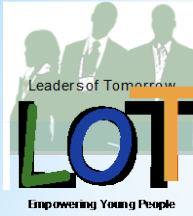
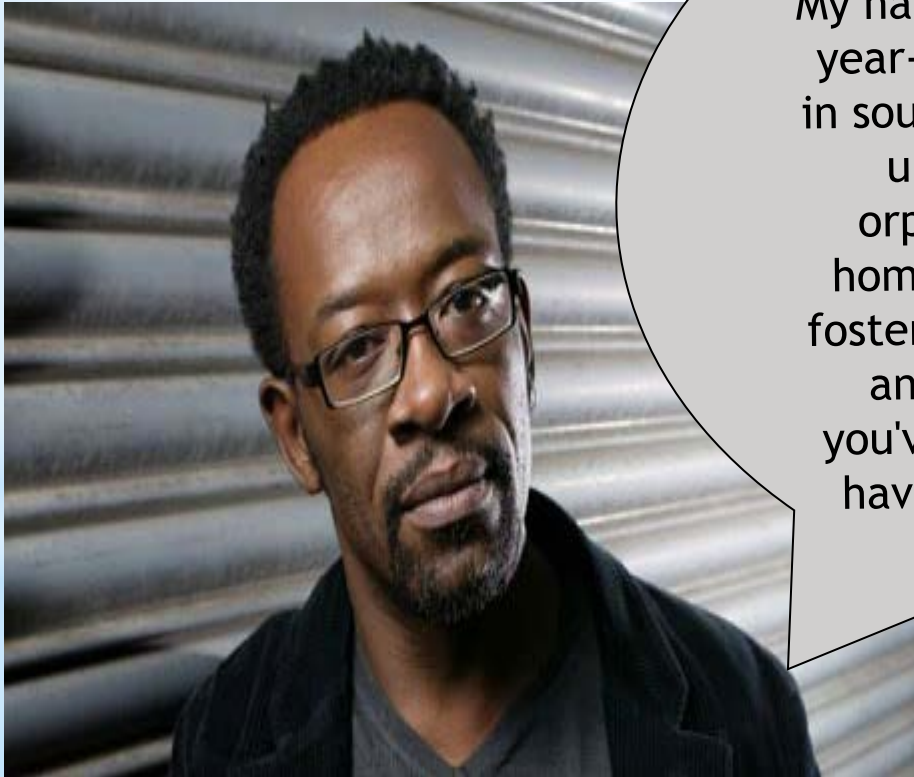


Leaders of Tomorrow

**HAVE THE RHINO
MENTALITY**

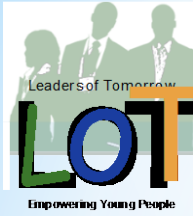


Leaders of Tomorrow



To whom it may concern,
My name is Lennie James. I am a 42-year-old father of three. I grew up in south-west London. I was brought up by a single mother. I was orphaned at 10, lived in a kids' home until I was 15 and was then fostered. I tell you this not to claim any special knowledge of how you've grown, but to explain how I have, and from where I draw my understanding.



