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NOMA MAGAZINE
ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN
FALL 2012

WENDELL CAMPBELL
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2012

ISSUE 8

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Magazine Printed by:
 Capitol Development Design, Inc.
 2000 L St. NW | Suite B-103
 Washington, DC 20036
 240.997.3932 | 202.821.8498



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IMAGING**
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CONGRATULATIONS NOMA ON OUR 40TH ANNIVERSARY

— SANFORD E. GARNER, NOMA, AIA, LEED AP ND - PRESIDENT

WE HAVE BEEN BLESSED TO HAVE BEEN RAISED ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS (OUR FOUNDERS, LEADERS, PAST PRESIDENTS, BOARD MEMBERS, AND MANY OTHERS).

We have been blessed to have been raised on the shoulders of giants (our Founders, leaders, past presidents, board members, and many others). From our inception, we have been an inclusive organization with a bent on family, fellowship, mentorship, and professionalism. NOMA's mission is to champion diversity within the design professions by promoting the excellence, community engagement, and professional development of its members.

Our 40th Annual Conference is being held in Detroit, Michigan in October. The theme of the conference is A Legacy Driven By Design and highlights our past, present, and future. 40 years ago, our Founders incorporated the National Organization of Minority Architects as a professional organization, and NOMA has grown from that organization to the one we have become today. As we reflect on 40 years of our history and plan for our future, we return home to the City of our birth – Detroit, Michigan.

As you peruse the pages of this magazine, you will see examples of work performed by your NOMA members. This work is award winning, exceptional, and noteworthy, and we are pleased to be able to share these projects with you. The purpose of sharing these works is to inspire and challenge each one of us to “do better” and move towards excellence. I want to personally thank all of the architects and designers within this magazine for their work and willingness to share their projects, and I challenge others to do the same.

As we celebrate our 40th Anniversary, I ask you to reflect on NOMA's past. I ask you to recall what drove you to become engaged with the organization. I implore you to consider what about NOMA's mission and membership moves you. And, I challenge you to find ways to advance our organization, our profession, and each other.

As my Presidential term comes to a close, I can look back on my time in office and smile. In a trying economy and uncertain times, my NOMA family has helped me maintain my sanity, sense of purpose, and drive. The friends and family I have within the organization are very dear to me and I value each and every one of them. The desire to lead was not predicated on an aspiration to build a resume, establish relationships, or gain some level of prestige; the wish to lead was simply based on my wanting to give back and continue to advance this organization that I have come to love so dearly.

I thank you for the opportunity to serve and ask you to find a way to advance the organization and continue to grow.

Sincerely yours,

Sanford E. Garner, NOMA, AIA, LEED AP ND
President



THE NOMA MAGAZINE SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

— R. STEVEN LEWIS, NOMAC, AIA

LONG BEFORE THE INVENTION OF THE PRINTING PRESS BY JOHANNES GUTENBERG, CIVILIZATIONS AND SOCIETIES WERE INNOVATING WAYS TO SHARE IDEAS AND INFORMATION WITH A MASS AUDIENCE.

Clay tablets were used in Mesopotamia in the third millennium BC; Papyrus was used for writing back in 2400 BC; Writing on bones, shells, wood and silk existed in China long before the 2nd century BC, and paper was invented in China around the 1st century AD. The first printing of books started in China during the Tang Dynasty (618-907); The Maya used a form of paper to record their texts, although most were destroyed by the Spanish during colonization on cultural and religious grounds; Romans used wax-coated wood tablets upon which they could write and erase using a stylus. Whether scribed on papyrus or parchment, or on a shell or in a book, transcription of ideas to a form accessible to the masses has for centuries helped to advance civilization.

Gutenberg's printing press moved books into the industrial age. The Western book was no longer a single object, written or reproduced by request. The publication of a book became an enterprise, requiring capital for its realization and a market for its distribution. The cost of each individual book was lowered enormously, which in turn increased the distribution of books.

Somewhere between those first mass produced texts and the current explosion of e-books, falls the magazine as an affordable, accessible form of mass communication. As a youngster growing up in the 50's and 60's, I shared with everyone a love of America's most iconic monthly – LIFE Magazine. Before I had an awareness of race, I viewed the material presented in LIFE with a sense of belonging and inclusion; however, as my consciousness was awakened to the plight of Blacks in America, I began to look for other magazines that were created by Black folks, about Black folks. Luckily, even then we had a roster of titles that could be found on the coffee tables of Black families throughout the nation. Ebony, Jet and

Essence arrived on the scene in 1945, 1951 and 1970 respectively. As was the case back then, and continues to be today, we learn about our accomplishments, our unique challenges, and our overall prevailing cultural paradigm by regularly opening up these familiar publications.

As an architecture student in the 70's, I looked to such titles as Progressive Architecture, Architectural Record, and even Peter Eisenman's Oppositions for information and inspiration. It didn't take long before it became clear that the architects of color who I knew and held in high esteem were, for the most part, absent from the pages of the industry's most renowned publications. Once I became actively involved with NOMA, I quickly discovered the extent of noteworthy projects that were being delivered by people of color, whether looking back to Vertner Woodson Tandy or Paul R. Williams, or looking up to J. Max Bond or Norma Merrick Sklarek. Yet it was as though all of these people and all that they did were somehow being held in secrecy.

Any group that is organized around a set of principles, issues, or ideas ultimately has a choice as to how its activities will be documented and preserved in order that current and future generations may be informed by a particular orientation or point of view. Bottom line is that if we fail to tell our story on our own terms, then our contributions will be left to others to record, or worse yet, left out of the legacy of our time altogether. There is absolutely no doubt that current-day NOMA members are contributing significantly to the legacy of our time that will be preserved by what we leave behind in the built environment. That is why I am so proud of the NOMA Magazine, and what it means to countless members and others who continue to be inspired, if not awe-struck by the

rich content that reflects all of you – our members. Your achievements are mighty and impressive, notwithstanding a long history of structural inequality that has persisted within the profession of architecture. And as NOMA endeavors to cultivate the next generation of architects of all racial and ethnic backgrounds through the summer architecture camps that our chapters across the country have been conducting under the “umbrella” of our premier initiative, “Project Pipeline”, there is no better way to convey the possibilities available to our young people than to simply open up an issue of the NOMA Magazine.

Those who have enjoyed the privilege of serving NOMA over the past 40 years understand the need for, and importance of our mission, which is to champion diversity within the design professions. Many have sacrificed time and money for the love of NOMA and for what it stands. And despite the incredible gains made by people of color within the profession, NOMA's work is not yet done. How will we be remembered by future generations? Who will tell the story of “us”? If you believe that we should own that responsibility, then I invite you to become active in NOMA, and to support our flagship outreach tool – the NOMA Magazine – by contributing your accomplishments and by proudly waving it in front of as many people as you can in order to secure our place in the legacy of our time. ✕

1 “Structural Inequality: Black Architects in the United States”, Victoria Kaplan, PhD.



— KATHY DENISE DIXON



CHERYL MCAFEE,
NOMA PRESIDENT 1996



ROBERTA WASHINGTON
NOMA PRESIDENT 1997

BACK TO THE FUTURE

— KATHY DENISE DIXON, NOMA, AIA, LEED AP BD+C

AS MY PRESIDENCY DRAWS NEARER, I AM OFTEN ASKED IF I WILL BE THE FIRST WOMAN PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF MINORITY ARCHITECTS (NOMA). HAPPILY, I RESPOND QUICKLY BY SAYING “NO, I WILL ACTUALLY BE THE THIRD WOMAN TO HAVE SERVED AS PRESIDENT OF THE ORGANIZATION”.

Then I go on to state that Cheryl McAfee and Roberta Washington both served as presidents back to back in 1996 and 1997, respectively. Often, people remember on their own, once I mention their names. Indeed, it has been fifteen years since a woman last led the organization, and those who are new to NOMA may have little or no recollection of it ever happening. In addition to Ms. McAfee and Ms. Washington, who are known as leaders in and outside of NOMA, there are also other women who were among the leaders of the organization for many years, and who helped it to progress to where it is today. For example, Susan Campbell, who served as Parliamentarian for several years; and Cheryl Green, who was the NOMA Secretary for what seems like decades, were important bearers of the torch in what was certainly a male-dominated profession at the time. But as stated in its name, today's NOMA represents minorities, including women, in addition to African-American, Asian, Latino, and others races. The organization has been accountable to that charge and has encouraged participation by all minority and non-minority individuals who support its mission.

Not only has NOMA been led by women presidents in the past, it's recent leadership boasts several women – some licensed architects, and some on the road to licensure – who have helped raise the bar as the organization grows and evolves. Heather Phillip O'Neal as Treasurer, Anzilla Gilmore as Membership Chairperson, Ameera Ashraf O'neil as Parliamentarian and Treasurer, Carla Flagg and Aminah Wright as Recording Secretary and Corresponding Secretary, Mary Shearill-Thompson as GSA Liaison, and Elizabeth Bramwell as the Northeast University Liaison each have contributed to shaping the legacy of NOMA. I have been proud to serve with each of them over the course of the past eight years, and can attest that they have given their best, and volunteered their gifts of service for the good of the organization.

Let's also not forget the dedication and support of the spouses of the Founders and elders of NOMA. Year after year, conference after conference, city after city, women like Mrs. June Campbell, Mrs. Betty Williams, Mrs. Drusie Chase and others attended the NOMA conference to support not only their husbands, but the organization as a whole. Though not recognized officially as officers of the organization, these ladies are to be commended for their steadfast support given so graciously over the arc of NOMA's history.

Oddly enough, the first ever NOMA conference that I attended was the one held in 1999 in Charlotte, NC that saluted African-American Women Architects. It was a noteworthy event and I was glad to be in attendance. As I look to the next two years, I am encouraged that women will continue to play a large leadership role in the projects, governance, and vision of the organization. The names and faces may be different in the new administration, but the work effort, expertise, excellence and general love of the organization remains. Let's hear it for the Women of NOMA. ✕

CHAPTER NEWS

DC . NY . PA . LA . IN . SF . LA



DCNOMA

DCNOMA's February featured the 2012 highlighted firm Marshall Moya Design. Michael Marshall presented some of the firm's recently completed work along with current projects on the boards. The evening ended with a lively discussion on the importance of relationship building and its correlation to receiving project commissions.

In March DCNOMA teamed up with the African American Real Estate Professionals (AAREP) for a presentation on development and design. Michael Marshall of Marshall Moya Design and Peter Cook of Davis Brody Bond provided architectural representation on the panel with several developers.

The AIA National Convention was held in DC in May and several DCNOMA members were part of the convention committee, volunteered, and participated in seminars during the convention. The highlight of the convention was the NOMA Reception co-hosted by NOMA, Devroux + Purnell, and DCNOMA. The offices of Devroux + Purnell were filled to capacity as we all socialized and enjoyed the specialty cocktails of our own Nikolas Hill.

2012 marked the fifth year milestone for the chapter's Lankford – Giles – Vaughn Minority Architect Awards, our annual celebration of the design profession and scholarship awards program. In addition to giving out \$3,000.00 scholarships to three deserving architecture students, DCNOMA honors outstanding architects, educators, developers and community service people. The 2012 Architect of the Year was Mortimer Marshall, FAIA, NOMAC and winner of the 2012 AIA Whitney M. Young Award.

August 2-4, DCNOMA held the East of the River Career Exposure Camp. A partnership between DCNOMA; River East

Emerging Leaders (r.e.e.l.); and the Southeast White House (SEWH) facilitated the three-day camp for middle school students from Washington, DC's Ward 7 and Ward 8 communities. Sponsors of the camp included Department of Homeland Security, Safeway Market, Harris Teeter, Yes Organic, Chik-Fil-A, Discovery Channel Networks, ZGF and LSY Architects for their contributions and help. We also appreciate the efforts of volunteer DCNOMA instructors Carol Smith, Crystal Browkaw, Kendrick Richardson, Kenneth Hartsfield, and Thomas Browkaw.

INOMA

In March INOMA held the UIC Portfolio Review Workshop. The workshop is an opportunity to combine students in the Chicago area with professional architects so that the student's work can be reviewed in a low pressure setting.

