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**Moderator questions in Bold**, Respondents in Regular text.

**KEY: Unable to decipher** = (inaudible + timecode), **Phonetic spelling** (ph) + timecode), **Missed word** = (mw + timecode), **Talking over each other** = (talking over each other + timecode).

(TC: 00:00:05)

**Reena: Hello, and welcome to a very special podcast episode, featuring members of Youth Futures Foundation's Ethnic Disparities Youth Reference Group. In this episode I'll be chatting to them and understanding a bit more about their reflections on our recently published research and consider their lived experience of the barriers highlighted in the report. Please note, within this episode there are a few trigger warnings to highlight. We'll be discussing experiences of racial, cultural and ableist discrimination amongst other sensitive and important issues relating to the research and the lived experiences of the young people speaking on our podcast today. So hello everybody, thank you for joining me for this episode. Would you mind introducing yourselves to our listeners and telling us a bit about your work with Youth Futures Foundation.**

(TC: 00:00:56)

Oscar: I'm Oscar, I'm twenty. I'm currently in my second year of university. I'm studying sociology and social anthropology and I've really enjoyed working with the Ethnic Disparities Youth Reference Group. I've been really inspired by the work that Youth Futures Foundation has been doing and this research in particular, so, yes.

(TC: 00:01:21)

Oi Mei: Hi, I'm Oi Mei. I am 25. I have been with the Youth Futures for a few months now and contributed to the research for the parliamentary event and, yes, this podcast is something I've been really looking forward to, so thank you for inviting me.

(TC: 00:01:40)

Sara: Hi, I'm Sara, I'm eighteen, from the South West and I'm a full time student and I work part time at a local cinema. And I've been with the Ethnic Disparities Group since around the end of August.

(TC: 00:01:55)

Nyasha: Hi, thank you for having me. My name's Nyasha. I work in research and also some other

freelance bits and pieces in areas not limited to diversity, equity and inclusion. And, for me, when I first saw this because, you know, I just always feel so privileged to be part of YFF's work and to contribute, but I felt it was a really meaningful initiative and so many great projects springing around this around how we can create positive change around what can, of course, understandably be very painful lived experiences to have to deal with and overcome as best as we can. Thank you.

(TC: 00:02:41)

**Reena: Thank you, everybody. So I'd love to start the conversation off by talking a little bit about Youth Futures' recent Youth Voice Survey and, Oscar, can you tell us a bit about Youth Futures' survey, how were you involved?**

(TC: 00:02:58)

Oscar: Yes, so the survey collected the experiences of over 2,000 young people aged 18 to 25 from ethnic minority backgrounds in order to gauge their experiences in relation to employment. So the Youth Futures Foundation commissioned the research and brought on board the Ethnic Disparities Youth Reference Group for consultation on the research questions and the direction of the survey, as well as filling out the survey ourselves and sharing it within our networks. And, yes, we've since been giving our interpretations of the findings. It's just really important that young people are consulted on research that concerns us because we're able to add nuance and personal experiences that quantitative data might not be able to reflect. So, yes, the opportunity to have young people engaged, not only in being researched but in part of the research process has been really great.

(TC: 00:04:02)

**Reena: Amazing, yes, and you raised some really important points there about ensuring that young people's voices are involved and how quantitative analysis doesn't always capture those nuances. Were there any parts of the research that particularly resonated with you?**

(TC: 00:04:19)

Oscar: Yes, quite a lot. What really stands out to me is the findings around the mental health impact, 41% of young people from ethnic minorities reported their mental health suffering due to the pandemic and 38% that their mental health had suffered due to the cost of living crisis. We already know that ethnic minority young people are more likely than their white peers to be in low-paid and insecure employment, be on a zero-hour contract or have more than one job. So the way that these experiences of discrimination and job insecurity interact with struggles with mental health are really interesting to me and they're really important to talk about as well so I'm glad that this research touches on that because it often doesn't get enough attention.