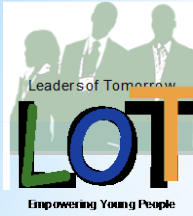


Leaders of Tomorrow

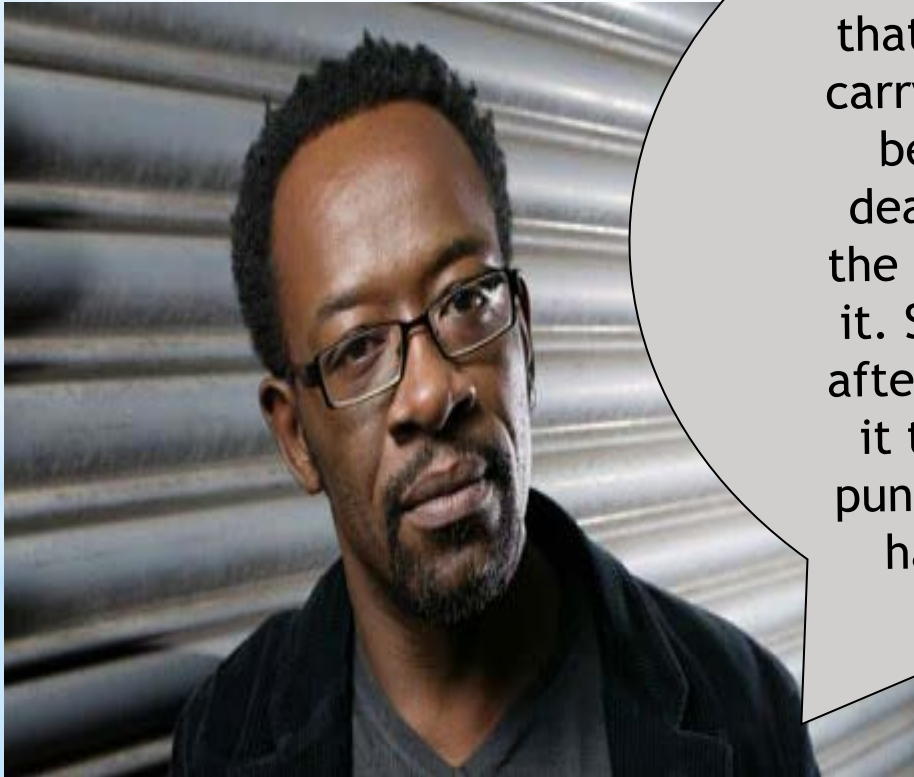


I want to talk to you about the knife you're carrying in your belt or pocket or shoe. The one you got from your mum's kitchen or ordered online or robbed out of the camping shop. The knife you tell yourself you carry for protection, because you never know who else has got one.





Leaders of Tomorrow

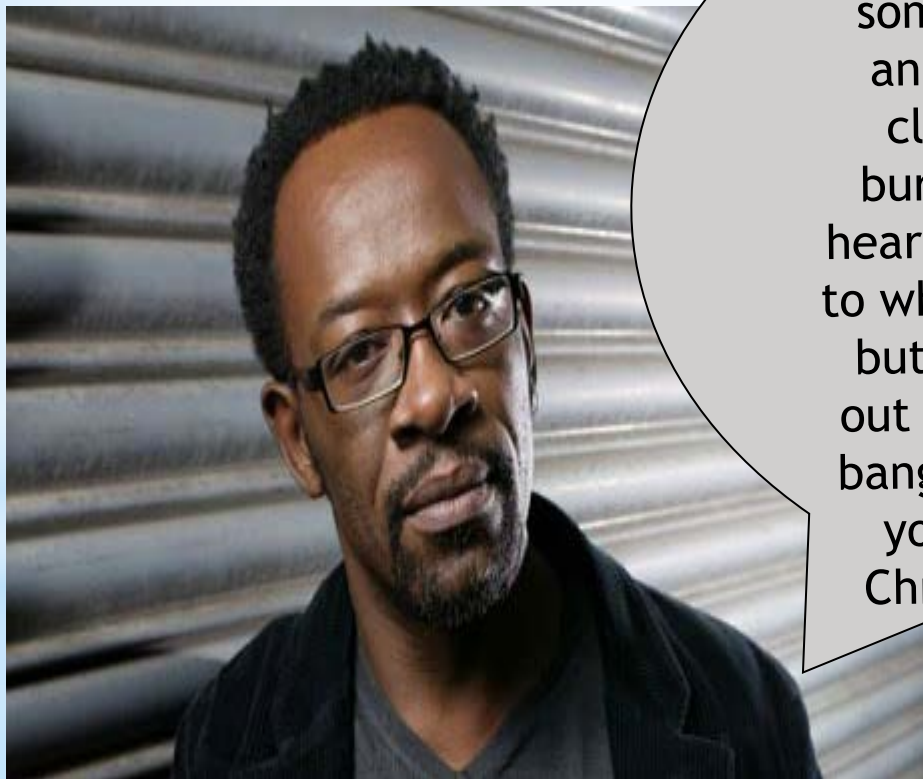


I want to talk to you about what that knife will do for you. If you carry it, the chances are you will be called on to use it. It is a deadly weapon, so if you use it the chances are you will kill with it. So after you've killed with it, after you've seen how little force it takes for sharpened steel to puncture flesh. After your mates have run away from the boy you've left bleeding.