INOMA one-day session Project Pipeline Camp brought together a morning discussion about the architecture career path and an afternoon sketching activity and tour. Our host, the Chicago State's Aquaponics Center and its director Mr. Emmanuel Pratt facilitated the afternoon session as well as the service activity. After lunch, the camp moved to the outdoor planting area, where students helped to complete a raised planting bed. This involved measuring and cutting wood, digging existing beds out to make room for the frames and then following with back filling.

Sponsors: USG, solquest design unlimited, Landers Family, Out the Box Catering, SOMA Design

PhilaNOMA

In Spring, PhilaNOMA began a "Community Design Intervention" initiative which seeks opportunities to bring design solutions to urban communities in Philadelphia. As

part of this effort, PhilaNOMA members recently collaborated on the design for a unique community parklet for the Logan CDC. PhilaNOMA's design for Logan is one of the first parklets in Philadelphia's (MOTU) Pilot Parklet Program. Unlike most parklets which are placed near restaurants, cafes or commercial strips, the Logan Parklet is planned on a residential street, next to the Logan Branch Free Library in North Philly. The PhilaNOMA design team (Marguerite Anglin, AIA, NOMA, LEED AP, Michael Spain, Assoc. AIA, NOMA, Uchenna Okere and Chanelle Hurst) worked with the Logan CDC, the Logan Branch Library, and the Logan community, with input from PhilaNOMA's chapter (via Peer Review) to create a flexible design that will allow for various library and community programming for people of all ages. The Logan Parklet is being fabricated and constructed by professional builders and the Grand Opening is planned for September 2012. The space will be in operation for six weeks this fall until it is disassembled and stored for the winter. Operations will continue in Spring of 2013, with potential for a longer term with continued neighbor and city support.

This August, PhilaNOMA also completed a fifth year of their summer CAMP SustainAbility, at Temple University's new Architecture Building. The middle school participants (ages 11-14) designed a "GREEN Dream House": a sustainable house for a green colored fictional character of their choosing. Their "green" clients included Kermit the Frog, Shrek, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, the Hulk and more. Students also learned it is not easy being "green" as they worked to incorporate sustainable elements in their designs, develop their imagination, and test their ideas for providing healthy places for people (or giants) to live.

At the end of September PhilaNOMA presents "OFF THE CLOCK!", an Art Expo and Networking Event. Architects, designers and local artists the opportunity will showcase works of art, fashion, photography and poetry. The event will feature live music performances. Proceeds will benefit CAMP SustainAbility.

SFNOMA

To celebrate Black History month, SFNOMA sponsored a presentation on contemporary architecture by leading African American architects by Shelley Davis, SFNOMA 2nd Vice President, at California College of the Arts (CCA).

Also in February, UC Berkeley College of Environmental Design (CED) welcomed Phil Freelon to give the Richard Keating Lecture. SFNOMA and AIA East Bay co-sponsored. Prior to the lecture, SFNOMA and UC Berkeley held a reception to mingle and meet Mr. Freelon.

In March, four local architecture firms opened their offices for a student firm crawl. Approximately 15 students took advantage of the opportunity to hear from professionals and get career advice as well as learn about a diverse cadre of work and firm experiences.

In April, the chapter participated with Rebuilding Together, to design and build a city owned Community and Learning Garden at the Allendale Park in East Oakland. The 1st Vice President, JonAnthony Floyd-Jackson led the Design and CA.

In July, SFNOMA held its third summer camp at California College of the Arts. Held for four days over two weekends, the students in the camp learned the basics of design and architecture and developed designs for a kiosk for a public plaza in San Francisco.

NYCOBA

This spring, we hosted a B*Session at Mohawk Industries NYC showroom on leveraging social media to create awareness and increase our reach to our chosen clients and audiences. 'The Business of Communication: Social Media and Content Marketing' brought three Marketing professionals to lead an interactive session on what social media platforms can do for your business' bottom line. We are planning a follow up session with one of the panelists to focus on the how to make the content more useful and informative to ultimately increase new client interactions.

The Portfolio + Resume Review Day is scheduled for early fall this year. On October 13th, FXFOWLE will help to host this annual event for young professionals and graduating college students seeking feedback on their work and presentation style, as well as tips on market trends and the job seeking process. This session provides one-on-one feedback to participants from professionals representing a variety of sectors in the architectural and design community. Participants bring their materials and have a chance to meet professional individually to receive feedback.

This summer, we had two networking sessions (one exclusive for members and their guests). Urban Office, a company offering solutions to workplace environments, sponsored our open networking event. We are happy to say we made new connections and some of our guests attended our most recent general body meeting. Next step, membership!

Nycoba NOMA is working in alliance with the AIA New York Chapter and the New York Chapter of the ASLA to provide mentors for a new initiative through the NYC Department of Small Business Services. SBS announced a "Compete to

Win" Technical Assistance program for firms in the Architectural and Engineering Industries. AIANY won the contract and is working in concert with nycoba NOMA and ASLA NY to provide mentors from our collective memberships.

Services under the contract will include workshops and one-on-one technical assistance for Minority & Women-owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) and small businesses. Launch late summer and aim to spark growth in the industry by helping firms build capacity to compete for and perform on New York City contracts. Our members who have experience in public work have answered the call to be mentors.

LANOMA

LA|NOMA held its 3rd Annual Architecture & Engineering Summer Camp 2012 Theme: Sustainable (Green) Design. On July 19, 20 and 21, the Los Angeles Chapter of NOMA (National Organization of Minority Architects) in partnership with the AIA Pasadena Foothill Chapter led a three-day architecture workshop for high school students, in cooperation with the Pasadena Educational Foundation (PEF) and the Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD).

NOMA Chapter Secretary Camille Jackson, NOMA, LEED-AP, a Parsons design manager, and Judy Turner of PEF, are primarily responsible for organizing the program.

Seventeen students attended. Steve Lewis, Joe Catalano and John Luttrell joined Camille in leading the workshop sessions on Thursday and Friday mornings. On Saturday the group toured construction work underway at Franklin Elementary School, and then traveled to the Getty Center for a docent-led architectural tour. ✕



THE HAITI CULTURE CODE

— RENEE KEMP-ROTAN, URBAN DESIGNER, NOMA

THE HAITI CULTURE CODE IS A POST-DISASTER DEVELOPMENT KIT THAT INCLUDES A MATRIX OF MORE THAN 100 VARIABLES THAT ESTABLISH THE ECONOMIC, PHYSICAL, POLITICAL, CULTURAL PRINCIPLES FOR REBUILDING A SUSTAINABLE HAITI, POST-DISASTER. THE HAITI CULTURE CODE STARTED AS A GUT RESPONSE TO WORKING WITH DESIGNERS, WHO WANTED TO HELP REBUILD POST-EARTHQUAKE HAITI, BUT WHO KNEW NOTHING OF HAITIAN CULTURE.

From co-establishment of Black Design News Network (BDNN) as an international design communications tool to the Haiti Earthquake/NOMA ‘call-to-action’ by Atim Oton (BDNN Co-Founder) in January 2010; from directly supporting the NOMA Haiti Initiative as a member of Committee to symbolically sending tents to Haiti; from supporting Haitian innovators, such as architect Rodney Leon, in his development of the ‘softhouse’ to participating in intimate talks with Haitian, Caribbean and American architects at AIA workshops in Puerto Rico, DC, New York, Chicago, Miami; from the development of a 10 speaker Culture Code roster at the NOMA conference in Boston to support from Sherry Snipes, AIA Diversity; Steve Lewis, NOMA; Deutsch Bank; Erica Rioux Gees, AIA Legacy Foundation, Tony Whitfield, Parsons School of Design, the Society of Haitian Architects and former members of Haiti’s cabinet and Haitian scholars; the once casual discussion on culture soon morphed into an International Call for Papers on Disaster and Cultural Identity (www.haiticulturecode.com). My obsession with the Code then led me to speak nationally and often on the subject of Disaster and Design in the Diaspora.

Indeed, 2010 was quite the tumultuous year. And now, with the continued help from experts, such as cultural anthropologists, inter-culturalists, linguists, civically engaged designers and culturally sensitive architects, the Code is developing into a formal curricula with subsets of courses. These courses are designed to integrate knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to cultural

competency in the provision of design services and to help lessen racial and ethnic disparities brought on by disaster situations and cultural differences in the Diaspora. The Code examines donor-design values as well as the cultural values of design recipients. The Culture Code movement is consistently attracting expert scholars with historic track-records and consistent interest in the relationship of “cultural competency in the establishment of design values”.

To our knowledge, this will be the first time that a CultureCode is designed to integrate knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to cultural competency in the provision of design services to help lessen racial and ethnic culture and community development brought on by disaster situations and cultural differences. Already we are working on the development of highly sophisticated software that would measure the cultural proclivities of donor architects, designers and planners. This testing would be used prior to contracts to gauge the extent of one’s cultural competency before going in to ‘save the nation’. Depending on score, next intervention level would insist that designers take customized culture Code curriculum courses that positively influence their cultural competency. Schools of Architecture at HBCU’s with support from US AID would be the first testing grounds for such a pilot.

Throughout development of the Culture Code curriculum, a broad range of skills will be introduced, such as: assessing one’s own cultural biases; working with linguistic and cultural interpreters, locating translated materials on culture, negotiating cultural

differences, developing and implementing the Culture Code Design Standards into written and visual architectural strategies, management policies, funding incentives and plans for implementation.

We shall continue to rely on input from the Directors of Planning from New Orleans- Katrina/Flood; Birmingham/Tornado Alley and Haiti/Earthquake post-disaster, for statistics and innovative strategies on disaster and design in Diaspora settlements-- with full buy-in and participation from these survivor communities.

Primer for the Culture Code will be published. The full-fledge publication of The Culture Code curriculum would be supported by major grants from US AID, the United Nations and the Clinton Bush Foundation, among others already showing funding support. We look forward to continued moral and financial support from both the American Institute of Architects and the National Organization of Minority Architects regarding this ground-breaking work. E Luta Continua. Please stay tuned. ✕



NEW TOOLS, NEW TECHNOLOGY: WHY NOW?

— KAREN COMPTON, CREATIVE DIRECTOR/FOUNDER OF INDUSTRY SPEAKSTM

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT WHEN CATASTROPHE HAPPENS, IT LEAVES AN INDELIBLE MARK. THAT MARK ALLOWS YOU TO REMEMBER WHERE YOU WERE, AND WHAT YOU WERE DOING WHEN THAT “EVENT” HAPPENED.

My mother remembers with vivid detail where she was when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated and I’m sure we can all so vividly recall where we were when “The Twin Towers Fell” or “When the Levees Broke.” For me, I can recall that day in June 2008 when I believed that the industry I have grown to love—architecture, engineering and construction—had changed.

The changes I saw then were not your typical recessionary responses. That summer, I saw deep concern for and about the future of our industry, as well as hastened decisions that resulted in deep and in many cases draconian decisions—mergers, acquisitions and yes, significant reductions in force—as firms had shuttered employees, both technical and administrative, in order to remain competitive, made attempts to merge or acquire and in some cases grow. These changes, unlike changes of the past, in my opinion were permanent because they affect the size, culture and perspective of organizations for a long and undefined period of time.

Like many of us they see a shift in the market and wonder what our role and responsibility is in addressing and I was no different. I saw then and see now, small firms, minority-owned firms, women-owned firms, architects, engineers, contractors/construction managers and interiors firms all challenged to develop a competitive position in a constrained marketplace with limited or no administrative resources. And then, it hit me.

Large firms, understandably have advantages in the marketplace. They have extensive networks of associates that can provide them with the “best business advice” to achieve their business objectives. But, small (minority, women-owned, emerging growth) firms don’t have those

connections. It’s not for lack of trying... it’s for lack of time. Small businesses are focused on what they do, not the back office functions—legal, marketing, information technology, finance, human resources. Yet without these professionals, our designs, engineering solutions and facilities would be little more than a heap sketches on a floor. So, how does one close the gap?

I reached out to many professional organizations to try and understand if they provide referral information to their members. While some said they could provide a list, they could not make recommendations. Others went on to say that they couldn’t provide that type of support at all, since some may view the organization as having preference for one particular firm over another. Frustrated by the responses, our firm, A3K Consulting, took a page from consumer-based web applications and set out to develop a business-to-business tool that allowed companies to find firms (not people), review their services, rate their experiences with the firm, including its pricing and deliverables, and then make an informed decision about hiring or retaining that firm. In just a little over 12 months, our team set out to design and program the industry’s newest resource, Industry Speaks™. The design of the front-end interface appeals to the design nature of an industry we know well. The site is easy to navigate and allows consultants to upload their firm profiles, recommendations, and details about their firm expertise in seven categories: marketing/business development, finance, legal, human resources, information management/graphics, leadership/management and ownership transition. Subscribers (firms) can then search for resources by specialty such as human resources and even explore subspecialty capability in specific areas

such as compensation/benefits. They can also post comments about their experiences with certain firms and will soon be able to ask for “chat” advice in a Consultant’s Corner.

