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The Broken 'Social Contract' - Episode 2: Education (Transcript) *Bollo Brook Youth Centre, in collaboration with Renata Albuquerque and Simon Tullett, SOAS, 28th September 2020*

YOUNG PERSON: One time I was in DT, and me and this teacher like, I won't say we always had problems, but like I'm not gonna lie and say I was that ideal student. I was a handful. One time, he called me a 'monkey'. And then I said, 'You can't, you can't say that to me. You know what, that's wrong. You can't say that'. And then he said, he can say whatever he wants. I said, 'I'm going to report you'. And he said to me, 'Who do you think they're really going to believe, me or you?'. And then I got kicked out the class for disruptive behaviour. And when I told the teacher who picked me up, he said that there's this code between teachers and how he can't undermine another teacher in front of the students.

[Intro Music]

INTRO: This is the second in a mini-series of podcast shorts by Bollo Brook Youth Centre for Corridors of Power. Each episode will focus on a different element of the broken social contract. This episode is on education.

YOUNG PERSON 1: In secondary school, in my secondary school anyway, there was a specific rule where you weren't allowed to have an afro, you weren't allowed to have cane row, dreadlocks, because it wasn't seen as professional. After that hair thing, I was just a bit like, what has that got to do with my learning, kind of thing. That's the attitude I was on now, like, couldn't be bothered to work hard if, if the rewards ain't justified kind of thing.

YOUNG PERSON 2: I did history both at GCSE and 'A' levels, and I remember 'A' levels, we asked our teacher, how come you don't do black history, blah blah. And she, and this was even a white lady who said this, she was like, they want to teach you white history, and they don't know enough of black man's history to teach you. She was like, those education systems don't know how to tackle it, and they just want you to learn the white man's history.

YOUNG PERSON 3: I just don't see how this country can pretend to be a meritocracy when the education system isn't tailored for everyone. It's not a one size fits all. It's a one size fits the smallest minority of people that don't have any mental health issues; they don't have any financial constraints; they don't have any family problems. And that's the thing with the education system, especially higher education: it doesn't take into account people's life circumstances. Thus, the only people that are able to really flourish are people that have a strong support network. I mean, how are students that don't have a strong support network, be it, a stable and loving family, or no financial constraints, be expected to academically compete with privately educated students that are spoon-fed what they need to be, to be successful. It's a paradox in the idea that the education system actually educates – it's mainly for the maintenance of the status quo. It's teaching you to comply with, with the system - it's not teaching you to question it, or to understand it, it's trying to

mould you into being the perfect citizen. And in a sense, it just shows how the education system is indoctrinating young people.

YOUNG PERSON 4: I feel like the education system is not built for people like me, because when you come into an environment where you have difficulties in your family, and then you unfortunately leave education to focus on a life, that tends to be a kind of repercussion on you in the long run.

YOUNG PERSON 5: Well, my thoughts, a lot, majority of those teachers there, like honestly, did not actually care about the students. I feel if you want to be a teacher, you might as well do it properly, and teach, as in, you actually want to help, you want to be there and you want to help. Whereas many teachers didn't really do that. There certain teachers, yeah, that'd go the extra mile that, they really like, they actually want to genuinely help you, you can tell. There's a lot that just don't.

YOUNG PERSON 6: One guy I know, I find out, I think through his Instagram, that he's a teacher. But he was, he was a bad boy though, I get twisted; he weren't no good youth or nothing. But when I saw that, I'm like, yeah, sick.. Because he's, he understands, you need someone who comprehends the situation, who knows what's going - if you have someone who don't know what's going on, it's like, how, why am I going to listen to you? You, you, you don't get it.

For further information on the issues raised here, please contact Colin Brent at bollo@ealing.gov.uk, Simon Tullett at st92@soas.ac.uk or Renata Albuquerque at ra40@soas.ac.uk. Please also visit our website for further briefings (<https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/cop/>), and contact Professor Alison Scott-Baumann and her team for further briefings and access to other experts, at as150@soas.ac.uk.