

# Heritage Intercepted Ep.1: Recruitment Strategies

## Transcript

### SUMMARY KEYWORDS

organisations, feel, heritage, diversifying, minorities, recruitment strategies, recruitment, ethnic minority, work, terms, pronouns, workplace, people of colour, hiring, interviews, apologise, diversity, young, change

### SPEAKERS

Aaliyah, Ayan, Aqsa, Lois, Divya

#### Ayan 0:35

Hello guys, my name is Ayan. I'm 23. My pronouns are her and she, I'm a spoken word artist, writer, community activist and facilitator.

#### Lois 0:52

I'm Lois. I'm 20 and I use she her pronouns. So, I work with different social enterprises managing their projects and consulting for organisations on how to make more impact and change.

#### Aqsa 1:15

Hello, my name is Aqsa, I'm 22. My pronouns she her. I work as a dietitian in a hospital and my experience with heritage is I'm a member of a local charity in my area. We organise a lot of events like dinners, food banks for the community, bazaars, etc.

#### Aaliyah 1:39

Hi, my name is Aaliyah. I'm 22. A current law graduate and my preferred pronouns are she her.

#### Divya 1:52

Hi, my name is Divya. I'm 21 years old, my pronouns are she. I'm currently a fine art student with a great interest in cultural heritage organisations.

#### Aaliyah 2:07

So I'm here today to talk about what heritage means to me. Heritage is an integrative and tapestry of the things that make us human. So they are things that we want to preserve for the collective benefit of us all. They are things like heirlooms and family recipes, they are things like castles, artisanal crafts, that might have been lost to the

test of time. They're important because they make us us and they have inherent value.

So in terms of personal experience, I feel like I've had a few negative experiences when applying for organisations, sometimes the hardest part is actually getting the confidence to apply for a place especially if you don't see yourself reflected in the higher positions at the organisation. It makes you think are there opportunities to progress.

Sometimes I might talk myself out of applying, and I personally find travelling to interviews really difficult so sometimes travelling can be a barrier. Also cost is a barrier, especially when you are travelling to heritage organisations out of the way and you have multiple stages of recruitment to get through. It's a lot of unpaid labour, which isn't as fruitful when we're looking at other organisations.

**Aqsa 3:36**

I've also had negative experiences with interviews because I don't have a very common name in this country. A lot of the time interviewers struggle to say my name but they don't bother to ask Oh, Aqsa is this how you say it, was that correct? I apologise for saying it wrong. My name is not common here; it is more like a religious name.

I feel like your name is such a big part of your personhood it's part of your identity. So I find it quite offensive when someone struggles with your name and doesn't ask how to pronounce it correctly or doesn't apologise when they don't say it correctly. I would rather you apologise as you try to pronounce my name. This puts me off organisations.

**Aaliyah 4:24**

Would you say that anybody else has experienced somebody mispronouncing their name or just outright calling them a different name, or felt awkward about correcting somebody?

**Ayan 4:36**

100% I think, Aqsa said it perfectly, a name is something that is associated with your personhood. When you take away someone's name, or you try to diminish it, you are essentially diminishing who that person is. When you go to the spaces or experience recruitment processes that are not open to accepting different names or different cultures the organisations are expressing that this space is not for us.

**Aaliyah 4:57**

I think sometimes it can be quite complex because although they are trying to create spaces for ethnically diverse people sometimes when this happens it can feel a bit like they are ticking a box. So it feels quite disingenuous. Has anyone here ever felt like they were just a diversity hire?

**Aqsa 5:16**

I think I've come across diversity hires before where they've added in the job description that they want an ethnic minority person. That does feel tokenistic and not authentic at all.

**Ayan 5:34**

I think the way that you can tell if recruitment is sincere is by looking at what effort they have put in making the workplace or the institution or spaces comfortable for ethnic minorities. Like how do these organisations retain employees from diverse backgrounds instead of recruiting them to tick a box? I think that's very telling about whether an organisation is sincere and how they pronounce your name is one of those tell tale signs.

**Aaliyah 5:55**

I think it's interesting, what you said Ayan about recruitment, that it is actually about retention, not just hiring diverse talent but keeping diversity talent. Actually, why do we want to work for an organisation like what they could bring to us?

**Divya 6:13**

Jumping off of that, if that comfortable space is created and the diverse people they hire create a good image. Communities of colour get to see themselves represented in different aspects of the organisation which can make them more confident to pursue their passions.

**Aaliyah 6:43**

Like a chain reaction. You'll see it ripple through the upper echelons of the organisations to the exhibitions. It becomes more of a commitment rather than having a cultural exhibition for Black History, but actually all year round untold stories get to shine.

**Ayan 6:59**

You can't be what you can't see. If heritage organisations or institutions who are committed to diversifying their staff diversifying their management, because management once again provides the overall lead or the direction of organisation right, all the way down to the exhibitions you see. If organisations become committed to diversifying voices in their work environment they are platforming their

stories and in turn young people will look at these institutions and be like, Oh, that exhibition was actually very similar to where I come from, my background and so I will facilitate something similar. So it's a cycle. It's about providing a platform to showcase that Britain is a really diverse place with a lot of different heritage and if your recruitment is diverse, it will reflect and represent that .

**Aaliyah 7:57**

I feel like in terms of benefits of diversifying the workplace, I guess they're kind of countless. I know that communities of colour are not a monolith and there are so many different cultures in Britain alone, it would just be interesting to see different stories be told especially because one person's heritage is not necessarily another person's heritage.