A colleague of mine recently called to “applaud the mark that we (Industry Speaks™) were taking to introduce new technology now.” He went on to say that he didn’t ever think that the industry would see the day where we would embrace technology. But, as an elder statesman, he was happy. I told him that this is not just about us, the 20+ year veterans who have seen and done it all; it is about the future generation of architects, engineers and other professionals and how they use tools and technology to communicate. I went on to explain to him that our generation still believes in direct communication strategies—phones, lunch and coffee, and occasionally we’ll utilize indirect forms of communication—internet, text messaging or email. But those behind us, those we call job captains and project managers, communicate, evaluate, analyze and act based on indirect forms of communication first—technology and applications. So why now? Because Industry Speaks™ has the ability to serve as a relevant tool in today’s challenging economy, as well as provide the first step in serving as dedicated, industry-specific communication platform. ✕



THE ARCHITECTURAL INVESTMENT

— KIMBERLY DOWDELL, ASSOCIATE AIA, NOMA, LEED AP

THE SELECTION OF A CAREER IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISIONS THAT ONE WILL MAKE IN LIFE. UPON CHOOSING A MAJOR IN COLLEGE OR APPLYING FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS, A SERIOUS INVESTMENT IS BEING MADE.

This article is intended to serve as a guide for those who have decided to invest in architecture, a most noble and complex profession. The beauty of a career in design is a limitless array of possibilities. Every architect has the potential to design their own path, carefully balancing their personal and professional goals with an open mind and an appetite for creative challenges. Architecture is a timeless profession and one that will be necessary as long as humans need places in which to live, work and play. Congratulations on your decision, make the most of it:

7 Principles Of Maximizing Your Architectural Investment

1. STUDY

Absorb as much information as you can. Choose your classes wisely and make the most of your education, you'll never have another experience quite like it. Really take the time to learn your craft and excel.

2. PRACTICE

Find internships as early as possible and get as much office experience as you can, which you'll find is very different than the studio experience. Find mentors in the workplace and keep in touch with them.

3. DIVERSIFY

Take classes in other disciplines and make friends with people outside of your department. Having a broad base of knowledge to draw from will only make you more valuable and well rounded as an architect.

4. PURSUE YOUR PASSION

After having a breadth of experiences, you will be able to identify what aspects of the profession are of greatest interest to you. Pursue what motivates you and let your passion drive your career.

5. NETWORK

Get involved with professional organizations, preferably at the leadership level. Doing so will enhance your network, which will enhance your access to great opportunities. Who you know is extremely valuable.

6. VALUE YOUR MENTORS

There is nothing more valuable than a network of advisors to help you navigate the profession. Leveraging the insight of those who have been where you aspire to be is vital to your success.

7. BE A MENTOR

Never forget where you started and be compassionate to those who are charting along the same path behind you. Take the time to invest in mentees the way that your mentors have invested in you.

If you follow the aforementioned guidelines, you should be able to distinguish yourself among your peers, which is especially important when the availability of work is limited. While your peers shouldn't necessarily be considered competitors, you must realize that your work is being evaluated in the context of those around you. Be the best that you can be and observe how others are doing the same. Build strong relationships with your peers and collaborate with them whenever possible. In most cases, the profession is more team oriented than school, so be able to work well with others to get things done.

The education of an architect is demanding, but appropriate preparation for professional practice. While the work environment is very different than school, the basic principles of design thinking apply. For example, in contrast to designing your own studio projects in school, at an office you might be detailing a drawing of a tiny element of a building that someone else is designing. In both scenarios, you need to evaluate all of the information that you have available so that your output responds to the needs of a given project. As you advance in your career, you'll have opportunities to focus on the type of work that is most interesting to you, but in the beginning, you'll have to do it all.

As someone who started architecture school a decade ago, I've seen a lot of what this profession has to offer, good and bad.

I had an excellent 5-year education and a very interesting series of jobs since graduating with my Bachelor of Architecture in 2006. I've studied abroad in Rome, worked for the private sector in medium and large firms, worked in the public sector, worked on a project for deaf students, an airport in the Middle East, housing in Costa Rica, a large corporate office building and National landmarks. I've also initiated International movements geared towards using design as a tool for societal change; all experiences for which I am deeply appreciative. I'm now working towards completing the requirements for my license to practice architecture. I've completed 4 of the 7 required exams and all of the internship hours. Over the past few years, my career has been influenced by an interest in marketing and business development, so I'm currently engaged in work that promotes the value that architects and real estate project managers bring to the development process. My success is really attributed to following the 7 Principles listed above, especially #6. (Thanks Mentors!)

Like most things in life, the more you put into architecture, the more you will get out of it. Study hard, work hard, be fully present and let your creativity shine. Most importantly, have fun and be true to yourself. Be prepared for market volatility, but know that the worst of times will cycle away and that everything will work out eventually. There will be times when you question your entire investment strategy, but be confident that remaining steadfast will likely yield winning results. ✕

NOMA

Student Design Awards 2011

VILLAGE WALK COMPLEX: BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH "THE MOVEMENT" 2011 NOMA STUDENT DESIGN COMPETITION WINNERS. EVOLVING DESIGN EXCELLENCE THROUGH CULTURAL CONTEXT

JURORS:

Michael Lutz AIA
(Gensler Atlanta)

Mine Hashas Phd
(Southern Polytechnic State Univ.)

Lonnie Hewitt AIA NOMA
(Hewitt+Washington)

Jeff Potter FAIA
(AIA President)

Eric Brock AIA
(Lord Aeck & Sergeant)



THE PROBLEM:

This design competition called for the development of a new Ashby MARTA Transit Village, creating a node of local services and community-supporting activities centered on the existing Ashby Train Station. The new development is intended to serve as an economic catalyst for the Washington Park/Vine City communities.

FIRST PLACE AWARD

AUBURN UNIVERSITY

SECOND PLACE AWARD

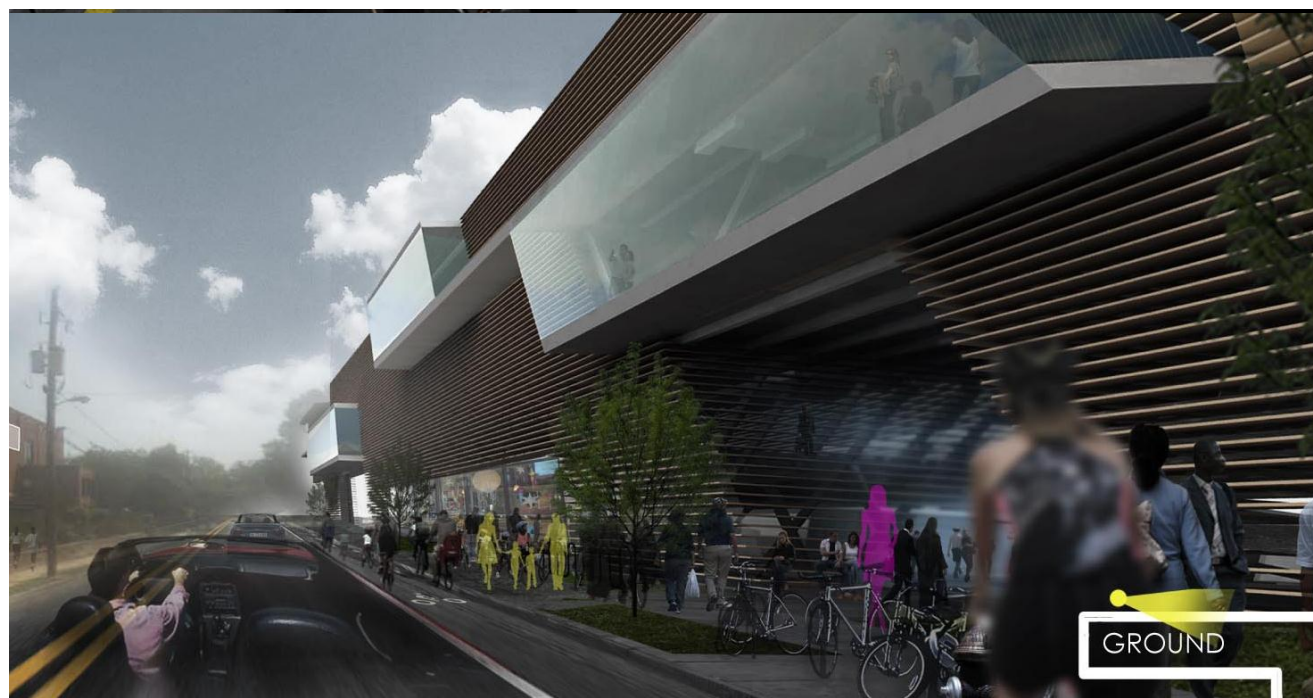
WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN SAINT LOUIS

