

# NOMA

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF MINORITY ARCHITECTS  
FALL 2013



## Fitting into The New Economy

CONTENTS



NOMA  
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Magazine  
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 **Fitting into the New Economy**

President's Message . . . . . 2

Editor's Page . . . . . 3

Member Highlights . . . . . 4

Chapter Updates. . . . . 5

A Letter from George Bandy Jr,  
Incoming Chairman of the USGBC. . . . . 11

A Conversation with Ted Landsmark. . . . . 12

Transitioning from NOMAS to NOMA –  
the importance of staying involved  
after graduation. . . . . 16

Professional Purgatory:  
staying creative in post-grad limbo . . . . . 17

Watering Design Deserts . . . . . 19

Conquering MEP  
the power of desperation and prayer . . . . . 22

Life Without Fear:  
distilling the spirit of practice . . . . . 24

The Story of DOCKr –  
from idea to product . . . . . 26

Obituaries . . . . . 28

NOMA Officers . . . . . inside back cover

# NOMA: A Tool For You

Kathy Denise Dixon



Kathy Denise Dixon,  
AIA, NOMA,  
LEED AP BD+C

Depression, recession, downturn... no matter what you call it, it hasn't been good for architects. New construction becomes a luxury item when the economy is failing and architects feel the pinch more than others. If the industry is doing poorly, you can be sure that minority architects are severely hurting. Large firms have begun to pursue work that smaller firms have traditionally pursued. As a result smaller firms, most likely to be minority firms, are squeezed to the point of considering closing their doors. What can be done? And how can NOMA help? Below are a few suggestions to individuals and firms seeking to survive the current economy:

## Relocate

I have witnessed a number of individuals who have recognized greener pastures beyond their current location and have taken the initiative to relocate to seek better employment opportunities. The Washington DC Metropolitan area is one location that people target regularly due to its general stability as a result of a federal based economy. This is a drastic

measure, but the people I have seen take this step have found employment and fared well after relocating.

## Create a winning team

Teaming with other firms to pursue projects has become standard operating procedure when it used to occur only in special situations. Today, teaming with other firms is the best method to win projects. Use your network and business development practices to find like-minded firms which provide services that are different from your own, but have skills that enhance your company's marketability. Also, utilize business certifications (i.e. WOSB, Veteran-owned, MBE, DBE etc) to your advantage when seeking teaming arrangements.

## Increase your services

Another strategy for increasing your sales is to increase your services. Do you or your employees have skills that are not being utilized to their fullest in related disciplines (i.e. landscape architecture, planning, graphic design, product design, etc?) If so, consider expanding your architecture firm's business by marketing new services to a wider range of potential clients.

## How can NOMA help?

NOMA's member network reaches across the United States covering 22 professional chapters. Whether you are looking to relocate to a new area, find a team partner for a project, or are seeking advice regarding how to add services to your existing business, there is a NOMA member that has the knowledge and experience to assist you. I encourage you to reach out to other members who perhaps have experienced similar struggles during the recession, but have excelled nonetheless. Take time to reach out and connect with your NOMA colleagues to build upon what's already been established.

The economy is indeed improving. The DOW Jones average has hit a number of record highs already this year. If the worst of the downturn is over, then one only needs to survive the economy a little longer before it's business as usual. Remember that you are not alone...NOMA was founded partly based on the idea that there is strength in numbers. I encourage you to tap into that strength and connect with your fellow colleagues. Join NOMA, attend the conference, expand your network, share ideas, and most importantly, *thrive!* ○

Join NOMA,  
attend the  
conference,  
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# My Personal Economic Downturn

Katherine Williams



Katherine Williams,  
AIA, NOMA

We all know  
that our  
industry  
has been hard  
hit over the  
last 5 years...

President Obama gave a "major" speech on the economy. I am sure many architects listened closely. We all know that our industry has been hard hit over the last 5 years as the banking collapse eventually led to an enormous decline in construction.

Personally, I am late to experience the effects of the economic downturn. Despite having enjoyed steady employment in architecture for over almost twelve years, I have for the last two summers not been employed full-time. In 2012, by choice, I did not work full-time in order to be on family leave to take care of my mother. This summer, I experienced my first layoff.

I know that I am not alone in navigating this new path, but I had a mix of feelings over the layoff.

I was hurt by they manner in which I was notified, since I considered my boss to be both a friend and mentor. I was asked not to discuss my layoff with other staff because they had not been

notified that the firm may have had to layoff or furlough additional staff.

I was disappointed that I didn't have more time of notice. When a major project ended months before, my boss gave no indication that he was taking a hard look at cutting staff in the near future.

I felt naïve for not knowing the status of projects that I thought were moving forward, when in fact they were moving so slowly that they were, for all intents and purpose, on hold. I have worked for organizations where the books were discussed regularly in staff meetings to keep staff aware of the fiscal health of the organization. That was not the case in this situation.

With all of that, I am happy to present this issue of the NOMA magazine, which focuses on surviving the economic downturn. The articles presented give stories and perspectives on how today's architects are weathering the storm. George Bandy, Jr. highlights USGBC's expansion and opportunities created by a partnership with NOMA. Thalia Lewis sat down with Ted Landsmark to get his perspective and survival tips for today's students, universities, and

architects. Nenha Young reminds us of the importance of staying connected. Devanne Pena writes about how she coped with the "purgatory" between graduating and securing her first job. Deanne Van Buren encourages architects to look toward "design deserts" for new work, like she has done, while Megan Kent gives us an example of a firm doing just that. Garfield Peart describes his experience taking the ARE exam - a step many of us take to help secure our careers. Louis Smith reinforces the notion of knowing yourself in order to succeed.

I also encourage you to check out the Chapter updates to see what local chapters are doing and get new ideas for your own chapters.

Do you have suggestions or just want to share your stories about the economy? Contact us through Facebook or Twitter (@NOMArchitects). You can also contact me directly.

Katherine Williams  
Magazine@noma.net ○

- As in year's past, NOMA hosted a reception at the **2013 AIA National Convention** in Denver. A booth was also on the expo floor informing attendees about NOMA.



- FAIA: **Charyl F. McAfee-Duncan** and **Terrence E. O'Neal** were inducted as Fellows in the American Institute of Architects.
- PhilaNOMA member and corresponding secretary, **Tiffany Millner** proudly served for a second year in a row as the Co-MC for the Women In Architecture Dinner at the 2013 AIA Conference in Denver this past June!
- Members participated in the Diversity Council Closing Reception and After-Party at 2013 AIA National Convention. **Stephonie Brackett** served as MC and **Antoine Bryant** moderated. The event honored multicultural members recently inducted into the AIA College of Fellows as well as the 2013 Whitney M. Young Jr. Award recipient **Harvey Gantt**, FAIA, and 2013 AIA Diversity Recognition Program recipients AIA Buffalo/WNY Architecture + Education Program and NOMA Louisiana Project Pipeline program.

