



Connection

The architecture and design journal of the Young Architects Forum

2021

Q3

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This issue:

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (J.E.D.I)

What are the possibilities of J.E.D.I. driven design?

Emerging professionals seek ways to create justice in design process, curate avenues for equitable practice, showcase diversity in thought and leadership, inclusion in work culture, and much more.

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Editor's note:

Thunderous silence – actions over words

It has been over a year since a police officer knelt on the neck of George Floyd for 9 minutes and 29 seconds resulting in his death. The murder of George Floyd sparked international protests. Tears were shed, calls for action were made, listening sessions and personal conversations were had, and resources for learning were shared. There's no doubt this was a turning point for our nation and an impact was made.

Legendary civil rights leader Whitney M. Young Jr. sharply criticized architects and design professionals during his keynote speech at the 1968 AIA National Convention he stated, "You are not a profession that has distinguished itself by your social and civic contributions to the cause of civil rights . . . You are most distinguished by your thunderous silence." Over 50 years later the explosive traction from the Black Lives Matter movement had many asking how much progress we have made. Has the pendulum swung in 50 years? Many would argue we have made progress. However, I wonder if Young was not only referring to the verbal silence, but the silence of little to no action or accountability to follow. While I believe we have moved from passivity to activity, it would be disingenuous to not acknowledge that change can be quite slow.

In this quarter's issue, you will see how young architects, design professionals, and students take

on the challenges of J.E.D.I. in the industry. Our authors explore issues like creating a more just system for financing community visions and providing visibility for marginalized and diverse voices. You will see how women are trailblazing the narrative of inclusivity and more. Each of these perspectives plays a critical role in creating a more equitable future

It takes a village to truly push the needle in the right direction. We can all reflect on our actions in the last few years to evaluate the intentional impact we have made. We can co-lead [in-person design and mentoring programs for young BIPOC students](#), or host virtual design seminars to encourage students to pursue architecture or related design pathways. We can build bridges to connect programs and opportunities to BIPOC and women students interested in pursuing design professions. We can share impactful stories with approachable action plans in webinars for professionals and students. I was fortunate enough to participate in all, but I must admit I often wrestle with understanding that not all impact can be immediately quantified or measured. It is a gentle reminder to continuously take incremental steps to design the industry we all want to work, lead, and thrive in.

Editorial committee call

Q4 2021:

Call for submissions on the topic of practice innovation.

Connection's editorial committee welcomes the submission of articles, projects, photography, and other design content.

Submitted content is subject to editorial review and selected for publication in e-magazine format based on relevance to the theme of a particular issue.

2021 Editorial Committee:

Call for volunteers, contributing writers, interviewers and design critics.

Connection's editorial committee is currently seeking architects interested in building their writing portfolio by working with our editorial team to pursue targeted article topics and interviews that will be shared amongst Connection's largely circulated e-magazine format. Responsibilities include contributing one or more articles per publication cycles (3–4 per year).

If you are interested in building your resume and contributing to Connection please contact the editor in chief at: aia.beresford.pratt@gmail.com

President's message:

Holding ourselves accountable

My first two jobs as a young architect were amazing experiences. The first, in the London office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, was a baptism by fire in rigor, excellence, and mostly good habits. I was surrounded by fascinating, capable, and competitive colleagues, who (owing to the hours we kept) also represented my entire social circle. The second, at Venturi Scott Brown Associates (VSBA), was another notable initiation in which I became a citizen of a spectacularly fun studio where models were made, Pantone sheets adhered, and Prismacolor pencils sharpened under the watchful gaze of Steven Izenour. Today, we might characterize it as a place of admirable work-life balance. We had rubber-band fights. We had mentorship. We had a boss who knew our kids' names.

For me, and for many, this balance is one of the great legacies of that workplace. When I speak about the AIA's Guides for Equitable Practice, I have these memories to draw upon. I believe the guides are one of the finest roadmaps we have for ensuring that architectural practices vault beyond convenient minimum standards and strive to be exemplars for all professions, not just architecture. As architects addressing injustice in our communities, we must first hold ourselves accountable. The VSBA office aspired to be the paragon I see in the guides and represented values that still inspire me every day.

Denise Scott Brown and Bob Venturi were great polemicists — their words are often privileged over their buildings in the lecture hall — but their ideas were anchored by their ethics. I consider Denise's essay "Planning the Powder Room," which first appeared in the AIA Journal in April 1967, an ingenious manifesto for accessibility and equity. She speaks directly to the fact that being conversant in a spatial typology is no substitute for experience. In case it needs to be said, the vast majority of architects in 1967 were men who had never used half the bathrooms they had designed. They presumed that if it was good enough for the gander, it was good enough for the goose. I'd like to think we have moved beyond this position, even if the ratio of women to men in architecture remains woefully imbalanced.

I like to think that words mean something — that Denise's words, in particular, still mean something. Her argument in "Powder Room" extends far beyond the places we live, work, play, and learn, of course, and into scales of magnitude that touch every aspect of our built environment — affordable housing, public transportation, and school districts, not to mention access to jobs, health care, and nutritious food. Her point can magnificently resonate in the process of scaling up. Accessibility and equity might be our strategies and superpower when we design, yet empathy must be our only underlying motive.



Peter J. Exley, FAIA

Exley is the 2021 AIA President and co-founder of Architecture Is Fun, a Chicago-based architecture, design, and consulting firm. He is an adjunct professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

YAF Chair's message:

Let's keep showing up

Twelve months ago, I sat down to write my contribution to Connection's annual equity, diversity, and inclusion issue. As the then-vice chair of the Young Architects Forum, it gave me a chance to reflect on what was an incredibly disruptive year for our committee and for the world. After the turbulence of 2020, I'm sure I'm not the only person who was hoping for a quieter and steadier 2021. Instead, we've had to continue to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic, a bitterly divisive political landscape, and a new series of natural disasters.

At the YAF's Annual Meeting in January, we committed to prioritizing three broad themes throughout our work this year. These included climate action, practice innovation, and J.E.D.I., or justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. J.E.D.I. has been a core value and priority of our committee since at least 2018, when the MeToo movement rippled through the profession, but it became front and center in 2020 as we grappled with the systemic inequities present in our society and our profession.

But while we have made progress, it has often felt slow. NCARB reported a significant decrease in the number of candidates who logged professional experience, who started on the path to licensure, and who became new architects in 2020¹. Workplace challenges related to the pandemic have led to unprecedented burnout among American workers, which has spurred a "great resignation"². And while we are finally talking more openly about mental health, that new level of transparency does not mitigate the real feelings of stress and languor that so many of us are facing. These setbacks will continue to impact the demographics and culture of the profession well into the future.

And yet, despite the ongoing challenges, emerging professionals and young architects continue to show up every day to drive change within the AIA. Members of the Young Architects Forum presented the [Emerging Professional Friendly Firm program](#) at AIA Grassroots in February and are working to roll out the program in several new components this year. The YAF advocacy work group is hosting a series of webinars on AIAU. I encourage everyone to watch the recording of our Aug. 13 session, "[So You Want to Design for All? Designing for Belonging](#)," which featured an engaging conversation with architects who are committed to design that works toward

more equitable development. The YAF community director, Katelyn Chapin, is a member of the AIA's Equity and the Future of Architecture board committee this year, where she served on the selection committee for [Next to Lead](#), a program that aims to remove barriers to AIA leadership positions for ethnically diverse women. And YAF made the decision to transition from a regional-governance structure to a state-based model beginning in 2022. This new model will provide over twice as many opportunities for engagement for young architects from all 50 states, plus Puerto Rico, Washington, D.C., and the international component.

While it is important to look back on our accomplishments to remind ourselves of the progress we've made, the critical question to ask ourselves is, "What comes next?" Young architects are poised to lead change within the AIA and within our firms. But we cannot make strides toward a more equitable and inclusive profession unless we continue to show up every day, even when it feels hard. And even when the challenges seem overwhelming. Because progress happens one step at a time.

Footnotes:

[1]: <https://www.ncarb.org/nbtn2021/covid19>

[2]: <https://tinyurl.com/3ucrxvbu>



Abigail R. Brown, AIA

Brown is a senior associate at Hickok Cole in Washington, D.C., where she works as a project architect on multifamily and mixed-use projects. She serves as the 2021 YAF chair.

Becoming visible

Amplifying the voices of nine young architects and emerging professionals advocating for justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in architecture.

It was an evening in 2004, and my family and I were watching “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition.” That night’s episode was about a young boy who has the same medical condition as I do. As they started planning the renovations of that boy’s home, a woman in a wheelchair appeared on the screen. She had the same physical features as I did. I knew in a heartbeat she also had the same condition. Her name popped up on the screen: “Karen Braitmayer, Architect.”

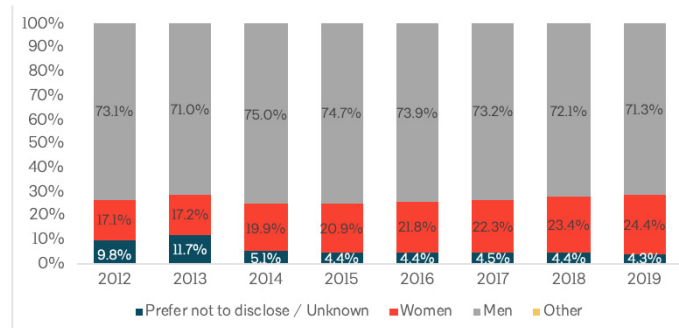
As a young, disabled girl born and raised in the Philippines, I had always been aware of the power that architecture holds. I knew how it can be a barrier, but moving to the United States taught me that it could also create opportunities. Until that night in 2004, I was convinced that architecture was only for strong, “able-bodied” boys. But seeing Karen on that screen changed my perspective and gave me the voice that I needed to follow my dreams.

With the level of diversity in the architecture profession today, moments like this are rare. According to the 2019 AIA Membership Demographics Report, membership was 71.3% male and 66.6% white. The Board of Directors in 2019 was 57% male and 86% white. With these numbers, visibility becomes crucial for the underrepresented.

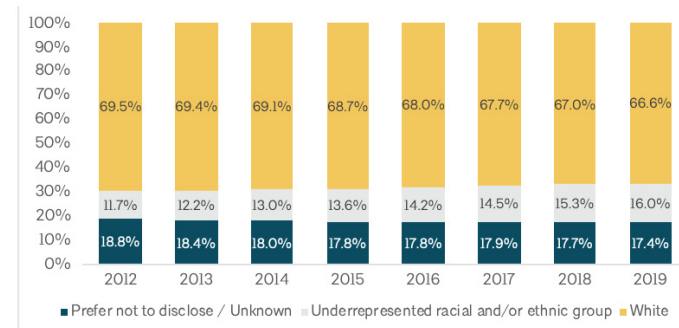
In this article, you will meet nine incredible young architects and emerging professionals who have been gracious enough to tell us their stories. They are here to share their perspective of what justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in architecture means to them; to discuss what we can do now to make our profession more diverse and inclusive; and to be visible for the

younger generation who dreams of becoming an architect but may not have seen themselves as belonging, the voice they need to succeed in this profession, as well.

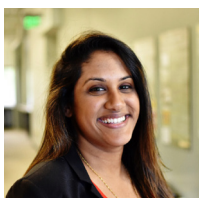
➤ GENDER: ALL MEMBERS



➤ RACE AND/OR ETHNICITY: ALL MEMBERS



Source: <https://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/2019-Membership-Demographics-Report.pdf>



Shikha Subhadra Subramanian

Emerging Professional | Union City, California

Subramanian is a job captain at Dahlin Group Architecture in Pleasanton, California, working primarily on affordable housing. She is an active member of NOMASF and BIA-Bay Area’s Professional Women in Building and Young Professionals groups. She is co-coordinating an upcoming series that connects higher education students with mentors, particularly women of color, in diverse career paths in the AEC industry.

Olivia Asuncion (OA) : What would you say is your favorite part of architecture?

right now is housing. Working on housing is my way of directly giving something back to a community.

Shikha Subramanian (SS): It directly is a way to affect social justice and change. You’re creating a setting for people to have these important conversations. The biggest one that’s facing us

OA: Can you tell me how the current status of diversity in architecture personally affected you?



Above: Shikha and her mom attends a San Francisco 49ers game.

SS: It's the fuel for me to provide more action. It's laying out the groundwork for the next generation of Fijian architects.

There are probably other Fijian and Pacific Islander women who are saying, "Is this something that I can fit in with?" I think it's important to look for people who "look like you" in your industry. We don't have that in architecture yet. We need to change that. And I need to start within myself. I'm even more heads down in my ARE studies right now because the easiest thing I could do to change that 0.6% number [percentage of licensed Pacific Islander architects] is to get licensed.

OA: What does justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in architecture mean to you?

SS: When my family came from Fiji, we had a three-bedroom house in San Lorenzo that my grandparents bought. All six of their children, with their families, lived in that little house. An architect probably laid it out for a white family with two kids. But our story is now becoming a majority story. And we need to change how we design to reflect that story. In order to do that and be true to it, we need the same people who represent those countries behind the tracing paper.



Emma Johnston

Emerging Professional | Seattle, Washington

Originally from Minneapolis, Minnesota, Johnston joined the nonprofit Seattle architecture firm, Environmental Works, after graduating from the University of Texas at Austin. Her latest project is an affordable housing community in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood, providing homes and resources for LGBTQ seniors.

Olivia Asuncion (OA): How do you view the current status of diversity in architecture right now?

Emma Johnston (EJ): Architecture really struggles to be representative of the world at large. It's taken a really long time to have a lot of women architects. In Seattle, it's a very white profession. And disability is also not talked about as much.

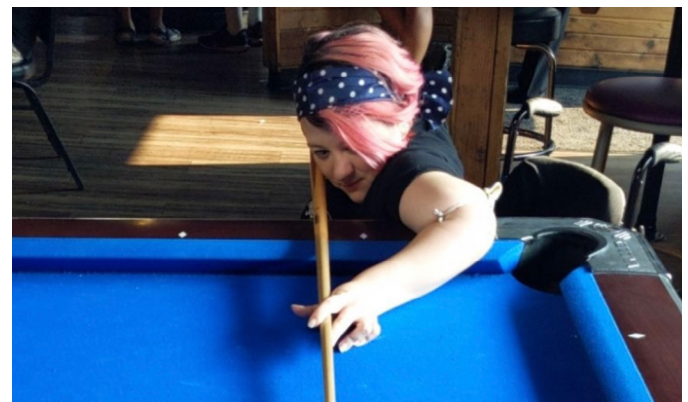
(OA): Can you tell me a little bit about how this has personally affected you?

EJ: Like showing up to a job interview and realizing that the front step is inaccessible or seeing that their pathways are too narrow. When applying for jobs, I have to find a balance between "Do I disclose my disability but then they're prepared?" and "Do I not because I want to be evaluated without that extra piece of information?" I've had interview questions where they were clearly concerned about my ability to do my job, like asking me questions on how I can go on site visits. And I would be like, "Well, we can be creative." Just because I don't do things exactly as everybody you've ever had doesn't mean we don't have GoPros or Skype. But there are many who have a hard time integrating technology for access.

If something is made accessible, it doesn't really inconvenience people who don't require extra access, but it is really seen as a luxury good.

OA: How can we change the culture of architecture to be more inclusive and diverse?

EJ: A lot of it starts with education. What I really had a hard time with was architectural education because of the culture of overwork and elitism and favoritism. I also don't think there's a big stretch in saying that there's some implicit racial bias, gender bias, and ableism within those choices. And when I was in school, we didn't have any education when it came to accessibility. One thing I'm interested in is seeing architects having to take a required ethics course.



