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UK jewellery industry needs to improve visibility and representation of black people according to first national survey of black jewellers, which found that 51% experience racism

- Experiences of racism were most likely to take place at selling events or exhibitions, in education and training, or in interactions with suppliers.
- Three-quarters of those who said they'd experienced racism had never reported it.
- Racism impacted on the mental health of over a third (39%) of respondents.
- Lack of funds, business experience, and role models were the most common barriers to developing a practice or business for black jewellers.
- Respondents were more likely to seek support or training from search engines/ social media than from mainstream providers.

London, 00:01, Thursday 26 November 2020: A first-of-its-kind national survey of UK black jewellers reports that 51% of respondents said they had experienced racism in the jewellery industry.

The Survey of Black Jewellers was carried out by Private 2 Public Ltd on behalf of Cassandra Lauren Gordon, a black jeweller, supported by the Goldsmiths' Company and the Goldsmiths' Centre. It follows Cassandra's open letter to the jewellery industry in June about the lack of diversity and inclusion for black people in the industry. The survey looked at the experiences of racism black people said they faced in the jewellery industry, as well as the skills, barriers and opportunities black jewellers needed to grow their businesses and improve their practice. 94 black jewellers responded to the survey, conducted between 25 August and 8 September.

Experiences of racism happen across the jewellery industry, but are rarely reported

The survey indicated that experiences of racism were most likely to take place at selling events or exhibitions (39%), in education and training (39%), or in interactions with suppliers (services, equipment or materials) (35%).

Yet racism was rarely reported (74% never reported it), regardless of the stage respondents were in their careers, because they didn't know how to report racism, or who to report it to (38%), and were either concerned about the consequences of reporting (33%) or if they'd be believed (33%).

Racism impacted on the mental health of over a third of respondents

Impact on mental health (39%) was cited as having the most marked effect on those respondents who said they had experienced racism, along with stalling career development (13%) or hiding their identity (11%).

One respondent said that racism in the jewellery industry amounted to "...lots and lots of small incidents – microaggressions. In the short term they don't seem that damaging but in the long term, when you put it all together, it is... It's death by a thousand cuts"

Kassandra Lauren Gordon comments, "The results of the survey are validation, were it needed – and I'm sad to say it is – of the collective experiences many black jewellers, me included, have had in the industry, from microaggressions to direct racism. Some people may find it shocking, particularly the pervasiveness of it in the industry, from the workshop to the lecture hall. Those that have experienced racism won't be shocked at all. The focus now should be on how the jewellery industry is going to create a culture of inclusion for black people and become proactively anti-racist both in day-to-day life and longer term."

Lack of funds, business experience, and role models the most common business barriers

The survey also looked at skills, barriers and opportunities for emerging and established Black jewellers, to understand what support was needed to develop and grow the practice and business of black jewellers; and encourage more black people into the industry.

The survey indicated that the three most common barriers today were lack of funds (77%), lack of business experience (51%) and lack of role models (44%). While these results were comparable to other surveys of the jewellery community, 'lack of role models' was not typically offered as a response option, further emphasising the need for visible black role models in the industry.

Many black jewellers are learning the craft outside the mainstream

The skills gaps respondents most wanted to address were business skills (80%), making/manufacturing skills (69%) and product development (56%). And the opportunities for support that were rated most highly were: money to fund new pieces/ the business (80%); to make contacts in the industry (72%); to showcase work through exhibitions and events (70%); and more press and promotion (70%).

Those surveyed were less likely to come into the industry through mainstream education – higher education (33%) and further education (20%) – and more likely to enter the industry through short courses and private tuition (49%) or to enter through alternative routes (23%) such as being self-taught.

They were also less likely to seek out support from mainstream FE or HE education providers (44%) or industry bodies and trade associations (46%) compared to other more self-directed sources, such as reaching out to other skilled craftspeople (76%) or the internet/ social media (65%). This might, in part, be due to relatively low levels of awareness and a fragmented take-up of membership to those organisations – 58% of respondents were not affiliated to an industry/ business group.