(TC: 00:05:12)

**Reena: Yes, you're so right and one of the key themes that came out of the research was exclusionary workplace culture and the impact of the cost of living crisis on the mental health of young people from ethnic minority backgrounds. And I wondered, Oi Mei, if you had any thoughts on that?**

(TC: 00:05:29)

Oi Mei: Yes, definitely. I think the cost of living crisis, you know, there have been quite a lot of new campaigns starting up. For example the Enough is Enough campaign as well, really shining a light on how much the cost of living crisis is impacting people, especially young people because a lot of younger people tend to be, typically, in education or in lower income jobs because there are different age bands for eighteen-plus compared to 23-plus. You know, almost £2 an hour difference in wages which really amounts to a huge amount over the long term. And also it means that, as Oscar said before, the fact that a lot of people are now struggling even more with mental health when we were already having an increase in mental health or mental ill-health with young people and a lack of resources due to the NHS being understaffed as well. I have been studying psychology recently, doing a counselling course at the moment. I've gone back into education after a long break and we, kind of, touched on a little while ago, something which made me think about the cost of living crisis actually. Which was there's this concept in psychology that in order for people to reach their full potential and to be the best version of ourselves, and also that this is something innately that we all want to achieve, it's known as self-actualisation. But in order for us to reach that concept, we need various needs to be met. It means that our basic needs need to be met which consist of food, warmth, shelter, rest, feeling safe, feeling secure. And that's something that a lot of people are having to choose between at the moment.

Putting the heating on or making sure that they're going to bed with a full stomach, or that their kids or siblings are going to bed with a full stomach as well. And even outside of that, it's saying that our psychological needs need to be met as well. So we need to have a sense of belonging, a community that we feel that we can be safe in, that we feel loved by our friends, our family, our chosen family. And also that we have love for ourselves. You know, we have good self esteem, a sense of freedom, which I think is really important, and independence. And, you know, when we can't even afford our basic needs, it means there's a whole generation of people who are growing up unable to attain a life where they can live the best version of themselves, if that makes sense?

(TC: 00:08:25)

**Reena: Yes, you've raised some really important points there about the need for safety and security, and that itself presents many barriers within the cost of living crisis. What are your reflections on the key barriers and issues that young people from ethnic minority backgrounds face today?**

(TC: 00:08:47)

Oi Mei: Well, I personally grew up as the only non-white person in my own school until I was twelve. So the only non-white people I saw were my own family because I live in quite a rural area of England, and just having a total lack of any, sort of, representation of people who look like me whilst I was growing up, meant that I was immediately othered by other people. You know, it was just a really difficult, sort of, time and being able to now find that sense of community through forms of activism, through organisations that now exist, had been amazing. But when you don't see other people who look like you in your school, in your universities, in your workplace, it just leaves this feeling of a really insular way of living, to be honest. And I always, in the back of my head, wondered about, you know, being the token person because I was the only non-white person and, you know, (TC 00:10:00) because of the Equalities Act, workplaces need to have quite a broad of people hired. And it, kind of, makes you question your own self worth, because now you're starting to wonder if the reason that you've been hired somewhere is just because of the colour of your skin or just so they can tick a box, and it makes you feel really devalued because you question if you're only there because of positive discrimination if that makes sense? And, me personally, I'm also neurodiverse, so I have ADHD and autism, and that is a massive barrier to employment, to making friends, and just in all areas really. Yes, so it's quite a difficult way of living but I think because you're part of so many different minority communities, it also means that it's easier to find other people who are going through the same thing.

I mean, you know, there are statistics in the Youth Futures report which are stating that there are more than eight out of ten ethnic minority young people who are worried about barriers or challenges to do with their specific ethnicity or their background when it does come to work and employment. And that, kind of, burden is definitely shared, definitely felt all across the board, I think.

(TC: 00:11:35)

**Reena: Thank you, Oi Mei. And within your reflections that you shared that were really thoughtful and mindful, thank you for sharing those reflections with us, especially about your own lived experience, what do you think young people from ethnic minority backgrounds face, in particular when they are seeking work or employment?**

(TC: 00:12:00)

Oi Mei: Yes, so I'll give you an example of something fairly recent. I have got another zero hour contract job which is, you know, a big surprise. Again, according to the statistics that our study showed, a lot of ethnic minority people do tend to have several jobs or tend to be on a zero hour contract rather than receiving stable work. And I am the only non-white person, the only queer person, the only disabled person in that entire workplace, and the differences that I feel are incredible. It's actually, kind of, you know, you can't help but feel let down and you don't know if management is safe. We had, sort of, talks the other day about one of my colleagues had said that it was really stupid because when she asked what

