

Mincome

I was born in a country house, surrounded by sheep, cows, and money. My father was an investment banker, who lived half my life in London and paid for me to have the best schooling his education could buy. I was a slow learner at first (everyone else was on the blue book, while I was still on the red) but thanks to a bit of extra guidance from Mrs Hanson, I managed to stumble on to my academic feet. I learnt how to learn and, over time, discovered a passion for languages. I gained pen pals in Germany (Guten Tag), Russia (Drassvoitye), and China (Ni Hao), and visited each of them on alternate holidays. I quickly discovered that Russian Winters and Chinese Summers were best reversed and that every country sells souvenirs of tyranny.

Sorry, that's not right, I made all that up, sorry, I wasn't born in a country house; I was born in a council house – although it certainly smelled like sheep and cows. My dad lived half my life in the pub and told me that school wouldn't help me in the real world. The Chinese and Russians had taken his job and half the street, and don't get him started on the Germans. I never really figured out what school was about and dropped out at sixteen. It would have been selfish to carry on when my family was barely getting by. I had to get a job; minimum wage, maximum hours, and on the radio they're telling me that I could earn more on benefits. I've seen my Dad jumping through those hoops, going to interviews for jobs that don't exist. I can't go through that.

I am going through that. That's a lie. I didn't drop out of school, but I might as well have. I went to college and got the grades to go to uni. Big waste of time that was – I've spent three years training to be good at nothing. I've sent a thousand CVs but it's always the same answer – sorry but we're oversubscribed, we've hired someone else, we're not looking right now. I can't even get a job at Starbucks – I dream of making the perfect cappuccino. I go to the jobcentre and I look at the lady looking at me – a smudge of pity just above her lip – and I think, 'can't I just have your job?' She's being paid to work out if I should be paid? Why don't they just take her salary and split it between us? Fuck the deserving poor! We're all deserving – I was born, that's not my fault, I should get paid just for putting up with being alive. I'm working 24/7 – count my breaths if you have to.

Sorry, I don't know why I said all that, the truth is I was born somewhere to someone. The truth is I had no control over my upbringing. The truth is I might have been abused, I might have been bullied, I might have been a bully, I might have been naturally gifted at playing piano, I might never have seen a piano, I might have been raised with good values, with ambition, with connections, with loud-mouthed parents, with a history of unemployment, with family in prison, with a mother who smoked while she was pregnant with me. What do I deserve?

Basic income studies have shown that if you allocate a basic living income to every citizen then you remove bureaucracy and save money on fraud investigations, you reduce crime, you secure pensions, you improve working conditions and balance the power of the employer versus the employee, you allow young people to start their own businesses or take time for training, you provide new parents with the resources to care for young infants, you find that people don't stop working – they start working, you achieve a new form of social justice and recognise that as human beings we are not born equal, but we can try to do something about that.