The jewellery industry needs improve visibility and representation of black people

Overall, survey respondents said that the jewellery industry needed to be more inclusive, and to improve the visibility and representation of black people. This ranged from more media coverage for black jewellers (37%); to more diversity in exhibitions and showcases (30%) and the need for the industry to be more inclusive/equal in general (21%).

One respondent said, "I think that the industry can shine more light, promote and just uplift more black jewellers as mentors, role models, teachers and stuff like that, to show young black jewellers, like myself, that we do actually exist, and we can get to a high level in the jewellery industry."

Commenting on the findings, Richard Fox, Prime Warden (Chairman-equivalent) of the Goldsmiths' Company, which supported the research, said, "There is no place for racism, or any other form of discrimination, in our trade. This research highlights a disconnect between the industry and the black jewellery community. While the industry has a lot to offer, from training and development to showcases that celebrate the work of jewellers, we need to ask ourselves if enough is being done to improve the accessibility of those opportunities for budding and established black jewellers."

He added, "All of us in the industry need to look closely at how we can reach and engage with black jewellers better and more effectively and encourage more young black people into jewellery and silversmithing – we are potentially missing out on a whole generation of talented designers and craftspeople. This will require sustained commitment and substantive change. It will involve an industry-wide collaboration and effort, most importantly with black jewellers themselves."

Kassandra hopes that the survey will prompt the industry into more visible and tangible action. She concludes, "For far too long black jewellers have been all but invisible in the jewellery industry, developing their practice and their business on the fringes. Before June, I knew of one or two other black jewellers and had come across no black tutors or industry leaders.

"Several months on, black-led networks, such as the Black Jewellers Network and The List, have evolved in response to Black Lives Matter and the failings of the jewellery industry to address challenges of inclusion. But this does not absolve the industry of its responsibility to be proactive and to act: to be open and transparent about the steps it is (or isn't) taking to be more inclusive of black people. It will take time to develop trust – trust is fragile – and for change to happen. But happen it must."

Three considerations for the UK jewellery industry

Based on the findings of the survey, three key areas have been identified for the jewellery industry to consider with regard to how it can improve access, training, and support for all black jewellers:

1. **It takes more than a policy or procedure to tackle racism:** How can the industry ensure that not only are effective systems and processes in place for both the reporting of and acting upon racism; but that these are communicated effectively across the Industry, from suppliers to educators and small businesses? How can it enable black jewellers, and in particular aspiring black jewellers, to build confidence and trust in the industry in which they work or wish to work?
2. **The industry needs to look at how it engages black jewellers and aspiring black jewellers:** Black jewellers are more likely to approach other skilled craftspeople or go to a search engine for support or training than they are to go to trade bodies and associations or FE and HE providers. How can the industry reach and engage with black jewellers effectively, and ensure that provision (be that education, training, events, competitions, memberships, and so on) is appealing, relevant and accessible to them?
3. **Black jewellers have been largely invisible in the jewellery industry:** Respondents want the industry to be more inclusive and to improve the visibility and representation of black people, from promoting black jewellers and celebrating their work to using black models in campaigns. How can the industry improve the visibility and representation of black people (not only black jewellers)?

Kassandra has also undertaken and authored a social research study – *Challenges faced by black jewellers working and studying in the UK jewellery industry*. It identifies and documents the challenges facing black jewellers in the UK. 11 black jewellers were interviewed. The study revealed six themes: experience of racism in the jewellery industry, education and training, the press, social capital, supply chain, and resilience. Recommendations are offered to redress the problems that featured in the research.