- Atlanta's **Oscar L. Harris, Jr.** has chronicled his 40 years of experience in a new book, "Oscar: A Memoir of a Master Architect". He explains how he built his business, Turner Associates, from nothing to one of the most successful and diverse firms in America. He gives insight into what it took to revitalize Underground Atlanta, re-build major government buildings and justice centers, retail centers, create "the look" of the 1996 Olympic Games and so much more. He was recently featured on NBC as one of the Griot's 100 Most Influential because of his work in founding the Atlanta Center for Creative Inquiry, focusing on young people. Oscar will be making numerous appearances and doing book signings this fall.



- J.W. Robinson & Associates, Inc.**'s expertise and commitment to historic rehabilitation and renovation was recognized, in being the recent recipient of the prestigious 2013 Excellence in Rehabilitation Award from the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation. The 15,613sf Huntington Hall, located on



the campus of Fort Valley State University, was originally built in 1908. J.W. Robinson & Associates, Inc. facilitated professional design services for this two phased project. [www.jwrobinson.com](http://www.jwrobinson.com).

- Prescott Reavis** and **Katherine Williams** teamed up in New York City this past June to present at the Just Metropolis conference sponsored by Planners Network and Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility. With **Dr Shirl Buss**, they presented on engaging youth as civic activists in the design and redevelopment of public housing in San Francisco. [justmetropolis.org](http://justmetropolis.org)

- May 2013. Secretary of the Interior approved the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Management plan. **The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor**, established by federal legislation in 2006, is the only one of 49 National Heritage Areas that promotes the living culture of an African American population. It spans the coastal communities from Wilmington, North Carolina, through South Carolina and Georgia, to St. Augustine, Florida. [www.gullahgeecheecorridor.org](http://www.gullahgeecheecorridor.org)



**DC NOMA**

**January:**

Meet and greet the new DC|NOMA E-Board - Attendees met the new E-Board and shared their thoughts for desired seminars and events for 2013.

**February:**

DC|NOMA & African American Real Estate Professionals (AAREP) presented a Black History Month networking happy hour. This event highlighted the achievements of area minority firms and created an atmosphere to mingle and network.

**March:**

Women in Architecture Lecture Series. The four-part series was given from a woman's perspective to encourage and empower women in the architecture field to engage in business, politics and family life. This was a joint venture with AIA|DC Emerging Architects, AIA Northern Virginia Woman in Architecture Committee, DCNOMA and AIA Diversity and Inclusion Council.

**April:**

Firm Highlight for Marshall Moya Design. MMD spoke to a room of professionals about the diversity of design within their firm as well as within their projects and project types.

**May:**

HumanScale. This seminar offered guidance on designing healthy work environments. The course explored current client oriented challenges in proactively addressing ergonomic concerns and seeks to bridge the gap between workplace aesthetics and functionality. Participants learned how ergonomic principles are being applied to the design of computer workstations to reduce employee discomfort and risk of injury

while lowering employer costs. Information on how organizations can earn LEED-CI credits through the implementation of an ergonomics program were provided.

**June:**

Joint tours & networking. Young Professionals from AGC, AIA NOVA, AIA NOMA, AIA DC, SEA and ASHRAE toured a great project at City Center followed by networking at Capitol City Brewing Company.

**NOMA Detroit**

**May:**

NOMA-Detroit launched a new initiative called Professional Open Houses (POH). The inaugural POH event was held in May at ME Designs, LLC. The POH Program will help to achieve NOMA-Detroit's mission to be the voice, the vehicle for advancement and resource for minorities in and affected by the practice of architecture in the Detroit Metropolitan area and southeast Michigan. POH Program events seek to bring together minority architectural firms, professionals, architectural interns, pre-college level students, and majority architectural offices to display their accomplishments, interact, mentor and network at one event. Intern Development Program (IDP) credits may be available for

interns attending these events in the future.

**June:**

The chapter honored high school students who participated in the Detroit Housing Commission (DHC) Mentoring Program sponsored by The Habitat Company and Hamilton Anderson Associates. Over the course of 9 weeks students were introduced to careers in architecture at Hamilton Anderson Associates offices in Detroit. More specifically, they were asked to create their own vision of what should replace Douglass Homes. Students were taught Sketch Up, a computer-aided-design software tool, in order to create 3 dimensional CAD models illustrating their design vision. Participants will receive a certificate of completion, a portfolio containing color prints of their work, a list of members of NOMA-Detroit and a letter of recommendation for use in application to a local design school or entry level job. The





Habitat Company and Hamilton Anderson Associates are sponsoring the program as part of a unique method for meeting their US Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 3 obligations. With the completion of the program, registration will begin for the next class.

### HNOMA

HNOMA has been in the forefront of a battle with the Houston Independent School district regarding the use of 100% black owned architecture firms based in Houston. After no African-American owned firms were awarded project as part of the dispersal of \$1.24

billion in projects funded by a bond measure approved by voters. Several of the schools have historically served African American populations. None of the Houston based African American architecture firms owned solely by African Americans were invited to interview for the four African American high schools that are being rebuilt. Contact the chapter directly for updates and to find out how you can help their efforts.

### INOMA

The first half of 2013 has been very productive for INOMA. At the beginning of the year the chapter welcomed a new president, Naaman Landers III, and a new executive board. Under new leadership the chapter established a mission to promote and serve. Beginning the year the chapter highlighted the accomplishments of current and former members and had a special tribute to Barbara Laurie. INOMA also held its annual portfolio review for students at the University of Illinois at Chicago in April, providing valuable feedback and inspiration to participating juniors and seniors. The chapter also supported Arquitectos at its annual bowling fundraiser, continuing the long standing relationship with the organization of Hispanic architects. We didn't place this year (we were robbed) but we will get them next year.

The summer months are active times for INOMA. In July we hosted our first annual Jazz Night Fundraiser. All monies collected go towards scholarships, which are awarded at the chapter's holiday party in December. Project Pipeline is the other major event of the summer where we have expanded the curriculum to include urban planning. The event is held at Chicago State University's Aquaponics Lab. INOMA continues to work on behalf of its members and promote the profession in the community and throughout the state.

### NOMA Memphis

During 2013 the momentum of the chapter has been somewhat interrupted by the continuing challenges of the local economy. This is our fourth year as a NOMA Chapter and we continue to focus on establishing the presence of the chapter within the City of Memphis. The primary obstacle we must overcome is how to best sustain the interest and involvement of the local members. Fortunately, recent graduates have expressed interest in taking a leadership role.

In June NOMA Memphis assisted with the Discover Architecture Summer Camp. This exciting Summer Day Camp was developed for High School Students who are interested in learning more about the art and science of

design. University of Memphis and the Memphis Chapter of AIA also sponsor. NOMA Firm, Self + Tucker Architects hosted a visit from the campers coordinated by chapter members Mario Walker and Tiffany Mayhew. Chapter President, Jimmie Tucker, participated in the critique of the students' design projects during Discover Architecture Final Review.

