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In the beginning of August 2011, explosive rioting took place in London, England following the terminal shooting of a man named Mark Duggan. The rioting began in Tottenham, North London after a nonviolent march and protest against the way police responded to the shooting. The looting and violence quickly spread to numerous London districts, and even to towns and cities outside of London including Bristol, the Midlands, and the England's North West. Rioters' anger was manifested in extraordinary ways as the protests rapidly escalated to arson, looting, and other violent acts.

An online discussion panel was held on September 19th, 2011 in partnership with London-based Just for Kids Law, featuring two London youth to get an alternative perspective from the mainstream news reports. Although the dissidence against law enforcement was decidedly sparked by the questionable shooting of Mr. Duggan, the youth observed that looters took advantage of minimal police presence, to desecrate and steal property from shops and other private establishments. The law's unpreparedness to deal with this unforeseen looting and vandalism gave rioters the idea that there would be no consequences to their actions. Increasing anti-police sentiments spread through the boroughs and further instigated violent acts in other areas of England. The issue was no longer the tragic and untimely death of Mark Duggan, but rather, a way for the many people already upset with the authorities to manifest their anger and frustration at the government. Those already disillusioned with austerity measures, where the middle and working classes are being made to pay for the excesses of banks and corporations, finally had an outlet for their outrage.

The youth maintained that they did not feel that their security was threatened. A state of emergency was issued by the government and eventually the police presence was greatly increased. They further asserted that the rioters were simply opportunists with their own agendas to express anti-government and anti-establishment feelings and to participate in looting while law enforcement was scarce. However, it is also possible that different demographics had



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diverse experiences. Twenty percent of total arrests were youth arrests, and of that twenty percent, eighty percent of those youths were visible minorities. The youth commented that the police in London, "Have always been racist," and that this has been a major problem for them over the years.

The youth in our discussion criticized the British government for their slow initial reaction to the death of Mark Duggan, and secondly to the rioting itself. One speaker expressed that if the police had been prompt in acknowledging Duggan's death and apologizing for the loss of a member of the community, that the riots might not have erupted as they had. He went on to say that in the time it took for the government to get a handle on the situation, that the rioters had tired themselves out and ceased stealing and vandalizing on their own.

The idea of government accountability was stressed during the chat. It was generally known that the Prime Minister and Mayor, were on holiday outside of England at the time of these acts. Meanwhile, on the topic of accountability, children as young as fourteen and fifteen years of age had

been taken into custody. The sentencing for youth under age eighteen would be the government's discretion with punishments ranging from community service; rehabilitation; probation; or in some cases, being tried as adults and sent to prison, depending on the severity of the crime with criminal records lasting up to five years. The youth also reported seniors being arrested by police. They felt that police were arresting people in such large numbers to make examples of ordinary people. Those found guilty of looting or rioting risk losing their benefits and even their housing. Furthermore, they felt that there should be an independent governing body to "police the police." One young person suggested some way for this to be in the hands of the public, to monitor and make decisions via the Internet.

Additionally, privacy became a serious concern when T-Mobile gave police access to users' BlackBerry Messenger logs. The messaging service was being used to broadcast information about where and when riots were occurring, and once the government received the

logs they began to pursue the people that shared information. BlackBerry Messenger service was even taken down for a period of 48 hours.

Perhaps the most notable thing about this discourse was that there still appears to be much animosity towards the police and the government. The general outlook seems to be that the police did not fulfil their duties from the very beginning of the riots, and that they were the ones to spark the violence with the death of Mark Duggan. The youth reported that people died gruesomely during the riots. Some people's houses burned down, three Asian youth were run over, another was shot in the head while sitting in his car. The youth feel that this was a reaction to the initial violent behaviour of the state, and propaganda being spread by the media. They have stated that there was not a sufficient number of officers to control the riots.

The youth can see that these riots are not just a result of Mark Duggan's shooting. They recognize that there is something wrong with the political system. They are hoping to see the Labour Party return to power as the new party has cut significant funding to social support systems. The decrease in funding has resulted in loss of employment and benefits, with the youth unemployment rate being the highest it has been in twenty years. Dishearteningly, the youth feel as if the political situation in England is worsening and that the public is unsure of the outcome if things continue on this path.

Unfortunately, with funding cuts to social programs, the resulting decrease in the number of NGOs to help lobby for rights and benefits, and the next election due in another three years, the youth see a bleak immediate future for England. They believe violent outbursts can, indeed reoccur, but anticipate a better prepared police force to attend to rioters. Police are now receiving riot training and Community Watch Officers are being brought forward to build relationships between communities and police. Sadly, the youth feel these liaisons are yet ineffective.