

Policy Brief April 2022

People, Place and Powers:

Supporting creatives of the African Diaspora to improve art and culture for all

Executive Summary

This document, whilst geared towards policy reform, aims to spotlight, and protect three core beliefs emerging from the work Kauma Arts¹ has carried out with dance industry leaders, artists, creatives, and community members of the African Diaspora.

This work was carried out from 2019, when the company was established, with a pilot edition to ensure a needs-based approach was adopted, and funding from Arts Council England was secured (ACE) to produce work between 2020 and 2021. Our three-month project focused on analysing the previous work carried out and the resulting manifesto to produce this policy brief and our three key findings:

- i. Dance practices and strategies that promote and advocate for the African Diaspora community groups already exist and **need to be further explored**
- ii. The solutions to the challenges are already known by the community members and **need to be evidenced and reported on to improve wider sector policies and practices**
- iii. The work needed to overcome the challenges is already taking place and **needs to be further supported to scale up**

Considering our findings and in line with key industry organisations and government agendas geared towards inclusion, diversity, and racial equality we ask for greater support that listens to and values what African Diaspora creatives and communities have to say. Now is the time to implement policy change from the bottom up, creating space for community placed based agency that nurtures greater civic responsibility and organic change that is culturally fit for purpose.

Key recommendations:

- Building stronger African Diaspora networks across the globe (build on our relations with individuals, artist and organisation in Nigeria, Kenya, Canada, and America, among others)
- Spotighting African Diaspora artists (support, develop and curate African Diaspora screen dance and performances for film and festivals)
- Celebrating and showcasing African Diaspora artists (organise, manage, and curate work to take place in museums, libraries and other cultural spaces across the country and globe)

Introduction

The 'Global Frameworks for Creative Exchange: Kauma Brief Encounters' was a three-month collaboration between Coventry University's Centre for Dance Research (C-DaRE) and Kauma Arts (KA) and brought together researchers, artists, consultants, and policy makers. The project was funded by the QR Policy Fund and Research England and was directed by Dr Rosa Cisneros² (C-DaRE) and Mercy Nabirye³ (KA). The project aimed to synthesise the work

¹ Kauma Arts: www.kaumaarts.com An organisation dedicated to connect and support talent across diasporas rooted in Africa.

² Dr Cisneros is an Equality and Diversity consultant, academic, dancer, artist and president of many charities across the UK and Europe. More info here: [LINK](#)

³ Dr Mercy Nabirye FRSA WLF is a Creative Producer and African Diaspora arts Consultant, founding Director of Kauma Arts. She serves on several boards globally and is inspired to push boundaries. She received an honorary doctorate from University of East London for her contribution to the Arts. More info here – www.linkedin.com/in/mercynabirye

undertaken and make recommendations aimed at advancing opportunities for creatives of the African Diaspora whilst working to close the gap between racial and ethnic disparities within the UK arts sector. It is aimed at government departments, higher education institutions, art organisations and individuals that have responsibilities for equality and diversity within their sector. We envisage that policy makers, Members of Parliament, art sector funders and sponsors, leaders and managers of art and research institutions and their employers, communities, and creatives.

Kauma Arts is concerned with closing the gap between the existing racial disparities for creatives of the African Diaspora whilst striving for a more diverse, equal, and just art sector for all. Coventry University is well known for being ambitious and innovative, making significant contributions to work on important global and societal challenges.

Methodology

This policy brief outlines the main findings from our report and offers a series of recommendations, which contribute to current Government, Art Organisations, and Research Councils work to overcome racial and ethnic disparities. The brief builds on work including:

- One Dance UK's African Diaspora Mapping Report, 2017⁴
- Arts Council England 2020-2030 Strategy⁵
- UKRI equality diversity and inclusion strategy: draft for consultation, 2022⁶
- The Governments response to the Commission for Racial and Ethnic Disparities Report, 2022⁷

Published documents from each key source were analysed using qualitative software to identify themes to better understand the current political, creative and cultural agenda for racial and ethnic disparities.