Above: Emma enjoys her time playing pool



Ryan Gann

Emerging Professional | Chicago, Illinois

Apart from thriving as an entrepreneur consulting on design projects, business strategies, and marketing, Gann serves as the at-large director for the AIA National Board and chair for the AIA Equity and the Future of Architecture (EQFA). He is passionate about exploring the intersection between community-led design processes and the business strategies around storytelling.

Olivia Asuncion (OA): As a national leader for the profession, can you talk about what diversity in architecture means to you?

Ryan Gann (RG): [As chair of EQFA], we look at it through a few different lenses. First, through the profession itself and as a collective of individuals who have valuable perspectives and skills that we can bring to the clients and the communities that we serve. And then we have what AIA can do. It's more than just looking at how EDI impacts design and spatial experience, it's looking at it through a larger, more cultural-transformation lens.

OA: With the current status of diversity in architecture, can you tell me how it's affected you personally?

RG: As a gay, white male, it's both harder and easier at times at times to have an ear to a conversation that's more empathetic than, I would venture to say, others have. And that's just based on the demographics of who the profession is made up of presently or has historically been led by. But I still think we have a lot of work to do. In the last five years, AIA has been a lot more vocal in acknowledging that the composition of the profession is not as representative of the societies that we serve as it should and could be. Now we're in the actionable stage. We need to start breaking down those systemic barriers and creating the profession that you and I certainly want to be a part of, the people who have already been a part of the profession for 50-plus years feel like they're a part of, and students in eighth grade who are dreaming of being an architect want to be a part of.

OA: What would you say are those actionable items? What has the AIA been doing to contribute to this progress?

RG: The AIA Strategic Plan for 2021-2025 really elevates two topics: climate action and equity. The amount of knowledge and material that has been built related to how architects can

positively support sustainability, that's like 40-50 years in the making. If we can funnel that same amount of knowledge and resources into equity, I think that we can get this conversation into the same space. We had a joint meeting with the NOMA Board of Directors. NOMA last year released their 2030 diversity initiative with the AIA Large Firm Roundtable, and that goal was to double the amount of Black licensed architects. That level of ambition is really empowering in the same way that the 2030 Challenge in sustainability and net zero energy are empowering.

And we have to start pushing ourselves beyond that. How do you as an individual begin to create this space and the sense of belonging for those individuals that don't have the same lived experiences as you, and be able to support them as colleagues, as mentors, as peers? In a deeply divided country, we have to be very cautious about talking about morality in a way that isn't preaching. How do we take this brain trust from cities that are epicenters of culture and transformation and begin to tell those stories in compelling ways that are actionable to different-scaled communities that are having different challenges?



Above: Ryan presents a sketch series during Today @ Apple.



Omarys Carmen Vasquez

Young Architect | New Haven, Connecticut

Vasquez is an associate at Svigals + Partners and has had experience working on a wide range of project typologies. A notable project she is proud of is the Ronald McDonald House, serving primarily South American and other Latin American families. She also serves as vice president for NOMA Connecticut Chapter.

Olivia Asuncion (OA): Can you explain a little bit about your journey of how you became an architect?

Omarys Carmen Vasquez (OCV): I grew up in New York City, and I am a first-generation American, from Dominican parents. Growing up in public housing, I didn't know what architecture was. I didn't have a private school education, and we didn't have the acclaimed career days that you see on TV. So I didn't learn about architecture until roughly around age 13 or so. One of the best moves that my parents did was make sure that we applied to a high school that was outside of our district — one that was just marginally better.

At one point in high school, when it came to recommendations for college, I told my adviser that I wanted to be an architect. So he recommended Pratt Institute because it was local. I applied, and I didn't get accepted because, yet again, I didn't get that quality education, and I didn't meet their merit-based requirements. But because I checked the box that says I'm Hispanic/Latina, they took my application and sent it to their higher education opportunity program, which is a state-funded program providing almost a full-ride scholarship for students who did not initially get accepted, had a reasonable GPA range, were minorities, are financial-needs-based and whose parents didn't go to college. So checking that box got my foot in the door, and that was my way of getting in and being able to study architecture.

OA: What does justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in architecture mean to you?

OCV: I do want to see the profession better represented, to reflect the uniqueness of us as a people. We have such a rich tapestry of individuals in this country that isn't really reflected that much in our profession. A lot of that is systemic, things that are built into the government, into regulation and zoning. We're designing for certain cultures and communities, but those aren't the people that are designing for them. There's an



Above: Omarys loves being an architect -- directing, collaborating, and being a part of a design team

unspoken value that having diversity can help enhance a design because you have more of that representation that can help understand and empathize and relate to the users of certain projects. I'd love to see more representation, but it's really a deep woven problem.

OA: What are the actionable items to take steps forward towards diversity in architecture?

OCV: One of the easiest and quickest ways to start that trend, because it's almost an investment in our future, is public outreach and education in K-12 schools in disadvantaged communities. So that if I were my 8-year-old self, and I had someone come into my school to do a public presentation on what the architecture, engineering, and construction industries are, and have people of different cultures and backgrounds there presenting what that is so that my 8-year-old self can say, "Oh! I can be that?" If we can just infuse ourselves into communities that don't have resources and provide training and education on these different professions at least until zoning reform catches up, that for me would make the biggest impact and the biggest return on our investment.



Antonia Bowman

Young Architect | Oakland, California

A California native, Bowman is an architect at ELS Architecture and Urban Design in Berkeley, California. She serves as a board member for AIA California, representing AIA East Bay. She is also an active contributor and supporter for AIA San Francisco's Equity by Design Committee.

Olivia Asuncion (OA): What can you say about the status of diversity in architecture right now?

Antonia Bowman (AB): It definitely seems like there's a movement where EDI is becoming more of a mainstream topic. In response to the Black Lives Matter movement, hitting a particular awareness after George Floyd's murder, it's challenged many people, including myself, to pay more attention and to educate themselves more.

OA: Can you talk about how that relates to architecture?

AB: Those series of topics just raise awareness that we have inequities in all aspects of society. Inequity in health care, education, housing, justice system — it affects Black Americans, people of color, women, queer people, the disabled, and other marginalized groups of people. How it relates to architecture is that these inequities are reinforced by the built environment. You see the disparities and differences in schools in one neighborhood versus schools in another neighborhood. It's something that architects need to be aware of and figure out how to engage and support.

Instead of trying to design a building for people, the objective should be to design with them. How can we be better? How can we rethink the processes from the same way they've always been done? Status quo doesn't serve people equally.

OA: How would you describe an equity in architecture?



Above: Antonia explores and enjoys places through cycling

When I hear the word diversity in architecture, people usually think, "We need to hire more people of color! Look at all of these people of color and women in our roster!" To me, that idea of diversity doesn't translate into equity and inclusion. You do want people of different backgrounds and interests, gender expression, sexual orientation, life experiences, disabilities — but the firm leadership and the culture of the firm also needs to understand how to create a supportive environment where people can thrive. Are they getting promoted and getting the same opportunities as their white-male counterparts? It's about having the opportunity to lead and to be valued the same, being able to comfortably share ideas, and being able to make mistakes without penalty.



Crystal Day

Young Architect | Seattle, Washington

Day is an associate project architect for NBBJ Design in Seattle. She is also an active leader for NOMA Northwest Chapter (NOMA NW) and a co-chair for AIA Seattle's Diversity Roundtable. She is a board member and volunteer for Sawhorse Revolution, a nonprofit organization mentoring underprivileged students, providing resources and experience in design and construction.

Olivia Asuncion (OA): What are you working on these days? Are there any projects or events that you're excited about and want to share?

Crystal Day (CD): [For NOMA NW], we used to go around from firm to firm to do presentations to try and get member engagement. But then during this last year, we had to shift gears. After the traumatic events of last summer, firms started reaching out to us and asking us what to do. Everyone was



Above: Crystal sails on the Puget Sound in Seattle, often with her dog and her husband

trying to look towards how they can fix systemic racism. So we got together, as the board for NOMA, and we started to make a checklist of actionable items that we could recommend to firms, creating NOMA NW Call to Action. Now it includes specific prerequisites for firms to know that they are accountable for these things and have measurable goals.

OA: Given the lack of diversity in architecture, can you talk about how you've been personally affected by it?

CD: I was a little frustrated at first. We've been saying for years that this is going on, and it feels like some people are just discovering racism. NOMA was founded 50 years ago, and these issues have been around for a while. It's good that BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) designers' voices are finally getting heard. It's good that people at work are going out of their way to have really tough conversations and creating safe spaces for employees. Firm leaders are starting to look in the mirror and focus on how we can do a better job. One of the issues now that I'm concerned about is that there was this big momentum last summer, but it's fizzled down. So how can we keep people excited looking at the bigger picture and embracing equity as the end goal?

OA: What can you say to the younger generation who are thinking about becoming architects?

CD: The next generation is gonna be the one to change the industry. It's up to them to rewrite architecture and the way we're thinking about it, integrating non-Western architecture into our studies and changing the curriculum in our schools; the way we uplift our younger staff that we're hiring, and the way we're mentoring and recruiting and retaining our BIPOC staff. I think it's gonna get better with our younger generation.



Krithika Penedo

Young Architect | Honolulu, Hawaii

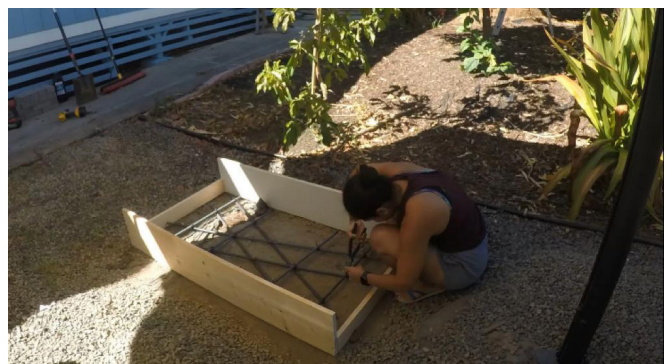
Born in Zambia, Penedo moved to the United States to attend college at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island and then attended graduate school at Parsons School of Design. After experiencing several countries and several states, she has found home in Honolulu, where she works as an architect at AMA A/E.

Olivia Asuncion (OA): Having lived in so many places, can you talk about what was your experience being in architecture school?

Krithika Penedo (KP): I came fresh from Zambia when I was 18 years old, and it was kind of different. Roger Williams University, at the time, was not as diverse as I expected. I had amazing professors that were really dedicated, and I felt like I could thrive there. But it was kind of a struggle within the student population because it was limited in diversity. But when I went to New York City, it was very different because there were people from everywhere. I found myself finding myself better. And that included personally, but also architecturally and understanding what are the goals of what I want to do, what type of architecture do I want to do, and why do I want to do it. I always knew that once I started, I wanted to continue and be licensed. There are so few women and minorities and immigrants who are licensed, and I wanted to do it for representation. I had a baby two years ago, too, and I went back to work shortly after. And I felt that it was important for me to keep working and staying active. And again, there are not only so few women in the workforce, but moms start leaving the workforce.

OA: When you hear justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in architecture, what does that mean to you?

KP: As hard as it may be, it's important to have many voices at the table: community members, clients, developers, architects, contractors, engineers. All those people must come to the table, and all those people must be different. They need to look



Above: Krithika works on hands-on projects around her home

different, sound different, and be different. And it's not just one homogenous group deciding something for someone else. It's a collective conversation because that is where the most successful architecture comes about. It's harder to pull out the voices, and it's harder to distill the information, but I think that if it exists, the architecture is richer.

OA: Do you have any insight on what we should be doing now to help make architecture more diverse?

KP: Architecture school, especially when getting a professional degree, is very expensive. And coming out of it, the starting salary is very low. So unless you're lucky enough to have come from money, there's such a disproportionate number of people who end up practicing architecture because of the costs. It's a question about the value of our work — who is doing the work and how are we valuing that work relative to education and relative to all factors that go into getting a license.



Margaret Knight
Young Architect | Seattle, Washington

Growing up in Upstate New York, Knight fulfilled her fourth-grade dreams of going to Cornell University to study architecture. She is an architect at minority- and women-owned Schemata Workshop. She also serves as a board member at AIA Seattle and is an active part of the AIA Diversity Roundtable.

Olivia Asuncion (OA): What projects are you working on these days?

Margaret Knight (MK): In Seattle, there's a really big push for communities of color to have staying power in their communities. There's lots of gentrification and displacement happening, particularly in the historically Black community here. We're working on a project that is part of an initiative to allow Black churches, which are big landowners, to be able to self-redevelop their own land, allowing them to stay and not sell their properties and have to move to the outskirts of the city. It's the first one which would hopefully build a roadmap for other churches to do it as well. We've completed the feasibility study and are currently going through fundraising.

OA: How has the current status of diversity in architecture affected you?

MK: One positive effect on me personally is that it lit a fire within me to get licensed. I honestly did not realize how few Black women architects were registered in the entire country. When I got licensed in 2017, there were only seven Black women architects in the entire state of Washington.

OA: What actionable items can we take to bring us out of this lack of diversity?



Above: Margaret gardens near her Seattle apartment in a small community P-Patch plot

MK: Supporting each other. I've been super lucky to have been surrounded by the supportive women that I have in the field. I have cheerleaders in all of my corners. I think once you get on the other side, you need to be the cheerleaders for everybody else; leave the door open behind you; make sure that any opportunity that you're given, you're passing them along. So we can raise everybody up together. In solving the pipeline issue, it's making sure that you get the word out to the young kids, to tell them that it's an option, and help support them when they do.

**Kevin Loo-Chan**

Young Architect | Honolulu, Hawaii

Loo-Chan was born and raised in Honolulu and was inspired to become an architect by his father, who is also an architect. He started his education at the University of Hawaii, then transferred to the University of Oregon, gaining a wealth of perspective and knowledge. This shaped him to be the skilled architect he is today, notably completing the Ola ka 'Ilima Artspace Lofts, a sustainable, affordable housing complex for artists as part of Urban Works Inc.

Olivia Asuncion (OA): What would you say is your favorite thing about architecture? The least?

Kevin Loo-Chan (KLC): I think most architects are motivated to practice architecture because they are genuinely interested in making a positive impact in their communities. The most rewarding part of our profession is seeing the look on the faces of our clients or end users when a project is turned over to them and seeing how they interact with the spaces you've worked so hard to create.

The least favorite part about architecture? The commodification of employees. It is not a sustainable business model to turn over an unhealthy number of projects just to drive company profits. This approach to architecture leads to unhealthy and unhappy employees who feel disenfranchised.

OA: What does justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in architecture mean to you?

KLC: Put simply, a more equitable and diverse architecture profession will lead to better architecture. The more voices and the more influences we can involve in architecture the better and the more informed our decisions can be. Architecture should never discriminate; it should be equitable, fair, and open to all.

OA: How have you seen diversity and inclusion in architecture? And how has it personally affected you?

KLC: Growing up in Hawaii, we learn to respect the land, and we learn to respect each other no matter what kind of background they may come from or what they may look like.



Above: Kevin frequently surfs all over the coast of O'ahu

We have a district in Honolulu called Kakaako. It is a light industrial district in urban Honolulu filled with metal warehouses and auto-mechanic shops. Kakaako has been gentrifying over the past decade or so, and these metal warehouses were in danger of urban plight. Then a group of local artists started an organization called Pow Wow Hawaii. They banded together and began painting large murals on these metal warehouses. This began to fuel a trend that opened the door to urban art and murals in urban Honolulu. It has created a more equitable environment where artists can now carve out a career.

I am excited for the direction of architecture and its increasing diversity. I think it is very healthy and refreshing for the profession. I am seeing a lot more individuals able to express themselves in the work environment and seeing their empowerment. We are starting to see a lot more voices and influences in architecture and its peripheral fields. I am looking forward to seeing what the future of architecture holds.