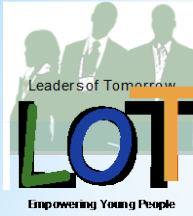


Leaders of Tomorrow

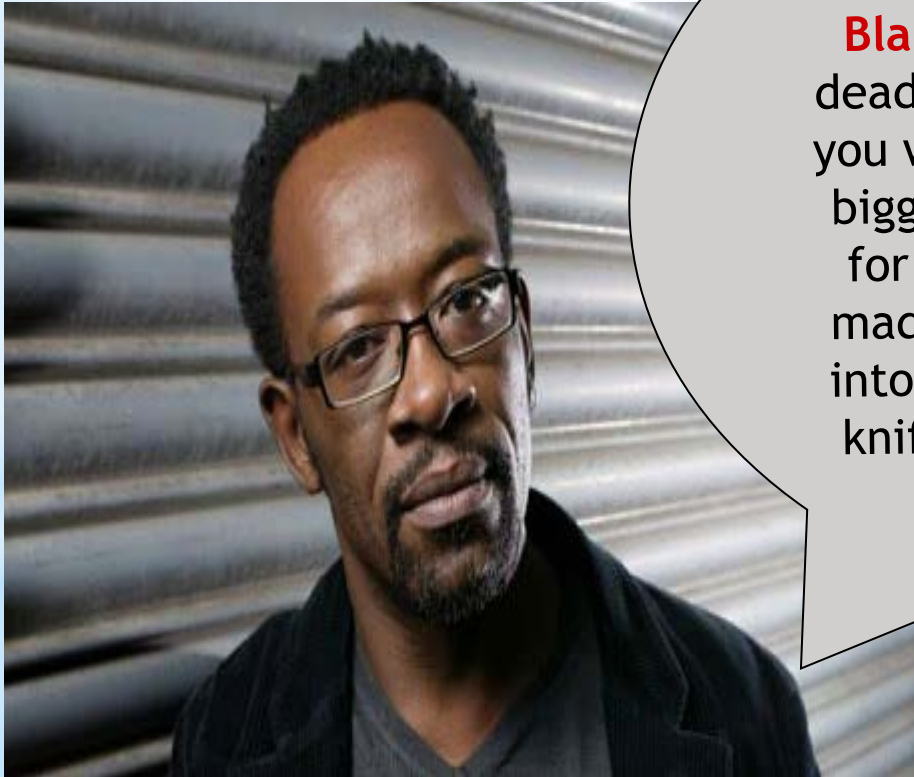


When you're looking for somewhere to dash the blade, and lighter fluid to burn your clothes. When your blood is burning in your veins and your heart is beating out of your chest to where you want to puke or cry, but can't coz you're toughing it out for your boyz. When you are bang smack in the middle of 'Did you see that!' and 'Oh, Jesus Christ!' here's who to blame...



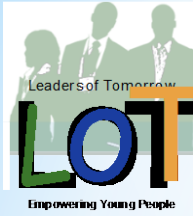


Leaders of Tomorrow



Blame the boy you just left for dead. Blame him for not believing you when you told him you were a bigger man than him. Blame him for not backing down when you made your chest broad, bounced into him and told him about your knife and how you would use it.



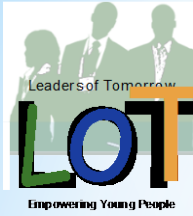


Leaders of Tomorrow



Blame him for calling you on and making you prove yourself. Tell yourself if he had just freed up his phone or not cut his eyes at you like he did, he wouldn't be choking on his blood and crying for his mum.



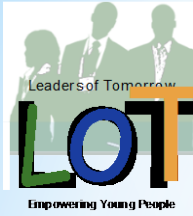


Leaders of Tomorrow



Then blame your mum. When the police are banging down her door looking for you, or she hears the whispers behind the 'wall of silence', tell her it's all her fault for being worthless. Cuss her out for having kids when she was nothing but a kid herself, or for picking some drug or some man over you again and again.



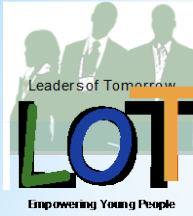


Leaders of Tomorrow



Even if she only had you and devoted herself to you, even if she is a great mum, **blame her anyway. Blame her** for not being around more to make sure you took the chances she was out working her fingers to the bone to give you.



