

**Testimony by Patricia Bailey, ATD Fourth World, London, UK.  
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***People who live in poverty want to work...***

I would like to introduce you to a couple of people I know from the UK.

Kevin lives with me since he got evicted because he couldn't pay the rent. He lives on a day-to-day basis, doing jobs like renovating houses. He doesn't want to be on unemployment benefit. They ask too many questions and he finds it humiliating. When you go to the Jobcentre, they look at you like you're another statistic.

Kevin's very resourceful. If we're short of food, whatever we've got in the house he can make it stretch, make it last. He shares what he's got. He helps other people do jobs, gardening, plumbing carpentry, painting and decorating. He's good at sorting cars out.

People want to work, but there aren't always the jobs out there.

Charlie is a young man who had a difficult time at school, and was bullied. He always had a dream to be a bus driver. He left school and did a mechanics course. For a while he was receiving unemployment benefit but he hated it. He put a lot of effort in to pass his driving test and then got driving jobs, off the books, working really long, unsociable hours. He wanted to provide for his baby daughter, Chloe. Early this year he applied to become a bus driver. He got an interview and studied really hard, especially for a maths test. He passed first time and got the job full-time.

Simon lives round the corner from me. He had a tough upbringing, looking after his little brother as his mum has mental health problems. At one point, he got fired from his job in a shop because he had to take his little brother to school everyday and came in late. He went to social services for help, but they told him there was nothing they could do. He managed to go back to college and get a weekend job. He told me, "Anything's better than being on unemployment benefit." Today he's managed to get a job as a parking officer ensuring cars are legally parked.

Most people in poverty want to work, they don't want to be on unemployment benefit. They want a job rather than rely on the social security. And if they are on welfare benefits, for most people it's because they have no choice: they're sick, have young children, lack skills or confidence. We need to challenge the myth of people living in poverty as not wanting to work.