

poverty truth Ilfracombe

Artwork

**NOTHING
ABOUT US,
WITHOUT US,
IS FOR US**

Leaving a legacy

"Nothing about us, without us" (originally 'Nihil de nobis, sine nobis') has deep roots in 16th-century Central European politics, notably Poland's 1505 Nihil novi constitution.

However, its modern usage, as a call for self-determination, was adopted by the disability rights movement in the 1990s and later by the Poverty Truth Newtork to demand inclusion in decisions



Verity

Artwork kindly supplied to the Ilfracombe Poverty Truth Commission by local artist Alison Rowe as a symbol of truth, justice and hope for our launch event in September 2024. See alisonroweprints.co.uk

Who is Lady Justice? She is a symbol of our legal system and is often seen holding a sword in one hand and scales in the other. The scales represent weighing out the evidence and equality. Her sword represents the strength of the law and the enforcement of justice. She is almost always seen blindfolded to signify that justice is objective without considering one's race, gender, social status, etc. Lady Justice is a symbol from Greek mythology.

What is social justice? Social justice is justice in relation to the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society where individuals' rights are recognized and protected. Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and the opportunities that they have to lead happy, healthy, fulfilling lives. Justice and peoples rights shouldn't be influenced by their upbringing, race, colour, identity, or socio-economic status. It allows us to stand up for what we believe in to create a country that is more fair, compassionate, and just for everyone, Rich or poor.

A Poem about Lady Justice read at the Poverty Truth Ilfracombe launch event (Poet unknown)

Lady Justice, strong and fair,
With scales in hand and flowing hair,
She stands tall, unwavering and true,
A symbol of justice for me and you.

Her sword is sharp, her scales are just,
She upholds the law with honor and trust,
She sees no color, no bias or creed,
Only truth and justice, in every deed.

Her blindfold is a testament to all,
That justice is blind, to great and small,
That *every person, rich or poor,*
Is equal under her watchful score.

Her stance is steady, her purpose clear,
To bring justice to those far and near,
To ensure that every voice is heard,
And every wrong is righted by her word.

So let us honor Lady Justice today,
And strive to live by her virtuous way,
For justice is the cornerstone of all,
And Lady Justice stands firm, proud and tall.

A descent into poverty

I've created a series of paintings that I hope portray how fundamental housing is to a person's life.

I've had some bad experiences over the years: My father passed away when I was young – I moved to 200 miles away to live with my uncle in a city to try to escape the grief I was feeling. But the grief followed me, and things almost instantly fell apart. Within weeks I was kicked out of my uncle's house for alcoholism and onto the city streets, with no money, and nowhere to live. I had to make camp under a small bush on the edge of the city. I shoplifted to survive, with no way to contact anyone and no clean clothes or support. I stayed under that bush for a month until I was finally looked upon by some passing local council workers who took sympathy on me and got me in to a hostel. It was one of the worst times of my life and it seemed like an eternity.

Fast-forward 5 years and I'm living in a flat back home, when there house fire and I was badly burned

Upon my discharge from the Burns Unit, I was told the council had arranged accommodation and I was taken by taxi and dropped off at the council offices. I was still in bandages, it was the middle of winter and I was met by a council worker and given a tent. That was the accommodation that had been arranged for me.

Recently, I suffered a very unfair and biased eviction from a local estate agents. They gave me no time to get out and unfairly kept my whole deposit. I will now be paying a loan for the next 10 months and I had no money to pay the rent in advance needed for a new flat.

I was lucky in that an understanding previous landlord allowed me to rent somewhere he had available. If it wasn't for him, I'd be as the couple are in my final painting, living in a doorway (again). There was no justice – the letting agency had all the power to do what they wanted, and I had none. The painting is a miniscule demonstration of how I feel about what happened to me.





A Happy Place

I wanted to start the series with something that portrayed an overall sense of happiness, prosperity and hope for the anonymous couple I'm using in the saga, with something many can relate to.

I decided on the purchase of an idyllic little country cottage style house, surrounded by flowers, birds and a general sense of happiness but I also wanted to include the underlying truth of what was to come.

So the floor in front is dark, grey and crumbling to portray that this potential of solace was doomed from the start.

I also painted a figure of greed, a banker with money on his mind and a general intention for him to get richer and the couple to get poorer.

The ATM Demise

Next in my sequence, I decided to create something nearly everyone can relate to and is quite often the start of problems for many people; an empty bank account.

I wanted to include how it makes me feel; shameful, helpless, worried and angry. I created it to demonstrate how I feel when it happens to me, as if the ATM itself is laughing at me and enjoying my suffering. I thought it would be a good start for the decent to poverty for the couple in my paintings.



The Supermarket Scenario

Following the ATM piece, I wanted to include what I consider to be a horrible and embarrassing thing to happen; something many can relate to; being at the tills at a supermarket or shop, with loads of judging people surrounding you, and just as you're trying to pay, you are unable to, thanks to insufficient funds.

When this happens to me it is so embarrassing. I have previously found it difficult not to breakdown crying or indeed flip into angry mode and start shouting and cursing at all around me, even though it is none of their faults.