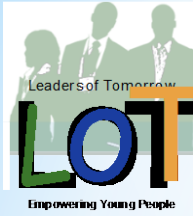


Leaders of Tomorrow

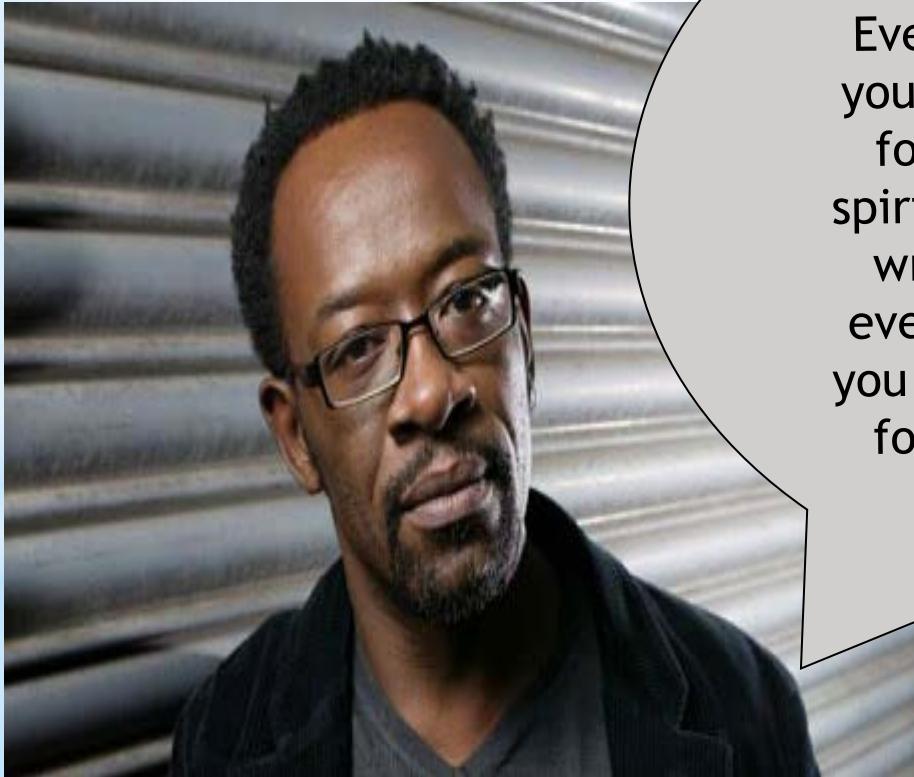


When you're done with her, **blame the man** she picked to make you with. **Blame him** for being less than half the man he should have been. When he comes to bail you out and starts running you down for the terrible thing you've done, tell him straight: 'I did what I did coz you didn't do what you should have done.'



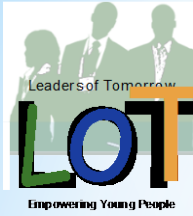


Leaders of Tomorrow



Even if he did right; respected your mother, worked to provide for his family financially and spiritually, taught you right from wrong and drummed it home everyday... Even if he nurtured you as best he could, **blame him** for the generation of men he comes from.



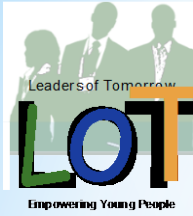


Leaders of Tomorrow



The one that allowed an adolescent definition of manhood to become so dominant. The one that measures a man by how many babymothers he has wrangling his offspring, or by how 'bad' his reputation is on the streets of whatever couple of square miles he chooses to call his 'ends.





Leaders of Tomorrow

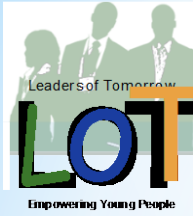


Damn them for letting you believe that respect is to be found with gun in hand or knife in pocket. Damn them and everyone who feeds the myth of these gangsters, villains, thieves and hustlers. Anyone who makes them heroes while damning hard-working, educated, honest men as weak, sell-outs or pussies.





If you are black, **blame white people** for the history of indignities they heaped on you and yours. For the humiliation of having to go cap-in-hand or get down on bended knee or having to burn shit down before you are afforded something so basically fundamental as equality.

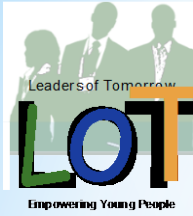


Leaders of Tomorrow



If you are white, **blame black folk and Muslims** for taking all your excuses. Failing that, **blame a class system** that keeps you poor and ignorant so the 'uppers' and 'middles' can feel better about themselves.





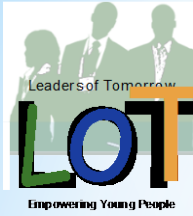
Leaders of Tomorrow



You have good reason to **blame them all.**

I wouldn't be you growing up now for love nor money. **Your generation** has so little room to manoeuvre. We had more space to step around the bullshit.



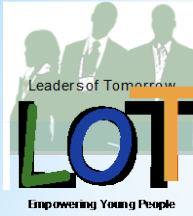


Leaders of Tomorrow

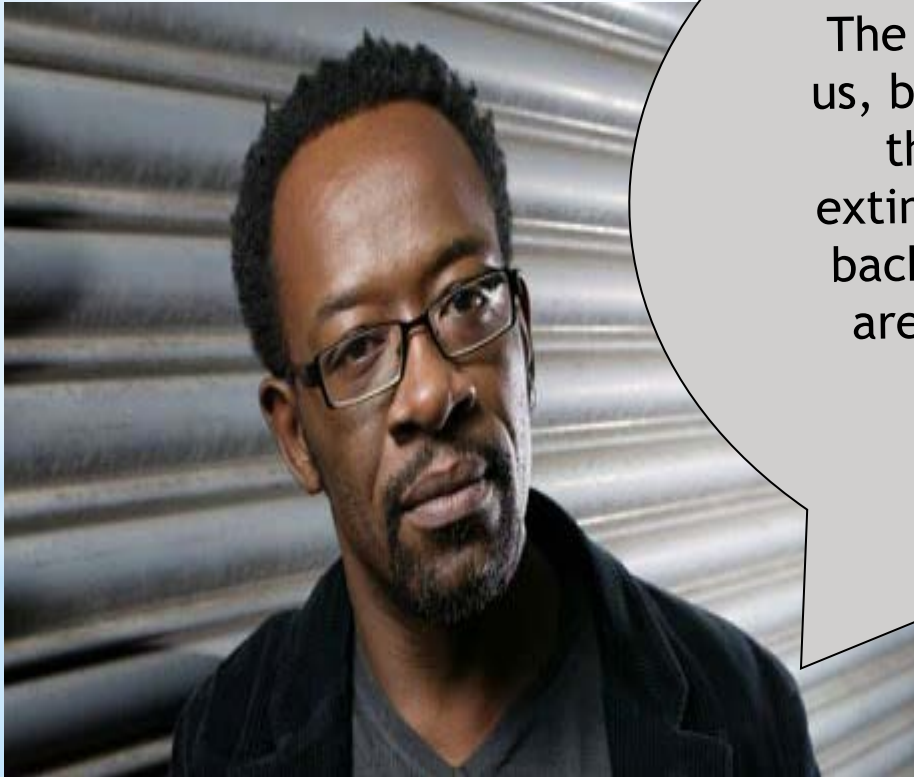


We weren't excluded at the rate you lot are. Teachers hadn't given up or lost their authority over us. They still tried to protect and guide us even through our most disruptive years.