Patricia Quist Thurston continues to develop the NOMA Memphis presence on FaceBook. Please become a Friend of NOMA Memphis.

During the remainder of 2013, we will work diligently to grow the chapter and develop our leadership structure. We will hold a chapter meeting in August and we plan to hold elections for new officers in September.



### PhilaNOMA

This year, PhilaNOMA celebrates TWENTY years of service to the design community. As tribute to our chapter's successful past and future, we recently completed our first official Strategic Plan. The process included charting our 20 year history, and engaging members in visioning, assessment and chapter planning. The 2-year plan addresses such issues as membership, financial structure, chapter operations, fundraising, programming, partnerships, and community outreach. Now armed with a vision for the future, the chapter is already heading in new and promising directions.

#### Conference 2014 planning:

Earlier this year, PhilaNOMA members were excited to begin planning for the NOMA 2014 Conference which will take place in Philadelphia! We kicked off the effort with a Conference Planning Happy Hour in February 2013, and a Conference Theme Charrette in March where members brainstormed the overall concept and title for NOMA's 42nd Annual Conference. Since then, the 2014 Conference Committee has been busy, but, this has not slowed down our monthly events!

#### March: Leadership: A

#### Conversation with Women VIPs.

PhilaNOMA partnered with the Women in Architecture (WIA) committee of AIA Philadelphia to host a joint panel. The event highlighted the experiences and achievements of women who have made significant contributions to the architecture and design fields through organizational leadership. Speakers included our very own Kathy Dixon- NOMA President, Kate Wingert-Playdon, Chair, Temple U. Architecture Dept,

and Beth Miller, Executive Dir., Community Design Collaborative.

**April: Student Firm Crawl.**

Local firms opened their doors for architecture and design students to showcase their most noteworthy projects and tour their workspaces. Students participated from Temple U., Drexel, Philadelphia U., University of Pennsylvania, and N.J.I.T.

**May: Speed Mentoring.**

With a similar format as speed dating, this event provided design professionals the opportunity to network while providing and receiving mentorship in a fast and fun format. Participants from Students to Emerging Professionals to Seasoned Professionals had to "mentor up" and/or "mentor down".

**June: Design Day with PhilaNOMA.**

This collaboration with the STEM Program of the Philadelphia School District was hosted at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. Members Michael Spain and Uchenna Okere led over 20 students in a design activity to re-imagine their school, using fun materials such as spaghetti and marshmallows. PhilaNOMA continues to work with the school district to develop future STEM focused programs.

**July: Peer Review.**

This will engage all members in the chapter's "Community Design Intervention" initiative. Chapter members are working on a pro-bono conceptual design for the New Africa Community Center in West Philadelphia.

**July, August: CAMP Sustain.Ability.** PhilaNOMA looks forward to the sixth year of its Project Pipeline program, which will run on Saturdays from July 27- August 24, 2013 at Temple University.

**October: OFF THE CLOCK.**

An annual Art Expo + Networking event which will showcase the hidden, and not so hidden talents of our members.

**SFNOMA**

NOMA's Bay area chapter, SFNOMA, has been putting on a number of great events always packed with new and insightful information for members and non-members alike. SFNOMA's Annual Lecture Series which included the African American Lecture, the Asian American Lecture, and the upcoming Latino Lecture (to be part of the Architecture in the City Festival) was created to foster a growing critical dialogue about minority architects making valuable contributions in architecture, design and education. This year they've enriched these dialogs with SFNOMA's Conversations blog series. Here they encourage members to continue these critical conversations with the greater online community.

Along with SFNOMA's Lecture series and blog, the chapter has sponsored special events for its members. From student firm crawls, private guest lecture receptions with the likes of Teddy Cruz and SFNOMA's Local Event Spotlight Series, which encourages members to get involved in different design events around the bay area. SFNOMA is also proud to host their 4th Annual Project Pipeline, Architectural Summer Camp in July. This 4-Day intensive studio based program introduces middle school students (ages 11-14) to the profession of architecture. Students will learn and practice model making, architectural drawing, sketching, critical thinking and public speaking skills during this fun and challenging program. SFNOMA continues to provide valuable resources for the professional and creative growth of the bay area design community of color.

**PhilaU NOMAS**

In 2013, PhilaU NOMAS became the first established NOMA student chapter in the city of Philadelphia, with its mission to create a stronger sense of community among minority architecture students and champion diversity among the student body of Philadelphia University College of Architecture and the Built Environment. Through our strong dedication and engagement to the education and professional development of our members, we aim to curate the next generation of minority architecture and design professionals to become active mentors and an effective source of inspiration to the future generations of architects and designers of the Philadelphia community.

**January:**

In conjunction with the 18th Annual Greater Philadelphia Martin Luther King Day of Service, PhilaU NOMAS launched its first community service event partnering with PhilaNOMA on the renovation of Philadelphia Housing Authority's Spring Garden Apartments. Projects included interior painting, exterior cleanup and other beautification activities. Phila NOMA and PhilaUNOMAS launched a Professional Mentorship Program pairing chapter members with practicing professionals in the Greater Philadelphia Area to develop long-term relationships between design practitioners and students.

**April:**

First Student Firm Crawl + Networking Reception to expose current college architecture and design students to the management of large and small sized architectural firms such as WRT, Francis Cauffman, JKR Partners, TMH Associates, BLT Architects and KlingStubbins.

**Summer 2013:**

Members provided organizational support and volunteered as studio assistants as part of Phila NOMA Project Pipeline's Camp Sustain.Ability for middle school students focusing on sustainable architecture and design.

**2013 – 2014:**

PhilaU NOMAS will be working on increasing its campus presence and membership through monthly joint meetings with PhilaU AIAS and Freedom By Design. The chapter will be launching its Diversity Talk Series as a dialogue on the issue of "diversity" in architecture and design on national, local and campus scales through lenses of students, administrators and practicing professionals.

For updates on our activities and events, visit our webpage: <http://nomasphilau.wordpress.com/>

**Tuskegee University  
3rd Annual AIAS Career Focus  
2013-2014**

Career Focus is an event that aims to better our students' skills when acquiring internships and jobs as well as exposing our architecture and construction science students to the professional world and view of surrounding architects, contractors, and related fields. Activities during Career Focus include seminars, lectures, panel discussions, interviews, studio crawls, and much more. This event will be held during the weeks of October 7 - 11, 2013 and February 24 - 28, 2014 and your participation is strongly encouraged. If you need more information, please contact Taneisha Gordon at [taneishagordon@gmail.com](mailto:taneishagordon@gmail.com).

See the latest news from NOMA chapters at [noma.net](http://noma.net).



**CHICAGO!**

**AIA Convention 2013  
June 26-28  
Chicago, Illinois**

*NOMA reception at the 2013 AIA convention by Claudene Pierre*



# A Letter to NOMA



George Bandy, Jr., Vice President of Sustainability at Interface, believes that looking at opportunities to position environmental, economic and socially responsible solutions for customers can set the standard for other businesses to follow, resulting in a brighter future for us all. He serves on the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) Board of Directors as Chair-Elect and has been active in national and local leadership since its founding in 1995. George was instrumental in the formation of a national partnership between NOMA and USGBC.