gender her baby was, the woman replied that the baby she was raising to be gender neutral, so the baby could decide later. And my colleague had a very disgusted reaction to this type of thing, and then for me to just, straight up say, 'Oh, well I'm also non-binary, by the way,' and for my manager to be there and not even acknowledge, support or ask my pronouns afterwards was really hurtful. So I guess you're constantly putting yourself on the line, your safety on the line and, you know, whether or not that zero hour contract that I have, it might not be renewed, even though it's zero hours. So you have to, kind of, sacrifice either a part of your identity which is then detrimental to your mental health, or you just have to hide aspects of who are you, or you have to just say it proudly and hope for the best and see what happens. And that is very dangerous. I don't think people actually realise how difficult that choice is, you know, to be seen and accepted for who you are, or to be able to afford to survive. It's a really difficult thing. So, yes, that's why I'm really passionate about, like, the Narrow The Gap initiative.

(TC: 00:14:30)

**Reena: Thank you, Oi Mei, and I'm so sorry that you experienced that. And you, sort of, touched upon it there about what your employer didn't do, what you, kind of, needed them to do in that situation, and what do you think that employers can do to address some of the barriers that you've talked about and ensure a more inclusive workspace, (audio distorts 14.58) place?**

(TC: 00:14:59)

Oi Mei: Yes, I think that's the trickier question because that will involve dismantling a lot of systems that have been at the benefit of-, I'm not going to use the word majority because white people are not the majority, but in this country, typically, you know, straight white people are the ones that are in power and it shines through with all sorts of representation. And I just don't think that dismantling these systems should purely be the responsibility of those who are at a disadvantage to them, if that makes sense? Like, talking about trauma and talking about, you know, being, quote, unquote, 'Different,' meaning not white, you need a lot of energy to be able maintain change and you need to be able to have community to make change because if one person was to try and do it alone, they would completely burn out, which is why it's amazing that organisations like this exist. Because you actually have the power to, you know, have that parliamentary event the other day, or the other week, sorry, which is fantastic to have been able to do, because it sheds light on actual data that cannot be disputed. And then doing stuff like this as well where you, kind of, hear a little bit more about, you know, just scratch beneath the surface of some of these stats. Yes, it's a team effort, I think, but we need people who are not an ethnic minority to also get involved and be an ally in the sense that they're also fighting for equity for people of ethnic minority backgrounds too.

(TC: 00:17:03)

**Reena: Couldn't have put it better. Thank you so much for your points there, Oi Mei, and for sharing your experiences, I really appreciate it. Some of the themes that you were exploring there, in terms of discrimination, came up in a video that Sara, you helped contribute to, which was the Ignite subgroup, which was led by the Future Voices group members Isha, Roshan and Ed, looking**

**at the experiences of young people from ethnic minority backgrounds navigating employment. And some of the distressing themes that we heard in the video included whitewashing of CVs, exclusionary workplace practices based on faith, drinking culture, ableism, as well as language and hair discrimination. So, Sara, I'd love to know, what led you to want to contribute to the video?**

(TC: 00:17:59)

Sara: I think one of the biggest reasons is that it's a very important piece. It's quite common, I think we have so much access to so much information that it's common to hear quite grim statistics like the Youth Voice survey about 71% of young people from ethnic minority backgrounds have experienced discrimination in the workplace. And the rapid evidence review backs that, you know, Oi Mei talked about being on zero hour contracts and how that is so much more likely for people from ethnic minority backgrounds. And these numbers, they're very alarming, but it's also very easy to get de-sensitised to them. Even though they're the-, when you hear something so shocking and audacious, you would think that it wakes people into action. If you're being presented with clear evidence of deep rooted issues of inequity, especially with the nature of this research, that someone's background, ethnicity, can drastically alter their opportunities, their confidence, their health. All of this, which impacts their quality of life. But we still find that there tends to be quite a large disconnect which is why I think the video is so important, because people, they may very much believe it but they don't quite put stock into the facts because they don't have a personal connection to it. And so it's very easy to be, kind of, dismissive and say that this isn't as prevalent today, that Britain today is flawed but it's still a modern, equitable, meritocratic society. And on top of this, there's this very, like, very big notion, I think, of how young people today are just a bit petulant, and they don't know how good they have it, and they're just whining, or something like that.