THIRD PLACE AWARD

BOSTON ARCHITECTURAL COLLEGE

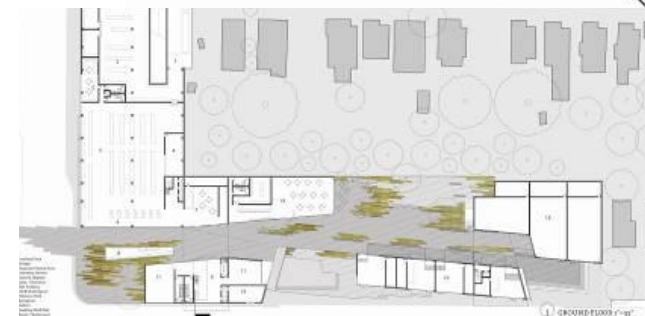
THIRD PLACE AWARD

BOSTON ARCHITECTURAL COLLEGE



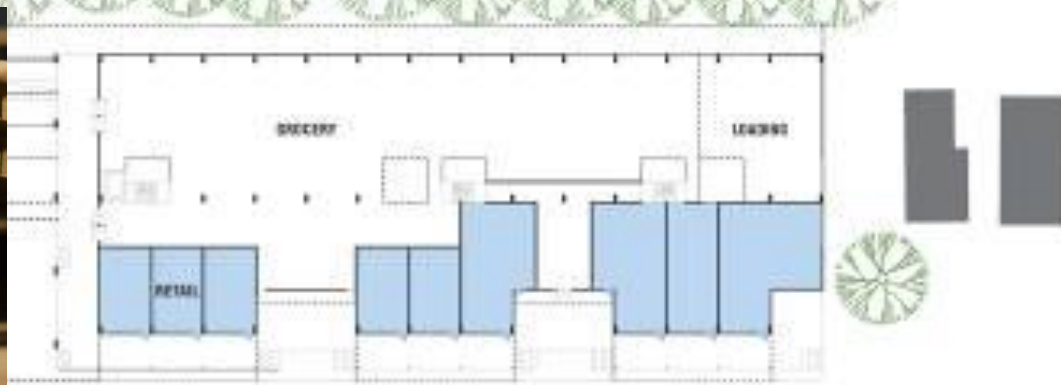
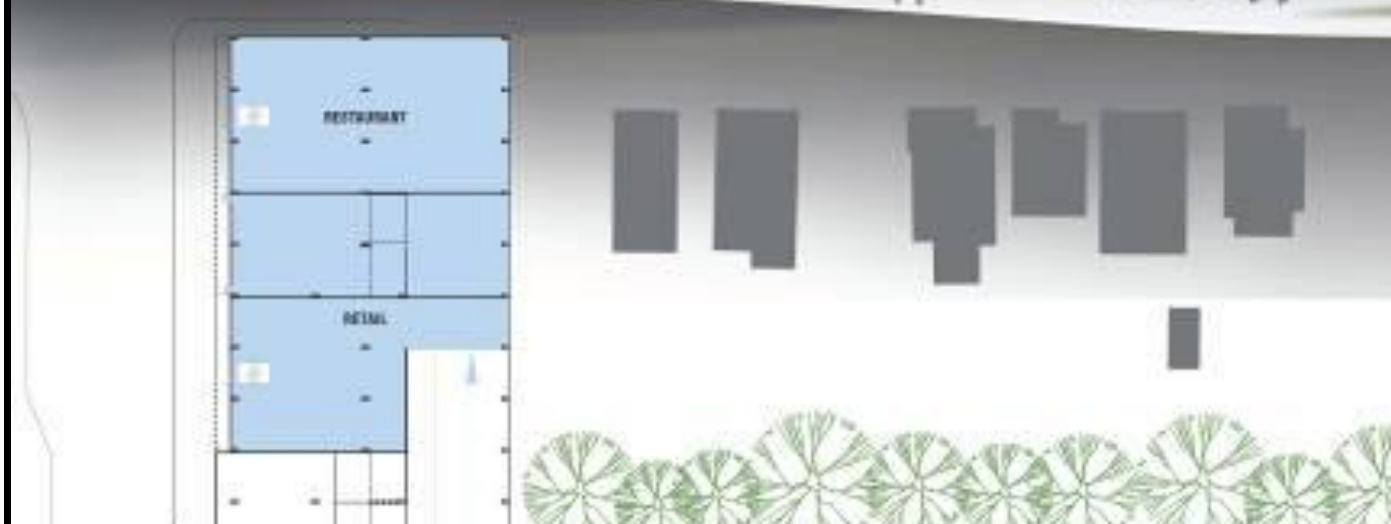
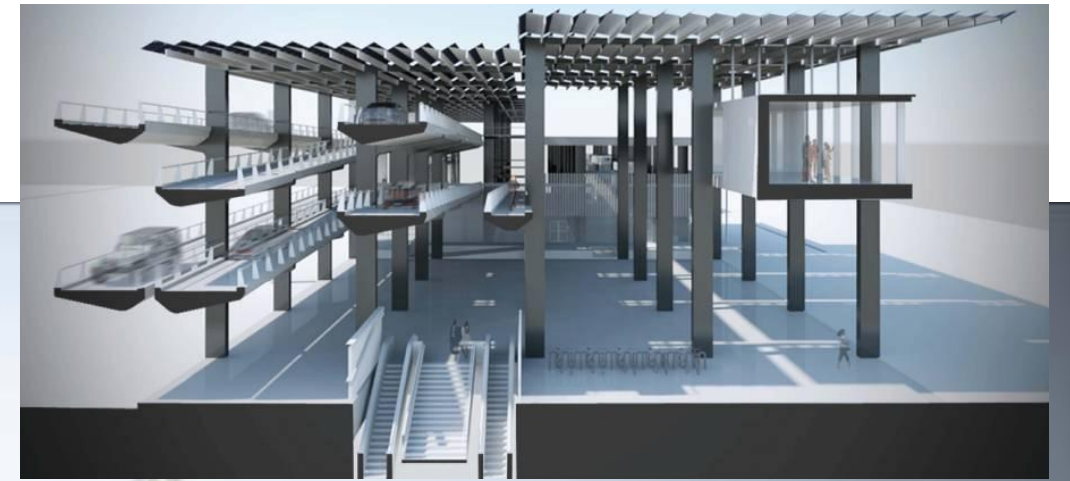
SECOND PLACE AWARD

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN SAINT LOUIS



FIRST PLACE AWARD

AUBURN UNIVERSITY



NOMA

Design Excellence Awards 2011

JURORS

RENEE KEMP-ROTAN

Kemp-Rotan's resume includes the following: Special Projects/Capital Projects, Mayors Office, Birmingham, Alabama; Former Chief Urban Design/Urban Development; Director Economic Development, Atlanta GA. B. Arch Syracuse, cum laude; MSUP Columbia U.; RIBA II Architectural Association, London. She came to the South around 1996 to work for Corporation for Olympic Development in Atlanta. She now oversees special public projects in Birmingham. Kemp-Rotan has served 10 mayors of major American cities on issues of urban design, economic development, and master planning. She has directed more than 30 major master plans for predominantly African American communities over the course of her career. Kemp-Rotan was recently recognized by both Harvard University and Oxford University as a leading American urban designer in their jointly published African American National Biography.

She is now authoring The Haiti Culture Code a post-development manual that explicitly focuses on culture, design, and disaster in the Diaspora, post-2010 earthquake in Haiti. She is co-founder of Black Design News Network a web-based communications platform with Nigerian designer, Atim Oton.

ROBERT THEEL

Robert Theel, AIA, serves as the U.S. General Services Administration's Chief Architect in the six-state Great Lakes Region headquartered in Chicago. He is the senior advisor to the Regional Administrator of GSA and the Regional Commissioner of the Public Building Service (PBS). He provides leadership for the regional design and construction programs for United States Courthouses, Federal Office Buildings and Border Stations.

For his role in establishing and supporting GSA's Design Excellence Program, Theel is a recipient of GSA's "Excellence in Public Architecture" award, and he received the National Endowment for the Arts "Presidential Design Award" for his work on Border Stations. Robert is a graduate of the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT). He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Chicago Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

DAVID HARMON

David Harmon grew up in Camden, New Jersey and Nice, France. Harmon enrolled as a Morehead Scholar at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1973. He earned a degree in International Studies. He went on to graduate from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design in 1988 with a Master's Degree in Architecture.

He worked at I.M. Pei's office in New York as a project designer for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and moved to Paris, France, as a designer of the new spaces for the Louvre Museum's Department of Near Eastern Antiquities and Islamic Art. In 1993, Harmon and a team of French and American architects in various cities formed atelier4Architecture. As a 'virtual', internet-based office, a4A did early conceptual studies for the Motown Historical Museum in Detroit. In 1996, Harmon moved to Denver, Colorado. He worked as a designer with various offices on projects including the master plan for the new medical campus at the former Fitzsimons army base, and the new Longmont Museum and Cultural Center.

In private residential practice, he also collaborated with teams to pursue Denver's Museum of Contemporary Art, and the creation of the African American Research Library. Harmon has worked in Seattle as a project designer for DKA. He has served on the board of Power of Hope, an organization for the empowerment of youth, on the board of the Central Area Senior Center, and is a Trustee for Saint Mark's School in Massachusetts. As a designer, Harmon believes in the power of architecture to create spirit and to be of communal service. ✕

1-Citation Award

Built: Moody Nolan, Inc.
Cincinnati Ohio
Public School
Center For Performing Arts

2-Citation Award

Built: Moody Nolan, Inc.
Cincinnati Ohio
Fire Station
Community Project

3-Citation Award

Built: Moody Nolan, Inc.
Miami Florida
Miami University
School Of Business

4-Honor Award

Built: Neighboring Concepts, PLLC
Charlotte North Carolina
Public Sports Academy

5-Honor Award

Unbuilt: Hkit Architects
Oakland, California
Dragon's Tail
Affordable Housing

6-Citation Award

Unbuilt: Marshall Moya Design, LLC
Student Center
UDC/Washington DC

7-Visionary Honor Award

Marshall Moya Design, LLC
Moya Architects
Cartegena Columbia
Master Plan

2011
DESIGN EXCELLENCE CITATION
Built Category

firm moody nolan, inc.
project cincinnati public schools
location cincinnati, ohio

THIS IS THE FIRST K-12 PUBLIC ARTS SCHOOL IN THE COUNTRY AND IT IS ALSO THE PRODUCT OF COMMITTED PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN CINCINNATI, OHIO.

As a high-performing center for creative folk, this center also serves as a catalyst for an older neighborhood's revitalization.

With its 250,000 SF of space, this complex must reach beyond its own walls to also anchor an arts community, an historic district and a central parkway. The lifespan of this performing arts program and the material lifespan of the building were all functional and financial considerations.

We know that students, teachers and communities all thrive in creative settings. We also know that the design of this KUNZEL SCHOOL FOR PERFORMING ARTS is an exciting, artful and highly effective community-based, learning environment.

With multiple theatres and studios for specialized visual arts, drama and technology programs, this K-12 PERFORMING ARTS campus offers distinctive educational experiences to students, families, teachers, and community.

Aesthetically, this facility complements the adjacent brick-laden vernacular. But, it also reveals its futuristic nature through its glassy, curvaceous façade, called the Urban Curve. Here, architects and public school officials along with financial masters joined forces to create an urban design master piece.

✕

ERIC KUNZEL

Center for Arts and Education



2011
DESIGN EXCELLENCE CITATION
Built Category

NOMA

firm moody nolan, inc.
project fire station renovation
community project
location cincinnati, ohio

FIRE STATIONS SERVE AS SECOND HOMES FOR FIREFIGHTERS. MOST DON'T APPRECIATE THAT FIRE STATION DESIGN IS A LOW-FREQUENCY, HIGH-RISK PROPOSITION.

Fire station design requires — no, demands — more attention to firefighters and how they function.

Since 911, we better understand the impact of a missed emergency communication or an incorrect field measurement for these first responders.

As architects there is nothing worse than horror stories about fire station design. After all a fire station is only a garage for shiny red trucks. Right? Wrong!

Many hard-headed designers have found the newly delivered engines too long, the aerial ladder extensions too tall, or the turning radius too wide to use the drive-through bay of a just-completed fire station.

Are there best practices, tools or checklists that architects can use to help constantly upgraded fire departments avoid construction errors? With more than 50,000 fire stations cross-country, this is an opportune building type for architects to love, contract and master. ✕

Fire Station #51

City of Cincinnati



2011
DESIGN EXCELLENCE CITATION
Built Category

NOMA

firm moody nolan, inc.
project miami university richard t. farmer school of business
location oxford, ohio

THE GEORGIAN REVIVAL STYLE AND MATERIALS OF THIS NEW SCHOOL OF BUSINESS WAS DICTATED FROM THE VERY BEGINNING OF THE PROJECT.

Finding the right site within central campus presented the first challenge to the design team. Deciding which old buildings would be demolished to make room for the new -- was challenge number two. (Moody/Nolan recommended demolition of an older dormitory immediately across from the main academic block.)

Third challenge was to protect significant trees near the site. (This would later influence the building's footprint.) Final building orientation, however, responded to the design of an adjacent campus quad, consistent with the overall campus plan.

How does one design a fashion forward, student-friendly, state-of-the-art, business facility within the historical context of a globally respected university? After all the B-school and its design often are recruitment tools for the university.

Business for universities is a formal affair and this team managed to provide a dignified and powerful architecture through its design of the Great Hall and the Commons. This formal architectural approach was softened through provision of stimulating public spaces that encourage student interaction between class sessions.

Columns, porches, cupolas, gambrel roofs, balustrades and colonnades help disguise this building's density and maintain the human scale. Double wings with double-loaded corridors for faculty offices and a basement devoted all to classroom space further reduce the exterior scale of this building as seen from campus. LEED silver certification further enhance the attractive character of this mighty, yet, low maintenance complex ✕

RICHARD T. FARMER

School of Business



2011
DESIGN EXCELLENCE CITATION
Built Category

NOMA

REVOLUTION PARK

Sports Academy

firm neighboring concepts, pllc
project revolution park sports academy
location charlotte, north carolina

REVOLUTION PARK SPORTS ACADEMY IS MECKLENBURG COUNTY PARK AND RECREATION'S FIRST SILVER LEED CERTIFIED (LEADERSHIP IN ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN) FACILITY.

The facility is part of the Revolution Park complex which includes Revolution Park Golf Course, First Tee facility, Irwin Creek Greenway, and Revolution Park that includes athletic fields and an artificial turf football field in partnership with the Carolina Panthers.

This design challenge required the programming of space for a golf pro shop, grill and concessions, and multi-purpose rooms with mobile computer labs; a fitness center with showers and lockers; and a sports training area that includes a boxing ring with boxing training areas complete with punching bags and multi-use training areas available for group exercise, martial arts and wrestling.

This new, 30,000sf state-of-the-art Revolution Park Sports Academy provides a healthy mix of athletic and educational space with great services for the local community. This building's respect for regional design is well demonstrated: From its high esteem for wood as building material to its masterful attention to carpentry as a well-honed craft.

