiator, declined to turn up to the DCMS committee in Parliament to answer questions about the problems faced by creative workers. Because obviously, he's decided it doesn't matter to him.

J

Jackie Clune 27:46

Devastating for big commercial international tours, or, you know, crews trying to travel freely in Europe actors trying to flit over to do a bit of filming. It's across the board in our industries. And it's so important that they actually address this and get it right.

P

Paul Valentine 28:01

So again, we need to keep up that that pressure on him as Lord Frost and the government. So again, it's very much, I'm going to say this after every one - it is all about lobbying your local councillors, your MPs, your assembly members, getting those people in power and politicians on side, making them know about what Equity is and what it does. Because then you can secure these debates in Parliament and get the right people around the table to make the change that we want to see.

J

Jackie Clune 28:28

Right. And I think we've got time for one more policy focus, Paul,

P

Paul Valentine 28:32

There is a final one as well, which is actually quite important to us as a union, because we're joining forces across the union sort of circle if you like, to resist new levies and draconian rules that the government wants to impose on unions. Now this comes up, it feels like it comes up like sort of every so often, almost like a European Championship, in fact, probably more more often. There's always some sort of attack on the unions. And this time, what we've got is an attack through the certification officer. So essentially, there's a certification officer who has to do various bureaucratic things in relation to the way the unions run. And the changes that were announced on the eighth of June essentially mean that 2.5% of Equity's income has to be paid to this certification officer and the regulator in the future. And of course, if we're paying 2.5% to something that's governmental red tape, then that's 2.5% that's not going on members, on Green New Deal stuff, on class network or you know, on all the issues that we care about. It could be literally going for someone to just sign a few bits of paper and have an office in Parliament and we don't want that. So again, we're lobbying, lobbying councillors, MPs, assembly members and trying to get a reverse to this

J

Jackie Clune 29:54

Further chipping away isn't it. Thanks so much, Paul Valentine. Thank you to everyone. I guess I just like to ask everyone to contribute, you know, we don't want the class network to become just a talking shop. That's something that we've been very definite about, haven't we, since the beginning. So I'd just like everyone, perhaps starting with Louise to say, what she thinks the key focus should be, what's the main issue here? We've all been talking about our accents and education and the leaky pipe and whether or not there's discrimination in the industry against working class people, whatever their part in the profession, but industrially, what's our key aim, Louise.



Louise McMullan 30:36

Our key aim Jackie is to get employers to recognize that this is a problem. And they are the people who have the money, they have the power to make decisions, they have the ability to recruit people, to cast people. So they need to take that responsibility seriously. One of the things that my colleague Ian Manboard's been doing over the last few months, is working with a number of organizations to come up with a social mobility toolkit for this industry. Now, you know, that is something that could make a real difference, not just in terms of giving employers who do what to do the right, the methods by which they can open up access to their jobs and treat people from working class backgrounds the way that they deserve to be treated. But it also means that we'll have the ability to monitor change in the future and also call out employers who just haven't improved their employment statistics for working class people or the the pay rates for them in the future. So it is a good time to meet change. There is an openness and a willingness to look at this issue, whether it's at government level, employer level, and actually the class network, really refocusing itself relaunching in the wake of the pandemic is one of the most positive things that we've got at this time. And we all need to give you all our energy and focus to be able to make those wins for for the majority of people out there in this country, and the majority of people who either consume this content or want to work in this industry.



Jackie Clune 32:06

Thanks very much, David, what's your key aim?



David John 32:10

Yeah, I was just thinking about that, as Louise was chatting, and there are so many, but I was really shocked to discover when I moved the motion at teh TUC about class inequality a couple of years ago. I was really shocked to discover the class pay gap in our business, it's outrageous. And of course, it was much worse for women, it was much worse for people of color. So if you're a woman, and of color, you were earning a ridiculous amount less than someone who was not. And it just struck me we must be able to do something about that as a union because that is possibly illegal, isn't it? When you know, how can you pay someone less for doing the same job as someone else because of their gender? Or color or class? It can't be? Right. So that is a big thing for me. But alongside pushing for the UBI, I think would be great universal basic income.