And it's part of human nature to complain about young people, it would be strange if there wasn't, like, a single (TC 00:20:00) person talking about, like, 'Kids nowadays,' or something. But you very easily run into this issue of ignoring problems when young people aren't given opportunities to have their voice heard, which is what this video was about. It's a chance to force people, especially influential decision makers, to connect these numbers to real people, real stories, real lives, and see a human face to some of the statistics. It means something to hear directly from people that another person's inserting you into their life. You can't really just dismiss that and I genuinely believe that people can't just ignore when someone's being vulnerable and they are telling you about a painful experience. When Oi Mei was talking about their experience, it's very difficult to turn a blind eye to that and it motivates action.

(TC: 00:20:55)

**Reena: Yes, you're so right, Sara, and I think you really speak to the importance of the nuance of hearing from young people themselves about issues that affect them. And so you reflect on some really important issues there about why you wanted to contribute to the video and, you know, your experiences getting involved in that and some of the data from the survey. What do you think schools, employability support providers and employers can do, then, to help more young people from ethnic minority backgrounds overcome some of the barriers that you've described when it**

comes to work?

(TC: 00:21:38)

Sara: So, this is, kind of, quite a difficult question, so the answer seems very simple when I say that it's very important that people, you know, schools, employers, anyone who wants to be part of the solution, the first thing they need to do is recognise that it isn't a single problem. You know, you've listed a lot of different things about whitewashing, about hair discrimination, about workplace practices and they are all their own little fires that all require their own unique approach to put them out and to build a better structure in their place. Young people need holistic support. They need personalised support to enter the workplace confident of their ability, of what they bring to the table and of their value. And workplaces need to adapt. They need to be flexible to be able to welcome people of unique backgrounds and unique perspectives and ensure that they feel comfortable, that they have reasonable adjustments in place so they aren't just bringing in the same type of people and that they're able to retain those workers who are so valuable to their company. Because if you're just bringing in the same type of people and the same type of background and the same type of skills, it's simply not in the interest of anyone, no matter the industry or company. It's going to stall eventually and it isn't productive. And what I want to emphasise is that this is not a case of forcing young people to abandon their identities. I think Oi Mei hit on a really good point about feeling, like, the need to hide to be able to go through work in a way that feels comfortable, and we have this archaic image of what a productive member of society looks like.

And it's very-, we see that clearly, it's something that's put into everyone no matter their background. You know, two in five young people think they don't act or speak the, like, quote, unquote, 'Right way,' and it's very unlikely that it's just because a lot of young people are just unprofessional or lack education, we know that that's just not true, and that it's more likely the impact of a lot of negative stereotypes attached to individuals because of their identity. And also the somewhat hostile image a lot of workplaces can have for being a place that is just not for people who aren't white, who aren't able, who aren't neurotypical or, like, some other, quote, unquote, 'Perfect individual.'

(TC: 00:24:21)

**Reena: Thank you, Sara, you've raised some really powerful points there and some really important points about what employers and education providers can do. And that really speaks to a mantra that Youth Futures try and live by. Which is, 'Nothing about young people without young people.' And, Nyasha, I'd love to hear your thoughts on this particular topic. Why do you think it's important to consult young people on issues affecting them?**

(TC: 00:24:57)

Nyasha: Thank you so much, Reena, and yes, I would echo that, loving all the powerful sentiments that have been shared. So I think it's important to consult young people because I think we want to build the,

sort of, strongest projects, we want to deliver the best possible programmes. And I think using an approach of co-creation and having reflection and really having that, I guess in a way, a diversity of voices and perspectives and lived experiences and all sort of things coming in, is such a key way of empowering everyone to really feel that they're being involved and that they're listened to. And one thing that springs to mind immediately with Youth Futures Foundation and the way that they are really, like, leading the way with youth voice, is I love the diagram I think that there was, where you, kind of, think where are you on that scale or, I guess, it's a cycle as well in a way, of youth voice. And, you know, in terms of informing young people, consulting young people, empowering them and really making sure that they're an integral part of any, sort of, key decision making. But, for me, I think it just makes whatever you're trying to do a lot better. It makes it, I think, more, sort of, thought out and I think you increase the likelihood of succeeding because I feel one thing that I always say in my personal life as a mantra myself is, 'I believe in helping people how they want to be helped.' So I might come along and say, 'Oh, you know, I could do this. I think it'd be really great if-', but if that person doesn't feel that what I've done it actually, you know, what they needed, then the intent, unfortunately, doesn't count as much. It's really about the impact, isn't it?