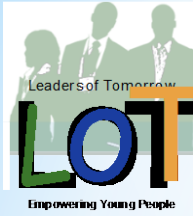


Leaders of Tomorrow

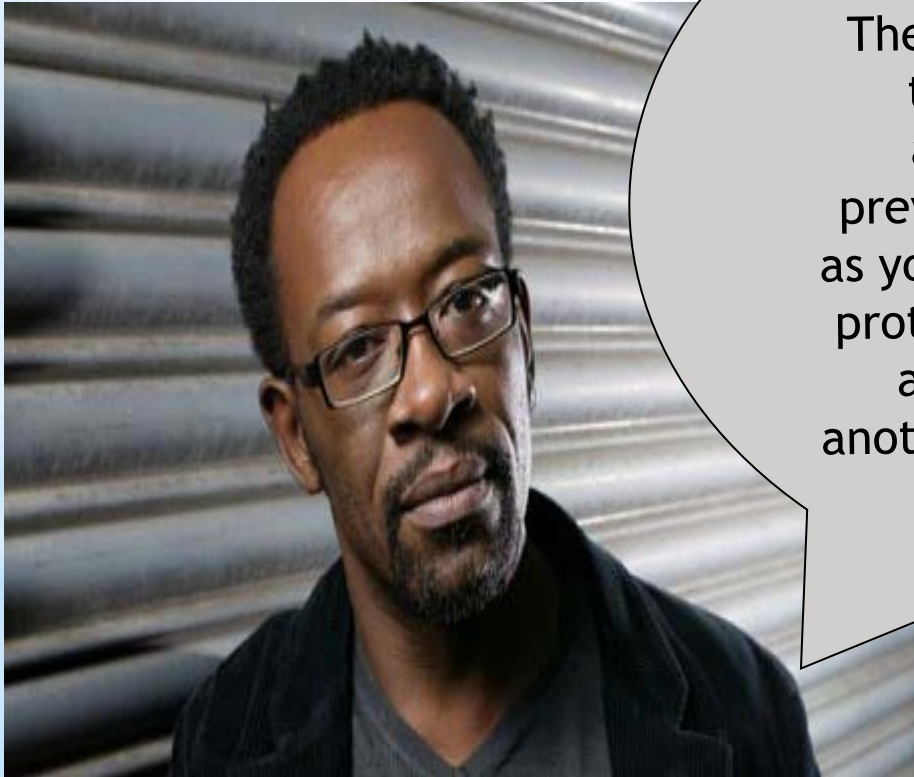


The police stopped and searched us, but we fought that right out of their hands - we hoped into extinction. But they want to bring back that abusive practice. They are still hooked on punishment rather than prevention.