To find out more go to: <https://bit.ly/SurveyBlackJewellers> #SurveyBlackJewellers

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For more information contact:

- **Curtis McGlinchey**, Communications Manager, the Goldsmiths' Company e: Curtis.McGlinchey@thegoldsmiths.co.uk m: 07541 213 253

- **Sarah Jurado**, Director of Communications, the Goldsmiths' Company e: sarah.jurado@thegoldsmiths.co.uk m: 07970 388967
- **Kassandra Lauren Gordon** e: kassandra@kassandralaurengordon.com

Notes to Editors

- **The Survey of Black Jewellers report**, an infographic and social media assets, as well as Kassandra's social research report, can be downloaded [here](#)
- **Two videos have been produced for the Survey**. One of which documents black jewellers' experiences of racism. It is available on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RC8VXmzi5dc&feature=youtu.be>

About the Survey

Kassandra Lauren Gordon instigated a national survey to understand more about black jewellers in the UK and their experiences in the industry, in order to help improve access, training and support for them. The survey was carried out by Public to Private Ltd, supported by The Goldsmiths' Company (a membership organisation and Livery Company that has contributed to national life for 700 years), and was promoted across the industry between 25th August and 8th September 2020.

A total of 94 completed responses were received, and the question response rate (92%), and survey completion rate (83%), were extremely high.

The survey questionnaire was developed by a small team comprising of Kassandra and representatives from the Goldsmiths' Company and The Goldsmiths' Centre; the survey was conducted by research specialists Private 2 Public Ltd. A focus group of Black jewellers reviewed and provided feedback on the survey questionnaire prior to it being finalised and launched, as well as on this final report.

Margin of error calculations: it was not possible to calculate precisely the proportion of black jewellers in the UK that the survey sample represented. Although an assumption was used to help us to estimate this proportion. This estimate suggests that the survey sample size is significant, and that the results have a maximum margin of error of 9%.

Please see the full report for more information <https://bit.ly/SurveyBlackJewellers>

About Kassandra Lauren Gordon

Kassandra Lauren Gordon is a Black British Jeweller based in London who creates fine bespoke jewellery. On 17 June she wrote an open letter to the jewellery industry about the experience of Black Jewellers and Silversmiths and industry professionals, highlighting how current practices and systems limit accessibility/entry into the trade for Black people; and a five-point plan to help increase the visibility of Black Jewellers and Silversmiths in the industry and amplify their voices.

Kassandra launched a 'Go Fund Me' page (19 June) to raise money for Black Jewellers and Silversmiths facing financial hardship. The Fund has successfully raised £19,885 – exceeding the target. As a result of the open letter a number of organisations and individuals have been in contact with Kassandra to see how they might support or contribute to the changes highlighted in it.

Kassandra runs the Black Jewellers Network which produces mentoring opportunities and support for Black Jewellers, and monthly free events www.facebook.com/blackjewellersnetwork @blackjewellersnetwork

Website <http://www.kassandraaugordn.com/> **IG:** @klgjewellery

About Private 2 Public Ltd

Established in 1998, Private 2 Public Ltd (P2P) is a specialist provider of project and business development services for the UK Creative Industries. Its work involves: market research and analysis, project funding, planning and delivery, business planning and delivery and online and digital strategies. www.P2p.org.uk

About the Goldsmiths' Company

The Goldsmiths' Company is a membership organisation that has contributed to national life for 700 years. We train and support jewellers and silversmiths, protect consumers by testing and hallmarking precious metals and work with charitable, educational and cultural partners to help people in need.

In a pre-welfare state society, trade guilds like the Goldsmiths' Company provided a safety net protecting craftspeople, their communities and people who had fallen through the cracks in society. The giving of alms, or financial relief, is mentioned in the first pages of the Company's earliest minute book in 1334.

- **The Goldsmiths' Centre:** Trains and supports jewellers and silversmiths and those in the allied trades.
- **The Assay Office:** Protects consumers and the trade by hallmarking precious metals.
- **The Goldsmiths' Company Charity:** Works with charities to help improve people's lives.

Website: thegoldsmiths.co.uk

IG: @TheGoldsmithsCompany

Website: goldsmiths-centre.org

IG: @GsmithsCentre