**Aqsa 8:19**

Also another benefit of diversifying heritage spaces, it will help people from ethnic minorities and people of colour to feel more included and comfortable in the environments that they're in. It will help organisations to be more representative of the population because I think a lot of spaces might be predominantly white but that doesn't just represent Britain. It doesn't represent where we are, because there's a lot of diversity in Birmingham but the heritage workplaces don't represent the population.

It would help to have that more representative approach and help those people to not feel so alone and isolated because a lot ethnic minority people might feel like that so it would be nice for them to feel a bit more included and not feel like an outsider.

**Aaliyah 9:02**

Our interaction with heritage spaces does begin at a young age, like the school trips where we go to explore heritage. I remember I used to want to be an archeologist because I saw some dinosaur bones. I guess their job is to instil that magic, that a career like that is possible.

**Divya 9:32**

Structures need to be put in place so that it doesn't just stop as a field trip. There should be able to either study in depth or have placements or internship or work experience that's more accessible to minorities and someone that maybe doesn't have connections in the industry. Stuff like that needs to be in place throughout secondary school throughout university because you never truly know what you want for a career.

Also, more men need to be represented in heritage spaces, perhaps there's a lack of support. As women we have more conversations about our passions and there's less stigma nowadays but for men that is still a working issue. They need those spaces to be able to have conversations and be supported and seen in organisations like this.

**Aqsa 10:36**

I feel like it is quite sad, but in this society men have an image of how men need to be and what kinds of careers they need to be in. So I feel like it's quite difficult for men as well, which might be a reason why we are sitting here talking about it.

So in terms of strategies for change, I think people higher up need to widen their understanding about different cultures, different ethnic minorities, so that when they come for their interviews, they've got more of an understanding and that person who's been interviewed feels a bit more comfortable in the working environment.

Another idea could be that they have a certain percentage of people that they're recruiting from different minority groups. In a place I worked before it was like 80%, white, and 20%, ethnic, they could have like a 50/50 split, or they could choose certain percentages when they're employing different identities, this can help the organisation be more reflective of the diverse population.

**Aaliyah 11:40**

Yeah, I think that it's important to not be tokenized. I think it's important that you're not hired because of your ethnicity or race, you should be hired because you're the best person for the role. The work environment needs to also allow us to express our opinions and our culture so we don't need to hide ourselves, or give ourselves an easier name to pronounce, we should be able to bring all of ourselves to the workplace.

It's also worth going back to think, why are you as an organisation not getting diverse identities in positions or applying for or why is our retention rate of diverse talent so low? There is a perspective that they're not seeing, given the climate, we live in a big city, long recruitment stages when you're working two jobs are not practical.

**Divya 12:39**

Sometimes having the opportunity to apply for roles whilst working is a privilege that most minorities might not have. For example, having the time to buy extra interview clothes and being prepared to go for four or five rounds of interviews without being paid. There are a lot of minorities that would prefer a quicker job and a long recruitment process can curb their passion, preventing them from trying to pursue

something aligned with their interest. That is something that also needs to be addressed.

Organisations can create really nice, safe spaces even after recruitment. This will allow them to have confidence in their abilities, especially for young people, if they have confidence, guidance they will be able to easily excel in the areas they are interested in.

**Ayan 13:44**

Sometimes opportunities are there but the mediums that they use to contact people of diverse backgrounds is absolutely flawed. Recruitment needs to look at how they are making it more accessible for a young person who comes from a low income background and has not been exposed to heritage opportunities before.

**Lois 14:03**

So when you see sweeping statements at the end of a job listing saying, oh, yeah, we want people of colour, you know, it's not going to entice people more. I think instead they need to tell us how they have done the work to create an accessible working environment. Like are there prayer rooms for people, are accessibility requirements met and what about salaries? Be transparent with your salaries, make sure that you're providing support in the recruitment process. They need to practise what they preach and be supportive with their recruitment processes instead of saying that they want their token ethnic minority to tick a box.

**Aaliyah 14:51**

I totally agree. I just think that there is a reason why perhaps some of us in this room don't feel comfortable applying or working in these spaces. What is needed is an entire culture shift. It's about retention, effective outreach to schools, fostering joy for heritage because heritage is for us all, it's our collective history. It's a tapestry of all of us, all nationalities, we all live here, love here, I feel like, you know, it's a shame to not see every group reflected.

**Aqsa 15:43**

It is important to note that change has to come from higher up. I think it would obviously be quite a big change, because I think the way recruitment strategies are now, they're quite universal. So a barrier could be that this is quite a big change that would need to happen. So it would obviously have to come from higher up.

**Ayan 16:00**

Don't fix the system, change the system.

**Divya 16:04**

Once one organisation does it, I'm very sure that a lot of organisations will follow, especially when they see that there's a positive, successful outcome from their decision to change their recruitment strategies. There is always a positive outcome, when more people are involved, and everyone works together.

**Aaliyah 16:21**

Like a domino effect. I think that a lot of people at the top just find themselves in certain jobs, not that they don't work hard, but connections do help. Organisations are missing out on top tier talent because of certain stipulations like not including your job descriptions in different languages, and so on.

**Ayan 17:03**

So today has been a very uplifting experience. It's always a pleasure to feel empowered by other young like minded passionate people about things that matter. Getting different perspectives, different stories, but it's also intriguing how there was a same overarching theme, although our experiences might be different, it was pointing at the same problems around recruitment or language or other different stuff. So it's very interesting to know that other young people feel so passionately about this and it was also fun, it had a nice vibe, it was a good conversation, good energy.