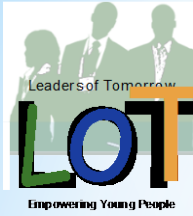


Leaders of Tomorrow

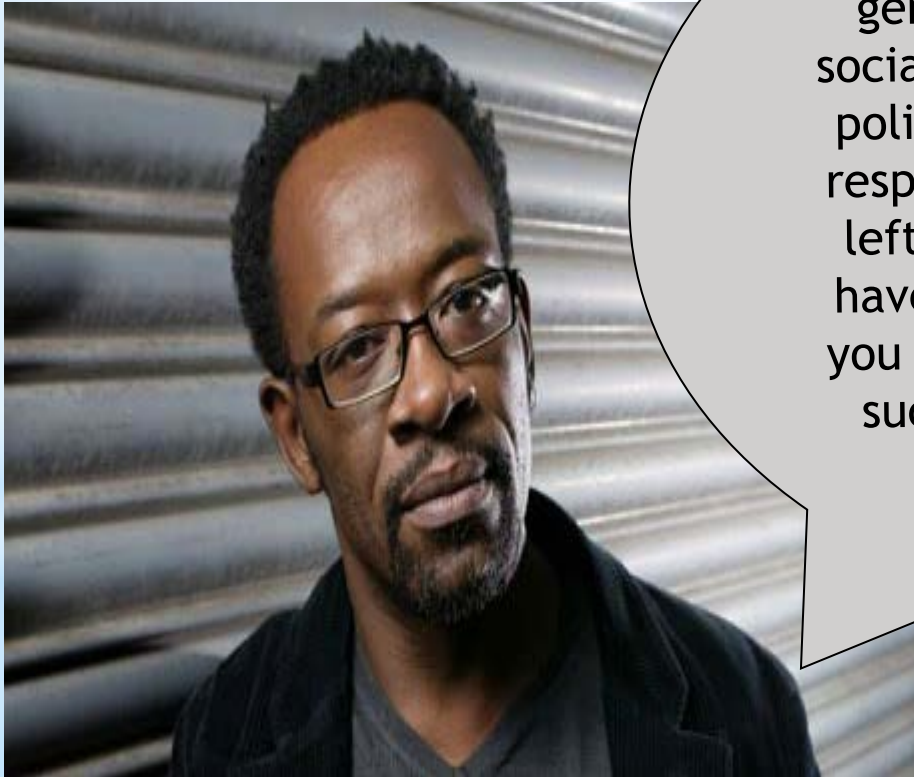


They seem ignorant to the fact that they are feeding you acceptance of an already prevalent gang mentality. As far as you can see, the police are not protecting and serving you, they are coming at you like just another street gang trying to boss your postcode.



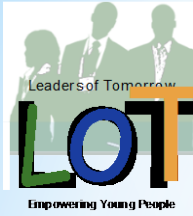


Leaders of Tomorrow



When I was where you are now, generations of state agencies, social services, policy-makers and politicians had not abdicated all responsibility for me. We weren't left to our own devices like you have been. Is it any wonder that you end up expressing yourself in such a violently pathetic way?



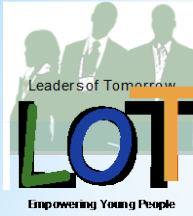


Leaders of Tomorrow



We should be ashamed. I am. You have shamed us into a desperate need to do something about ourselves. We have collectively failed you and we should take all the blame that is ours for that... but so should you.



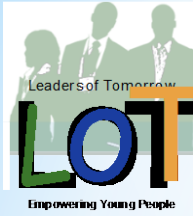


Leaders of Tomorrow



I blame you. I blame you because as a generation you are selfish, self-centred and have little or no empathy for anyone but yourselves. You are politically stunted and socially irresponsible and... you scare us. What scares us most is that you would rather die than learn. Your only salvation may be that still most of you aren't playing it out dirty.



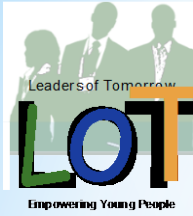


Leaders of Tomorrow



The vast majority of young men, even with all that is stacked against them, are finding their way around the crap. **The boy you will kill**, should you continue to carry that knife, almost certainly had the same collective failures testing him. He probably felt no less abandoned and no less scared. He also, almost certainly, wasn't carrying a knife.



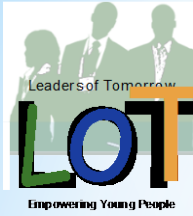


Leaders of Tomorrow

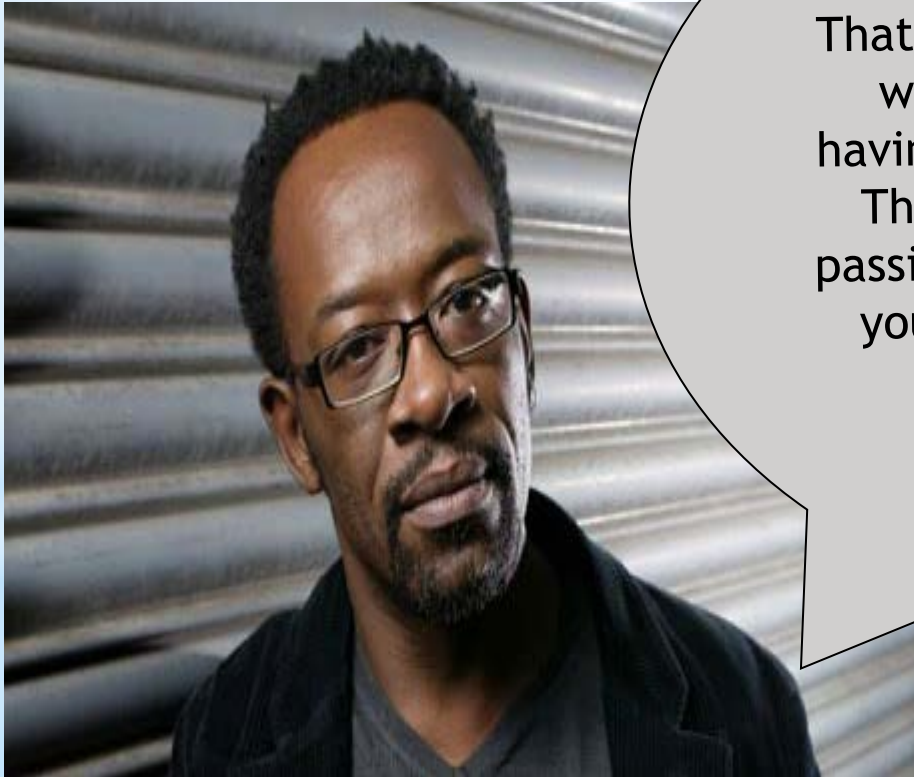


Whatever it seems like, whatever you've read, whatever you tell yourself about protection being your reason, statistics show the life you take will be that of an unarmed person. That is what that knife will do for you. It will make you escalate a situation to where it is needed. It will give you a misguided sense of confidence. It will make you the aggressor.