With LEED Silver, this team respects the efficient use of natural resources throughout the building and across the well-landscaped site. This design shows high regard for top-notch materials and considerable deference to a quiet country style. Such design sympathy creates a nurturing 'woodland' experience that beckons the entire community to come and enjoy this place. Multi-use spaces with well-equipped athletic programs actively promote a great sense of place and well-being for many families, citywide.. ✕



2011
DESIGN EXCELLENCE CITATION
Built Category

NOMA

FAMILY HOUSING

cultural influence of Chinatown in a contemporary manner.

firm hkit architects
project affordable family housing building
location Oakland, California

THIS SEVEN STORY BUILDING PROVIDES A VITAL MIXED-USE COMPLEX OF 98 AFFORDABLE FAMILY HOUSING UNITS AND A BADLY-NEEDED HEALTH CLINIC IN A DENSE DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD OF OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA.

The design maximizes light and air for the units, creates generous and comfortable outdoor spaces at the podium and expansive roof decks, highly articulates the building to provide human scale and detail and finally, responds to the non-profit client's desire to express its location and the cultural influence of Chinatown in a contemporary manner.

The design wraps an L-shaped building around an east-facing courtyard. This space provides the center of community life, with a two-level patio deck, community meeting room, offices and computer space. The lower level patio contains a children's play area and the upper level provides outdoor space for meetings, barbecues and relaxation.

The client requested that the building express its Chinatown location and the culture of the area in a contemporary and tasteful manner. He wished to avoid kitsch historical pastiche commonly used in other Chinatown buildings.

The client and architects sought an innovative approach to parking in order to minimize costs, reduce the height of parking required and thereby maximize the number of units within the high-rise limits and improve sustainability.

The building is designed to meet LEED silver certified level. Its features include minimizing parking, sunshade elements to reduce heat gain, energy-efficient hydronic heating and projected photovoltaic panels and/or solar hot-water panels. ✕



UDC STUDENT CENTER

The University of the District of Columbia - Van Ness Campus

firm marshall moya design, llc
project new student center at UDC
location washington, dc

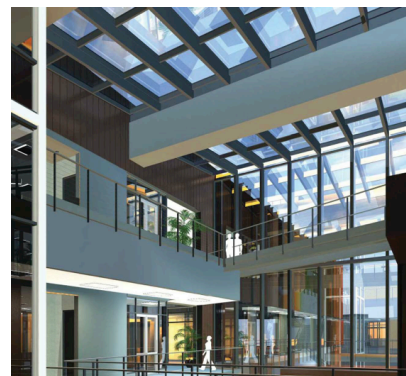
ICONIC BUILDING - SENSITIVE TO URBAN CONTEXT AND TO ITS ENVIRONMENT. THE STUDENT CENTER WILL HAVE PROGRAM ELEMENT THAT WILL ENHANCE STUDENT LIFE ON THIS FLAGSHIP CAMPUS.

Traditionally, a university student center is that college facility primarily devoted to student recreation and student socialization. This building type—THE STUDENT UNION—is tasked with serving co-eds, faculty, staff, alumni, and guests with a variety of programs, activities, services, and facilities. On many college campuses, the student center establishes both the “brand and the brawn” of college life.

Student centers are the recognized life-blood of campus identity. They must encourage students to study locally, but live globally. Their design must also uplift student thought and provide opportunities for spirited student debate about human ideals. Such is the challenge for this proposed student center in the nation's capital on the campus for the University of the District of Columbia-- a public university.

Chartered in 1974, it is the only public higher education institution in Washington, DC and the only urban land-grant university in the United States. The University of the District of Columbia (UDC) is committed to a broad mission of education, research and community service. Established by abolitionist Myrtilla Miner in 1851, (cf. as Miner's Teachers College) the current University of DC offers Associate's, Bachelor's and Master's Degrees and a host of workplace development services designed to create opportunities for student success.

The University is comprised of a Community College, School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, School of Business and Public Administration, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences, and School of Law. This university encourages student engagement on campus and in the community.. ✕



CARTAGENA

Mixed-use and Urban Plan for Internally Displaced People (IDP)

firm marshall moya design, llc
project mixed-use and urban plan for internally displaced people
location cartagena, colombia

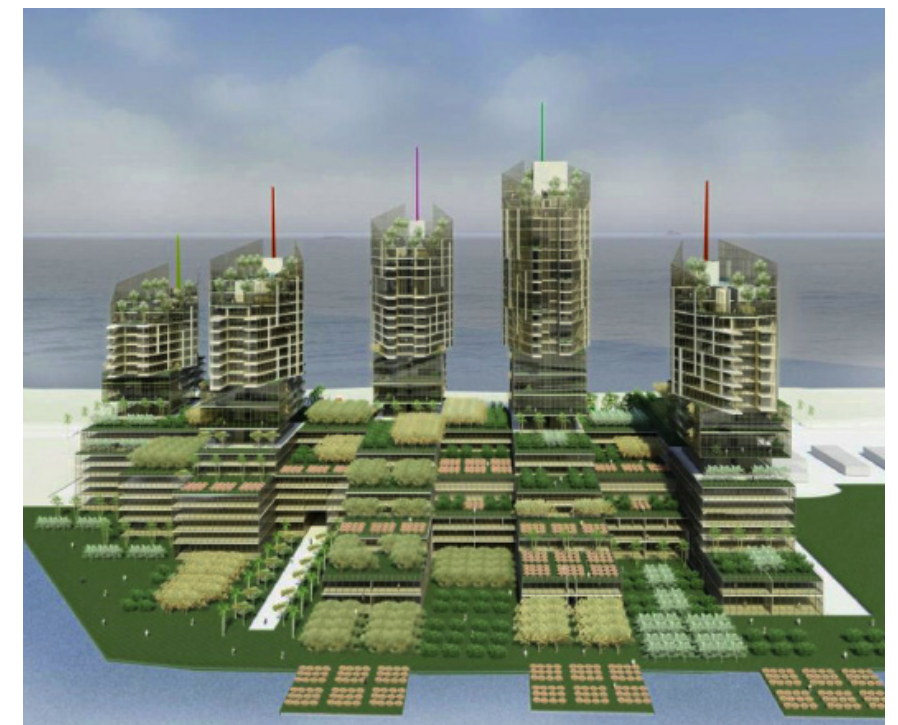
ON THE COASTAL STRIP OF CARTEGENA, COLOMBIA WHICH IS IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO DOWNTOWN CARTEGENA AND CARTAGENA'S INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT.

This proposed master plan includes two hotel towers that serve as employment generators for IDPs and other community residents. Five towers that include vertical and horizontal farming are proposed to include high density residential units with wind farms, organic markets, day care, public school and health centers for the hotel workforce.

Displaced persons now 'live/farm' in one tower while working at adjacent tower hotels for gainful employment. IDPs also sell food from their terraced gardens to the hotel for best local cuisine. By establishing an appropriate density with diverse income mix, this complex insists upon social integration by design. With 5 million IDPs generated from years of political conflict, this mega-live/work solution also offers an economically sustainable housing typology.

This is a gigantic architectonic response to a global housing predicament. But, it convincingly represents the ideal of a seamless integration between two co-dependent communities- 'the haves and the have nots'. This highly plausible socio-economic solution pushes the design envelope to validate these noble tower forms, with a powerful "cause celeb". This prize winning entry celebrates humanity by building hotels for visitors and vertical housing for the displaced workers.

With on-the-job-training, this master plan could provide economically viable solutions to homelessness and direct access to adjacent hospitality jobs. Workers also grow their own food in vertical gardens and use these same goods to supply the hotel under a co-operative agreement where the hotels agree to purchase 20% of their food goods from these terraced gardens.. ✕





OUR TIME PAST-PRESENT & FUTURE

— BRYAN C. LEE JR

FROM A PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVE, I DON'T KNOW THAT MY LIMITED TIME IN THE FIELD WILL ALLOW ME TO SPEAK TO ITS CHANGES AS MUCH AS I CAN SPEAK TO MY PERSONAL SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE OVER THE SAME PERIOD.

Being a person of color in the field of architecture has been a relatively stagnant proposition over the last 7 or so years, neither completely discouraging nor exceedingly encouraging with respect to the issues of diversity or employment. To be slightly more specific about my non-committal assessment, I would say the past 10 years have introduced a countless number of incidents from market collapses to building collapses that have acted to unify the conditions of many architects, let alone minorities; and in turn have rendered the experiences of my peers equal to my personal experiences, regardless of race or gender.

Notwithstanding, being a person of color has, to some extent, shaped my perspective on the world around me and defines my own personal ethos. Therefore, my cultural identification has implications on the work that I do on a daily basis. At this point in my career, my ethnicity has greater implications on program, process and client interaction more than design process, but I expect the practical application of my culture to infiltrate all aspects of design as I become more experienced within the field. Additional perspectives, whether ethno-cultural, gender based or the like, are always an asset to a process that is reliant on an empathetic translation of social tendencies and architectural precedents to produce an effective space for an end user.

Architecture as a profession or even as ideology affords me the opportunity to interact with the public in a way that is beneficial, if not absolutely necessary, for the success of a project. The overlap between most urban projects in the United States and minority communities is significant, so the power to impact these communities can be equally significant given the trend towards the re-population of these environments. My personal history and by extension, my cultural identity, gives me an empathetic perspective on certain conditions allowing me to reach out through community engagement programs and mentorship programs on a directly interpersonal level that may not necessarily be available to other cultures or ethnicities. In a field of few minorities, my culture, in combination with my career affects the way my community interacts with me, generally to my advantage through simply having elevated access. Within the field of architecture, my association with NOMA has shaped my experience; so I have managed to navigate and survive the professional landscape with the guidance of my mentors and peers. While I am an active participant in our pursuit of a more diverse profession, personally, I have never worked in a firm that is exceedingly culturally diverse in its architectural staff. My experiences lean heavily towards the differences in the age of staff, and with that distinction my younger coworkers may be a more culturally immersed population, less hindered by any cultural biases that may exist within an older population.

Although I am presently stable and working in New Orleans, the past five years have been precarious for me; I endeavored to start working as architectural multimedia consultant one month before the market crash

of 2008. SOA Design started with the development of a few different quality projects that sustained me for a while. Professionally, my work targeted the architectural community with services ranging from corporate identity and rendering packages to design development and project management services. Needless to say the climate for architecture firms hindered my business as it did many others, but luckily, I accounted for an inevitable dip by diversifying my revenue streams which allowed me to work consistently until recently when I transitioned back into the workforce as an associate with Billes partners in New Orleans Louisiana.

Frankly, diversity and culture in our field is far less relevant if we continue to minimize the idea of a practical cultural influence in our work; not as a superficial condition, but inherent in programmatic and design resolutions. As architects, we analyze and interpret the nuances of existing social structures and human behavioral patterns in order to articulate a built vernacular, complete with its own basic alphabet, lexeme, syntax, and punctuation. At best, our efforts rely on the intelligible execution of this architectural language to create a cogent, functional piece of architecture; at worst, we falsely assume the logic of this language effectively translates across all cultural communities equally. My research investigates both the subconscious and conscious affects of various socio-cultural constructs that implicitly impact the built environments commonly associated with African American communities. Subsequently, this research will attempt to conceptualize practical methods of utilizing this data in order to elicit design specific responses to the aesthetic of form and function, as it relates to African American culture.

Comprising less than two percent of the architectural profession, African American architects represent the unequal influence of culture on the built environment en masse. I am attempting to develop a culturally specific architectural language that is colloquial in its response and deeply empathetic to the community it serves. The anthropological, economic, and sociological research associated with this research will attempt to define the complicated relationship between the African American Community, the field of architecture, and the black-built environment, from reconstruction to present. In framing this study, I am ever

mindful of the primacy that African American culture has in today's society, and I am also aware of the countless volumes of research enumerating African American history, philosophy, and theory. Despite this, I have struggled to discern my community's relationship with applied theories in architecture and, more precisely, its relationship with the built language of architecture. I view the language of architecture itself as a product of both historic (built) and theoretical precedents, but more to the point, the architectural language with which we choose to build is the lasting and defining expression of culture for every society in history. It is a reflection of our cultural prejudices, a repository for our institutional constructs, and a record of history's inequitable class structures. An architectural language is defined in context with the period and the technologies available to the architects and builders of that respective time. So it follows that the accumulation of this knowledge, over time, acts as an exponentially influential factor on current design zeitgeist; moreover, the lack of doctrinal precedent by a given community will inevitably dilute and in some cases, eliminate any intended influence.

