

# An open letter to the jewellery industry re racism

By Cassandra Lauren Gordon

Dear fellow human beings,

A lot of you feel strongly about the recent events in the US, as the protests following George Floyd's death have raised much deeper issues of inherent racism, and people of all races have started to [speak out in support of the Black Lives Matter movement](#). As a Black woman, it was a particularly tough week for me.

I am an ethical fine jeweller, using Fairtrade gold, and have my own brand [Cassandra Lauren Gordon](#), through which I offer collections and bespoke commissions. My work is sold at stores across Europe and I've participated in many events, including IJL and the Islington Wedding Fair, and have had four solo gallery shows at Craft Central.

After studying in Hatton Garden and having spent the past nine years in the jewellery industry, I have to admit that – if I'm honest – I am not shocked by the lack of response to the recent events that have affected me so deeply, which I would call a humanitarian crisis. It smarts all the more after watching the industry mobilise so quickly and effectively [in response to the Covid-19 pandemic](#).

In my opinion, the jewellery industry is not as diverse as it could be, and it is not inclusive for Black people. I will go even further and even say that the industry is not welcoming to Black people.

I could give you a large list of examples from my own personal experience of how people have treated me negatively in Hatton Garden and elsewhere in the jewellery industry because of the colour of my skin. Some of these slights are blatant: unsavoury words said directly to me; being ignored (some people have literally looked me in the face and walked away when I've spoken to them). Others are more insidious in their racist motivations, but equally as upsetting: falsely being accused of stealing supplies (obviously, it didn't happen); staff following me around stores while I buy my jewellery supplies, yet white counterparts are left to search for their own supplies unbothered and unsupervised. I could go on, and on.

These are emotive pictures, I know, but I don't want you just to feel. Feelings won't help Black people and Black jewellers. Neither will a few social media posts of guilt and sudden solidarity. What I am interested in is what the jewellery industry is going to do in the long term.

Feeling anti-racist is not the same as being proactively anti-racist in your day-to-day life. I cannot prescribe how you should be proactively anti-racist in the jewellery industry, but I urge everyone to act in some way. What is going on now is not a black/white issue, it's a humanitarian issue. We are all human beings and need to be given equal opportunities.

Not all jewellers who enter the industry start out from the same place. Due to a legacy of systemic racism, many Black jewellers are hindered by [socio-economic disadvantages](#). We also don't have established networks and professional communities that jewellers from other minority backgrounds do, such as Jewish or Asian jewellers. I am not asking for handouts for Black jewellers, but we need support in order level the playing field of this monolithic industry. What I am asking for is the jewellery industry is to be more inclusive and create more opportunities for Black jewellers.

Change will not be achieved overnight, and there is no easy one-size-fits-all solution, but we need to act now. Therefore, I have compiled a list of some practical suggestions for the jewellery industry. Each one would help increase the visibility of Black jewellers in this industry and amplify our voices:

- **Create a pledge.** What are you going to do to support Black jewellers? What resources can you offer? Create a task force/quality assurance group to hold the pledge accountable.
- **More financial aid.** We need a hardship fund for Black jewellers, as well as dedicated bursaries and grants for things like materials, education, studio space, PR and participation in exhibitions.
- **Increase visibility.** The jewellery industry bodies, associations and trade publications should proactively highlight Black jewellers in communications, social media and publications. Trade shows should celebrate Black talent through dedicated installations or catwalk shows. Let's create a directory for Black UK-based jewellers.
- **Amplify Black voices.** Send out a survey to Black jewellers asking them about their experiences of the jewellery trade. Invite Black jewellers to speak at industry events. Hire Black jewellers to be a sounding board and sense check issues in the jewellery industry.
- **Open doors.** Develop structured mentoring schemes for Black people. Create space for Black jewellers in jewellery and department stores that don't rely on the type of sale-or-return agreements that can financially cripple designers.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this letter, feeling anti-racist is not enough. Black people are not visible in the jewellery industry, and staying silent on this issue is not an option anymore. Your silence and lack of action say a lot about the problems prevalent in our industry.

In hope,  
Kassandra Lauren Gordon

(A human being, who happens to be a Black woman and a jeweller)