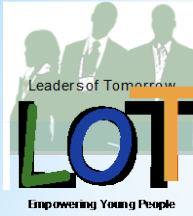


Leaders of Tomorrow

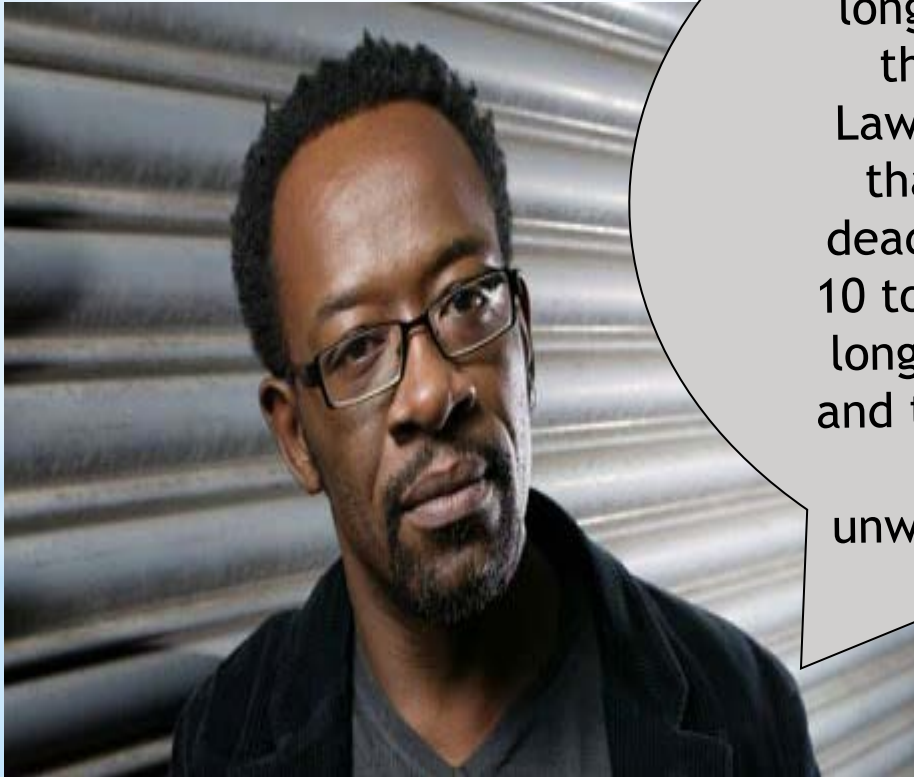


That knife will make you use it. It will bring you nothing worth having. There is no respect there. The street may give you some passing recognition, but any name you think you might make will soon be forgotten.



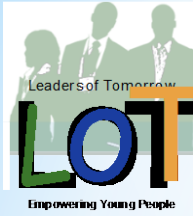


Leaders of Tomorrow



Your victim will be remembered long after you. Name me one of the boys who killed Stephen Lawrence. Once you've bloodied that knife you may as well be dead because you'll be buried for 10 to 20 years. Banged up for that long, only a fool would look back and think it was worth it. You'll be nothing more than a sad, unwanted, unnecessary statistic.