## Fitting into the New Economy

Birthdays and anniversaries are milestones that present us with the opportunity to reflect on the past, celebrate the present and look forward to the future. This year the U.S. Green Building Council celebrates twenty years of transformation. We celebrate what started as a dream and became a fundamental shift in the building industry - transforming the way we design, construct, operate and maintain our buildings. This change has catapulted into a global movement and emerging trend for the international built environment. This celebration is personally an exciting time for me as the incoming Chairman of the Board of Directors for USGBC. Over the last twenty years, USGBC has led the global green building movement.

The growth of the market place has been exponential. Every day 1.5 million square feet of space becomes

LEED certified. The impact on the building market has been incredible! LEED is referenced in specifications for 71% of projects that are valued at \$50 million. By 2015, an estimated 40-48% of new, non-residential construction by value will be green. This equates to a \$120-145 billion opportunity. In addition, the results are yielding improved worker productivity in businesses, improved test scores in schools and healthier communities for 'tomorrow's child'. As design professionals, this potential presents opportunity and a hope for a more sustainable future.

This incredible opportunity goes beyond 'the new' as we re-invest in our existing buildings and communities to improve and reinvigorate amazing spaces with energy efficiency and improved operations. Did you know that approximately 61% of all construction projects are retrofits? By 2015, the green share of the largest non-residential retrofit and renovation activity will more than triple, growing to 25-33% of the activity by value—a \$14-18 billion opportunity in major construction projects alone.

Have we arrived? The market has clearly seen the economic opportunity and embraced greener building practices. Looking to the organizational vision, I clearly see we have not yet arrived, and there is a tremendous amount of work left to do. We must focus our sites to position ALL buildings and communities to be environmentally sustainable, socially responsible, healthy, and

economically prosperous. This bold vision will only be realized when we improve the quality of life for all.

So what's next?

The energy and passion connected to the opportunity of "what's next" is breathtaking. As Americans we spend 90% of our time inside buildings. Yet, indoor air quality can be 4-5 times more polluted than outdoor air quality. The quality of our buildings and neighborhoods has a big impact on our health. A 2008 report shows that 15,000 U.S. schools suffer from indoor air that is unfit to breathe. While green building has strong roots in economic and environmental performance, it offers vitally important benefits for human health and well-being. Rick Fedrizzi said it best, "Healthy places are a human right!". We kicked off a new strategic focus on human health in 2013 with the Green Building & Human Health Summit. We aim to emphasize role of the built environment's impact on human health through research, advances in LEED v4 and an ongoing dialog with professionals and the public.

Further, we are expanding our mission beyond individual buildings by embracing the larger built environment. We're broadening our discussion of sustainability to also include a more focused approach to social equity. We move closer to accomplishing our vision by respecting all communities and cultures, and holding the aspiration to be a fully inclusive movement. We are mobilizing the vast USGBC Community to move the dial. We demand healthier, more productive buildings and communities locally, regionally and globally. Human health starts the conversation within a single building. Social health and human opportunity expand the dialog at the neighborhood level and beyond.

We embrace these opportunities that broaden and expand our reach through initiatives and partnerships with organizations like NOMA. Having diverse voices in the movement and perspectives at the table leads us towards a better future. This is the same engaging spirit that brought an unlikely mix of business and environmental leaders together to form the green building movement twenty years ago. If you're not already engaged, we urge you to make a difference by joining the revolution this fall at Greenbuild 2014 in Philadelphia.

Passionately yours,

George Bandy Jr.  
Incoming Chairman of the USGBC

# A Conversation with Ted Landsmark

Thalia Lewis

Because architects and designers know how to take ideas and put them into useful material form, they are now emerging both within traditional firms and outside of traditional firms as key planners of the built environment.



Thalia Lewis is an M.Arch. candidate at Boston Architectural College, and graduate of McGill University in Montreal, Canada. Ms. Lewis is a past member of the NOMA Board of Directors.

In July of this year, NOMA Magazine Assistant Editor Thalia Lewis sat down with Dr. Theodore C. Landsmark, M.Env.D., J.D., PH.D., Assoc. AIA, D.F.A. (Hon.), President of Boston Architectural College since 1997, and current President of the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB). In their conversation, Dr. Landsmark offers his thoughts on how the nation's design schools are preparing students for the existing and upcoming challenges of the industry, and how the recent economic downturn has affected design professionals of color.

**How do you think a design education prepares a student for the instability of our profession in difficult economic times?**

One thing that graduates of design programs learn is that they need to be agile and open-minded about emerging career options. This is an extraordinarily creative time for emerging design professionals. Even though traditional work in architecture and interior design firms is increasing to its highest level in several years, right now opportunities are available to new graduates to enter fields that would have been unimaginable as recently as five or six years ago.

**For example...?**

For example, it would not likely have occurred to architecture school graduates that they seek

employment with software companies that are designing "smart cities," or with entrepreneurial start-ups, designing new apps being used by urban planners, realtors, or retailers. But the emergence of new ways of pulling data from "the cloud," and applying that data towards important design purposes, has created opportunities for entrepreneurial design school graduates to make career paths outside of the traditional profession in ways that are proving very useful to traditional practitioners.

There are examples in cities like San Francisco, where "big data" is enabling municipal planners to project energy usage and traffic flows, and to make use of building data, so that they're saving owners money and making environments more comfortable for their users. Because architects and designers

know how to take ideas and put them into useful material form, they are now emerging both within traditional firms and outside of traditional firms as key planners of the built environment.

Non-traditional design firms IDEO, and non-traditional design schools like The D.School at Stanford are bringing together traditionally trained designers, clients, engineers, medical planners, economists, and others working on the built environment, to plan projects as small as the layout of aisles in retail shopping malls, and as large as the development of new cities in China. And the skills that design graduates develop while they're in school are immediately useful to planners and clients who are looking for innovative ways of improving the built environment.

**In preparation for assuming your role as the President of NAAB, in the past year you've visited numerous design schools across the country, as well as several international schools. Do you think that the existing curriculum in most traditional schools is preparing students to be agile, entrepreneurial, and flexible in the way that you've described?**

The existing curricular structure is flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of ways of teaching. No one would confuse a school like Sci-Arc, which is fundamentally

committed to the development of new physical forms with, for example, the Boston Architectural College, which has a fundamental commitment to preparing graduates to enter practice. And yet both schools received full accreditation. [Many different kinds of ] schools in the United States and abroad, have found innovative ways of asserting specialized identities as they are educating designers.