Conclusions

As detailed in the Equality Act 2010⁸, race and ethnicity are protected characteristics, with discriminating against someone because of them being against the law. However, leading arts organisations, including Arts Council England and OneDance UK, recognise the racial and cultural disparities amongst creatives of the African Diaspora and acknowledge that specific targets to close racial and ethnic gaps must be measured, monitored, and reported on. **This acknowledgment highlights the need for policy reform that monitors and reports on the legal duties that organisations must consider in their diversity and equality policy making and practices.**

Activism, policy reform and changes in the law can contribute to the important changes required to improve the disparities that we have highlighted. Tackling the causes of structural racism, inequality and lack of diversity will improve the lives of all people and places. **Our current guidelines are no longer fit for purpose and require an overhaul which is driven by an industry commitment to transformative changes that dismantle racial disparities.**

In the context of political positioning, the UK government is pushing forward with its Inclusive Britain strategy, which followed on from the Levelling Up White Paper⁹ and provided the blueprint for spreading opportunity more equally across the country. The strategy is the result of the response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report (CRED)¹⁰ published in March 2021 and includes The Inclusive Britain Action plan which sets out more than 70 concrete actions. Action 70 of this action plan states that the government will work to:

“(...) support employers and industry sectors to create opportunity for groups that are underrepresented in their workforce, the Government Equalities Office will create new updated guidance on positive action by December 2022”.
(Gov.UK, 2022)¹¹

⁴One Dance UK | DAD Mapping Report - One Dance UK

⁵Our strategy 2020-2030 | Arts Council England

⁶Equality diversity and inclusion strategy: draft for consultation – UKRI

⁷Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

⁸Equality Act 2010 (legislation.gov.uk)

⁹Levelling Up the United Kingdom - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

¹⁰The report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

¹¹Inclusive Britain: summary of recommendations and actions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

This action comes under recommendation 8: Advance fairness in the workplace and aims to “develop resources and evidence-based approaches of what works to advance fairness in the workplace, and which are readily available to employers.”

Laws, activism, and policy reform can contribute to important changes needed to overcome the causes of structural racism, inequality, and lack of diversity. Art organisations must now formally and openly commit to transformative changes that dismantle racial and ethnic disparities within their workplaces.

In line with the Governments response to the CRED report and their three-fold strategy to ensure equality and fairness we make three key recommendations that build on their three key areas of focus:

- i. build trust and promote fairness
- ii. promote equality of opportunity and encourage aspiration by nurturing agency
- iii. actively foster a sense of inclusion and belonging

These key areas of focus are framed within our own areas of focus concerning:

- iv. People
- v. Places
- vi. Powers

We must now work to review and challenge equality and diversity inspection and reporting processes. This requires improved understanding of and training in educational settings and workplaces that focus on prompting fairness. This training should be created using investment in research that seeks to evidence and understand drivers of success that target racial and ethnic disparities and build on the social and cultural capital of the African Diaspora. We recommend that racial and ethnic topics are addressed with far younger audiences than the government suggest and call for age-appropriate solution-based initiatives to start in early years settings. These initiatives should be concerned with equity, inclusivity, innovation, and entrepreneurship that will equip the next creative generation with the regenerative tools and skills needed for a changing landscape.

Specific recommendations include:

- Spotighting African Diaspora artists (support, develop and curate African Diaspora screen dance and performances for film and festivals)
- Building stronger African Diaspora networks across the globe (build on our relations with individuals, artist and organisation in Nigeria, Kenya, Canada, and America, among others)
- Celebrating and showcasing African Diaspora artists (organise, manage, and curate work to take place in museums, libraries and other cultural spaces across the country and globe)

What should happen next?

We wish for our recommendations to be reviewed by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and other organisations and institutional bodies. We welcome the opportunity to sit down and work through practicalities of how to implement change in your sector or institution and to advise on the importance of considering this work and developing these recommendations into the broader global cultural heritage ecosystem.

For further information contact:

Dr Rosa Cisneros (Coventry University, C-DaRE) E: ab4928@coventry.ac.uk

Dr Mercy Nabirye FRSA WLF (Kauma Arts) E: mercy@kaumaarts.com