**Olivia Asuncion, AIA**

Asuncion is an architect, design researcher, and universal design advocate. She is also serving as AIA Young Architects Regional Director for Northern California.

So you want to...design for all

Moderator:

Yiselle Santos Rivera, AIA, NOMA, LSSYB, LEED AP BD+C, WELL AP, is a medical planner and global director of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion at HKS Inc. To say that she has a passion for ensuring equality in architectural practice would be an understatement. Throughout her career, she has sought out areas of the industry where she felt she would belong; if there were none, she created them: She co-founded the Latin American Interior Designers, Engineers, and Architects (LA IDEA) DC Committee in 2013 and later created the Women Inspiring Emerging Leaders in Design (WIELD) event program in 2017, just two of her many accomplishments.

Panelists:

In his role at the helm of Moody Nolan as president and CEO, Jonathan Moody, AIA, NCARB, NOMA, LEED AP, FITWEL, is continuing his father's legacy in architectural practice and finding his own way to inspire those around him. As a leader in the largest African American-owned firm, he has dedicated himself to making a positive impact in the community through mentorship. He hopes the younger generation will see that there is a spot for them at the table.

Jennifer Park, AIA, is a principal at Brininstool + Lynch and an educator at the Illinois Institute of Technology. She sits on the Board of Directors of AIA Chicago and is the co-chair of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee. As an educator, she is inspired by the enthusiasm and openness of architectural students and creates a learning environment that will nurture a sense of belonging from the very beginning of their education.

Christine Williams, AIA, is an architect at Formative Architecture and an educator at the University of New Mexico's School of Architecture. Her experience in the design and construction of architectural projects explores equity in living, providing important basic human needs in a way that elevates an occupant's sense of belonging. Additionally, Williams's altruistic time is dedicated to Women in Design: New Mexico as a board member and PR chair.

Build a village

There's hardly a worse feeling than when you don't belong, believing you are an outsider to a tight-knit group. Teen novels and movies have famously tapped into this feeling because of the visceral reaction it can draw out of consumers. When we discuss justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, it is exactly this feeling that we want to remove from the practice of architecture.

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VIRTUAL PANEL
MODERATED BY

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PRINCIPAL
BRININSTOOL + LYNCH

JONATHAN MOODY, AIA,
NCARB, NOMA, LEED AP,
FITWEL
PRESIDENT/CEO
MOODY NOLAN

CHRISTINE WILLIAMS,
AIA
FORMATIVE ARCHITECTURE

YISELLE SANTOS, AIA,
NOMA, LSSYB, LEED AP
BD+C, WELL AP
DIRECTOR OF JUSTICE,
EQUITY, DIVERSITY &
INCLUSION, HKS

AIAU

Young Architects Forum
an AIA member group

Above: Designing for Belonging Webinar Panelists
Image Courtesy of Trevor Boyle

How do we encourage students with varied backgrounds and identities to take interest in the profession? How do we design buildings that support marginalized groups? How do we reach out to communities that are historically underserved? This topic was discussed on Aug. 13 when the YAF Advocacy Work Group (consisting of Monica Blasko, Kaitlyn Badlato, Jonathan Jackson, Anastasia Markiw, and Trevor Boyle) hosted the second webinar in a tripartite series dedicated to tackling issues of equity in architectural practice. The end product was an entrancing 90-minute journey through tales of successfully executed projects but also of the panelists' personal and professional experiences. This webinar was an opportunity to hear from diverse panelists who each had unique approaches for fostering belonging.

Rivera started by describing her personal experiences and mission as the HKS J.E.D.I. director. Her trek through the profession led her to the realization that if you do not find someplace you belong, you have to take charge and create it. She referred to the process as building a village: a support group or community to learn and grow within. Creating an empathetic space includes asking herself how she shows up to the table as her authentic self: presenting herself authentically so that others will be comfortable to do so.

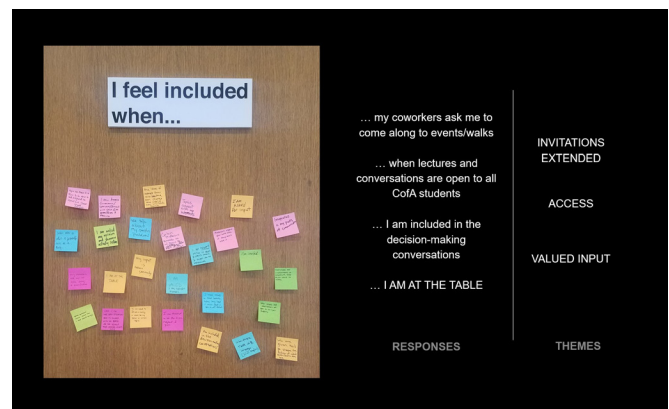


Above: Courtesy of Yiselle Santos Rivera

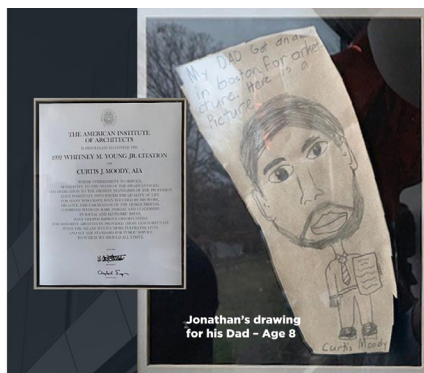
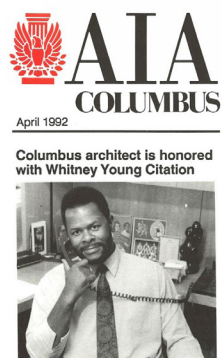
Building a just future

Moody's story is tied to his personal experience and identity as a Black man, and he credits much of his passion for architecture and success to his dad, Curtis J. Moody. Many Black architects did not have role models who looked like them in the profession, making it challenging to imagine themselves belonging. Representation matters. Moody's volunteer experience with children of color aims to fulfill the idea of "if you can see it, you can believe it," demonstrating that any child belongs in the next generation of architects.

As a firm, Moody Nolan is committed to diversity by design, which is easily seen in its work, including the Martin Luther King branch of the Columbus Metropolitan Library. Architects at Moody Nolan believe it is not simply the structure that matters, but the impact the building has on the community.



Above: IIT CoA Diversity and Inclusion Committee's Gathering for Diversity and Inclusion from fall 2019 and follow-up assessment work of the committee: Jennifer Park and Nilay Mistry (co-chairs), Daniel Allen, Davey Hines, Mark Osorio, Roland Knowlden, Meg Schroeder, Cynthia Torres, and Catherine Wetzel.



Above: Courtesy of Moody Nolan and AIA

Belonging in the architectural space

Park's view of architecture is one of social practice because buildings cannot be separated from the human condition. She asks, "How do we belong in the profession, how do we belong in groups, and how do we educate others?" The foundation for belonging and social justice starts early, and with her role as an educator, she points out ways in which the typical architecture program can be improved to recognize and respect the diverse backgrounds of students.

While each university provides unique experiences, one common memory that every architectural student across the country can draw upon is the studio critique. Park makes it a point to host a diverse jury so that students can see themselves in the crowd of critics. It is a small act, but one that often provides confidence and comfort to the presenter. Additionally, after each studio critique, the jury members become panelists, and students are able to ask questions of them. The two-way conversation creates a dialogue as opposed to the traditional one-sided critique.

Promoting justice in projects

Belonging in architecture goes beyond the profession. As architects, it is important that the buildings we design create an environment of ownership and belonging for the community. Williams capitalized on these principles when she worked on a project that provided transitional housing for the homeless in Bernalillo County, N.M. Initially, she faced NIMBYism (not in my backyard) until the team was able to connect with the Albuquerque Indian Center and the project transitioned into a community effort, working together with the architects to create valuable space.

The Tiny House Village sought to treat the homelessness problem in a new way. Organized as a community, residents were given self-governance with no hierarchical system in the design. Rather than being pushed around, residents are provided a place with a sense of belonging, respect, and ownership that they may not have had before. As Williams points out, part of an architect's role is not just research and problem solving, but understanding the unique needs of each community.



community

- Albuquerque Indian Center (AIC)
 - Offered a 1.5 acre piece of land behind their existing structure
- Saturday Morning Charrette
 - 30 participants (3 groups)
- Presentation by Baker A+D
 - Break-out
 - Site concepts / layout
 - Goals and concerns
 - Presented Ideas

Above: Tiny Home Village
Owner: Bernalillo County, Architect: Baker Architecture + Design
Principal Architect: Mark Baker, AIA
Project Architect (presenter): Christine Williams, AIA

Grassroots changes

Hearing countless stories like these in the webinar reminds me of why I joined a program called Black Architects in the Making (BAM) back in 2018. The pitch was simple and effective, using the African Impala as an analogy: This animal, which can jump 10 feet high and 30 feet out, is able to be kept in captivity behind a three-foot-tall barrier. It could easily jump out, but the unknown conditions on the other side prevent it from ever trying to leap over.

Over the past few years, our BAM program has worked to create lasting change and a sense of belonging for the next generation of Black architects, providing opportunities for students in predominantly Black communities to engage with passionate, diverse architects and understand that it could be a pathway for themselves. The goal is to expose students to the profession so that each one can see architecture as a career opportunity open to them.

Marching forward

Designing for belonging is a moment when you're not invested solely in your own success, but the success of the group as a whole. Designing for belonging is a process, and like a dimmer switch, it requires that change be slow, because if you flip the switch too soon, you may face setbacks.

One of the notable lessons from this panel discussion is that everyone has and will take a different approach to designing for belonging. Ensuring that we provide a community that embraces belonging is a complex issue that deserves time, thought, and flexibility to adapt to an enormously large breadth of situations. Each panelist represented a different part of the country and the profession with their own identities and experiences, leading each of them to varied paths toward belonging.

The final webinar in this year's YAF Advocacy series will dive into the topic of universal and inclusive design. Listen in on Nov. 4 and join the conversation.

Watch On Demand Now

So You Want to Design for All? Designing for Belonging
1.5 HSW LUs

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Trevor Boyle, AIA

Boyle is an associate and design architect at HuntonBrady Architects in Orlando. He lives in Central Florida with his wife, Casey, and two daughters, Kennedy and Ava.

Emerging professional friendly firm program comparison

New England vs. North Central States

The Emerging Professional Friendly Firm Program has been expanding across the United States since its launch by the Central States Region in 2010. You can now find the program integrated into the annual award offerings in AIA New England, New York, North Central States, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and most recently Houston, North Carolina, and the Northwest and Pacific Region. AIA South Carolina previously offered this program, and later in 2021, a few more cities and states will launch the firm recognition program, too.

The initiative aims to celebrate firms that create nurturing environments and development opportunities for emerging professionals (EP). You can find more information on the program and how to implement it in your city or state, in the 2020 Q3 Part 2 Connection article The Emerging Professional Friendly Firm Program.

As the program continues to grow, a common question is, "How do the firm responses compare to each other?" Let's take a closer look at AIA New England (AIANE) (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont) and AIA North Central States (AIANCS) (Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin), two regions that publish infographics of their survey responses.

It's important to note a few disclaimers when looking at the data. First, AIANE offers this program annually, and all entries are submitted by the same deadline. AIANCS offers a two-year cycle and a rolling submission deadline. Second, for this comparison, AIANE references 2019 data, and AIANCS references 2019–2020 data. Third, the questions are compared by themes and may have been phrased differently between the two surveys. Fourth, the results reflect the firms that responded to the survey, and while they capture a cross-section of the firms in each region, the responses do not represent all firms. Lastly, all data is self reported by each firm.

Topic: Diversity of emerging professionals

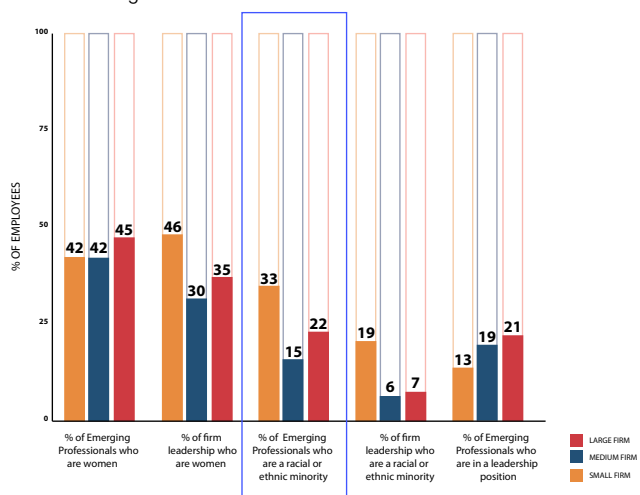
AIANE: 33% of emerging professionals in small firms (one to nine employees) identified as a racial or ethnic minority, in comparison to 22% at large firms (50-plus employees) and only 15% at medium firms (10 to 49 employees).

AIANCS: Firms were asked, "Of the EPs in your firm, do at least 30% identify as a racial or ethnic minority?" To that question, 17% of medium firms said yes in comparison to 15% of large firms and 0% of small firms.

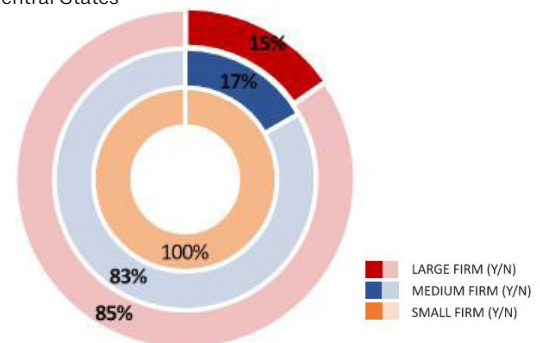
Comparison: AIANE had the most racial diversity in the small-firm category, while AIANCS had the most among medium firms.

According to the 2019 National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) Year in Review results, 35% of new exam candidates are non-white, and 46% of new Architectural Experience Program (AXP) participants identify as non-white. There is an opportunity for both regions to increase their racial diversity to align with NCARB's data.

AIA New England



AIA North Central States



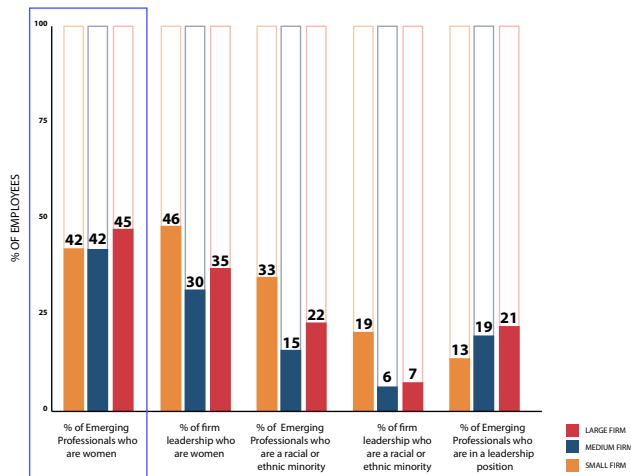
Q: Of the EPs in your firm, do at least 30% percent identify as a racial or ethnic minority?

According to NCARB's 2016 assessment of demographics, 30% of exam candidates identified as non-white.

