**Political Identities Audio Transcript**

*[Reverberating drum sound effect]*

**Alya:** So who are you?

*[Reverberating drum sound effect]*

**Antonio:** This project aims to improve understanding of the role that youth services have in the development of young people’s political identities and understanding of the range of political identities young people express, the processes through which these identities are developed and how they relate to relate to young people’s experiences with youth services.

If organisations can't speak to young people to find out our perspectives and acknowledge the value of our lived experience, there is a risk that tools and support designed for young people will only address adult-assumed challenges.

And we think it’s important create spaces for young people to use their voices because society often tells us we’re too ‘young’ to have opinions. That’s why we’re embedding youth voice in this project.

*[Reverberating drum sound effect]*

**Alya:** So who are you?

*[Reverberating drum sound effect]*

**Mushtaq:** So if you’re constantly reminded of your identity, for instance your race, religion, social class, gender, it’s not really going to be a huge shock when those identities become politicised.

COVID has brought the class divide in the UK to the forefront.

*[Spoken word pieece]*

**Alya:**

Who are you

Who am I

Where did we come from

How much more is there to find

Of our ancestors history

Erased by what is now my society

*[Reverberating* *drum begins playing in background]*

A political identity

Influenced by those who still oppress we

What are the different forces which fight

For control of my own mind

Do I even have choice or logic or reason

Or is it proximity that leaves me blind

As capitalism pushes for my liberation

So Im still free. enough to buy

The same chains. just new names

What is truth and where lies lie

*[drums intensify]*

So I

Turn to what is left of my roots

To search for guidance outside

The predominant state, the dominant thought

To find a way, in which I can rise

***Background vocal:*** *Rise*

**Alya:**

Above consumption, above depression

Above such blatant ! indescressions

As we build hope for our people

Empower ourselves

Building a world of justice

Of communal wealth

Where kindness is rewarded over greed

Longevity over short-term receipt

Where wisdom leads quietly

And we know how to hear

See past false gestures

Of sureity - free of fear

*[drum fill interspersed with backing vocalisations]*

So

who are you

And who am I

What is truth and where do lies lie?

Who can we be

With more patience and more tries?

It’s only you, who can decide.

*[drums and backing vocalisations end]*

**Anonymous:** How do young people's identities become political?

What do we mean by an identity becoming political?

I think young people don't, and cannot, choose whether or not their identities are political.

I think the most important factor is awareness of intersections, and privileges. And how you affect the world around you, and how the world is affected by you, and how you perceive yourself versus how the world perceives you.

To what extent are political identities imposed onto young people?

Massively, enormously. All the time.

To give you an example.

Every time someone perceives me as a woman, every time someone uses she/her pronouns to refer to me even when informed otherwise… like, that's a struggle. And it's, you know, you hear that a lot in LGBT communities, you don't just come out once and that's it. You have to come out in every conversation with every new person you meet, every day. Lockdown has been so refreshing!

And it's just who you are. But depending on what the discourse is, or what's going on, like, someone might perceive that as you making a political statement or being deliberately controversial.

And I think it's very much imposed, because like, then people look at you and they're like, oh, you're trans, that must mean that you want to go march for this or that. That must mean that you should speak up or you should sign this petition. And sometimes you just want to live!

And I don't feel that in many areas of my work. I would be like, my work itself isn't explicitly about identity. But it is political in that I'm a person who isn't traditionally in those spaces and that informs the work. Even if it isn't about political identity. There is still this person of this identity behind it.

And I really don't think that in many spaces I find myself in, that people would give a damn about me if I wasn't trans, if I wasn't neurodiverse, if I wasn't so many things, you know what I mean?

How do youth workers and youth organisations perceive young people's political identities?

This is a tricky one, because it kind of assumes that you know how a person perceives you. And this assumes that this is a process that can be subjectively controlled, which it isn't.

It implies that presentation and perception of presentation is a choice, which it is not at all, but I think also youth organisations and the way they perceive young people's political identities are important, because you kind of hone in on, “Okay, who's regularly getting screwed over by society? Let's help them out.”

And that can go both ways. Like I said in the previous question, are you kind of leaning into tokenism? And at the same time, who are the youth workers? Who represents the youth organisations? Are they white, middle-class, cis men? If so, why? Is ii just better optics if you, I don't know, get a trans person to lead the project on trans young people's identities and so on and so forth. Because so much of that is chicken eat egg.

Even if the intentions are good, that's how it can feel like, “Ooh, how interesting.” Like, I come from a science background. So, I know what it is on the other side, like there is always this part of like, “How very interesting! Let's get to know how the test subject thinks.”

I'm not being cynical or anything, these youth organisations are marvellously-intentioned and it’s a blessing that they exist. It's wonderful that within the UK’s very flawed infrastructure we do have this.

But it can veer into tokenistic places.

And much of that is addressed by the question of “Okay, that’s all great, but who is holding the space, to what end?”

*[Reverberating drum sound effect]*

**Alya:** So who are you?

*[Reverberating drum sound effect]*