Ideally, this type of research will help make a fundamentally essential art form accessible to a previously neglected community and, in turn, provide a design platform, which cautiously avoids superficial tendencies for the improvisation of the more primary characteristics in architecture.

In the coming years I hope to see the field of architecture continue to embrace the systems and methodologies that allow us to simplify some of the internal and external processes that tie up money and time, while limiting the extents to which our creativity can be reached through design. I believe the field will inevitably move towards a multidisciplinary approach that allows for multiple revenue streams and various creative outlets for a coming generation of practitioners who are intent on expressing themselves at different scales and through different mediums. I don't think the "architect" is a single state of mind any longer. I believe our field will grow and become more diverse culturally and creatively or be enveloped by the conflicting interest.

My advice to anyone who would like to pursue this profession would be to wildly accumulate knowledge, network and experience. This field is

cold and harsh whether you are in the minority or in the majority, so a thirst for knowledge is required. Learn from others successes and more importantly their mistakes. If you can find something about the field that has the potential to bring light to the inevitable dark days in your journey, your experience will be greatly enhanced.

Knowledge is gained through personal means while wisdom has a tendency to be passed down or gained through experience, so the best way to cover all your bases is to accumulating a network. Whenever possible gather a support system of friends, mentors, and mentees whom you can interact with to help manage your matriculation from the levels of academia on through your professional career. Trust me; these relationships will bare fruit when you're struggling through the long days and late nights of architecture school or when you're beating down doors to find a job. My father used to tell me "Bryan you may feel like you know more than some of the people around you, but you don't, so sometimes you have to just shut up and listen, then continue to form an educated opinion". So, find a network, then shut up and listen.

Finally, accumulate as many diverse professional and academic experiences as possible, not only because of the sheer growth you will attain through the various interactions you will have with people, places, and things, but mostly because the more experiences you have the quicker you can learn and move forward from the unavoidable failures that we all face in this field. Acknowledge criticism accept the relevant information, release the nonsense and let the whole experience shape you into an amazing architect. ✕



IDENTITY: AN ASIAN AMERICAN'S PERSPECTIVE

— ROD HENMI, FAIA AND NOMA

AT NOMA'S CONFERENCE IN BOSTON, A STUDENT SAT PURPOSEFULLY NEXT TO ME AND ASKED, "WHY NOMA?" I LOOKED AT HER AND REPHRASED THE QUESTION TO WHAT I THOUGHT SHE REALLY WANTED TO KNOW, "WHY AM I, AN ASIAN AMERICAN, INVOLVED IN THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF MINORITY ARCHITECTS, WHICH IS PREDOMINANTLY AFRICAN AMERICAN?" SHE NODDED.

The simple answer is, I feel at home with this group. In many respects, I feel more comfortable and relaxed at NOMA events than at Asian American ones in the San Francisco Bay area where I live. It's true: the dancing is better, the laughter deeper and interaction more direct. But the student's question digs down to the essence of identity, race and culture. That is, why do we identify with one group of people and not another? Why do we feel at home with some and not others? How is identity related to the color of our skins and the texture of our hair? What shapes our identity?

IDENTITY

Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano defined identity in a provocative manner when he wrote, "What it all comes down to is that we are the sum of our efforts to change who we are. Identity is no museum piece sitting stockstill in a display case, but rather the endlessly astonishing synthesis of the contradictions of everyday life." One of these contradictions is that we are simultaneously a member of one race and society as a whole, which is made of many races. We each are amalgams of bits of history, pieces of self, pebbles of experience.

An important part of the development of my identity is the time that I spent in Japan, the country of my ancestors one hundred years ago. I stood on a hill overlooking my grandfather's original house and gazed into a watery setting sun over a scene which I am sure had changed little since his time. It was as if my grandfather stood and looked beside me and with me. He went to America. I returned to that hill in Japan. We emerge gradually from one to be another and yet we

remain the same. I felt then and feel now the racial and cultural heritage from which I grew. I am of Asia and I stand tall as an Asian American.

But as my connection to NOMA demonstrates, we can be of one race and simultaneously identify with another. The color of our skin and the shape of our eyes are not the only definers of identity. Rather it is also shared values, beliefs, attitudes, energy, spirit, even music that links us. This is why, I, an Asian American, belong to NOMA. I love Japanese ceramics but also hip hop, Kuba cloth, Argentinian tango, the mountains and beaches of California and have strong ties to a village in China. I admire architecture from Australia, South Africa, Japan, the United States, Spain, in other words, all around the world. All of these are part of my history and therefore part of my identity.

Part of my connection to NOMA is based on the injustice my family experienced. I grew up in the Midwest because my parents left California during World War II. They were forced to abandon their homes and stores when they and their families and friends were put in prison camps surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards solely because they were Japanese Americans. They never returned to live in California but rather started their lives over in St. Louis.

Part of my connection is that as I was growing up I was called names: Jap, Nip, Chink, Ching Chong Chinaman. My mother told me, "Sticks and stones can break your bones but words can never hurt you." She was wrong. Words hurt a lot and verbal injuries last longer than broken bones. I know absolutely that this tiny bit of racial taunting is nothing compared

to the discrimination experienced by other persons of color. Yet it gave me a small taste of what others experience. It gave me insight into the hurt caused by racism.

So it is from this perspective that I respond to the questions posed by the editors about identity and how being a person of color colors our world.

CHANGES IN THE FIELD

To put things in context, I went to school during medieval times when people still drew with their hands. My undergraduate studies were at the University of Minnesota, admittedly not the most diverse part of the country. At that time, out of a school of 500 students, there were less than ten women and even fewer minority students. Today, in most schools of architecture, approximately half of the students are women and the numbers of students of color are also much higher. Not high, but higher. There are more Asian, Latino/Latina and African American students. There are also more lesbian, gay and transgender students.

The profession reflects these changes, both in the look but also in the tenure of its practitioners. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact nature but it feels different to be in a room of men and women, whites and minorities. It feels different to work in a more diverse profession and I believe our field is better off for it.

IMPACT ON WORK

Identifying myself as a person of color motivates me to address inequalities that architects can address, such as serving disadvantaged communities or skillfully designing badly-needed facilities, such as affordable housing



and urban public schools. This work touches my heart and fulfills me. Where does this connection arise? I think it's related to the history of my identity and my desire to give voice to those who are not heard. Working on projects with limited budgets and stringent parameters require the best of our efforts and our most skillful practitioners. I do my best to contribute to this arena.

INTERACTION WITH OTHERS

I interact well with minority communities and persons of color because I empathize and wish to do good work for them. My greatest satisfaction results from the pride that residents have in their new homes, in the classrooms, in the community center.

CHANGES IN PRACTICE

Since the current economic downturn, practice is tenser, more anxiety-causing and frankly, less fun. Competition for projects is fierce. Firms cut fees below the break-even point. Clients demand and get free services. Our profession has never been a high-profit field but now it is even tougher and less profitable. This makes it harder to pay decent salaries or raises, hire more employees or provide good benefits. It also puts pressure on the quality of architecture as employers hold down costs. It's painful to see business

owners and employees struggle to find jobs.

EXPRESSION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

Just as personal identity is the result of the "endlessly astonishing synthesis of the contradictions of everyday life," expression in architecture combines both deeply personal wellsprings and the influences of powerful work by others. That is, expression springs simultaneously from self and others, from new and old.

I seek to provide inspiring form that is both personal but also expressive of the identity of place, client and culture. Recently I sought to express the charisma and spirit of a dynamic church client through a building language of movement, color and rich textures.

POST-RECESSION HOPES

Architects are facing a difficult time now because buildings are not being built and therefore our services are not required. But I am confident that as the recession eases we will have work. Buildings are necessary. Architects are required to design those buildings. Finally, good architects are always hard to find and will be in demand.

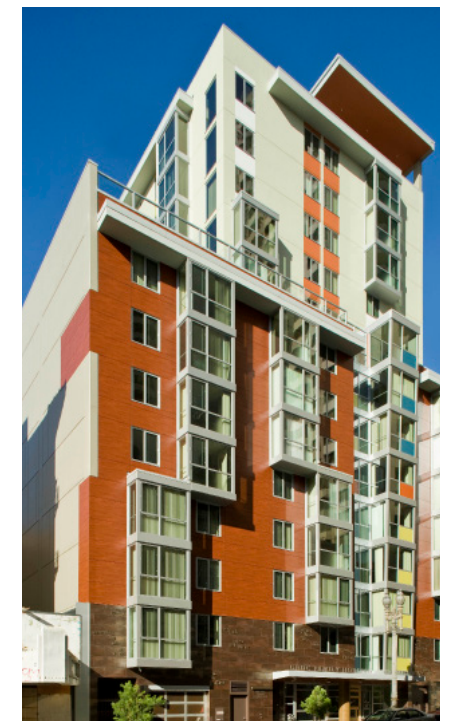
ADVICE

In these difficult times, good employees have jobs. I advise those studying or early in their careers to make

themselves into valuable contributors with well-rounded skills: design, detailing, drafting, even writing. Good design is the totality of making a building, from schematics to construction documents to construction administration. Good buildings result from a lengthy process of many people making right decisions. Build your skills at many levels so that you are one of those who know how to make insightful recommendations. Finally, a cooperative and collaborative working attitude is a valuable asset. Employers want to work with those whose presence they enjoy. Be self-critical. Believe in excellence. Demand excellence for yourself in all ways (work habits, skills, ethics, attitude).

CONCLUSION

When we proclaim pride in our ethnic backgrounds, we distinguish ourselves from others. That is, to be proud of one race is to separate from another. To promote diversity is to promote difference. This is at once the strength and the risk of focusing on diversity for I remember one of my professors saying society is always in danger of flying apart. The difficult question is how to be different and yet alike, how to be separate and yet together in a society that requires connections. But this is all part of the "astonishing synthesis of the contradictions of everyday life." I urge all of NOMA's members to view themselves as separate and together, as different and alike, as unique and the same. Through this lens we can become a richly colored society of inclusion and connections and thereby improve our field of architecture. ✕





REFLECTIONS OF GERRY BILLES

— GERRY BILLES

1. How has being a person of color working within the field of architecture changed since the time you entered the profession?

When I entered the field of architecture, my perspective towards it was very open to the possibilities that presented themselves to me. I integrated the Tulane University School of Architecture in 1964 after finishing high school at the Tuskegee Institute High School in Tuskegee, Alabama. In some ways I was accustomed to being the first African American student since my sister integrated Tuskegee High, an all-Caucasian school where she and twelve other students of color took their lives in their hands by choosing to study there. My dad served as the first assistant director of color at a Veterans Hospital in Butler, Pennsylvania as a result of his hard work and talent. From him, I learned that nothing came easy. Although this was especially true with regard to blacks in the south, it was also true everywhere.

Our family traveled from Tuskegee to New Orleans and Colfax, Louisiana during the summer months to vacation. My parents' families resided in these areas from the 1940's to today. My family was of mixed blood and parentage and we could appreciate the cultural aspects of our black communities but also understood the torment of being a light skinned black to Caucasians and people of color alike. My sister, for example, was mistaken as a white person by other whites that extricated themselves from the public schools in Tuskegee to hold classes in churches and other private assemblies in the area. I had access to Tuskegee Institute, a well-respected college where blacks were taught in all professional fields including architecture. Talking with those who ran the institute, I discovered that the school of architecture was not accredited and that would affect my being licensed at some point in the future. I began looking for other schools to give me the training and courses that would be accepted and found Tulane

University School of Architecture, located in New Orleans. I already felt comfortable in that city so that was my ultimate choice. Although New Orleans was a very racist place at that time, it was still considered somewhat of an international city -- European in its history, architecture, and culture mixed with the richness of its black population. By the end of my coursework, I finished at the top of my class and happened to be the first person of color to graduate from the Tulane University School of Architecture.

The primary change that has occurred since receiving my Bachelor of Architecture Degree is the acceptance of people of color in restaurants, and other public establishments both in and outside of the city environment. There has been little movement in the acceptance of blacks in architecture simply because of how architects market and receive commissions. The Caucasians in our community still prefer to hire an architect of the same ethnicity due to their affiliations and friendships with them. They go to the same churches, clubs, and private parties, which people of color are now accepted, but are still looked upon as anomalies. The primary advantage people of color have can be seen in the public sector where laws are written which give minimal protection to those of color in order to take advantage of a below prime percentage contracts. On a negative side, these same laws have prevented those who go far beyond their peers to establish themselves as architects with extraordinary talent and organizational skills. Some persons of color own their own firms and have been fortunate enough to live in areas of the country where there is value given to design excellence despite the color of one's skin.