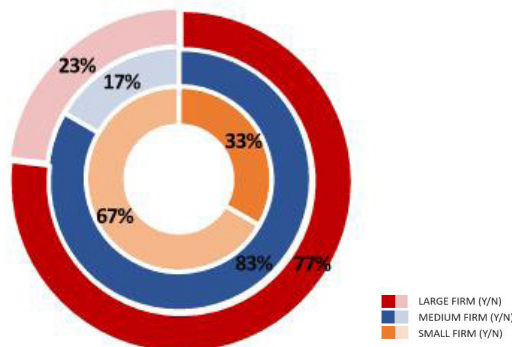
<https://www.ncarb.org/nbtn2017/demographics>

Topic: Female emerging professionals

AIA New England



AIA North Central States



Q: Of the EPs in your firm, are at least 30% architects/designers women?
 According to ACSA, 43% of architecture graduates are women and 30% of AIA Associate members are women. <http://www.acsa-arch.org/resources/data-resources/women>

AIANE: 45% of emerging professionals in large firms identified as female, in comparison to 42% at small and medium firms.

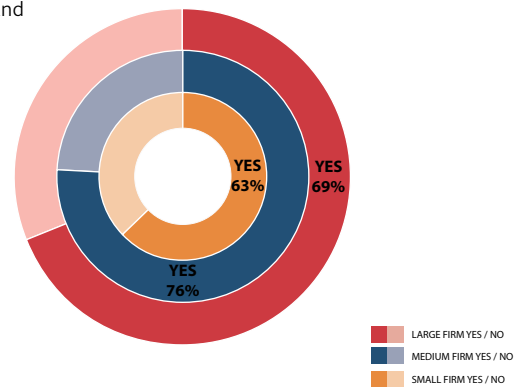
AIANCS: AIANCS firms were asked, "Of the EPs in your firm, are at least 30% architects/designers women?" To that question, 83% of medium firms said yes in comparison to 77% of large firms and only 33% of small firms.

Comparison: Within AIANE, all firm-size categories were above 40% female emerging professionals. Within AIANCS, more than 75% of large and medium firms had over 30% female emerging professionals on their staff. However, the small firms lagged behind significantly.

According to the 2019 NCARB Year in Review results, 44% of new exam candidates identify as female, and 50% of new AXP participants identify as female. According to the 2013 annual report by the National Architectural Accreditation Board (NAAB), 43% of the students enrolled in an NAAB-accredited architecture program were female. New England is close to the national averages, while there is room for improvement for firms in the North Central States.

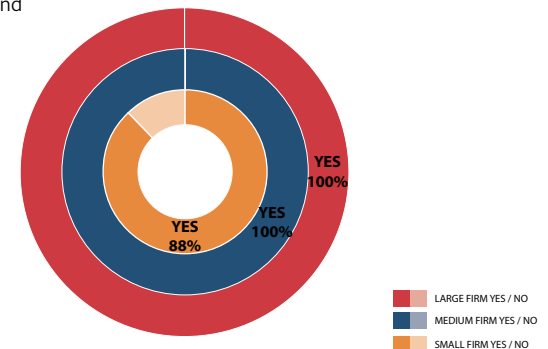
Topic: Exam support and work flexibility

AIA New England



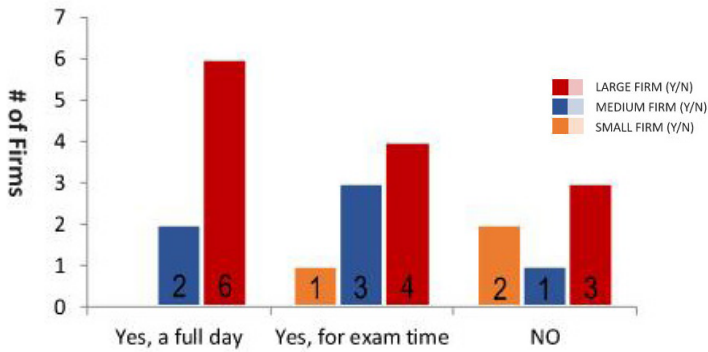
Q: Does the firm compensate Emerging Professional staff a paid day to sit for each of the ARE exams?

AIA New England



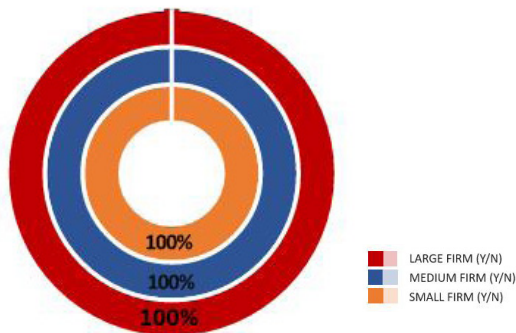
Q: Does the firm provide Emerging Professional staff with the ability to work remotely and have a flexible schedule as needs arise?

AIA North Central States



Q: Does your firm provide paid time off from work to take the ARE exams?
This time may not count against an employee's vacation days or regular PTO.

AIA North Central States



Q: Does your firm offer flexible working hours?

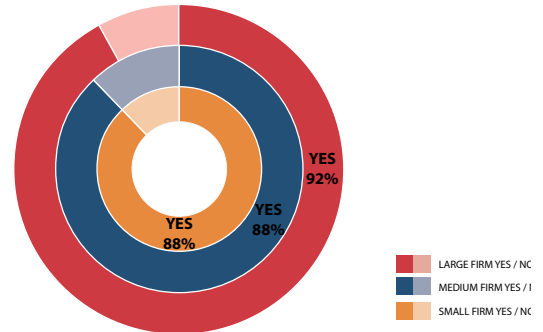
AIANE: Before the pandemic, 100% of large and medium firms and 88% of small firms offered employees the ability to work remotely or have a flexible schedule as needs arose. 76% of medium firms compensated EPs a paid day off to sit for each ARE exam, while 69% of large firms and 63% of small firms offered the same benefit.

AIANCS: In the survey year 2019-2020, 100% of all firm sizes offered flexible working hours. 83% of medium firms offered time to cover the exam or a full working day on exam days for employees, in comparison to 77% of large firms and 33% of small firms.

Comparison: All the firms in AIANCS and the majority in AIANE offered flexible work schedules to their employees. Between 63% and 76% of firms in AIANE compensated an EP to sit for an exam, which was similar to the 77% to 83% of medium and large AIANCS firms. Small firms in the AIANCS were considerably behind the other size categories. This support enables employees to sit for an exam and accommodate unexpected changes in one's schedule without having to use vacation time or paid time off.

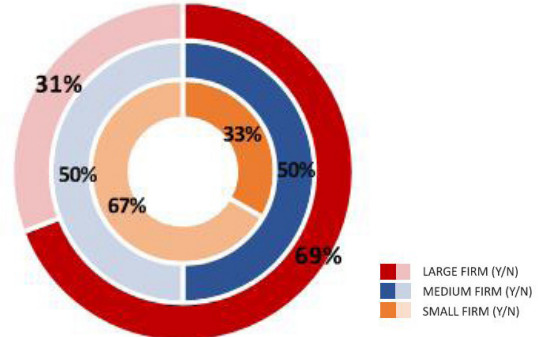
Topic: In-house mentorship

AIA New England



Q: Does the firm provide and/or encourage each Emerging Professional staff member to have an in-house mentor?

AIA North Central States



Q: Does your firm provide a mentor to each Emerging Professional outside of their direct supervisor to guide licensure and young architects development?

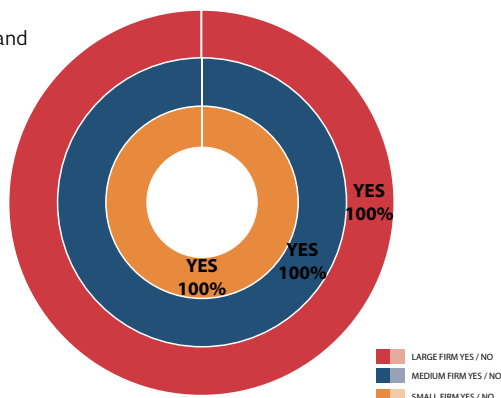
AIANE: According to the survey results, 92% of large firms, 88% of medium firms, and 86% of small firms encouraged emerging professionals to have an in-house mentor.

AIANCS: According to the survey results, 69% of large firms, 50% of medium firms, and 33% of small firms encouraged emerging professionals to have an in-house mentor.

Comparison: AIANE large, medium, and small firms had a much higher percentage of emerging professional staff members who had an in-house mentor when compared with AIANCS. However, when comparing the specific data collected by AIANE versus AIANCS, AIANCS large, medium, and small firms still provide a rather high percentage of in-house mentorship through an emerging professional's direct supervisor, though they may not offer mentorship outside of that relationship.

Topic: Leadership outside the office and firm support

AIA New England



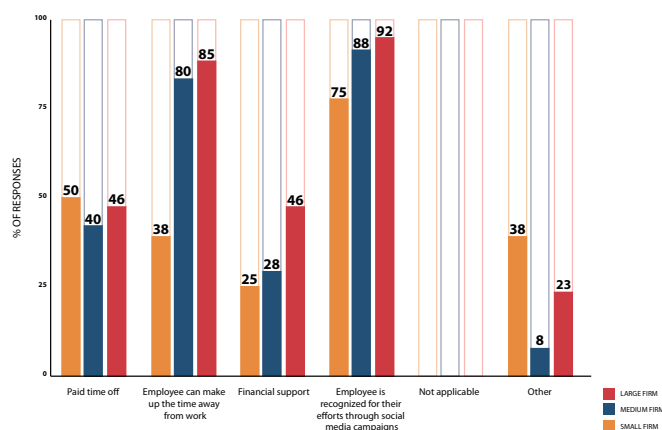
Q: Does the firm encourage and support Emerging Professional staff to be involved in a committee, professional affiliation, community group and/or design organization within or outside of the firm?

AIANE: 100% of all firms provide opportunities for emerging professionals to be involved in committees or professional affiliations outside of the organization. Firms provide support in different ways, such as paid time off, financial support, and allowing employees to make up time away from work. Additionally, employees are recognized for their efforts through social media campaigns.

AIANCS: Firms were asked, "Does your firm facilitate opportunities and support for EPs to participate in community service activities?" 100% of large and small firms and 83% of medium firms provide support and opportunities for EPs to participate in community events.

Comparison: The support from firms in both regions is positive, and AIANE was able to capture specific ways in which firms can provide support, such as through paid time off and financial help.

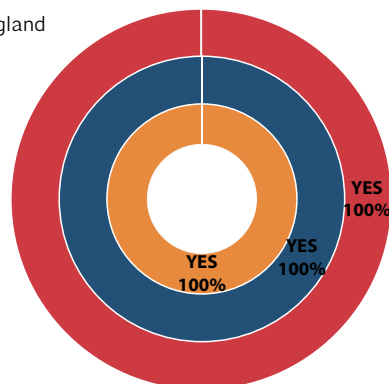
AIA New England



Q: If the firm does encourage and support Emerging Professional staff's involvement in a committee, professional affiliation, community group and/or design organization within or outside of the firm, how so? Select all that apply.

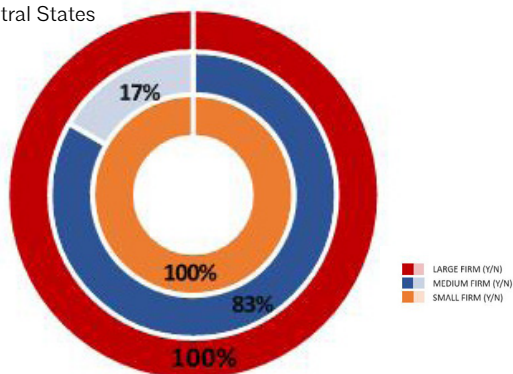
Topic: Leadership inside the office through project exposure

AIA New England



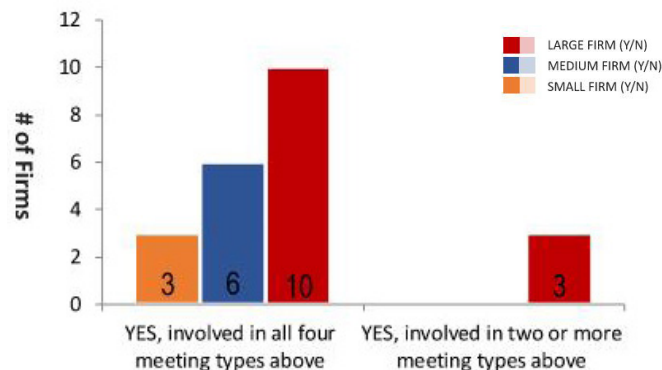
Q: Does the firm include Emerging Professional staff in all areas of the firm's practice, such as design, documentation, construction, presentations, client meetings, consultant coordination meetings, job site meetings, code reviews, etc.?

AIA North Central States



Q: Does your firm facilitate opportunities and support for EPs to participate in community service activities?

AIA North Central States



Q: Does your firm include EPs in all areas of the firm's practice? Client Meetings, Consultant Meetings, City Review Meetings, Job Site Meetings.

AIANE: According to the survey results, 100% of all firms provide emerging professionals opportunities in all phases of a project, such as design, documentation, and construction.

AIANCS: According to the survey results, 100% of small and medium firms provide opportunities to be a part of all aspects of the firms' practice, while 76% of large firms provide opportunities in all areas of practice and 24% provide opportunities in two or more areas.

Comparison: From the responding firms, nearly 100% in all size categories in both regions include emerging professionals in all phases of practice, except for 24% of AIANCS large firms, which include EPs in just two or more areas of practice.

Summary

Results from the Emerging Professional Friendly Firm Program survey help us to recognize differences in emerging professional opportunities among employers, firm sizes, and regions in the U.S. The information identified in this survey can help firms assess, adopt, and implement strategies for more equitable, diverse, and inclusive professional development experiences for emerging professionals in the field of architecture. The data can also be a tool for emerging professionals to advocate for change from within their firms. An equitable path forward includes transparency, communication, and written policies to eliminate any barriers for individual advancement.

Reference the list below for a few ideas to implement today for a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive profession:

- Read the [AIA Guides for Equitable Practice](#)
- Establish a J.E.D.I Committee at the firm
- Sponsor emerging professionals to attend a J.E.D.I.-related seminar or conference (such as a National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) conference or an AIA Women in Leadership Summit)
- Institute a J.E.D.I. advocate position at the senior leadership level
- Provide a designated space in the office for nursing mothers
- Evaluate pay equity on an annual basis across all firm employees
- If mentorship is not offered within the office, seek an outside relationship
- Encourage all eligible employees to start an AXP record
- Support ARE candidates by covering the cost for exam material, study courses, resources, the exam fee, and a paid day out of the office to sit for an exam
- Publicly recognize the accomplishments of emerging professionals in the firm, through social media campaigns, e-blasts, or other means
- Encourage your firm to recruit from historically Black colleges and universities
- Engage with students at your local K-12 schools to share more about your path to the profession and what the field entails

For more information about these two regions:

[AIA New England Website](#)

[AIA NCSR Emerging Professionals](#)



Katelyn Chapin, AIA

Chapin is a project architect at Svigals + Partners in New Haven, Connecticut. She is the 2020-2021 community director of AIA National's Young Architects Forum and is a recipient of the 2021 AIA Young Architects Award.



Ryan Welke, AIA

Welke is a project manager at ISG in La Crosse, Wisconsin. He is the 2021-2022 Young Architects Regional Director for the North Central States Region.

Constructing differences

Architecture, disability, and a glimpse into ways interdisciplinary thought can contribute to greater spatial belonging.

Our built environment controls physical access, flow of movement, and social acceptance of bodies in space. The social and political framework that determines the repression of disabled people and other marginalized bodies is guarded by capitalist systems and institutions that hoard power, allowing an elite few to determine who can be made to feel included.

The restroom, for example, can range from the most mundane to the most imaginative space. Yet contemporary public and private bathrooms remain heavily regulated with strict and consistent building codes limiting construction of what a bathroom space could be. Specifically, sex-segregated bathrooms are a “technology of discipline and power,”¹ based on the presentation of gender identity linked to biological sex. The public restroom — with stall doors and walls that don’t quite touch the floor, mirrors aligned next to one another, and minimal sound proofing — is panoptic and invites the surveillance and perpetuation of gender norms.