So the problem—in terms of creativity and innovation—is not necessarily the structure that the existing accreditation standards provide: The problem seems to be... a perception among some faculty members and program leaders that the accreditation standards are a box within they must live, rather than a platform that enables them to launch creative and innovative ways of teaching, in both form and substance. In developing more refined standards of accreditation, NAAB is trying to provide incentives for schools to use the creativity that both exists in the schools, and is implied within the accreditation standards.

Students have been fundamental in bringing about changes to the accreditation standards, by asking for studio culture standards that mandate that faculty show respect for students, and by strongly encouraging schools to address issues of sustainability, handicapped

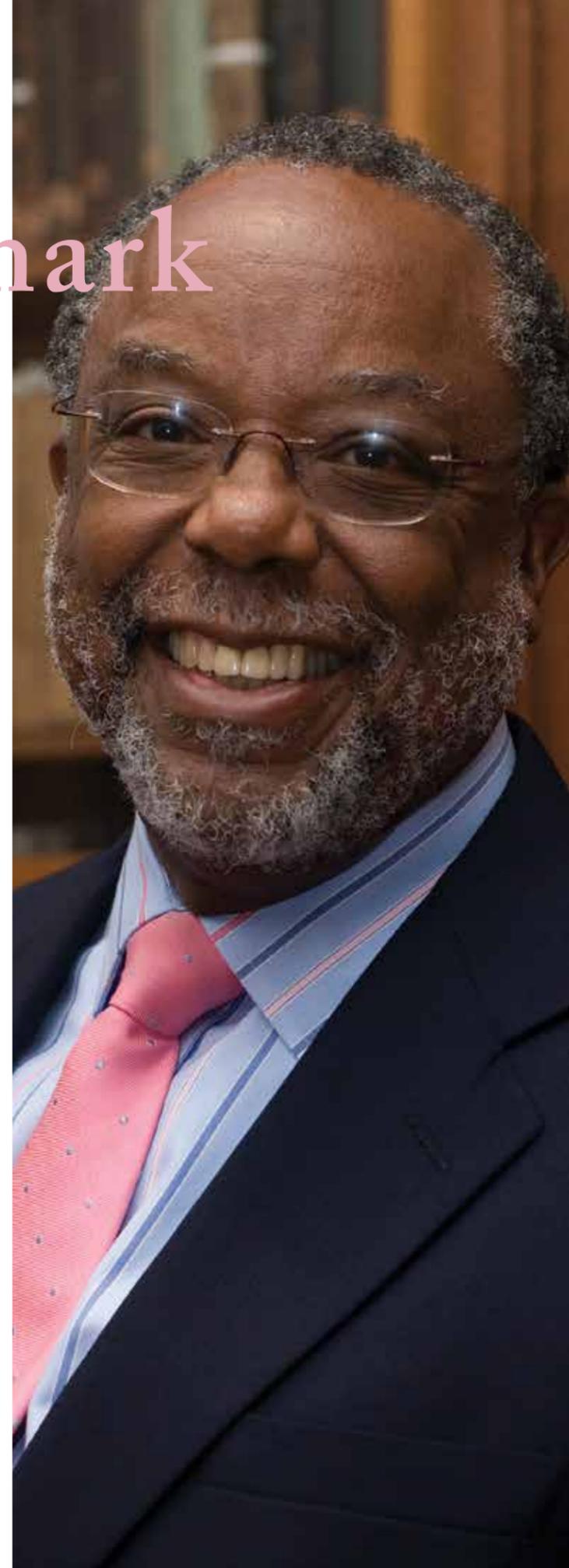
accessibility, and service to individuals who might not otherwise receive service from designers.

**Do any schools' programs or projects specifically come to mind?**

The community outreach programs at the University of Arkansas, University of Detroit-Mercy, the BAC, Tulane, the Rural Studio at Auburn University, and the Texas schools that have worked with migrant workers. These are very strong examples of how students have worked effectively and collaboratively with faculty on behalf of underserved communities. Students who participate in community service projects have opportunities to work directly with clients to develop sensibilities about different cultures, and about the needs of diverse groups of clients. They graduate with a better sense of what it really means to translate a client's needs into design solutions that are useful as well as innovative.

**In what ways should NOMAS' emerging professionals be preparing to face impending changes in the industry?**

The emerging markets for design will be in places like Africa, Latin America, and large parts of Asia, where client needs will not be the same as is traditionally taught in programs with Northern European design biases. Students graduat-



ing from schools now need to think about what it will mean to be a successful practitioner in East Africa or Brazil ten or fifteen years from now, as well as thinking about how one might apply Northern European design principles to solutions that meet both ergonomic and aesthetic challenges.

**When one designs for an individual who would be considered handicapped, one is designing for everyone.**

The way we think about materials and building methods cannot be dictated entirely by current Western standards for the use of labor and materials. *It might once have been sufficient for students to visit [a region's] classical architecture to feel that they had acquired knowledge of what it was like to design and build for a different culture at a different time. But truly global practices, today and into the future, will require an understanding of what the needs of cultures*

*will be fifteen years from now, in places where there may not be classical examples remaining to provide insight into the needs of those cultures.*

Graduates of programs now need to be well-grounded in traditional ways of thinking about design, but also need to apply their creativity to the use of both natural and manmade resources in order to meet the needs of larger populations, in cities with different manufacturing, mobility, and recreational needs than may have been required in the past. They need to think about what it means to design... a traditional hospital, but also what it means to design a neighborhood or rural facility that can provide the same basic services without the same reliance on heavy equipment or technology.

**So, for emerging professionals, it's about learning to operate globally, with a different resource base, and being able to accommodate that, and understand that...?**

That's right. And what might once have been viewed as impediments to successful design—for example, an unskilled labor pool—may sometimes prove to be a great advantage, because it can create an opportunity to educate a group of workers. The architect or designer... leaves behind

a legacy of well-trained local people who can develop their own design solutions, moving forward. The role of the architect or designer therefore changes from "all-knowing expert," to facilitator of the development of local design solutions that are most appropriate for those particular clients. I would refer people to the book *Design Like You Give a Damn*, and the exhibition at the Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum that emphasized the use of indigenous materials and local creativity as essential to developing successful design solutions.

The other thing I would say is... a lot of the work that designers will have to do will be for individuals who previously might not have been as fully integrated into society as they are today.

**For instance, aging people, and people with limited mobility.**

Yes. At the Accrediting Board, we were all disappointed to see how many programs produce students who had studied the elements of handicapped accessibility, but were unable to integrate that learning fully into their designs. When one designs for an individual who would be considered handicapped, one is designing for everyone. And maintaining that sensibility is an important element of design. We're not designing

large-scale sculptures and landscapes, we're designing spaces that have to be used by a wide variety of individuals of different ages, heights, and abilities to negotiate space.... The need for that sensibility should be a starting point for design, and not something that one adds on, as an afterthought.

I was a studio critic last summer at the Bauhaus, and a young Englishwoman produced all of her renderings with typical pregnant women as the individuals using the space. When asked why, she said, "If you can design a space that works well for a pregnant woman, you can pretty much design a space that will work well for everyone. If you think about a pregnant woman as your client, it will fundamentally change the way you design." (Laughs) We were all very much impressed with her sensibility in that regard.

