

Is there a class issue at LSE?: Episode 3

Following from yesterday's blog, this week at Researching Sociology @ LSE, we will be discussing the **LSE's Social Mobility Society's** panel discussion, which involved students and staff speakers. *To view all blogs so far, click here.*

This blog will discuss *my* views on the matter.



For guidance, this panel discussion centred around 3 central questions, which were as follows:

- *What does class mean to you?*
- *What does social mobility mean to you?*
- *Is there a class issue at LSE?*

Ronda Daniel:

'Class to me is a personal thing. It's an experience. It's a combination of Mike's work from the Great British Class Survey; like he said, economics are only a small part of it. Class is definitely cultural, and it's definitely social. Personally, I have felt a culture shock at the LSE, and I feel that the biggest element here is social capital. Research has shown that the working class aren't successful in jobs that might be middle class or a higher status, because of these things. I also think that the working class are used as the biggest scapegoat in society, especially in the wake of Brexit. There was, and still is, this discourse that the white working class are racist, ignorant and intolerant; when realistically, who creates racism institutionally, who controls the media that fearmongers and turns people against each other? Poor shaming is regarded as okay because this society tells us it's undesirable to be poor; economically, culturally, and ultimately, socially.

I personally detest the idea of social mobility. To me, it is very much political. I don't want to "move up"; I want to help others. To be socially mobile, when moving upward, is to abandon yourself, and your people. I shouldn't have to pretend to be something else to succeed. And we are regularly told that to be poor is to fail, and no one says anything about the systems that create and perpetuate poverty. Social mobility is based on this idea that we constantly have to better ourselves. Being poor is not to fail but to be failed. I would love to go into academia one day, to give myself and others like me a voice; but I shouldn't have to abandon my council estate to do that.

Is there a class issue at LSE? Of course there is. I remember, like the other students on this panel, I wasn't quite sure what working class meant, but I knew from my family and local community that that's what I was, and there's honour in being working class. But upon beginning my

undergraduate degree here, I was told in my first week here, that on the class structure, I would be considered the “underclass”. And that’s just one of many comments I’ve had – “you’re from Dagenham?”, “you’re from a council estate”, “you live off the state”. I’ve heard it all. But it’s not just the individual snobbery that is an issue here, it’s the LSE as an institution. It’s taking a dangerous path. I remember an LSE 100 lecturer saying that “poor people don’t come here”, and that’s when I wrote [my first blog about class at LSE](#). We’re not acknowledged here, unless we’re ticking boxes. Mike was right, the LSE was founded on certain values, and researching and acting on poverty – now, it is a culture, a brand, an employment agency.’

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