Different bodies may be subject to targeted physical violence or health risks that result from delaying use of the restroom. According to a former adviser of the New York City Department of Transportation, Quemuel Arroyo, “so many of these ‘accessible’ bathrooms still don’t get it ... and they don’t get it because they’re being designed by people who don’t understand accessibility.” Even codes that created considerations of accessibility, such as the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Universal Design brought about in the 20th century, fail to address the needs of individuals by declaring solutions for predetermined collectives. Because architects continue to treat the compliance standards as a list to be checked off, regulations created to assist disabled people often undermine the original intent of their implementation.

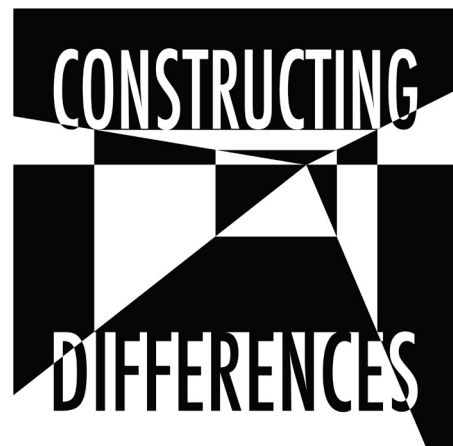
Throughout the evolution of feminist theory, scholars have discussed how the intersection of gender through a range of social characteristics such as sexual orientation, class, race, and ethnicity shapes our perceptions of one another. Yet, historically, disability has not been included within this intersectional framework. How can designers understand accessibility to better address these spatial complexities in our work? What frameworks can be created so that we can move toward a post-compulsory knowledge of inclusion and create sensations of spatial belonging?

As more and more people may come to identify as disabled, I pursued undergraduate research opportunities to think critically about the intersections of architecture and diverse bodies. “Constructing Differences” is a project that explores the multiplicities of spatial belonging — comfort/discomfort, inclusion/exclusion, and belonging/estrangement in constructed space. The project resulted in a podcast production and a physical installation and aims to imagine non-existent spaces, work with existing communities and networks, and enact solidarity through design and architecture.

Podcast

In April of 2021, I conducted virtual interviews with academics, activists, artists, writers, and students in North America who worked on or surrounding topics of design and disability justice. I wanted to engage individuals through dialogue to become involved with this network and help build upon this dialogue and knowledge-making with the resources and skills I have as an architecture student. I wanted to explore how I can use my education to contribute to the goals that have been set forth by the disability justice activists and communities.

In interviews with individuals such as professor Jay Dolmage, architect Seb Choe, and Dr. Rebecca Garden, I realized how important the multiplicity of disability and other equitable practices are to the progression of architecture and design. All 11 [podcast episodes](#) demonstrated the various ways people have collaborated through organizing and writing and how we can be in greater solidarity with one another by using individual strengths to build a more equitable future.



Above: Construction Differences Podcast

Installation

“WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?” is a physical installation that was on display in May 2021 in the atrium of Syracuse University’s School of Architecture. Inspired by multidisciplinary artist Shannon Finnegan (also a guest on the podcast), the artwork is a form of social commentary on the inaccessibility of designed and constructed spaces as well as the normative behaviors and cultures that are normalized around them.

Rug tufting was chosen as a medium for “WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?” because it provides a formal flexibility and a physical sensation of potential comfort in spaces and on hard surfaces. When placed on these surfaces, the rug acts as a cushion, providing comfort and perhaps a sense of belonging. The viewer no longer has to stand — they feel the urge to sit down or lie down, feeling the woven textures and patterns. Similar to the ways the “Constructing Differences” podcast began dialogue on intersecting ideas of space, the installation intends to inadvertently engage bystanders in an informal manner, leaving them with new perspectives, questions, and ideas to implement into their own work and practice.



Above: photos of the “WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?” installation

Footnote

1 Bender-Baird, Kyla. “Peeing under Surveillance: Bathrooms, Gender Policing, and Hate Violence.” *Gender, Place & Culture* 23, no. 7 (2015): 983–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09663669.2015.1073699>.

This project was funded by a grant from the Syracuse Office of Undergraduate Research & Creative Engagement (The SOURCE) at Syracuse University.

What are we doing here?



Above: 3' x 4' design of what installation rug, noting color and texture variation from light to dark blue and light to dark orange.

“What are we doing here?” is a question that we so often ask ourselves when we experience exclusion in various forms. For example, the traditional cultures of architecture school have made so many individuals from various racial, gender, class, and disability groups question their belonging within institutions. Thinking about our capacities for joy, pleasure, and hope, we might consider what we labor for. What do we want to achieve through the struggles against homonormative modes of operation?

Lay & Rest, there is more here

The construction of the infamous 1:12 ramp brings attention to the limitations of compliant design, as architects and designers often treat accessibility as an afterthought. That thought is often limited to physical disabilities addressed by simple interventions such as the ramp and the elevator. The ramp in this installation, which is divided and constructed in three pieces, suggests the metaphor of collapse, a generative idea that is extracted from disability to think about different and more sustainable tools and systems, as Dolmage discusses in the “Constructing Differences” podcast.



Above: 3' x 2' design of installation rugs for “Lay & rest, there is more here,” noting color and texture variations from orange on top of light to dark green.

The use of the rugs invites viewers to think about interactions in spaces such as the ramp differently. The verbs “lay” and “rest” seek to bend time for different movements and operations on a structure designed strictly for movement.



Julia Chou

Chou is a thesis student at the Syracuse University School of Architecture and is a representative of the DEI Student Committee as part of her dedication to equitable design practices. Chou worked as an Educational Intern at HKS in the summer of 2021.

Maximizing your AIA membership

Tips from the NAC Knowledge Work Group

Membership is the key to unlocking all of the American Institute of Architects (AIA)'s benefits. The AIA has a global network of architectural professionals whom members can connect with, as well as the local architecture community. Members are the voice of the AIA and will support the organization's goals, from advancing the built environment to fighting inequity and climate change.

Emerging professionals can maximize their membership by utilizing the resources available for their level of career development. Referring to AIA National as a guide for best practices, chapter leaders can better engage with their emerging professionals by providing leadership development opportunities and professional resources such as tools, education, and support. Not only does increasing awareness of these resources increase the value of an AIA membership, but sharing information between these scales of membership also increases community connection and networking. The following are some of the resources available from AIA National.

The Center for Emerging Professionals (CEP)

This webpage is a great starting point for emerging professionals. It includes links to applicable resources, education, leadership opportunities, publications, networking, and access to the National Associates Committee (NAC) and Young Architects Forum (YAF). The NAC serves associate members (those within the first ten years of their career) through engagement, innovation, connection, and leadership. The YAF supports recently licensed architects (those licensed for ten years or less) by fostering mentorship, leadership, and networking. Both the NAC and YAF aid and inspire the professional advancement of young architecture professionals.

Emerge by AIAU

AIA University is a collection of video-based education courses, supplying knowledge that is not always available at firms. Associate members have free access to the platform and pay a discounted price of \$25 for each course.

Architecture grants and fellowships

There are a number of funding sources available through AIA National: AIA Upjohn Research Initiative, AIA College of Fellows Latrobe Prize, the Delano and Aldrich/Emerson Fellowship, and the AIA Arthur N. Tuttle Jr. Graduate Fellowship in Health Facility Planning and Design.

AIA Compensation Survey Salary Calculator

This tool allows professionals to compare their salary to their peers' to increase equity in the profession. There is also a full AIA Compensation Report, completed every year, which includes deeper insights into compensation and benefits in various metro areas. Some chapters keep copies of the physical report available as a resource to their members.

While these national resources are helpful, it's important for state and local chapters to develop programming specifically for their emerging professionals. Most chapters provide some sort of Architect Registration Examination (ARE) prep program, but emerging professionals need something more to see the value in membership. Chapter leaders can encourage the creation of unique and relevant programming by providing resources to support their emerging professionals. They should draw inspiration from what other chapters have tried and proven to be successful.



Above: AIA Tennessee invites EP's from the Gulf States Region on architectural tours of recently completed projects within the state.

Photo credit: Tre Yancy

The AIA Illinois EP Network was founded by a handful of associate, young architect, and student leaders in the summer of 2017. The group drew inspiration from similar networks, like AIA New Jersey's EPiC. The AIA Illinois EP Network has since moved beyond existing as a sole Slack channel to become a source of consistent content for emerging professionals across the state of Illinois. Monthly Happy Hours and "Firmside Chats" give professionals the opportunity to discuss relevant topics, speak to industry experts, learn how various firms operate and discover the nuances of diverse markets. The network's most successful program, the annual EP Summit, provides a conference-like atmosphere focusing on issues relevant to emerging professionals (EP). The conversations go beyond practice management and include discussions about both soft and hard skills, mental health, and creating a plan for a fulfilling career. The program is successful because it is designed by EPs for EPs. Not only do participants walk away with applicable skills, but leaders also get the opportunity to network with the members they represent, enabling them to better advocate for that membership. "At the end of the day, the beauty of growing a grassroots organization is the ability to be concurrently proactive and reactive in an effort to realize the shared purpose of championing a new generation of leadership, challenging the status quo and growing a diverse membership," notes Jeremy Gentile, associate director for AIA Chicago, "I, for one, am incredibly thankful to the leadership at AIA Illinois that have given this group of passionate leaders free range to build from the ground up!"

Programs for emerging professionals do not have to come out of grassroots movements. AIA North Carolina, for example, created an EP Director position on its state Board of Directors. The EP Director can share their perspective, influence component policy, and develop targeted programming. As a voting member, the EP Director is enabled to share the challenges young people face in the industry and the causes they care about. Since the position was added, AIA North Carolina has created an EP Friendly Firm Award program, an Annual Leadership Workshop and a support program for Associates and Young Architects applying for awards. Shawna Mabie, current AIA NC EP Director, describes the motivation behind the support program: "AIA NC has a robust Fellows program that nominates, educates, cultivates, and provides support to candidates applying for Fellowship in North Carolina. We wanted to offer a similar program for Emerging Professionals that would help demystify the process, provide substantive feedback from past recipients, and offer support and motivation to the EPs as they wrap up their submissions." AIA Grand Rapids also has a comparable associates director position as a voting member on its board of directors.

There are young leaders across the various committees of AIA St. Louis, including YAFSTL, which provides programming and networking opportunities while encouraging young leaders to stay active in the local architectural community. Construction

site tours and learning events allow emerging professionals to gain new experiences, witness the building process firsthand, and learn from industry experts to develop their professional skills. The committee also provides opportunities for emerging professionals to network with their peers during happy hours and trivia nights. Cody Henderson, director of science and education at FSA and the AIA St. Louis 2020 chapter president, notes, "AIA St. Louis continues its strong interaction with EPs by keeping their Design Awards free to attend. Doing this increases the exposure of young professionals to the design community and encourages their participation and networking with others in the profession. They also maintain an emerging professionals softball team in the local A/E softball league, increasing cooperation and exposure to team environments in a different setting."

AIA St. Louis engages young leaders at the membership level, the committee level, and the chapter board level, where there is a member-elected seat for an AIA associate on AIA St. Louis's Board of Directors. The chapter also encourages leadership growth by offering programs focused on developing young and vibrant leaders. The Christopher Kelley Leadership Development Program (CKLDP) teaches EPs entrepreneurship and management skills, tools to build relationships, and the importance of teamwork and collaboration. CKLDP is gaining traction in many chapters across the country, including AIA Albuquerque, AIA Colorado, AIA Detroit, AIA Georgia, AIA Houston, AIA Miami, and AIA Washington DC.



Above: AIA Detroit's CKLDP 2020 cohort travels to Custer in Grand Rapids, Michigan to network with members of the AIA Grand Rapids.
Photo credit: Jade Heiler

AIA Triangle created an EP/YAF Committee to develop programming. The Pizza and Professionals event occurs a few times each semester and brings local architects to college campuses in the area. The sessions include food, studio critiques, portfolio reviews, career questions, and networking.



Above: Community Leaders Summit hosted by AIA Memphis engaging the perspectives of emerging professionals, architects, and other local leaders.

Photo Credit: AIA Memphis



Above: 2019 YAFSTL Construction Tour of the Last Hotel with Paric: "Building tours not only offer great exposure for emerging professionals, but also a great opportunity to network with the local community." - Geoff Vaughn, AIA

Photo credit: Geoff Vaughn

Mentorship Pods is a formal mentorship program that includes regularly scheduled virtual meetings for an entire semester. The "pods" include students, associate members, and licensed architects. AIA Triangle also arranges Hard Hat Tours of construction sites and a virtual Cribs event that allows architects to give tours of their homes, like the old MTV show "Cribs."

In conclusion, for EP programming to be successful, it must provide member value to the audience it is targeting. Giving agency to EP leaders allows them to create meaningful and relevant content and connect with other members. EP groups and programming at other AIA chapters can be a valuable resource for launching programs in new chapters. This article has provided a brief introduction to successful programming from local chapters, but it will be important to continue to share these ideas. AIA is stronger when all members are supported, and that includes emerging professionals.



Jade Heiler, Assoc. AIA

Heiler is a designer at NORR in Chicago, where she works on retail projects. She serves as an at-large director for the NAC.



Jenn Truman, Assoc. AIA

Truman is an apprentice at Matthew Konar Architect, a firm focused on food architecture based in Raleigh and Durham, NC. She serves as the regional associate director for AIA South Atlantic.



Maggie Will, Assoc. AIA

Will is a project designer at TSK Architects in Reno, Nevada. She serves as the regional associate director for AIA Western Mountain.



Molly Rademacher, AIA

Rademacher is an architect at SmithGroup in Chicago, IL, where she works on corporate workplace and higher education projects. She serves as regional associate director and EP network chair for AIA Illinois.



Tre Yancy, Assoc. AIA

Yancy is an architectural associate at Fleming Architects in Memphis, TN, where he works on education, commercial, and mixed-use projects. He serves as regional associate director for AIA Gulf States.



Valerie Michalek, Assoc. AIA

Michalek is an associate and architectural designer at Lamar Johnson Collaborative in St. Louis, MO, working on workplace, mixed-use, education, and science/tech projects. She is the regional associate director for AIA Central States.



Cody Henderson, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP

Henderson is the director for science and education at FSA, LLC in St. Louis. He serves on the AIA St. Louis board of directors and received the AIA St. Louis Young Architect award in 2021.

Shawna Mabie, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, WELL AP

Mabie is a project manager and associate at Hanbury in Raleigh, NC. She currently serves as the AIA North Carolina emerging professional director.