**Lastly, do you think the economy over the past few years posed a more difficult challenge—or perhaps simply a different kind of challenge—for minority design professionals?**

The recent recession was, I think, particularly difficult for architects and designers of color; because many were working in smaller firms that lacked the capitalization or the access to specialized markets that would

enable them to survive the severe downturn. Also, the large wave of corporate consolidations and takeovers by large firms of smaller firms reflected in part a shake-out of the industry: efforts to bring greater efficiency and higher levels of productivity out of fewer people. And while, on paper, that may have been good for the economy, it was not necessarily good for smaller practitioners and designers of color:

**...the work that designers will have to do will be for individuals who previously might not have been as fully integrated into society as they are today.**

[The recession] also had an impact on enrollments at HBCUs, many of which struggled mightily to survive an economy where there were fewer viable job prospects for

graduates, and so enrollments declined. The industry responded by consolidating many firms: schools have not responded in the same way. So while overall enrollments have declined, and now stabilized, the number of architecture programs has continued to increase. And that means that some programs must be really struggling at this moment. At the Accrediting Board, we've tried to be particularly sensitive to that.

We're looking forward to what the economy will be like in three, five, or eight years. And while no one can fully predict that, we've certainly learned that programs need flexibility—to be agile and to be able adjust to changing circumstances—and that accreditation standards cannot be applied so restrictively that programs cannot make adjustments as may be necessary. That means, among other things, that we're changing how we look at online programs; how we look at education that takes place between and among schools; how we look at the role of community colleges; and how we look at the overall cost of design education, so that we're not nurturing a small number of elitist schools to the detriment of schools that are in a position to provide an education to individuals who are less well-off economically. ○

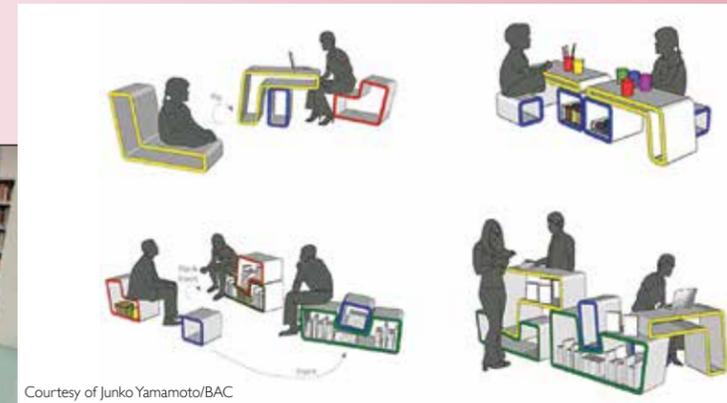


**Carter School**  
Community Service: Boston Architectural College students design improvements for the William E. Carter School in Lower Roxbury, MA, a 2010 Gateway Project.



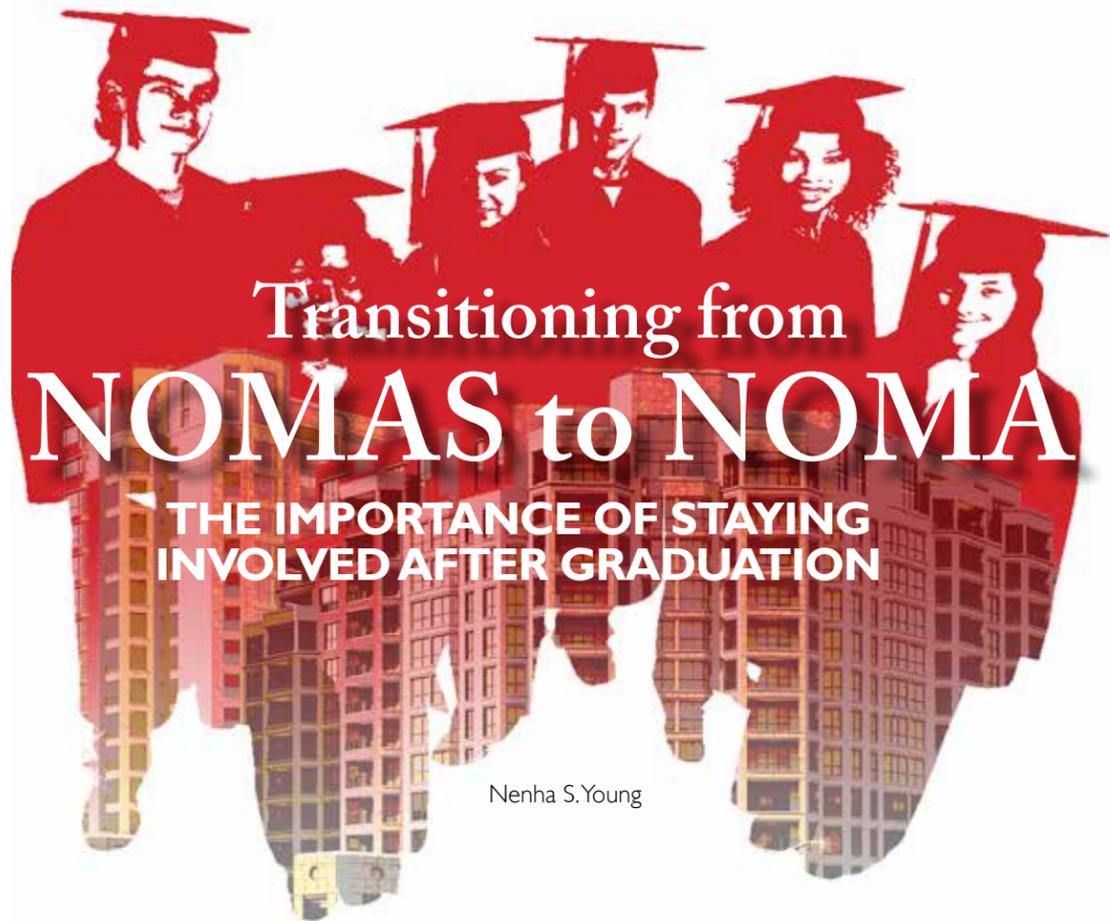
Photos Courtesy of Boston Architectural College

Courtesy of Bonica Ayala/BAC



Courtesy of Junko Yamamoto/BAC

**Chinatown Lantern Reading Room**  
Community Service: Boston Architectural College students design and fabricate furniture for the Chinatown Lantern Reading Room, in Boston MA, a 2012 Gateway Project.



# Transitioning from NOMAS to NOMA

## THE IMPORTANCE OF STAYING INVOLVED AFTER GRADUATION

Nenha S. Young



Nenha Young is currently a UDream Fellow at Carnegie Mellon University. She received her Bachelors of Science in Urban and Regional Studies with a minor in Architecture and Dance in August 2012. She aspires to use her passion for service and design to create social change.