And then I think just more broadly in terms of, like, with the other areas and things, you know, we see with, say, even the cost of living crisis and this, and this generation I think very often feeling shafted from the conversations that I have with various young people. But I think just in general, like, across climate, you can see so many areas where you're really looking at things and we think, 'It's not being made with the best interest of future generations in mind,' to be perfectly honest. And it's great, for example, that Wales have that Commissioner for Future Generations, don't they, but it's, like, we need to take that even further. And you know what, why not have a young person in that role? Why have, you know, just a Youth Parliament and, kind of, have that as, like, a different body? Why not try and have more integration and, you know, maybe, I don't know, things like making it mandatory that MPs would have, like, a young advisor et cetera. I think there have been great schemes, I saw one where it was, like, MPs got mentored by a young person, actually. And then in turn the MP would also give that young person (mw 27.57) mentoring but they were getting digital mentoring in, like, all sorts of areas. And I think it's just such a key way of really filling in the gaps and bridging some of that intergenerational divide that we often see.

(TC: 00:28:10)

Oi Mei: I think Nyasha's, like, made some absolutely insane points. Yes, people sometimes just need to be heard, you know, rather than offering solutions. Sometimes people just need to be able to voice their concerns and be heard first and asked how they can be helped rather than telling them how they should be helped, if that makes sense? Yes, I was just thinking as well, because Nyasha brought up that point, I was just thinking back to the question you asked me originally, Reena, where you were saying, you know, 'What can employers do to address barriers and ensure inclusive workplace practices?' I was also thinking about making a safe space where employees can actually voice their concerns and just, in general, whether it's to do with the workplace or it's an emotional thing. So offering private healthcare or therapy as part of the job. So having that as something that's standard to be included if someone so chooses, to be able to have access to that, kind of, support really easily. Yes, that was all I wanted to add.



(TC: 00:29:22)

**Reena: Thank you, Oi Mei, some really important reflections there. Nyasha, I'd love to elaborate a little bit more about what you were saying about the importance of ensuring young people are, you know, really embedded within organisations, working, empowering youth voice. Why is it important for organisations, do you think, for employers to recruit and retain a diverse workforce?**

(TC: 00:29:50)

Nyasha: Thank you, Reena, and love those points, once again, Oi Mei, and I can see Angel mentioning the system map. Yes, all these wonderful, wonderful (TC 00:30:00) visuals. Yes, to come back to your question, yes, I think in terms of embedding these future generations and really thinking of ways to, sort of, centre them. I think there have been great points that have been made about the, sort of, different trends in the workplace. I think there are so many levers that are part of this. It's things like, employee engagement. You know, we're seeing lots of, sort of, fascinating changes and demographic considerations as well in terms of, like, vacancy gaps and key issues that we think about when we think about the employment landscape. But I think it's so interesting because, you know, we keep talking about we've got an ageing population and ultimately, what do you need? You need more people of working age, you need these people, maybe, like, from let's say immigrant backgrounds et cetera. I know, painful topic of conversation but it's, kind of, a reality in terms of what we need ultimately to keep things running and to keep things working. And then I think also on the other end, you know, with young people and thinking about how, very often they can, like, I think, feel underserved, whether it's through education and it's through the difficulty of getting into the job market, et cetera. And obviously we know that this is exacerbated by discrimination et cetera that many ethnic minorities face.

So I think, for me, it's just a thing of we want to, in a very, sort of, tough environment and tough context of, let's say, I guess it's fourth industrial revolution and maybe we're going to be going into the fifth industrial revolution and we're thinking about automation and this (ph 31.33) and changing patterns of work. We want to create, I think, the best possible types of systems that work for people and I think, obviously, things can feel very, very dystopic but you want to, kind of, you know, why not have amazing, sort of, things with the technological revolution, and we're really working towards what a utopia or just creating a better world for us could look like. So I think, for me, it's just, with employers, ultimately they want to keep innovating and they want to keep having, like, growth and this and those new ideas and those fresh perspectives that the young people are going to bring. And I think just, it's so important to look at things in a different way. I think there's a quote which I'm going to massively, massively misquote so forgive me, but it goes along the lines of, 'The task is not to look at things and it's, like, to be able to see what everyone else has seen.' But it's to be able to, like, think what no one else has thought about those things. So it's, like, you're really reflecting and I think for those young people, if they feel really, sort of, supported to bring their full selves and to-, I know, I think change can be uncomfortable with some of the things and those culture clashes that might come up. But if they can really be supported to bring their whole selves, it's not only great for the business but just more importantly for them as people

in terms of, like, mental health and all those things.