2. Does your "identification" as a person of color impact or affect your work? If so, in what ways (asset vs. liability)

My work as a professional is different from my work as a student of architecture. As a student, the emphasis in my single-minded design was more sculptural and iconic in style. The types of projects we were given may have affected this -- museums, airports, multi-family housing, houses, etc. All were assigned without budgets and most without neighbors, governmental laws, or client input. As a professional, my work and that of other designers in my office is revised and modified by clients, engineers, and colleagues. Most of my firm's projects have limited budgets, sites and laws that govern the design of our work. New Orleans, where I practice now and have concentrated most of my firm's work, is European inspired and built by those of African descent. The styles of architecture were meant to accommodate the climate of the area. My mother's brothers and father built houses and commercial establishments throughout the city and much of the indigenous architecture was adorned by ornamentation.

Like its culture and food, New Orleans has such a strong tradition that to try to establish a style that is outside of the conventional architecture is considered to be terribly unacceptable. Although the style of architecture I am interested in creating might be objectionable to many clients who hire us, we are beginning to develop our own projects through the real estate development company we have formed and, as a result, I believe that a client's untrained eye will have less influence over the design.



3. Does your "identification" as a person of color influence or affect the way others interact with you (i.e.: expectations, opportunities, communications, etc.)?

Initially, some do not know that I am a person of color; I have been told that I have no accent or inflection to be noticeable as a traditional African American. However, the expectations are somewhat different if I had been trained as a Caucasian having gone to Tulane University and MIT graduate school. The perception is that I went to Southern University or another HBCU and that I am often associated with other professionals who did attend HBCU colleges or universities. Also, there are most likely opportunities that I have been afforded that I would not have been if I were not a person of color, but the drawbacks tend to outweigh the opportunities. As an example, sometimes my firm is placed in a minor role to meet an MBE or DBE requirement placed on the majority firms who often call to "team" when the RFQ or RFP requires that they find some minority firm that is competent and easy to work with. Our staff is ethnically diverse so we have no problems communicating with any current or potential client. In the end, few clients allow any architect to have a free hand in taking control of the design of most projects. The majority of our clients are surprised when they work with my firm because they find it very easy to get what they need when they allow us to perform the design and aesthetic services for which we were hired.

4. How has your practice/work situation changed since the onset of the current economic down turn (say, last 3-5 years)?

The extreme downturn in the economy has affected most architects, engineers and contractors. The market has demanded that we all adjust the way we do business or in my case, I have chosen to search a path that is less travelled by creating my own projects. Funding for such projects is always difficult, but since forming a partnership with several individuals whose business is finance, we have begun to reposition ourselves in an area that has been left to builders, untrained designers and developers to fashion and make money. We call the entity Strategic Development Partners and have been working on a mission and vision that works for both my colleagues and myself. We are concerned about the health of our cities and communities and gravitate to projects that answer the needs most imperative to them.

5. What are your thoughts about the potential for expressing cultural identity through architecture? Is it important, and if so, why? How do you believe it is best accomplished (i.e.: organizationally, thematically, aesthetically, etc.)?

Cultural identity in our architecture is difficult since our clientele is so diverse. If you are an architect practicing in the USA, there are projects that center in the African-American community, others in Hispanic, and others yet in the Caucasian communities. Depending on your client, architectural expression in form may appear foreign causing Owner and Architect miscommunication. If the architectural vocabulary is so different from what the client has experienced in their past, there could be a disconnection of thoughts and ideas. Even within the black community, we have seen resistance to any expression outside of a conventional strategy in solving programmatic needs of clients who have blinders on their eyes with regard to stylistically new expression. Most of our clients have preconceptions about what they expect of architects and even if you are a convincing practitioner, expect those with money to not buy what you may be selling. With all of what I have said, we do push the envelope whenever and wherever we can. Innovation is a key, although few clients want to be the first to try something new.

6. Discuss your hopes and/or fears for how architects will fit into a post-recession economy.

Architects are ethical in some ways and yet cutthroat in other ways. For the love of the profession and the health and safety of our cities and townships, we allow ourselves to be used by clients who have had bad experiences with our architectural colleagues and so they are

willing to pay big dollars to employ "project managers" who only see us as adversaries, not partners. As a result architects have relented and have virtually given up all authority for the overall direction that many projects take by accepting the wrong site, low payments, engineer's limitations and undesirable client aesthetics.

When architects were the master builders of the world, all of the design, most of the engineering, the construction means and methods and the client's satisfaction were paramount. In a post-recession economy, we need to reinvent ourselves to become more profitable and learn to embrace alternative delivery systems (i.e.: design/build, contractor assisted, Project Manager at Risk, etc.). We will have to develop quicker, leaner, more energy efficient and more accurate ways of delivering our projects to our prospective clients, whether those clients are others or ourselves as developers.

7. What advice would you give any young person interested in pursuing an education and career in architecture?

Design of buildings, complexes of buildings, neighborhoods, and cities is not a profession for the weak hearted. A career in architecture is full of anxiety and opportunity and is a field for people who want to make things happen in the best, most efficient and beautiful way possible. Every day, our practice is filled with literally thousands of decisions to make. With experience, it gets easier and faster to make these decisions and those made are generally more informed. Keeping a strong fix on your personal goals and mission is very important since each person you meet in the field has a different opinion about what the best solutions might be to your questions.

My advice to those young people interested in pursuing an education in architecture is that there can be no better training for many other fields requiring clear thinking, result-driven, and mission oriented perspectives, ranging from global to miniscule. Politicians, bookkeepers, computer website designers, project managers, contractors, engineers, furniture designers, planners, and many other fields are made better with some architectural education. Solving new problems and making opportunities out of them is our specialty. Disaster recovery, global warming, alternative energy systems are here today, but what of tomorrow? If there were more architecturally trained politicians, our world would not be in the sorry state in which it is currently. An architecturally educated person would have a better-rounded perspective on life than most other singularly focused professions I know. ✕



A FUTURE FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN ARCHITECTS

— WALTER L. WILSON, FAIA, NOMA, NCARB

ROBERT COLE, FAIA, NOMA WROTE AN ARTICLE IN PROGRESSIVE ARCHITECTURE MAGAZINE YEARS AGO WARNING OF THE SHORTAGE OF BLACK AMERICAN ARCHITECTS IN THE COUNTRY AND THE PLAUSIBILITY OF BLACK ARCHITECTS BECOMING AN ENDANGERED SPECIES IF SIGNIFICANTLY MORE DID NOT ENTER THE ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSION. AT THAT TIME IT BECAME VERY APPARENT TO ME HOW ENIGMATIC BLACK ARCHITECTS REALLY WERE IN THE UNITED STATES.

I no longer have to look at my calendar nor sneak peeks at myself while passing by the closet mirror to confirm that my years have passed with lightning speed, but some memories still linger in the dusty archives of my mind. Still filed away is the memory of my high school, a short, taught faced, very slender, unmarried woman in her middle fifties with fading brown hair, graying tinges around the forehead and ears, and a fetish for starched white cotton blouses with broad collars, complimented with faded brown business jackets with matching skirts that stopped just above her calves, tan stockings and wide heeled, black leather shoes, always neatly polished. I decided that I wanted to be an architect. I wanted to return to Pittsburgh, PA and in so doing restore a kind of environmental dignity to the Hill District with its cobble stone streets, splattered with shattered glass bottles, shredded news papers, discarded cigarette butts, and all manner of smelly, putrid refuse. I wanted to dignify the slum I was born into through an architectural practice whose focus and purpose made a difference for those less fortunate. Truly my vision was tainted with a naiveté that haunted me until I graduated from architecture school, as I think back upon those early days now. My father facilitated my desires and dreams by clipping out newspaper articles from the Post Gazette, which often featured bits and pieces about prominent architects like Frank Lloyd Wright and their work. My dad and

mother were my greatest allies, no question about it.

Yes. I remembered my high school comment to me, staring up through her wire-rims, stiff lipped and pensive, into my eyes, “You’ll never go to college. You’ll never become an architect.” She had just shared with me my scores on the national aptitude test: My scores indicated that my abstract reasoning skills were very high as were my reading comprehension and language scores. To this day, I have no idea what provoked her to end my interview that way. Was there a full moon outside that night?

I also remember my uncle Fred. A 33rd Degree Mason, he was a mountain of a man who always wore tan colored work clothes, which were typical uniforms for building contractors and road builder types. He also loved to fish and hunt. He was a long time construction worker and one of only a hand full of African American card-carrying heavy equipment operators in Western Pennsylvania. He drove a bull dozer, as a matter of fact. He and my Aunt Elsie had no children and for the most part lived a modest life in a mobile home, which was permanently parked in a narrow, unpaved alley behind a glass factory on the west side of town. His only extravagance was his fondness for big 22 [Duce-and-a-Quarter] Buick automobiles: he would buy a brand new one almost every year. Unlike my high school my uncle (at one point in time) looked forward to me going to college but he,

too, dashed ice cold water my aspirations when I told him that I wanted to become an architect. He pictured me as a lawyer, a preacher, or a teacher and nothing else – definitely not a Black architect. His vision of success was not unusual in the Black community, though. Many of my extended family members felt the same way, too. “You will starve to death,” he told me in the vernacular that revealed his deep southern roots. In his mind he would be wasting his money and I mine if I chose to become an architect. His skepticism was palpable and he did not mince his words when he told me that I was making a big mistake with my life, and he would not be a party to my poor decision-making.

He passed away before I graduated from Oklahoma State University, the second African American in the history of the school of architecture and the first to be awarded the Alpha Rho Chi award for academic and service achievements. He was not able to witness the successes I achieved as a licensed architect, the triumphs he swore were not possible for any Black man.

Of all of the things that factored into my decision to attend Architecture school at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma, my race was not consciously one of them. After all, I grew up in an integrated society in Pittsburgh, PA. The grade schools, the middle school and high school, the neighborhoods and social connections were all integrated. We Blacks lived

on our side of town – true, with but a few exceptions. You see our family was one of only a few Black families living in a predominantly Italian neighborhood. However, Whites and Blacks all attended school together, rode on public transit together and sometimes even partied together. I spent a tour in the United States Air Force, where life in the military was integrated, as well. In the barracks, my bunk mates were white. My life’s experiences prepared me for my academic and social life as an African American in the architecture and architectural engineering programs at OSU and eventually in my professional life. Were there challenges at OSU? Yes there were. After all, I was an architecture student in the late 1960’s when Dr. Martin Luther King marched in Memphis, TN. Did those challenges interrupt my education or my ability to function? Not significantly.

As is becoming evident, like many African American architects my age and older, mine has been a career of firsts or seconds: First African American hired by Trott & Bean Associates in Columbus, OH, first African American architect hired by Southwestern Bell Telephone Company in St. Louis, MO; first or second, as the case may be (my colleague and good friend studied for, sat for, and passed the licensing exam at the same time), licensed architect in the state of Arkansas and the second Black architect in the city of Milwaukee, WI. Notice, too, that the conversation has yet to focus on architectural practice and design. Indeed, the primary hurdle has not been design philosophy or esoteric architecture nor design clichés. Instead it has been more about negotiating and barriers and paving a way for others to follow. I became the first Black architect hired by Southwestern Bell Telephone Company (SBC), but only after the company agreed to comply with a Justice Department consent decree which forced them to employ African Americans to fill management positions heretofore reserved for Whites only. Indeed, before my arrival many of the phone company buildings in the system provided toilets for African Americans in filthy janitor’s closets, complete with mop buckets, slop sinks, overloaded trash cans, cleaning supplies and floor buffers.