Jackie Clune 33:05

Yeah, that would be huge

D

David John 33:06

That would be fantastic. And there are countries trying it out now. It's not a ridiculous pie in the sky thing it might work for everyone, might actually not be more expensive for the government might just be fair. And it's you know, fairness is what it's all about and getting people who've all got these experiences, where people try and put you off. Don't get you educated. No, you can't do that. There isn't work in that industry. There is, let's get you know, these career officers at schools. My son's just been to one, it's not an option. Why don't they get educated in it to say there are loads of jobs in our industry, look at the amount of jobs it provides. Look at the amount of money we bring into this exchequer every year 112 billion I think was the quote from last year. I think that was the government's figures that people working, people paying tax, you know, that to me just sums it up.

J

Jackie Clune 34:01

Yeah, let's open up the doors. Stephanie what's your main aim?

S

Stephanie Greer 34:08

Mine is to really sign off these, I say little niggles, but things that make an enormous difference to us in our working life. So let's make sure that these companies, these theatres are casting locally, that they're rehearsing locally, that we are given enough time to prepare so we don't have to get sacked from you know, the job that we're doing to keep us going to be able to go to that audition that we are not knackered when we're getting seen for a job that we really want to go for. And you go in against someone who's had a lovely night's sleep because they've not worked in a bar till 4am. These little things, let's make sure that casting directors employ because it's not just it's not just actors, anyone who goes for a job interview, you should be told whether or not you've got that job or not? It's outrageous. So yeah, for me, it's those things which seem so easy to change, let's just get it done.

J

Jackie Clune 35:08

Yeah, great. And Paul?

P

Paul Valentine 35:13

I think, for me, I've got, of course, I'm going to tie in the class network, again, with the

climate crisis, because we know that the climate crisis disproportionately affects and is disproportionately affecting working class people across the world. And although we may not be seeing the full forces here, we're starting to see it, flooding will affect working class people first, etc, etc. And I think tying in with that, we also know that by being more climate conscious, we improve people's social mobility. So for example, the big campaign of 'cast it here' we want people to not, not all come from the rich, privileged circles in London, you cast in towns, you cast in cities across the UK, all of a sudden, you're not shipping actors all around and chucking a load of carbon into the into the atmosphere, because you're saying, here's local talent, and here's where it will stay, here it will be used, so for me there's all that kind of intersect that I'm quite passionate about.

J

Jackie Clune 36:09

Brilliant. And finally, the lovely Valerie, what's your big aim for this network?

V

Valerie Edmond 36:14

Well, I was just thinking, as everyone was talking there, Jackie, that if you put everything that our industry is, into a sieve and distilled it, there would be one word left at the bottom of it. And that word is identity, our industry is about identity, and the identity of people who are in positions of power. And it's very, it's something they hold dear, there's conceits that run through it and have done for years and years. And the most important thing to them are two things. One is reputation. And the second one is moral high ground. And if you're not doing what you should be doing, and you're not doing what's fair, you know that, right, you know that, and we know it, and we're going to call you out. And that will affect your reputation. And you will no longer be able to stand on the moral high ground, and therefore your identity will change. And that's a threat. So we're a threat, and what a wonderful threat. And we're a threat of for all the right reasons. And what I want to see is a continuation of this conversation, because we're making people aware, because you know what, Jackie, a lot of people, you know, aren't aware of this issue and don't want to be aware of it. And we are knocking at their door. They're opening and we're standing there and we're saying, we're not going away. This is it and you have to change. And that's what's happened with Me Too. It's happened with all sorts of behaviors in our industry, and it's going to happen with this. So I'm very positive about it.

J

Jackie Clune 37:40

We are a wonderful threat, the Equity class network. And that's it. Thank you so much to all of my guests. Thank you to our wonderful stage manager on the tannoy Carol Pestrige, Equity greenroom podcast is produced by Tom Greenwood. I'm Jackie Clune

and if you have any comments or you'd like to get involved, please do email us at zellsmore@equity.org.uk. See you again next time.