I think the fascinating point that was being made just now, but even with things, like, whether you can provide mental health support in the workplace. They're talking about how, very often, if it's a bit of a larger organisation, they will have an EAP, it's, like, an employee assistance programme, and not as often the case with smaller organisations, unfortunately. But they were saying that through the pandemic, people have seen, like, basically an explosion. Whereas before, like, they'd get it and they think, 'Oh, yes, maybe we'll have a couple of thousand people taking it up,' and then they would have-, I think for one of them, they said they were expecting 4,000 people or something on a call and they had 120,000 people who joined. So it's just all these things, like, there's incredible need and really it's so important to see that uptake with being able to provide people with the right support that will help them thrive. But yes, ultimately, I think if you want to be purpose driven and you want to build an organisation that's going to last into the future, you need to do it with the people who are inheriting that future.

(TC: 00:33:57)

**Reena: Completely second that. So many important and powerful points there that you've raised, Nyasha, especially on the technical side and revolution that the labour market is undergoing at the moment around automation and what that could mean for the future of the youth labour market. We've heard some amazing points from all of you, reflecting on various different elements of your time on the Youth Reference Group. I'd like to steer the conversation, now, towards reflecting more on your experiences being in the Ethnic Disparities Youth Reference Group. So if we wheel back round, I'll start with you, Oscar, what's been your highlight of being in the group>**

(TC: 00:34:40)

Oscar: I'm going to say it's today because I've just really enjoyed hearing everyone speak. I think especially what Oi Mei was talking about, about-, I also have autism and ADHD and am mixed race and my entire family is white, and for a lot of the time, most of my school and workplace has been white as well. So I think, you know, we've been talking about very practical ways about how to aid people of ethnic minorities into the workplace but I think also having communities like this, where we're able to talk and listen with one and other is just amazing, because it can be a very isolating experience as the survey has shown. So, yes. Listening to everyone speak today has been really great, so yes. Thank you to everyone.

(TC: 00:35:41)

**Reena: Thank you, Oscar.**

(TC: 00:35:44)

Oi Mei: That's, like, so nice but also I'm so sorry that we've got so many parallels if that makes sense. I keep saying, 'If that makes sense,' I noticed that I say it quite a lot. So apologies for that, I'm trying to get better at just stating things and not needing it to be digested easily by other people. I guess it's one of the side effects of, sort of, always being the other person who's not taken quite as seriously as those around me. So, I will try better to not say that anymore because I've said it three times this podcast. But, yes, this has been really, really nice actually as well. I, kind of, really relate to what Oscar was saying. Yes, I feel like we maybe share quite a lot of parallels there and, yes, he's completely right just saying, like, having that community has just been so powerful. Again, personally over the lockdown, it's been quite a difficult period. Not just because of, like, losing family members and obviously losing a lot of my clients because I'm freelance and I was a travel photographer and writer before the pandemic, and obviously you can't travel during a pandemic. But because of the pandemic, I was able to find a lot more Eastern, South East Asian friends and people, and that type of community that this offers and that that has offered, yes, that's been, like, the most powerful, important thing in my entire life. And I can't remember who was talking about whitewashing before, you know, people changing their non-white children's names to be a white name so it's more palatable, so they might not be at risk of potentially not getting a job because their name is, maybe, hard to pronounce or whatnot.

I only started using my Chinese name, Oi Mei, for the past year and a half, and if places like this didn't exist where, you know, the focus is really on being an ethnic minority or global majority, whichever term you want to use, yes, I wouldn't be able to do that. So it's thanks to stuff like this which means I can start to accept myself, and that's probably been the most important step.

(TC: 00:38:10)

Sara: I think I've been very lucky through this group to be exposed to so many different perspectives that are so incredibly rich and that articulate very nuanced experiences in a very powerful, impactful way, as well as being able to personally partake in unique experiences like the parliament event. That is something that I just-, I still think of it as such a strange anomaly in my life. I live, quite literally, like, half an hour away from parliament but I would have never imagined myself to be there, especially to be in the House of Lords. It seems very absurd. You think of it as, like, a building that is composed of and built for, like, old men in stuffy wigs and silly robes that wouldn't fit in anywhere else except for, you know, on the BBC. And it still feels very strange to think of youth unemployment as an issue that, even though it quite rightly does concern them, it feels strange to have actual, established, like important individuals, not only ask about people's experience but actually listen.