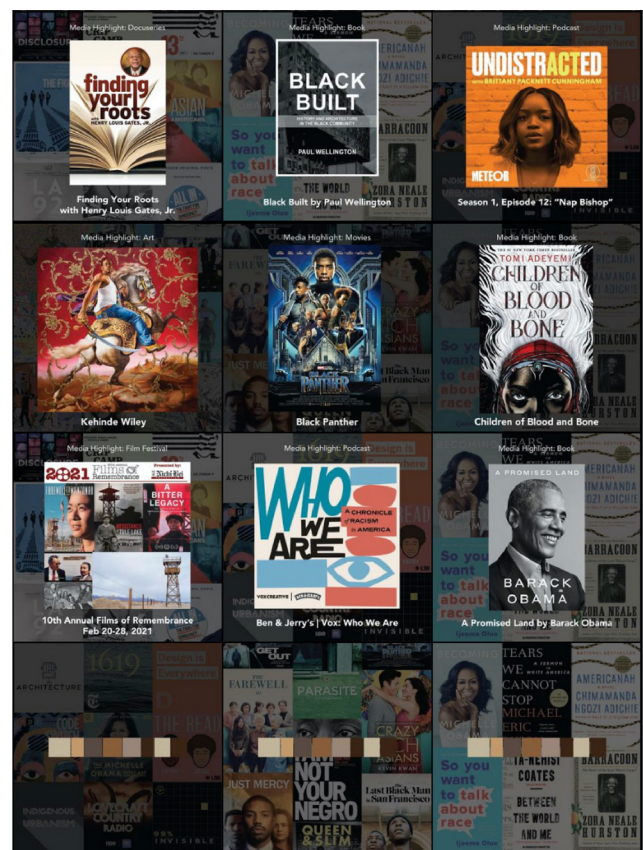
Jeremy Gentile, Assoc. AIA

Gentile is a junior project manager at HPZS in Chicago and an associate director at AIA Chicago. Passionate for all things hospitality and travel, he is also the author of *In Good Spirits* and writes a travel blog titled *From the Window Seat*.

BosNOMA: For a better Boston

The past few years have brought a hyper focus to J.E.D.I., EDI, and DEIB efforts. No matter the abbreviation you use, issues of social justice and equity have always been critical to understanding both our society and our built environment. Although these issues have become buzzwords and may feel like a passing trend as many are only just now acknowledging the reality of inequity that exists in the country, the work is no less real. It is well known that architecture has historically been a white-male-dominated industry that has been slow to change. In his famous speech of 1968, Whitney M. Young accused the AIA of being “most distinguished by your thunderous silence and your complete irrelevance.”¹ Just three years later, the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) was formed, and in the 50 years since, strides have been made to increase diversity and bring us closer to equity and parity. However, the work is far from done.

BosNOMA (the Boston Chapter of NOMA) holds a critical responsibility in Boston’s design community to further our mission to foster the advancement of equitable practice and minority leadership.² With the renewed spotlight, our work has taken on a greater urgency to invest in the next generation through design education, mentorship, and support. With a virtual platform, BosNOMA has expanded membership more than fourfold and continues to grow under the collaborative leadership of the board (Ali Horwitz, president; Gerard Georges, co-chair; Rima Abousleiman, treasurer; Elyse Ayoun, parliamentarian; Julian Phillips, secretary; Ryan Horton, brand ambassador; and Edward “Tony” Ransom, immediate past president and now NE Region vice president).



Above: A sample of BosNOMA's Minority Report, a curated collection of media highlighting marginalized voices. Graphics created by Ryan Horton.



Above: BosNOMA Project Pipeline site. Image of Nubian Square created by Taylor Johnson.

The past few years have brought immense change for BosNOMA as we focused on providing new perspectives, amplifying marginalized voices, and reimagining the future of our profession. BosNOMA hosted a series of brave conversations inspired by NOMA National’s B.R.A.V.E. statement on racial justice ³, organized panel discussions and podcasts, and curated a collection of books, documentaries, and other media titled the Minority Report. Through all these efforts, we aim for a better Boston by developing a supportive and collaborative community for our members.

Our latest program allowed us to engage with middle school students ages 10 to 15. An age demographic that is often overlooked within design education became an optimal age range to expose young people to architecture and enrich curiosities about their community, neighborhood, and city. Over three days in August, BosNOMA held its first Project Pipeline architecture camp for young designers of color. Project Pipeline, a NOMA National initiative, is a camp with the mission “to empower young people to effect change in their community through design.”⁴. Through a virtual format, our mentor team of architects, architectural students, and engineers led 27 students through drawing, modeling, and presentation exercises that built on each other over each session. Our sponsors made it possible to send a supply kit to each student that included materials to participate in the camp

and to keep the students’ creative juices flowing well beyond and into the school year. In just three days, our campers learned to observe their communities through a critical lens and analyze site context and conditions, created unique design solutions to address specific community needs, and gained a stronger understanding of how they can impact the environments around them.

The value and practice of mentorship are vital to diversifying any profession, especially architecture. Early in planning, we made efforts to define how the virtual classroom setting would operate. We determined that a mentor/mentee relationship would be more beneficial in creating a feedback loop than a teacher/student relationship. The question — “how do we build mentor/mentee relationships in a virtual environment” — became less of a concern and more of a charge to encourage discussion by incorporating a real-world scenario as the through-line of the curriculum and being strategic about how small groups work with hands-on activities. Boston is a city of neighborhoods, each with unique histories, culture, and design. Campers learned about architecture and its role in shaping daily life through the lens of Nubian Square, the heart of Roxbury. Nubian Gallery and Black Market were our focal points in the curriculum, and we asked the students to come up with creative solutions for framing or filling in the missing lots along Washington Street just beyond the newly painted Black



Above: Project Pipeline campers explored the building/site scale and the role of the building facade in communicating a story. Campers finalized their facade model and extended their efforts to the sidewalks in a final discussion on street life and placemaking.

Lives Matter street mural. The campers were encouraged to create based on site context given on Day 1 and clients selected on Day 2. A 2-to-5 mentor-to-camper ratio paired with a discussion-based curriculum set the stage for these young designers to create thought-provoking responses to three design challenges: Design a new welcome gate for the community gathering space, build a clay facade embedded within the neighborhood context, and create streetscaping to connect the new building to the city.

In the final session, each student shared their work, impressing the mentors with not only their creativity and craft, but also with the thoughtfulness and care they took to make their spaces inclusive, enjoyable, and welcome to all. Several students paid special attention to their entryways, noting that they had added ramps to “make sure anyone can get inside.” One student made a point to include the term “unisex” in their salon/barbershop sign “so that everyone knows they’re welcome here,” and another gave their space the simple, beautiful name of “Gym for Everyone :)” Unencumbered by the restrictions and hesitations of design professionals, the campers homed in on some of the most critical values that make up a successful community -- accessibility and inclusion. As BosNOMA continues to grow, we will constantly strive for a better Boston in all that we do, but it is through the eyes of our young people that this vision of a better Boston truly feels possible.

Footnotes:

1. <https://www.aia.org/resources/189666-commemorating-50-years>
2. <https://www.bosnoma.org/mission-2>
3. <https://www.noma.net/nomas-public-statement-regarding-racial-injustice-2020-may-31/>
4. <https://www.noma.net/project-pipeline/>



Ali Horwitz, AIA, NOMA,

Horwitz is an architect at Studio G Architects in Boston. She is also the president of BosNOMA and a member of the J.E.D.I. Editorial Board for High Profile magazine.



Julian Phillips, NOMA,

Phillips is a designer at Bruner/Cott in Boston. He is also the secretary of BosNOMA and a youth programs instructor at Mass College of Art.

The trailblazing women of inclusivity:

Lessons learned when starting a (J)E.D.I. Program



Above: (Left to right) Pascale Sablan, Yiselle Santos Rivera, Rosa Sheng: The trailblazing women of inclusivity

Architecture is unique because it is a field that affects nearly every person on the planet. Just as no two sites are the same, no two communities are the same because they all have an exceptional multiplicity of culture, history, and people. Therefore, the practice of architecture needs to represent the diverse nature of those it designs for.

Early in 2021, Gabrielle Bullock, FAIA, and Bill Schmalz, FAIA, of Perkins&Will, in conjunction with the AIA, developed “Creating a Culture of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for your Architectural Practice” as a guide to best practices for creating, implementing, and designing diversity programs for firms in the United States. While this guide is a strong representation for those looking to build a diverse network, three notable women have been making waves for over a decade, and through their words of wisdom, architects and designers can learn how to start or strengthen their justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts in their communities and firms. These notable women of change and inspiration are Pascale Sablan, Yiselle Santos Rivera, and Rosa Sheng.

Pascale Sablan, FAIA, NOMA, LEED AP, is an associate at Adjaye Associates and the founder and executive director of Beyond the Built Environment, which addresses the gaps in the architectural profession with a strategy of engaging, elevating, educating, and collaborating.

Yiselle Santos Rivera, AIA, NOMA, LSSYB, LEED AP BD+C, WELL AP, is the director of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion at HKS Inc. and the founder of Women Inspire Emerging Leaders in Design (WIELD) as a platform for visibility and engagement through the lens of EDI.

Rosa Sheng, FAIA, LEED AP BD+C, is a principal, Higher Education Studio leader, and the director of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion at SmithGroup. She also founded Equity by Design, formally known as The Missing 32 Percent, which catalyzed a national conversation on achieving equity practice in architecture.

As architects and activists, Pascale Sablan, Yiselle Santos Rivera, and Rosa Sheng are champions for diverse design professionals. We thank them for lessons learned and their selflessness to strengthen the profession.

Kelsey Jordan (KJ): What is your No. 1 most recommended step for people to take if they want to start a justice, equity, diversity, and/or inclusion program in their firm or community?

Pascale Sablan (PS): My No. 1 recommendation as the first step for people to take when they are aiming to start their justice, equity, diversity, and/or inclusion program is to first get involved with an established organization/institution that is doing J.E.D.I. work. This will provide the education you need to fully understand the bespoke challenges as it relates to your community, and it will help reveal successful techniques of engagement, and lastly it will provide an authentic coalition of like-minded individuals that you can lean on and support as you develop/start your program.

Yisele Santos Rivera (YSR): My recommendation to gain resiliency in J.E.D.I. work is “build your village” — your support system. J.E.D.I. in practice is a process that requires consistent engagement and measured progress requiring education, capacity building, and continual support. No one can do it alone. Even a small support group that finds synergies in curating resources can be instrumental in effecting change. I encourage groups to use the AIA Guides for Equitable Practice as the first “textbook” to guide J.E.D.I. conversations. The guide is clear yet comprehensive. It helps to divide the content and have a team member lead each topic. In J.E.D.I. work, we should all learn together — it takes a village.

Rosa Sheng (RS): There are many factors in starting a meaningful and effective justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion program in your firm or community. I think the most important aspect for such an effort to be successful lies in the willingness of participants to be vulnerable. We each need to openly acknowledge and reckon with the existence of racism in our daily lives and communities in all of its types and forms (individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural). Part of that willingness is to gain knowledge — through reading, listening to podcasts, and watching presentations that share the histories and impact of racist policies, practices, and procedures in these various forms and also raise awareness of shame, denial, and inaction that perpetuate the continuation of racism, that harm people of color and vulnerable populations. In [“Sum Of Us: The Hidden Cost Of Racism — For Everyone”](#), author Heather McGhee draws on a wealth of economic data to make the case that discriminatory laws and practices target African Americans, but also negatively impacts society at large with many impactful case studies.

The second most important aspect is to commit to taking actions to dismantle racism and other barriers to opportunities for success. It’s not someone else’s problem or responsibility. Each of us needs to be involved in solving the complex challenges

that we face in the world today. It’s easy to look the other way and convince ourselves that we have no power or influence. It takes bravery and courage to get out of our comfort zone and use our voices to advocate for what is right.

KJ: Is there anything that you have found that works really well or didn’t work? I.e. programs, outreach, mentorship, etc.

PS: I find partnering with local stakeholders and community pundits created much more successful programming. These partnering organizations were well connected with the targeted audiences and were able to maximize our engagement. These groups were able to teach us about the unique challenges that we need to navigate, and they were extremely generous with their resources. Together, we provided some justice to those in the profession and in their community that were once disenfranchised by it.

YSR: Something helpful that has kept me inspired and empowered has been joining “communities of practice.” Communities of practice in J.E.D.I. are groups of people that share a passion for justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion and meet regularly to discuss learnings from the strategies they implement in their firms, offices, and teams. AIA Minnesota’s Community of Practice for Culture Change creates a safe space for practitioners to learn from each other, discuss opportunities and challenges, and share progress to create meaningful change. Communities of practice encourage testing and learning. We are all at different stages in our own J.E.D.I. journeys. Listening to others’ initiatives, their development, and implementation can help spark new ideas. Openness and vulnerability are encouraged. Here we can challenge and be challenged. This is where change begins.

RS: There are several other programs and initiatives that SmithGroup J.E.D.I. National Committee has helped influence and lead in the past year since its formation. These have included setting up priorities and goals in three major focus areas — educate, cultivate, and advocate. We have made a series of commitments to guide us in this effort, which must be accompanied by definitive actions.

Since joining SmithGroup, I am most proud of the impact the Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion Scholarship Program has had in the past four years. In 2018, we created the scholarship program to support and mentor students from historically underrepresented demographics in architecture, interior design, planning, landscape architecture, and engineering. The program’s mission is to provide these students with the opportunity to attain their professional goals while advancing the AEC industry and improving the built environment. ... Since the scholarship program’s inception, we have awarded \$120,000 in tuition aid to 20 recipients across the country. Additionally, we engage with each recipient and forge relationships that last long after the summer has passed. Starting in January 2021, SmithGroup started an Historically Black Colleges and Universities’ partnership program spearheaded by Taft Cleveland, as members of the J.E.D.I. National Committee and Healthcare

Planner for SmithGroup Chicago. The initial class of mentors and leaders from the Chicago; Washington, D.C.; and Detroit offices partnered with Florida A&M, Howard, and Hampton universities. As we continue the legacy of partnering with HBCUs, we have begun the next steps of expanding our reach to include mentors from Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco offices.

KJ: What impacts and value in your firm/community have you noticed since starting a J.E.D.I. program at your firm or in your community?

PS: Through our work with Beyond the Built Environment LLC, we've been humbled by the impact our work has had globally. One of the standout distinctions is an increase of general awareness of people and work of women and BIPOC designers from all over the world and the creation of a strong community of supporters who constantly engage in our programming and initiatives. To date we've hosted over 24 SAY IT LOUD Exhibitions and have elevated the work and identities of 665 diverse designers in our library, which is free and accessible online for our Industry and community to use as a resource. Since launching the Dismantling Injustice SAY IT WITH-ME(dia) initiative, we've engaged industry publications with a large subscription base and reach to elevate women and BIPOC designers' stories, contributions, voices, and identities. To date, we have successfully received commitments from 6 publications with 268,000+ monthly subscriptions, to pledge to our SAY IT WITH ME(dia) call for action.

YSR: The biggest value in starting WIELD and J.E.D.I. at HKS has been in elevating conversations not at the forefront of how we discuss succession planning and building talent in our industry. These programs create a common language that encourages supportive discourse. They amplify the voices of the underrepresented by providing platforms for engagement and celebration. These programs increase self-awareness and social awareness, moving us from "intent" to "impact." Today, I see a greater willingness to have the tough conversations, but most importantly, more are willing to challenge the status quo with vulnerability and empathy. I like to think that we are moving beyond respect to caring, where we seek to "see" others, meet them where they are, and building bridges across our differences.

RS: I am constantly humbled in reflecting on the impact of Equity by Design on the AEC community and beyond. I had no idea that my commitment to advocate for others in the profession who shared similar experiences to my own would have such an impact. As you may have heard, the misguided culture of long hours, low pay, and absence of respect and value for people working in the industry almost caused me to leave the architectural practice. Instead, quite the opposite has happened. Overall, it is hard to experience the magnitude of the research, symposia, workshops, and presentations. The biggest indicator actually comes in private messages from people who have been impacted by the work and how it has changed their lives, both personally and professionally.