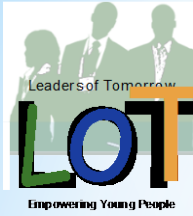


Leaders of Tomorrow

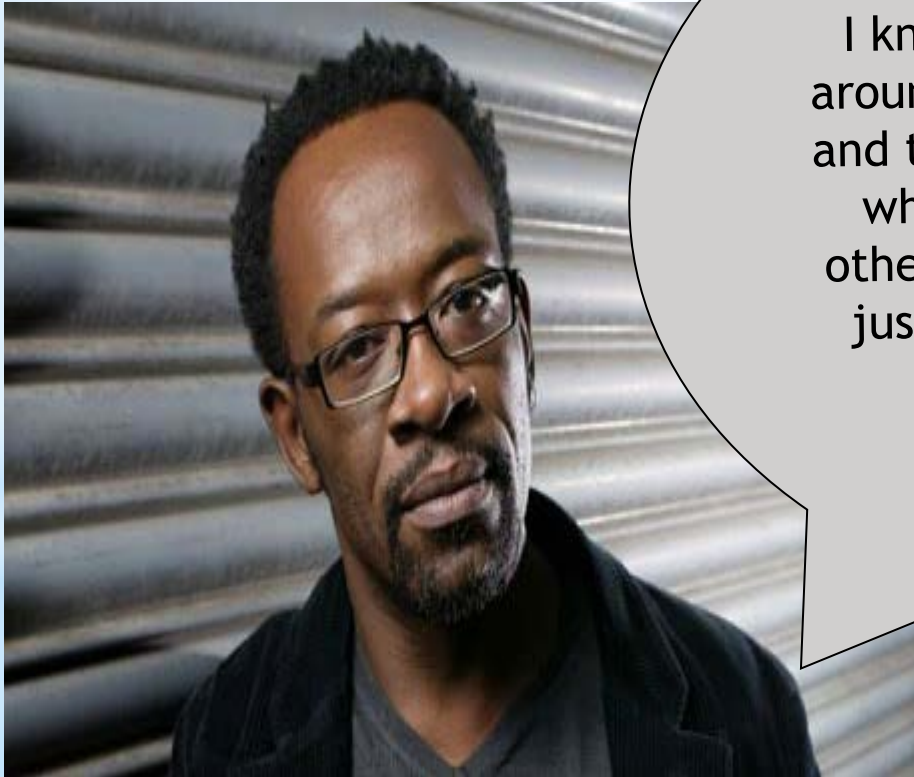


If you were mine, this is what I would tell you. I would make myself a big enough man to beg. I'd get down on bended knees if I had to. I would beg you to take that knife out of your pocket and leave it at home. I would tell you that I know you are scared and lost and that I know the risks involved in what I'm asking you to do.



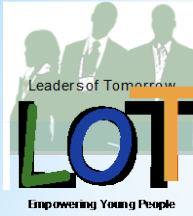


Leaders of Tomorrow

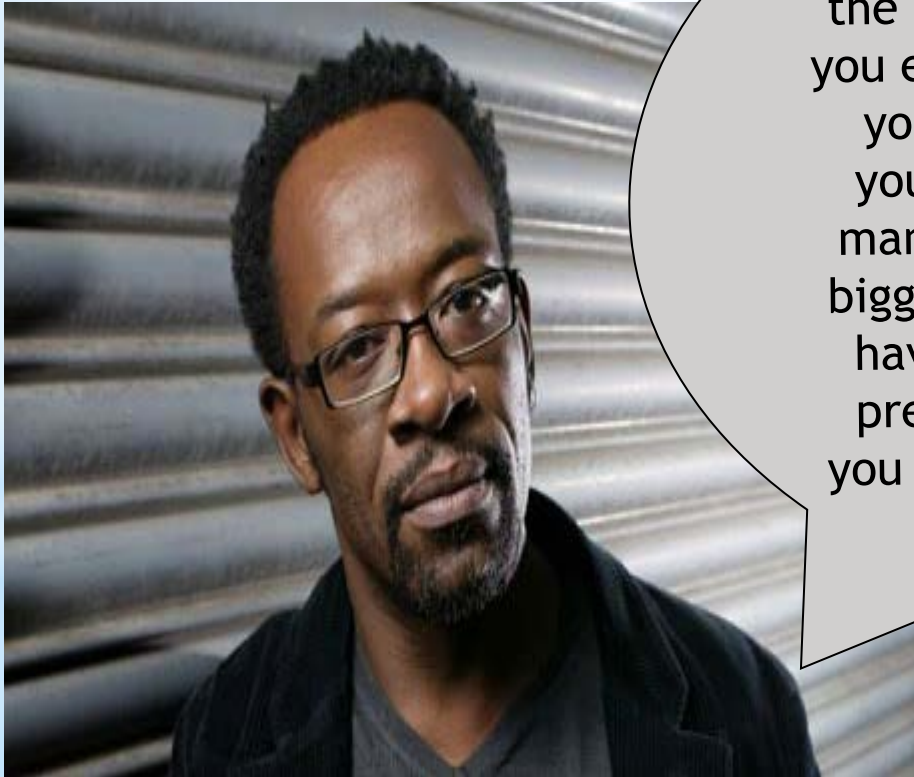


I know that what we could step around, you have to walk through, and that there is always some fool who isn't going to make it any other way but the wrong way. I'm just begging you not to be that fool.



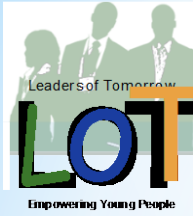


Leaders of Tomorrow



Be a better man than that. Let the story they tell of you be that you exceeded expectations... that you didn't drown. Don't spend your days looking to be a 'bad-man' - try to be a good one. Our biggest failure is that our actions have left you not knowing how precious you are. We have left you unaware of your worth to us.





Leaders of Tomorrow



You are precious to us. Give yourself the chance to grow enough to understand why.

Be safe.

Lennie James