(TC: 00:39:23)

Nyasha: Yes, absolutely. Everything that's said really resonates with me and I was thinking earlier when Oscar was, sort of, going through the process of everything that was being set up, I would say just really, to be honest, every part of the process and even with the wonderful team at Savanta ComRes and, you know, they sent us out the document and they were really consulting us and, sort of, having that youth voice integrated and interweaving through each part of it. And I remember, like, going through that

document. Like, 'Make sure you suggest changes, make sure you do this, make sure you do (TC 00:40:00) all those bits,' and learning about the whole intricacies of the trade, the unique coding system that they used in terms of, 'If this question is this,' and logic rules and all sorts of really fascinating, slightly nerdy stuff. So, yes, I think it was just fantastic to really see it from start to finish. I think definitely self actualisation is one of my favourite concepts to think about as well, Oi Mei, so I definitely felt a real, key sense of that because for me it was all sorts of things that, to be honest, I still grapple and deal with now in terms of what it's like to be, you know, a young black woman and neurodiverse and all sorts of other things and just, like, facing up against ableism and systems. I feel like you, sort of, feel like you're forced to fit into them and you don't really have that space to just adjust and actually feel like there's enough flexibility to make things more comfortable. So it just is such a nice space to, sort of, give back and to take stock and to be able to really, I think just a sense of really seeing how can we make things better for the next generation?

And then I think as a result of this, because what I really love with YFF, it's not just about, like, what are doing on the core of the day to day work and the objectives that's we're trying to achieve, but it's also about the external things as well because then as a result, I think something was signposted about, I think it's the Young Women's Trust and work that they were doing around just understanding ethnic minority women. I think in particular, experiences of racial discrimination and it was really quite, sort of, a bit, I guess, out of my comfort zone but then I signed up for that and then there was, like, a call. And I remember the first time I thought, 'Oh no, let's reschedule, do a different time,' and they were very, sort of, understanding and flexible about it because it can be tricky fitting it in around work and other things and having more than one job. But then just being there and being able to talk through some of the really, like, yes, tough experiences. And I think it's sad, but sometimes through these projects it's, like, the first time that I've felt like I've had real, sort of, affirmation and empathy because it's just that whole thing, you can tell someone, you know, I was sharing experiences about managers who were bullying me and I was getting completely different treatment to my white colleagues. And things like, you know, a manager who was using racial slurs and it's just having that space and that whole thing where you, kind of, like, are reflecting back your experiences to contribute to a greater good of some research, and then really having someone that I can just be-, like that thing about how trauma is what's experienced in the absence of an empathetic witness.

So just someone to, kind of, help me on that journey of recovery et cetera and healing. And just, really, thinking about, actually this isn't okay, and this is how I'm going to find meaning from this, and this is how I'm going to step up. It's been a whole process in terms of, like, the day to day and what we were doing, but then also the outside thing and I'm sure even years from now I'll be able to reflect and think about how, yes, life changing and transformative it's been. You know, so we continue to, I guess, beat on and just keep getting on with things and, like, doing the best that you can in spite of it because I know that any people listening and I'm sure many people have dealt with, just, yes, really, really terrible stuff. And that's why we want to create that better world and make sure that we don't have that again. And, yes, I loved what Sara was saying. I like that very, sort of, spunky call to action vibe. I think we need more of that.

(TC: 00:43:46)

**Reena: Thank you all for sharing your lived experiences and your reflections. I think just elaborating a little bit there on what Nyasha was saying about years from now, you'll, sort of, look back and, hopefully, think that it was a life changing experience for you all. It means a great deal for us at Youth Futures to hear that and hope that you, you know, really feel involved in all of these different processes. So really appreciate you coming on and feeling able to share some of these very personal and important reflections that are vital for stakeholders and the government and various policy makers to hear, who are working in the youth employment sector, that will be making changes and recommendations to young people's futures. So thank you so much for taking part. And for listeners who are interested in learning more about the research that the young people who were part of the Youth Reference Group were referencing today, you can find that on our website and you can learn more about our ethnic disparities work on our website as well. So thank you so much for listening. (Silence 45.08-45.23)**