There are several impacts, both small and large that I have seen at SmithGroup as director of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion and as San Francisco Higher Education Studio leader. Last year, we identified barriers to promotion for associates and recommended changes to policies to broaden the pool of candidates being considered for leadership. The SmithGroup Board adopted the new process for associate nominations in 2020 that was developed by our J.E.D.I. Committee with the intent to provide a more equitable and transparent approach that begins to mitigate barriers, including revising eligibility, nomination process, and selection criteria. As a result, I believe that the 2020 associates reflected a more diverse group with the implementation of the new policies and procedures. In our projects for the studio, I believe that adopting the J.E.D.I. principles into our design process and team dynamics has not only helped us win work, but also established trusted relationships with our institutional partners. There are several projects where a more equitable, inclusive and transparent design process has resulted in more innovative design outcomes that support student persistence, including engaged learning environments and high-performance buildings to mitigate the climate crisis.

KJ: Is there anything that I missed that you find important to inform readers?

PS: It is important for readers to practice accountability with J.E.D.I. work. I recommend that we hold people and oneself responsible by measuring and tracking the progress by setting milestones, goals, and deadlines.

RS: Overall, the biggest lesson is that these efforts require a marathon mindset, not a sprint. It's a daily practice to build persistence for making impact and progress, like working out or meditation. Not every day feels like a victory — actually, more days feel like multiple failures. But as I have shared with many:

Fail fast, and fail often. Don't let failure be your fear.

Because we can fail in the moment, but never be a failure in life.

As architects, we should all embrace the diverse changes that are strengthening the profession and provide a voice for the culture of a community. We all need to be more like Pascale Sablan, Yiselle Santos Rivera, and Sheng. We need to become inspired by their strength as a call to action to make a difference for the architectural profession and the communities we impact.



Kelsey Jordan, Assoc. AIA, WELL AP

Jordan is an architectural project lead at Ittner Architects in St. Louis. As chair of the AIA St. Louis Women in Architecture Community Outreach Committee, she is one of the founding members of the AIA St. Louis J.E.D.I. Committee.

NOMA national President – Jason Pugh



Jason Pugh, AIA, AICP, NOMA, LEED AP

Pugh, is the 2021-2022 President of the National Organization of Minority Architects. He is a Senior Associate Architect and Urban Designer at Gensler's Chicago office. He is a licensed architect and certified planner. He manages a variety of projects which engage the extended community and end-users, following projects from schematic community-based master plans through full construction. Pugh has a passion for helping develop underserved communities and the next generation of designers and architects. He previously served as the president of the Illinois NOMA chapter 2015-2016, and also served on Chicago's Associate Board of the ACE (Architecture, Construction, and Engineering) Mentor Program. Pugh has a Bachelor of Arts from Howard University, one of seven Historically Black Colleges and Universities with an architecture accreditation, and a Master of Science in Architecture and Urban Design from Columbia University.

Beresford Pratt (BP): How did you initially become involved with NOMA prior to becoming president.

Jason Pugh (JP): I've been involved with NOMA since I was an undergrad student at Howard University. I got more engaged in my third year of the five year program and helped to restart the dormant NOMAS chapter on campus. I served as the first student chapter president after the restart, and I was able to build a connection with the first Black AIA president Marshall Purnell, as well as Kathy Dixon, who would later serve as a national president for NOMA.

The local NOMA chapter supported a lot of our initiatives on campus, from seminars to guest speakers, receptions, etc. We worked hard to engage students, local practitioners, architects, and designers. However, while in grad school at Columbia U., I lost touch due to the intensity of the MSAUD program, but I did rejoin after moving to Chicago a year and a half later, in 2007.

I intentionally sought to connect with the local Chicago chapter and met some amazing folks. The chapter has a long, rich history and legacy, and I was excited to reconnect with Black professionals. Many continuously encouraged me to step up and serve on the local board, but I was hesitant since I wasn't sure how long I'd be staying in Chicago. Once I switched firms and began working for Gensler, I felt like I would be around longer and could step up and lead.

I eventually served as the local chapter President from 2015 to 2016. At the time, I focused on reactivating the chapter, developing more structure/organization, and creating tangible

value in being a part of the organization. I helped build our profile, and expanded a lot of the programming and our presence across the city. Bryan Hudson, a fellow NOMA member and leader on the National Executive Board at that time, asked me to step up and serve within his former position as the Midwest University Liaison, and provide a conduit between the student chapters and the professional chapters throughout the region.

When Bryan was elected as President-Elect of NOMA, I ran for his vacant seat once again, stepping up when asked to lead as the Midwest Regional Vice President. After a few years, I was voted in as President-Elect and ultimately the National President of NOMA.

It was never my goal or target to become the national NOMA President. I simply had many champions across the organization encouraging me to step up and lead. I had focused on my current positions, and before long, I was serving in a larger capacity.

BP: Wow, that's quite a robust background that really paints the picture of stepping up when called. Looking at today, as you took on the torch as the new National President of NOMA, what is your mission and some of your primary goals to push NOMA forward?

JP: My predecessor, Kimberly Dowdell, did an amazing job of steering the ship and guiding us through the unprecedented storm that was 2020. It was obviously nothing we ever expected or experienced between the global COVID-19

pandemic, the renewed focus around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), along with the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement following the senseless murder of George Floyd.

She was already on course with expanding the profile of the organization and building some strong strategic partnerships across the industry. She steered us into developing some amazing programs as well as focusing on infrastructure, like team structure and obtaining staff. This was a big deal since we've always been a completely volunteer-based non-profit organization.

There was a lot of groundwork set, which made it a little bit easier for me to really focus on more high-level initiatives and programs coming in. My Presidential platform for the next two years is focused on the Education, Elevation, and Empowerment of our valued membership base, which we call the three E's. Across those three pillars, we are directly targeting programming and initiatives which span all of our membership tiers across students, young professionals, legacy members, and firms. This gives us an opportunity to engage directly with our partners during this critical time, and builds on the "ALL-In for NOMA" platform of my predecessor, tying together Access, Leadership, and Legacy.

For example, we still have a primary focus of increasing the number of licensed Black architects, given that was the original target goal of the 12 founders when they started NOMA 50 years ago. Since the founding of the organization, we have not made much progress in that effort, and our numbers have unfortunately flatlined. In order to accomplish this we will need to partner with allied organizations across the industry and recognize there is inherent strength in numbers if we're able to collectively work towards strategic goals.

EDUCATE is focused on expanding our recruitment and retention efforts. We will develop focused strategies to create more education opportunities for minority students and professionals and expand the discussion around alternative paths towards licensure.

ELEVATE is focused on expanding and building our profile and increasing the clear and tangible value in a NOMA membership by increasing the performance metrics of our local chapters. From there, we can elevate ourselves nationally. Minority architects often don't get enough opportunities to celebrate our stories, so we need to find more outlets that elevate our work, contributions, and accomplishments across the industry.

EMPOWER is focused on investing in more resources and programming towards academic and entrepreneur opportunities for our members of all experience levels.

Developing platforms to showcase what has worked, what has not, and best practices to ensure that we have more firms, more succession planning, and legacy planning within firms. It's also tied to expanding our legacy of advocacy, and the important J.E.D.I work of our members locally and across the nation.

B P: What do you believe is the importance of representation in our industry?

J P: As architects, planners, and designers, we're stewards of the built environment, and we have a tremendous impact on the development and growth of our cities and communities. So it's critically important that our industry reflects the very same communities in which we serve.

Right now, as I think we all recognize and realize, there is an intense focus on channeling resources and development efforts of marginalized neighborhoods in Black and Brown communities.

And if diverse teams and minority architects and planners are not fully engaged with a prominent seat at the table when these decisions are made, we are at serious risk of repeating some of the very same mistakes that devastated our communities decades ago.

BP: Last year, there was a resurgence of J.E.D.I. issues brought forward on an international stage with the murder of George Floyd. With all the calls for action, what do you think has improved within the industry during that time, and where do you see room for improvement?

JP: I would say, right now, I think there's a lot more intentionality, focus, and sincerity across the board. Diversity, equity, and inclusion was always something that was being discussed, but maybe not as publicly focused on as it is today.

The industry has been forced to respond to J.E.D.I. challenges because of pressure from our clients and our communities. It wasn't until our clients started asking us what our positions were on corporate social responsibility (C.S.R.) or questioned the diversity make-up of our teams until the industry took notice. There is now a new focus on more community pro bono work and what the diversity of leadership teams look like both in terms of gender and ethnicity.

Architecture firms were competing, going in to pitch on projects with clients who asked these types of DEI questions, and across the board we were getting our teeth kicked in because we didn't have strong responses due to the lack of representation across many firms. We all quickly recognized

this huge hole, and so the industry started to self-correct to address some of these long-standing problems, even though in most cases they didn't know where to start. These difficult discussions were taking place well before 2020.

NOMA has been in this space and talking about the importance of J.E.D.I initiatives for decades, so naturally, we were the first organization many companies reached out to. Many of us have been deeply engaged in a lot of impactful conversations to help the industry evolve and grow. 2020 provided a booster shot for the DEI wave in a lot of ways and prolonged these conversations which have resulted in more intentionality and focus from companies.

Now don't get me wrong... There are still quite a few companies, organizations, and entities out there that are only interested in checking a box. They realize that it's important, but they're not ready to do the important work that's needed to move the needle in an impactful way. So one of the responsibilities for NOMA at this critical moment is for us to really build and forge strong relationships with companies that get it and are doing the work beyond a talking points or marketing piece. We are looking for long-term partnerships, not quick fixes, to address what we can do to diversify the profession. We need more transparency and action, less lip service.

B P: What is the significance to you of the NOMA Conference, "NOMA 50: Detroit Homecoming," this year?

J P: The significance of 1971 marks the historic founding of the organization 50 years ago, where the 12 founders of NOMA met, some for the first time, at an AIA convention in Detroit. They recognized the need to come together to create a formal organization to face some of the discriminatory policies and challenges that they were facing to advance their careers as Black architects in a majority white-male dominated profession and industry.

It's amazing to reflect on the founding of NOMA 50 years ago and to see how the organization has flourished with our student chapters to professional chapters across the country. We've expanded our voice and platform, and continue to celebrate the rich history and legacy of the organization.

This 50th Anniversary conference is an opportunity for us to come together in Detroit and celebrate the accomplishments that we've made now, as well as looking forward to the next 50 years. Our leadership must come together to strategically think about the next 50 years of the organization, continue to define who we are, and who we want to be. We also want to make sure we make solid progress in increasing the number of licensed minority architects.

The NOMA Conference is one of my highlights of the year, and it's an opportunity for those of us who do not work in diverse environments or work in large corporate firms where maybe there's only a handful of minorities to see others that look like you. This recharges our batteries.

Last year, due to the pandemic, the conference was completely virtual, and this year, it will be hybrid. The 50th Anniversary homecoming will have a virtual component for all conference-related programming, along with a smaller weekend Gala celebration for a smaller group of up to 400 registrants to connect in person.

B P: What can emerging professionals do to champion J.E.D.I in their practices, industry, and allied organizations?

J P: So the biggest thing I would say is, find your voice, find your passions, and then get engaged. After that, everything else will fall into place.

Architecture is a labor of love. You must really love what you're doing to really stick with this profession.

We are working with underserved/under-resourced communities, end-users, stakeholders, and community residents, and our projects' legacy should impact our work. Our designs of buildings in some cases can serve as a catalyst for development, but it all starts with just finding what you're passionate about.

From there, you get engaged and potentially lead more initiatives, and I think that's the best way to lead by example.

I also encourage licensure and obtaining credentials. Once you get those letters behind your name, in terms of representation and in terms of having credibility, authorship, and leadership in your work. This impacts how you're perceived by your peers, clients, and community stakeholders immediately when you walk into a room and start leading a discussion.

My current Q3 President's Challenge is for members to step up, volunteer, and be engaged, whether that's with your local chapter, with a local organization, national organization, or other entities stepping up and serving on their board/committee. We must have a presence and ensure our energy is felt and seen, which has a huge impact on the growth and development of our communities.



Beresford Pratt, AIA, NOMA

Pratt is a design manager and architect with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He co-leads multiple J.E.D.I based architecture pipeline initiatives with Baltimore, Maryland K-12 students. He is the AIA Young Architects Forum Communications Director.

Un-bank the bank

Economic development, coupled with the gentrification of communities has led to the lack of affordable housing in recent years. Government policies are geared toward providing temporary solutions such as concentrated, high-density affordable housing clusters in urban areas; however, these efforts often ignore access to basic support services that are critical to living successfully and creating equitable communities. These support services include grocery stores, mobility programs for families such as child and elder care, and workforce training programs closer to housing.

In this article, we will explore how to raise standards of living in affordable housing communities by elevating the supporting service sector, such as banking through regenerative design philosophies. A reimagined bank in these communities can be a conduit for providing social justice opportunities and improving standards of living.

Un-bank the bank:

A quick cluster-mapping study of areas around affordable housing communities shows there are fewer banking opportunities and more check cashing facilities. Historically, neighborhoods of color, especially African American and Hispanic communities, have faced significant housing challenges due to racial disparities and gentrification. Research shows that, generally, people living below the poverty line are intimidated by the banking business because a lack of financial education and awareness pushes them further away from financial well-being.

How can a regenerative design philosophy – achieving a successful balance between environmental, economic, and human factors – help us to create resilient and socially equitable communities through banking?

The first step is to un-bank the bank by integrating experiential design with financial literacy guidelines.

By intentionally creating a space that people can enter without traditional banking intentions, we are able to carefully craft flexible spaces that remove intimidation in active and passive conversations. Considerations can include opening conference rooms to engage families in goal setting and help them implement accountable financial behavior changes. Immersive and meaningful experiences can make the bank a community hub, providing a learning environment for high school students or a co-working space for adults with free internet service. While the main intention of the space is not geared toward aggressively marketed banking, the flexible spaces that encourage positive financial and fiscal behavior allow the bank to incorporate education creatively. For example, after a session on “What to expect when you adopt a pet from a shelter,” a banker can step in to conclude the event with education on building credit or incorporate education on savings for newly employed high school students. Co-working spaces can transform into microlending hubs to promote entrepreneurship. The opportunities that the space can bring to engage the community while providing financial education are endless.



Above: Axonometric view of reimagined conceptual banking space

While experiential design provides engaging educational spaces, factual knowledge in and of itself is not enough to drive behavior or behavioral change.

For continued behavioral change and engagement, sustainable banking spaces geared toward focused conversations are necessary. A formal setting for small businesses to go over expense reporting and tax documentation, a roundtable setting for financial rethinks, a warm outdoor setting for family engagement, as well as planned check-ins with a banker, without the intimidation of bandit barriers, will create an interactive and collaborative atmosphere. In addition, casual support services at a coffee bar can be supported by formal services within a private office.

The nature of the banking business is such that safety needs to be integrated into the design at every step. By removing bandit bars and queue stanchions, the formality of visual safety barriers will be dismantled, but a rolling metal gate at the formal spaces and back-of-house will cordon the area when not in use. Security protocols such as a direct line of vision from the banking space, ATMs in safer corners, and privacy film at private spaces will help prevent crime through design.

One of the biggest challenges financial institutions face in implementing community-based financial services is quantifying short-term returns on investments. In

a society progressing toward cashless transactions, communities cannot be left without traditional financial services. An open-minded approach to brand the services based on demographics, rather than implementing a universal solution, will help create an effective solution to positively benefit the society.

Personalized and community-based approaches, coupled with supportive architecture and design, will help create flexible solutions. When the relationship between architecture and service extends beyond the walls of a building, the environmental, social, economic, and physical health of the community is strengthened, creating a resilient fabric of trust.



Meghana Joshi, AIA, NOMA

Joshi is a senior project manager at Little Newport Beach. She is focused on retail and mixed-use projects. She is director of equity, diversity, justice, and inclusion at AIA Orange County and director of outreach at SoCal NOMA for Project Pipeline.



Ashley Spinks, AIA

Spinks is a senior project architect at Little (NC). Spinks, is focused on projects that fuse typological redefinitions and environmentally conscious design with leading-edge technology and innovation.