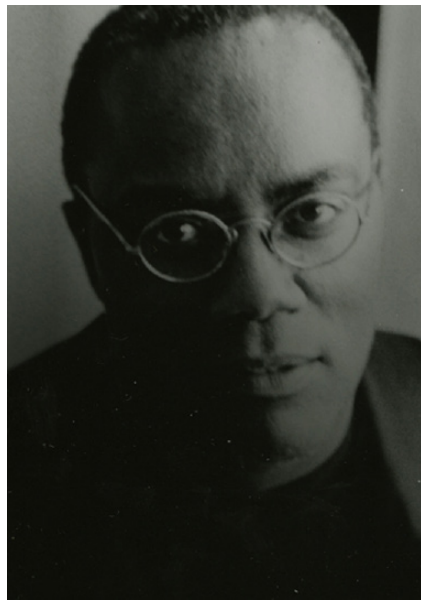
My immediate supervisors at SBC

were welcoming and encouraging, however, and I was given challenging and exciting architectural design assignments from the very start. As a design architect for the Bell System, my task was to interpret architectural design programs and other esoteric matters handed to me, which were unique to the communication company business and, quite honestly, not open to ethnic expressions within that context. Instead, external context and fit on site were more important elements to solving those unique design problems. I had the privilege of practicing architecture and working on design and construction projects in several states including Missouri, Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. My task was always clear: decommission toilets in janitor’s closets. Eventually, I founded my own architectural firm first in Arkansas and a few years later in Wisconsin, concluding that there was no future for me in Arkansas. It was in Arkansas that my bitter experiences with racism eventually sent me packing. It was in Wisconsin that I again faced challenges typical of any new architectural firm led by an architect with only a limited familiarity with his marketplace, race notwithstanding. That point noted, however, obvious irregularities occurred many times with regard to short listings for interviews on city and state projects; quality based selection, QBS, practices in the architectural services selection processes that made no sense; and misinterpretations of Minority Business Enterprise, MBE, and Disadvantage Business Enterprise, DBE, “voluntary” participation goals on architectural projects at every level. Few, however, could say with certainty that an agency or any soliciting client discriminated against anyone or performed any act of racism when they hired “the other architect.”

A question must come up at some point here: As a Black architect/designer is my work product influenced by my ethnicity, my family background, the neighborhood I grew up in? Has that laid out the frame work for my own aesthetic language? The short answer to that question is no. Why? You might ask. Because from the time I became seriously aware of my surroundings, I dreamed of escaping to a place better than the one in which I grew up. I view my approach

to architecture as a maturing response to problem solving, which is more than a juxtaposition of spaces, more than artistic expressions, more than the orderly assemblage of bricks and mortar, steel, and wood. Instead it is a purposeful amalgamation of all of those things.

While there may be only one or two Black architectural firms [that I am aware of] in Wisconsin at this time, I see a promising future for African American architects not only in Wisconsin but all over the United States as the number of licensed Black architects increases. Generally, I see the role of architects changing as integrated project delivery, IPD, building information modeling, BIM, design/build, D/B, and other project delivery models become more commonplace. There can be a different paradigm in which Black architects can not only survive but also flourish as meaningful contributors to the built environment. Good examples are the works of John Portman, FAIA and Jonathan Segal, FAIA, both of whom are very successful developer/architects. Fearless, innovative, entrepreneurial, Black architects with vision have a real chance nowadays to break away from the current paradigm of architectural practice where architectural services have become a market commodity subject to the fickle whims of supply and demand. Instead they should pursue unorthodox approaches to practice that engage their creative talents to not only design exciting projects but to develop them from scratch, build them, own and manage them, as well, if they choose to do so. I personally do not believe that Black architects are becoming an endangered species. Respectfully, optimistically, I think the future for Black architects is in the United States is very good and very exciting despite burgeoning economic and political challenges that lay ahead in the near term. ✕



OUR TIME

— JACK TRAVIS, FAIA NOMAC

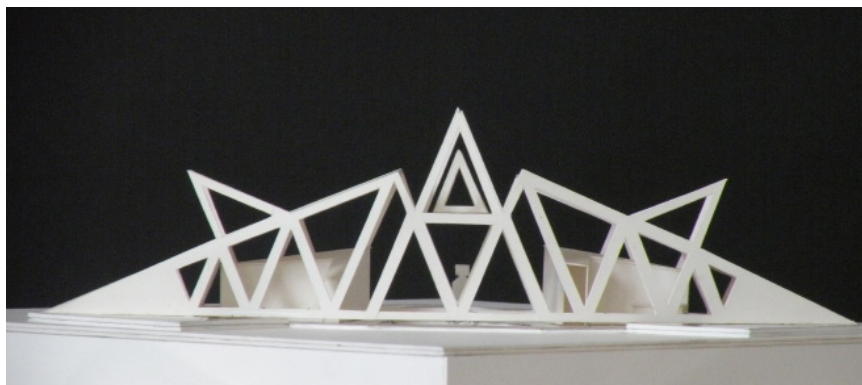
THIS IS A VERY PIVOTAL TIME IN MY RELATIONSHIP TO THE ORGANIZATION SINCE IT WAS IN ATLANTA THAT I ATTENDED MY VERY FIRST NOMA CONFERENCE. IT WAS IN 1991. THE HOST WAS THEN PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. STANLEY III, FAIA NOMAC, AND HIS LIFE AND FIRM PARTNER IVENUE LOVE-STANLEY, FAIA NOMA.

There I met several notable people, colleagues who became and remain friends to this day. Genell Anderson presented her self published book, *The Call of Our Ancestors*. My edited publication, *African American Architects, In Current Practice*, was only a few months away from publication and Stephen Kliment, FAIA, former editor of *Architectural Record* magazine was in attendance and spoke to me of his excitement and anticipation of the book's release. Also present were; research and studio design professors Brad Grant, AIA NOMA and Dennis Mann, AIA NOMA from the University of Cincinnati, Peter Pittman, an extraordinary designer, architectural historian Vinson McKenzie and Dean Harry Robinson III, FAIA NOMA, who would later host the first meeting of the Congress of African American Architects at Howard University.

That was then. Today is a particularly interesting time for NOMA member architects. There have been great strides and many past legacies to celebrate over these last forty years. Those of us who form the "old guard" at this moment in time have celebrated the election of the first black president of the AIA (and of the USA). Alongside those accomplishments has been the selection of what we can arguably term our first group of black "starchitects" to design the coveted National Museum of African American History and Culture for the Mall in Washington, D.C. These and a host of other significant accomplishments by architect of color worldwide are all certainly cause for celebration.

However, history has given this architect reason for a fair amount of skepticism when view and assessing accomplishments by our best and brightest and, what their success actually mean for the collective group in terms of empowerment and opportunity. While I certainly do applaud recent accomplishments I am very cautious and very concerned about what might be lurking on the horizon. One of my primary suspicions is that young and student designers of color, in general, seem to have a real lack of knowledge and understanding of our past legacies and the prevailing attitude amongst their peer group for a multi-cultural society engulfs them. Therefore it is with a good amount of hope and a fair amount of intrepidation that I set out to write this essay on "Our Time".

First of all any discussion of "our time" must begin outside or beyond the profession with the state of the economy. No one needs to remind the NOMA architect of the devastation of the current downturn of the U.S. and world economies. Both have had real impact on our practices and on our lives. It is important to note that the recent recession seems to have had a much greater impact on the NOMA architect in general than it has on majority architects. This should not be surprising nor should it be surprising that the mainstay of our work, that is government contracts, will more than likely be smaller and fewer in between for us going forward as larger and majority firms compete more and more in that sector to stay afloat. Historically this has been true in past recessions and there is little or no reason to think that this trend will not repeat itself in some fashion during this one, the worst in our lifetime.



As competition gets keener and overseas commissions become more of a staple for large and majority firms, I am concerned that a significant number of NOMA architects will find a difficult situation at best even more difficult if not impossible in the future. It is true that I have no concrete data to back up my assertions. I am not sure if that data exists at present. Perhaps we need to have a study conducted on the current state of the NOMA architect, the NOMA firm and the prospects for the future of black design practice. I am reminded of the study Bradford Grant and Dennis Mann conducted back in the early nineties profiling and documenting African American architects and firms.

My own inquiry and research began by questioning a host of NOMA architects at conventions, conferences and seminars on career opportunities, businesses practices, salaries and prospects for future work and growth. Findings were not promising in general. Many were reluctant to express the depth of their situations at first but began to open up more as conversations went on.

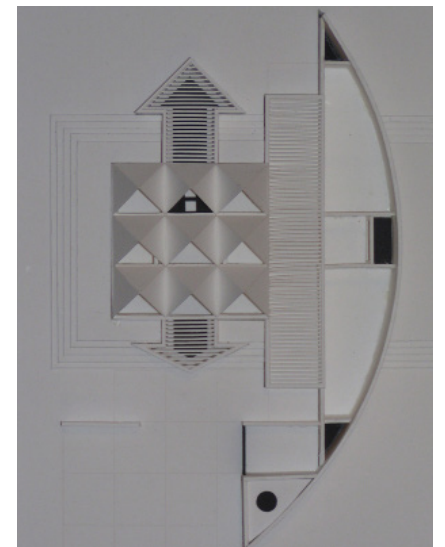
But more important than the clarity with which some individuals spoke about the immediate crisis was the fervent sense that most showed in hope for the near and distant future. I can't remember one single person saying that the situation was so hopeless that they were retiring, giving up or quitting. I found myself in accord. I do think however that as we go forward there will have to be some fundamental changes in the way we seek opportunity and where we seek it. One of the biggest changes might very well be that minority firms will have to find ways to get work beyond our borders. In that regard, one of the fundamental questions posed by prospective clients might be, "why should we hire you?" When contemplating this dilemma, I am personally reminded of this excerpt by St. Louis entrepreneur, Mike Jones when he gave the keynote speech in his hometown at the 2009 NOMA Conference:

"...Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, John Coltrane. Now do me a favor and close your eyes for a moment (pause). Now, imagine how the 20th century would have sounded had they not lived. Given the transformational social impact of music on this country, imagine the United States, without them?"

You see in my opinion whatever passes for original American culture springs from the genius of the Black Aesthetic.

You ask why I bring this up. In doing my research for tonight I was blown away by the myriad types of architecture. They spoke to every human era, and every place on the planet - with a notable exception. There was nothing on Africa. And in the Modern canon of citations on America we were conspicuous by our absence... In the face of the most virulent structural racism, (those musicians) produced, with all due respect to everyone else, what I consider to be the most extraordinary music the world has ever heard... How could they do it? They understood and lived an eternal truth that Shakespeare sums up so well, "To thine own self be true" ... Those musicians I spoke about created music that came only from them. They did not copy or imitate the music of others. In fact anyone who wanted to learn it, understand it, and play it had to come find them... In other words they created a market for themselves and their work?"

While it is true that the first concern of any qualified and competent architect is to render a professional and creative service and product, I am convinced that black architects collectively have a unique challenge to find a point of departure that places demand for our services at a premium. Looking back on some twenty years of attendance at these conferences I am more than convinced that this organization can be the catalyst for just the kind of ideas, theories, practice and education that begins to address this very question and the possibilities of such.



Finally, I'd like to leave the reader with a 4 point of strategy for moving forward collectively:

- 1 Create constant dialogue and an atmosphere around "us as ourselves", in academia and in practice that will create the opportunity for an architectural expression to be borne out of our collective black experience
- 2 Encourage and nurture such a movement by establishing and participating in conferences, panel discussions and seminars if not actual academic curriculums primarily focused on the subject of a black aesthetic
- 3 Collaborate on real and conceptual project proposals with other architects and non-architects of like mind both inside and outside the United states, entering competitions, creating competitions and, at every opportunity, showcase the importance of an investigation of culture paradigms along with sustainable strategies in environmental design
- 4 Mentor students who are interested in environmental design discussing the importance of both culture (Earth Family) and sustainability (Earth Home) as one integrated goal in creating "model" spaces and places for future generations

As the country, and the world for that matter, begin to move beyond "our time", this time to yet another "our time", next time... young architects can certainly find encouragement in the fact that at no other time in history has opportunity been so great. Though my concerns seem real to me, I cannot deny all that has gone before me from those pioneers upon whose shoulders we now stand and the rich possibilities that lay before thanks to the efforts of people like; Max Bond, Phil Freelon, Allison Williams and David Adjaye among others. It is truly a world of global possibilities for us architects of color and the only questions remaining for me are: will there be a collective approach for the black architect, what will it be, how will it manifest, where will it come from and when? ✕



NOMA 2011 atlanta

Architects as Visionaries

Through Imagination, Collaboration, Humanity & Triumph



NOMA

2011 LEGACY SERVICE PROJECT

The 2011 service project worked with the Greater Vine City Opportunities Program, a public-private partnership in Atlanta. GVCOP recently purchased a 100 year old elementary school with plans to convert the building into a green technology global community center.





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