I joined the National Organization of Minority Architects Students (NOMAS) during my sophomore year at Cornell University. As a freshman in the Urban and Regional Studies program, a pre-professional Urban Planning course, I wasn't exposed to design. I was entrenched in a policy heavy curriculum and I felt that something was missing in my undergraduate education.

One day as I was walking through the main building of the College of Architecture, Art, and Planning (AAP), Sibley, as I did every day I noticed something different

on display along the walls of the corridor. On the architecture side of Sibley the walls are lined with cork boards and are painted stark white from floor to ceiling. Students and faculty use these walls to display various studio projects. The display I saw that day was dark and mysterious. There were sleek architectural drawings and beautiful renderings. But what stood out most of all were the images of the students featured in this display. They were all members of the Cornell Chapter of NOMAS. The school displayed their winning entry for the 2008 NOMA Student Design Competition.

From that day on I was hooked! A few of my friends were already members so it was very easy for me to join. At the time I joined I wasn't an architecture student. Being part of NOMAS was one of my first exposures to architecture in an undergraduate setting. As a member of NOMAS I attended the annual conference, participated

in the student design competition, served as Student Representative and learned how to network with other students and professionals.

Transitioning from NOMAS to NOMA coincides with the pivotal transition from being a student to becoming a professional. I attribute my success in finding opportunities after I graduated to my continued relationship with NOMA. Currently, I am completing a fellowship at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I discovered this program during a NOMA conference and a NOMA member wrote me a recommendation.

The level of compassion and dedication of this organization to the advancement of people of color in the field of architecture and its allied professions is unlike any other. It's important to stay involved in all stages of your life. ○

# Professional Purgatory

## Staying Creative in Post-Grad Limbo

Devanne Pena



Devanne Pena is an Assistant Project Manager and Intern Architect in Laredo, Texas. In 2011, she received her Bachelor of Environmental Design in Architecture and Bachelor of Architecture in 2012 from North Carolina State University. She is an assistant editor of NOMA Magazine, and a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated as well as AIA Laredo.

I was absolutely sure I'd secure an intern architect position by the time I graduated in May 2012. Like many of my colleagues, this was not the case. To date, my resume+portfolio samples, put in the care of many a human resource office, are too many to count (but I'd estimate around 100). Well, it's not what you know, it's who you know, correct? It is my personal testimony that this "fact of life" is not without perforation. This article will not serve as a "how to-", being that paths toward success are relative to the individual. But rather, it is a "how I-", to perhaps bring inspiration to the motivated reader in maintaining one's prowess as an unemployed design thinker after earning a professional degree in Architecture.

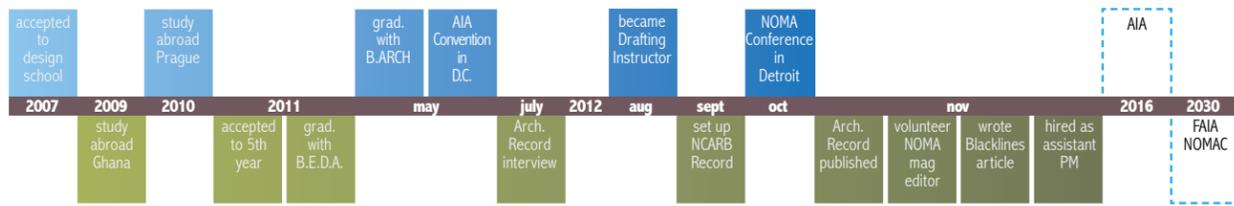
David Evans, executive director, renowned National Geographic photographer and fellow North Carolina State University alumni, validated a life tenant of mine in his commencement speech to the 2012 graduating class of the College of Design.

*"...Not having a plan is not the same thing as not being prepared... And not having a plan is not the same thing as having no ambition, or not wanting to accomplish great things.*

*But not having a plan is one way to make yourself available when the universe whispers that it has something special for you, and it frees you up to say yes when the universe plots random dots on the map of your life that you may only connect years or decades later."*

— Evans, David.  
"Spring Commencement 2012 – Evans Explains the Importance of Saying YES." Design-Life-What's Happening At The College Of Design. North Carolina State University, 15 May 2012. Web. 25 Nov. 2012.





The latter paragraph sums up my efforts thus far. I had been teaching high school drafting since August 2012 (three months after graduating) and a month before my students' semester was over, I heard the universe again. I accepted an offer at an architecture firm as an assistant project manager. I got this position by staying in my classroom after school let out and applying to jobs everyday. I set up email alerts with the AIA Career Center, redesigned my portfolio sample based on critique from architects I met at my first NOMA Conference, and relied on the Law of Attraction and constant prayer. I was willing to relocate to anywhere I applied to, whether it was Chicago, Beijing, or Laredo, Texas, where I ultimately landed.

If my first tenant is not having a rigid plan, then my second is to think relatively by, almost, systematically alternating perspective. Constantly adjusting perspective has proven to keep my ambition high and anxiety low. It was not until the day I secured my position at the firm that I'd begun to think of the 6 months (3 unemployed, and 3 teaching) as exactly what they were: only 6 months! They were but a wrinkle in time in proportion to overall career span. I had been seeking validation within the field by gaining and exhausting as many resources as possible. On one hand, it kept me on my toes and feeling involved, networking with everyone in sight with an AIA post-nominal and a welcoming smile (I've been called a "networking fiend"). But on the other, when all the valiant effort seemingly reaped no fruit of labor, it was becoming increasingly disheartening. Keeping rigid in thinking relative to current conditions (pessimistic) or holistically to lifetime goals (optimistic) results in losing grip of reality. I resolved this by being a forward-thinking realist by making reality-checks, for example, in the form of an archi-timeline of past, present, and future arch-endeavors. Here is mine:

For me, this timeline graphically reinterpreted my progression in the profession. We, as designers, know that variation of approach is an effective way of creating understanding of the whole picture, even when meeting the needs of ourselves. I only have two more tenants, being that I'm only 23, and have lived about that same [23] percent of my life, and experienced even less of that percent in architecture.

Returning to graduation commencement, after the ceremony I introduced myself to the speaker, David Evans. Later that month, at the AIA Convention in D.C., we met again at the NCSU Alumni Reception. One lovely thing about being the only African American woman in that graduating class is the way my encounters have been instantly memorable, for both parties. With our rapport supported by that first encounter, I gained a new contact, and more importantly, a friend, who took it upon himself to introduce me to each alumnus at the reception; one of whom is a contact who led to an interview at a nationally esteemed architecture firm. Another alumnus was a headhunter who installed my next tenant: Visibility.

All it took was a simple, "Hello! I'm Devanne Pena," to ignite conversations and build relationships I would never imagine having so early in my architectural career. It would become a platform of engagement in casual conversation about firm structure methodologies with two iconic firm owners and the principal of the L.A. office of an international firm. It would warrant new professional relationships and friendships with people who would more than happily compensate a young mentee's travel expenses to conferences and conventions. These are just a few examples of the experience I've received outside of an architectural firm just by being genuine and active. So being broke due to architec-

ture school, or an adverse background is no excuse! Which leads me to my final tenant: Barring bitterness.