Encouraging diverse voices

Using your voice to make an impact.

For emerging professionals, presenting at conferences, webinars, and other speaking engagements are excellent opportunities to practice public speaking skills, gain exposure, and expand your network. For a lot of people, the process is mysterious and intimidating: Here are the basics.

Why should I speak?

Oftentimes, the task of presenting a project, advocating for a cause, or narrating a story falls on the most senior person on the team. However, anybody with a particular expertise or a story to tell can be a compelling speaker, and team members at every level have important insight and valuable perspectives to share.

What should I talk about?

Expertise and thought leadership can exist at every age and experience level. If you have a particular expertise, unique perspective, or compelling story, you have something to talk about. You can present a specific project story via a case study or share a creative solution to an unusual (or a very common) problem. Most importantly, make sure your presentation (and submission) is a well-structured story, including information on the setting, the characters, the plot, the conflict, and the resolution.

How do I get started?

Start small: Gain confidence in public speaking by presenting to your office or local interest group on a topic you are knowledgeable about. Then, put your skills to work at accessible venues: other firm offices, local AIA events, industry events. It is much easier to be accepted to a local or regional conference than to a national one, so work your way up. Smaller events will help you hone your skills, develop your content, and refine your story.

Here's my first draft, what is it missing?

Research whether the selection committee has any targets to meet. For example, most selection committees for AIA presentations or conferences (whether local, state, or national) will be looking for presentations that can provide Learning Units or Health Safety and Welfare Units. Make sure your proposal meets the requirements for obtaining LUs or HSWs. And remember to seek feedback — constructive criticism is an important part of architecture, so take advantage! Find friends or colleagues who can help you take a critical look at your message, tone, and pacing. They can also help identify areas that need to be elaborated on before you can move on to explaining more complex concepts.

My submission was rejected ... Now what?

Remember, it is not personal: There is a limited amount of

“air time” at any given event or presentation, and selection committees must curate according to their objectives for the event. Depending on the year, theme, and zeitgeist, a presentation that has been previously rejected may be the perfect fit for a different event, or the same event at a different year, so don't be afraid to resubmit. However, always take a critical look at your material and refresh and refine your content before resubmitting.

Preparing to speak

- Memorize your outline and the key themes at each section, not each word.
- Practice going off script at different points, with a focus on making your way back from the tangent to the main story.
- Practice in real time, timing yourself. Understand the time required for each section of your story or presentation.
- Record yourself, and evaluate your speed and pacing. It's common to speed up when nervous, so practice at a measured and deliberate pace.



Conversations with the selection committee

AIA Conference was very different this year. ... What can we expect next year, and how can an emerging professional prepare to submit?

In 2022, the conference team will be doing a hybrid development of educational offerings. The first piece is a peer-reviewed call for sessions going out in September. This call will be slightly different than years past by reducing the number of questions asked and focusing more on the big-picture content goals. What EPs should be thinking about is: “What would catch my eye?”; “What would make me stop and read this session then choose to engage with it?”; “My time is valuable ... is this session/topic/speaker worth it?” As they write their proposals, they should think about it from that content lens. The second piece will be hand-selected and nominated

sessions. The conference team will be seeking out compelling and well-known professionals to speak on different topics of interest.

Who evaluates the submissions?

The peer reviewers for the hybrid events will be more seasoned AIAU review professionals, who have a strong grasp on the continuing education requirements and will be able to focus on the depth of the content, rather than meeting the minimum requirements.

In general, selection committee members and jurors tend to be more established professionals who have experience in different areas of the field. They should expect to see people with particular expertise in areas like technology, sustainability, resilience, EDI, and other big-picture topics in architecture.

Additional advise from Sara Shumbera, AIA Academy of Architecture for Health (AAH) Healthcare Design Conference Committee Chair

What advice can you give an emerging professional who is submitting for the first time?

As a new submitter, it's really about assessing yourself and developing a road map that identifies intermediate steps that all build towards your ultimate goal. For example, someone may move from a panel discussion to a solo presentation as they gain more experience and expertise.

What advice can you give an emerging professional who is submitting for the first time?

A successful submission will need an interesting topic, with thought-out content and materials that can be clearly described and stated within the submission format. Not only does the submission need to be well written, but it should also have the content to support the topic. A compelling title will help grab the attention of the selection committee (as well as the attendees), and learning objectives should be clearly stated and support the overall message of the session.

A good piece of advice is to rank the proposed speakers by the amount of experience they have with public speaking and in the industry. This may put the emerging professional last in the lineup (although you may be doing the bulk of the work), but the selection committee can usually recognize the leaders in the industry and will automatically strengthen your submission.

What does the selection committee look for when choosing sessions or speakers?

The selection committee looks for major trending topics



"My biggest tip:

If you don't get accepted the first time, don't be afraid to resubmit the following year! I had a conference proposal turned down for A'19, then resubmitted the exact same thing for A'20 and was accepted. Sometimes it just depends on who happens to be reviewing your submission that year."

— Abi Brown, Young Architects Forum Chair 2021

in health care/health care design but is also responsible for curating a variety of topics that will attract a variety of attendees. It's important to note that usually the committee will receive very similar submissions for the same topic, project, or an excessive amount from one firm. Sadly, even if all of the submissions are great, the committee will have to prioritize.

To increase your chances of being successful, seek out the extraordinary! As a reviewer, I want to hear about the stories not typically told ... whether those stories are the struggles, atypical solutions, or creative approaches to old problems, some of the best and easiest selections are the topics that are unlike any of the others.



Amaya Labrador, AIA, LEED BD+C, EDAC

Labrador is a health care project architect in Houston, Texas, with 10 years' experience. She serves on the AIA Houston Board of Directors and is the Young Architects Regional Director for the region of Texas.

Mentoring the architects of tomorrow

Expanding equity and diversity through mentorship

As an industry, we are facing a pivotal moment of multifaceted change. Successful leadership in this new landscape of work will require project architects and firm owners to inspire and retain their staff while leading them through daunting project deadlines. In addition to building technical capabilities in rising talent, effective architects will need to build their soft skills — including leadership, communication, empathy, and mentorship.

It turns out that mentorship is actually an extended conversation on leadership and an essential tool for finding people who are slipping through the cracks. The past year has highlighted more than ever that mentorship is about providing help to those who need it most. Furthermore, mentorship is an important pathway to raising our collective work on equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Intuitively, we know mentorship is important. But how do we make mentorship a priority when our inbox is full, our submittal review list is growing, and another meeting was just added to our calendar? How does mentorship show up in the crossfire of busy project deadlines? Why is mentorship a crucial piece of our career puzzle, and what makes it effective? And how do we train our teams to be nurturing mentors and proactive mentees?

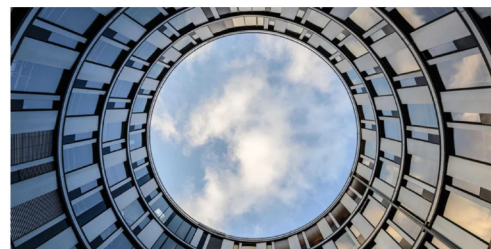
Mentorship is among the most critical skills for successfully advancing in the field of architecture. Emerging professionals rely on mentors to help them grow and navigate their career trajectories. Seasoned architects must learn and practice being mentors on their project teams and within their studio leadership positions. The mentor-mentee relationship is an essential part of the practice of architecture, and yet it is undervalued and underutilized in day-to-day firm operations and management.

How Mentorship Supports J.E.D.I.

The AIA recently expanded “The Guides for Equitable Practice” to include a section on mentorship and sponsorship. We highly recommend that readers explore this document for detailed research into the subject matter; however, for the purposes of this article, we’ll briefly share an overview of how mentorship supports diversity.

1. According to the guides, “Mentors can help increase access to professional and academic opportunities for underrepresented groups, such as people of color and first-generation college students, and expand their professional options.”
2. Mentorship is proven to increase hiring and retention outcomes, particularly with underrepresented populations. An emphasis on mentorship allows for a greater level of communication that is required to effectively support shared conversations on career development and career challenges. Individuals who feel supported by their firms are therefore more likely to stay with their companies longer.
3. Mentorship also improves firm culture, directly and indirectly, by elevating the individual experience and the overall business performance of the firm. At the individual level, this happens through career advancement. At the practice level, it is reflected in the profitability of the firm through team performance.

Mentorship and Sponsorship



Guides for Equitable Practice

The guides make the moral, business, ethical, and societal cases for equitable practice and provide key insights to help individuals, firms, and other organizations build equity in architecture. The Guides are a vital part of AIA's long-term commitment to lead efforts that ensure the profession of architecture is as diverse as the nation we serve.

[Return to Guides for Equitable Practice >](#)

Mentorship and sponsorship, when one uses personal capital to promote a protégé, can prove crucial to individuals' careers, and can help make workplaces more diverse and inclusive. These relationships can help individuals achieve power, influence, promotions, and increased compensation. You'll assess the qualities of being a mentor, mentee, sponsor, or protégé and the structure and effectiveness of mentorship programs.

[Download](#)

Above: AIA Guides for Equitable Practice, Mentorship and Sponsorship



Above: Virtual nationwide gathering of NEXUS program

While mentorship can be structured internally within the organizational design of the firm, there are also several external programs that create support through mentorship. We've included three case studies.

A National Model for Mentorship

"After graduating during the last recession, I couldn't believe how hard it was to make the transition from academia to practice, and assimilating into Chicago's robust AIA chapter, not to mention actually finding a job. I thought to myself, 'It shouldn't be this hard,' and it's become my mission to help others more easily navigate any and all transitions in their architecture career."

— Carl Sergio, AIA (co-founder)

NEXUS is a new nationwide mentorship program designed to engage AIA Fellows and emerging professionals around the United States and abroad in meaningful dialogue on topics such as work culture, professional knowledge, and leadership strategies. It was born out of the circumstances of 2020 — leveraging the new virtual meeting norm and reacting to the racial unrest around the country — with architects wanting to have a greater impact on our industry and our nation. The diverse cohort supports conversations across time zones, divergent backgrounds, generations, gender, and race. NEXUS was created as a virtual forum to reach and support members who need support the most and may be struggling to find support locally.

Growing the Next Generation of Latina/x Women

"Year after year, the percentage of licensed Latina architects in the U.S. remains unchanged at less than 1%. The number of degrees earned by Latinas have increased, women are earning their AXP hours 2.5 times faster, however, the traction stops there. ... There was a need for mentorship to grow in the profession, a lack of support when building a family. The Arquitina mission is to reach above and beyond the 1% mark of licensed architects in the United States while creating equitable and inclusive opportunities in the architecture profession." — Alicia Ponce (Co-founder)

Based in Chicago, Arquitina is a burgeoning professional leadership and licensure initiative for emerging Latina/x women. Close to 50% of the women who participate are earning degrees in architecture and complete licensing requirements 1.2 times sooner than men. According to a recent NCARB study in partnership with NOMA, women represent only 17% of all firm principals and/or partners in architecture firms based in the United States. Arquitina is on a mission to create equitable and inclusive opportunities in the profession and grow Latina/x women beyond their 1% share of licensed U.S. architects. Women of color experience lack of recognition and representation in academia and professional practice, which affects their trajectories and growth over the duration of their careers. Learn more at: www.arquitina.org

Supporting Women Through Mid-Career Transition

"The program is a vehicle for connecting women who are transitioning from emerging to establishing themselves in their career. The situations they face are all too common yet unique to mid-career women in the design industry. ... We recognize that without the diversity women bring to the industry, design will suffer by not having that perspective. We need everyone at the table to be engaged, feel valued, and produce innovative design." — Yanel de Angel, FAIA (co-founder)

The Boston Society for Architecture has created a program called Women in Design Mentorship. The nine-month program focuses on connecting women to a larger network to ensure meaningful time with a mentor and individualized attention. Their mentoring helps mid-career women successfully navigate career decisions and find balance to create fulfilling and lasting career paths. Every career path is different, and this program prompts and guides women through common questions related to lack of recognition within firms, hitting a ceiling, deciding to have a family or not, and navigating key career decisions. Learn more at: www.architects.org/knowledge-communities/women-in-design/mentorship



Above: Gathering of Arquitina program

Finding a Mentorship Program

There are so many other ways for us to grow and develop ourselves and those around us. Below are a few additional resources for connecting to professional development programs or becoming a mentor or mentee. We've also included two additional programs with national reach (ACE Mentorship and NOMA's Project Pipeline). Both programs offer opportunities to contribute toward developing the next generation of architects. Regardless of how you decide to engage in mentorship, we encourage everyone to make it a regular part of your daily and weekly conversations.

Through AIA National:

<https://www.aia.org/resources/6322768-women-in-architecture>

<https://www.aia.org/pages/6253000-mentorship-and-sponsorship>

Locally:

<https://www.acementor.org>

<https://www.noma.net/project-pipeline/>

Professionally:

<https://mentorarchitect.com>

<https://buildyourselfworkshop.com>

<https://go.blackspectacles.com/blog/how-to-find-a-mentor-in-architecture>



Above: Speed-mentoring with AIA Chicago's Bridge Mentorship Program



Carl Sergio, AIA, NOMA, NCARB, LEED Green Associate

Sergio is a senior project architect at Interior Architects in Chicago, co-director of the Bridge Mentorship Program in Chicago and one of the founding members of NEXUS, a new nationwide mentorship program.



Je'Nen M. Chastain, MBA, Associate AIA

Chastain is the founder of Apostrophe Consulting, a management consulting practice related to leadership, mentorship, and talent development. She co-hosts the podcast "Practice Disrupted".

Connection and Chill

Cocktails and streaming content for the casual consumer

Each quarter, the Young Architects Forum (YAF) Knowledge Focus Group curates streaming video content and a cocktail recipe to salute each Connection issue theme. In Q3, we celebrate justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion through provocative shows and drinks.

Cocktail Recipe: The Melting Pot

This mixed drink showcases ingredients with incredible history from around the world, such as rum, port wine, whiskey, and fruits. Most of these ingredients are accessible and diverse and have deep cultural roots. The result is a rich, strong, and flavorful experience.

Ingredients

1.25 oz berry syrup (recipe below)
1.25 oz lime juice
1 oz Irish whiskey (12-year aged preferable)
1 oz port wine
½ oz black rum
½ oz aged or gold rum
Nutmeg

Berry syrup:

1.5 oz raspberries or strawberries
8 oz simple syrup
Combine berries and simple syrup in a food processor and strain until smooth.

Instructions

Combine lime juice, port wine, rum, whiskey, berry syrup in a cocktail shaker with four to five ice cubes. Shake vigorously for 30 seconds, until foamy. Serve in a coupe glass and sprinkle ground nutmeg onto the drink. Garnish with dried fruit of your preference. Cheers!

The Melting Pot, a harmony of diverse ingredients from around the world



Streaming Recommendations (available on Netflix):

The following recommendations include comedies, documentaries, and movies. What connects them are cultural and racial perspectives, while also highlighting the inequities in society and the importance of justice.

“Dear White People” (2014)

“13th” (2016)

“When They See Us” (2019)

“Let It Fall” (2017)

“Our Voices, Our Stories: Amplifying Asian American and Pacific Islander Perspectives Collection” (2021)

AIA YAF Knowledge Focus Group (Allie Ditzel, AIA; Ashley Hartshorn, AIA, NCARB; Kiara Luers, AIA; Caitlin Osephchuk, AIA; Jason Takeuchi, AIA, NCARB, NOMA)

The YAF Knowledge Focus Group is dedicated to identifying important issues of recently licensed architects and the creation of knowledge resources to enable young architects to advance their careers.

Young Architects Forum

an **AIA** member group



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Institute
of Architects**