Thanks to my social anxiety, I can feel, that all around me are laughing, judging and looking down on me. It's probably the opposite and they feel sympathy and empathy like I do when I see it happen to someone. Yet the embarrassment of it brings those feelings on.

I tried to portray these feelings by including thought clouds above the surrounding customers. And also used the couple to show it would almost definitely be part of their poverty decent at some point.



Bailiff Bullies

I was very keen to include this piece in my series of paintings. It is something I feel very strongly about and have suffered the comeuppance of several times. The arrival of bullying bailiffs who show up on your doorstep in the name of so called justice, with the general intention to squeeze what they can out of you, penny by penny, in a forceful and threatening manner, thanks to bills you have been unable to pay such as rent, energy bills and council tax.

I describe them as sadistic bullies through personal experience and witnessing their actions upon others. They would almost definitely at some point be a part of my anonymous couple's suffering.

I created the scene of bailiff bullies portraying the way I first encountered them; looking out of my window and seeing guys in body armor approaching and grinning and pointing at me - coincidentally as I was holding the warning letter for unpaid council tax I couldn't afford to even contribute to at the time. I had literally been home one week from hospital after being treated for the 3rd degree burns I mentioned earlier, my arms still bandaged and one in a sling – I made an easy target for the hired bullies.

Because of the obvious delight they take in threatening folk to the point of having to surrender the last pennies they have, I feel those who take on this job must do so for deep personal revenge they want to commit upon all around them.

The sickening feeling when I saw them was what I wanted to portray through this piece, that would be easy to relate to for all who see it.



The Eviction Horror

Following my previous paintings the next major demise in my anonymous couples decent to poverty would have to be the worst. Something everyone has either suffered, witnessed or feared at some time or another.

In the piece I've included the same idyllic cottage only with grey skies instead of blue, no flowers or birds but instead vines and decay, the same vicious banker peaking out behind the house, only with handfuls of cash now instead of cash on his mind. And of course, the removal van being loaded.

A general scene that I hope portrays the horror it brings to all who have nowhere to go.



The Doorway Finale of Poverty

Summing up my couple's horrific decent to losing the life they had always dreamt of, I decided to portray a scene that is becoming disgustingly more common and popular around this country and indeed the world, something that has always been, but never should for anyone.

A simple scene but one that indicates that they have lost close to everything they hold dear in the world. It is an accurate ending to the previous demise I have exhibited within my previous five works, all contributing to their degrading, bit by bit towards this. It is something I have come close to many times over the years, but have only actually suffered once, as mentioned earlier.

No one ever intends to have to be homeless and no one should ever have to be. That's the main element of truth I have tried to exhibit through my works, and I hope it encourages some kind of agreement and also action towards it.

My timeline to poverty

For me poverty is related to a series of traumatic events and life experiences. Trauma and poverty have affected my mental health and I have felt unsupported and lost many times throughout my life.

I want to share with you some of my life timeline as a way to highlight how events starting from childhood can effect a persons ability to support themselves and integrate into a community. This is to try and help people understand that poverty is not a choice I made, it is a place you find yourself in, a place that is not always easy to get out of and a place you can find yourself moving in and out of.





Funeral

This began when I lost my family to an arson attack.

They were murdered by our own neighbor as he set fire to the building we lived in.

I had no police support or protection from the media interest after it happened.

I felt like my personal impact statement was not taken seriously and it was not read by the judge.

School

School was not easy. I was bullied badly, including being pushed down stairs and told 'my family deserved to die' or that I was being a 'wet-wipe'.

Teachers labelled me 'misbehaved' my entire school life and didn't try to help me with my behaviour. I felt misunderstood.

These made my struggles with emotion worse.

My school councillor kept asking if I had tried self harming because it might help, glorifying it, I tried it out. This made things worse. Thankfully I told my mum and she saw the headteacher, which led to the councillor being removed, but their comments still hurt and made a hard situation worse.

A positive was that I received a CAMHS worker through my GP. I felt for once me not being able to manage was not my fault but I still often felt unheard by my CAMHS worker too.





Foster Care

I got sent to a foster placement 90 miles away, as my relationship with my mum had broken down and she kicked me out. Whilst in care I had an autism assessment and was diagnosed the day before my 18th birthday.

I stayed there until accommodation was found back home.

Police & Paramedics
Upon returning home, I attempted suicide regularly but kept getting found by Police and Paramedics.

Eventually I was sectioned, under section 136, and got sent to a Tier 4 placement at hospital after a mental health act assessment.

I was now away from home, once again. This time 170 miles away.





Psychiatry unit

I was hospitalised for 3 years.

Being institutionalised meant my freedom was gone, everything had set times.

B&B and no money

I was eventually discharged from hospital and sent home but was put into a B&B with no support, once again.

I was trying to adjust to community life but being penniless did not help

After many months I finally got some money and a few months later I received support.

However, whilst I now have somewhere to live and receive some financial support I often find myself battling against poverty that affects my ability to take part, move on and find opportunities.



Artwork exhibited



United against poverty



'Poverty is a reality that most people can't see'