Yes, I grew up in subsidized housing with free lunch; and yes it made architecture school at a PWI (Predominantly White Institution) foreign and it took time to adjust my lack of knowledge of the resources and materials that could have better served my comprehension and overall education. But by no means did that affect my capacity for potential; in fact, it inherently increased. Logically thinking, if there is a greater distance between two points (where one comes from, and where one is going), there is a greater displacement of growth. Resentment counters that potential. It is too much of a burden to bear on a longer path to success. The first moment everything "clicked", when I had begun feeling to par with my majority counterparts, was during an M.Arch thesis critique. My 5th-year studio work was comparable (in caliber of design and constructability) to that which belonged to those students. Since then I could not give an excuse for my work being any lesser quality because of circumstance; and even if I could not afford to plot in color and on more than one sheet, I would not let lack of presentation pervade my new-found validation. Validation in architecture, as it is in life, is always profound and comes in many forms. Whether it be building rapport with successful people in the field, or securing a position in an office, it must be sought.

As mentioned earlier, this is not my set of instructions on how to enter the profession, but rather a testimony of my less-than-lateral journey. By not being rigid in my ideology of progress, actively adjusting perspective, and maintaining visibility, I have been able to stay optimistic and effervescent, and in the (relative) end, found my launch pad to a fruitful career in architecture. ○

# Watering Design Deserts

Deanna Van Buren



Deanna Van Buren is the founder and Design Director of FOURM design studio in Oakland California and has recently completed the Loeb Fellowship at Harvard's Graduate School of Design. Her practice focuses on the investigation and application of design innovations to the punitive justice system and alternative forms of justice that embrace reparation. Recent projects include "The Witness" video game, a peacekeeping room for Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth, the development of a prototype for the first stand-alone Restorative Justice Center as well as the development of design curriculum for working with incarcerated men and women.

Earlier this year I sat in Harvard's Graduate School of Design listening to the courses offered during my Loeb Fellowship year. A professor began to speak to the auditorium of students about how we would need to develop expert communication skills to compete and win the few museum and library jobs we are all vying for.

It was frustrating to hear, as I was reminded that architects and designers still think in a limited way regarding how, when, and where our services can be applied. While we certainly do need to have good communication skills, the reality is that there is an abundance of opportunities for good design in discipline areas we have never even considered, and populations who could use our support. The diverse and varied skills gained in architecture education and training puts us in a position to be effective leaders, inventors and bridgers of indus-

try silos. I believe that rather than chase after the same projects we will have to take a 360 degree view of the world and investigate new areas and populations where our skills could be beneficial. In doing so we can identify what I call "design deserts". These can be defined as industries, typologies, social practices and policies that architects have neglected, been excluded from or never envisioned as something of which we could contribute.

The question remains then how do we do this? I have spent the last year investigating two design deserts:



designing for the video game industry and designing for restorative justice and peace-making as an alternative to our punitive models. During this time I have discovered some key steps in beginning to work for and with organizations, communities and individuals who have not engaged with us before.

### Siting the Void

When we begin to find frontiers like this it is helpful to start where our deep interests lie. What am I passionate about? What resonates with me personally and professionally? It is through this doorway that you can often find a desert. For example, I was completely disgusted by our prison industrial complex. It seemed like a machine that was destroying our communities of color and that architects/ designers and planners were only fostering its growth. Then I heard about restorative justice and was completely charged by its philosophies and practices as it began to address both the structural racism and ineffectiveness of our punitive model. I made a decision to discover a way that I could use my skills to facilitate its growth and effectiveness.

### Research

While it can be exciting to find a design desert it also signals the beginning of the hard work. We are often moving into realms where people do not speak our

language and are not sure why we are even there. That is why it is critical to do the research. I was able to apply for a small grant from the firm I was working for at the time and spent a few months researching restorative practices worldwide before becoming clear about what I could offer and where to engage in their work.

### Point of Entry

As I launched out with my own practice I realized that developing a clear and concise description of one's intent and how you can be of service is helpful as you prepare to enter into a new field or industry. What is our contribution? How could they benefit from getting us involved? These answers can come out of the research and were developed as we began to reach out. I found that showing up at conferences of the industries we are interested in helps a great deal. In my case, I attended gatherings of the restorative justice interest groups in my community. The 1% solution developed by Public Architecture (PA) provided great on-line handbooks for me to approach a local Restorative Justice practitioner who was starting a program for youth in east Oakland, where I live. I was able show them the document PA put together explaining

why good design matters, but more importantly it helped me to articulate the added value that having a space dedicated to their program could bring.

### Listen & Teach

As we begin to meet people in other industries and markets we need to spend a lot of time listening. We will also need to be educators. Most of our population knows little about design, so empowering people across disciplines with this kind of thinking will help to make communication between us much easier. For example, my practice has received funding and begun development for a tool kit that includes design exercises, readings and discussions around justice, power and space. This can be used by anyone looking to engage in dialogue around these issues from outside and inside prison to empower stakeholder groups to re-envision them as spaces of refuge. I believe it is a critical first step in helping to re-envision these spaces.

### Building the Stakeholder Group

In order to develop and support this work, we must know who has a stake in our

service proposals. Therefore the building of a stakeholder group is a big part of this process and is time consuming. I recently spoke with a community-organizer friend who helped guide me through a process of listing all the stakeholders for our project. He said my list should be so long that it felt uncomfortable! He also helped me outline a series of convenings that we will begin later this year. As we bonded over our shared goal of dismantling the prison industrial complex he too became a stakeholder and a partner in our advocacy efforts.

### Forming Partnerships

Partnerships are critical to succeed in penetrating new markets and crossing disciplines. Much of my early efforts were spent showing up at community meetings and conferences giving my pitch in the hopes that I would locate both clients and collaborators. Through this process I was able to find and locate partners who shared my basic interests but had distinct and valuable skills different from my own. Today I am working with theater artists, social workers and mediators to raise awareness of design in restorative justice.

### Building New Knowledge and Expertise

Learning new skills to address the needs of the stakeholders has also been an important part of our process. For example if your client is a video game developer then you may have to pick up some coding or game playing skills. If you are trying to prove that design can impact success or failure of a process, you may need to learn how to conduct evidence-based design research. So far I have had to learn Rhino, have been trained as a circle-keeper and have taken classes in qualitative analysis in order to learn how to collect data on the impact of spaces for peacemaking.

### Investigating New Financial Models and Methods of Practice

All these steps are essential to success but none of this is possible unless some form of monetary compensation is available. The public interest design movement seen in organizations such as Design Corps, Architecture for Humanity and Public Architecture are beginning to define how we can begin to do work for disenfranchised members of our community through a nonprofit model. Firms across the country are doing pro-bono work to create built projects

that can also sometimes jumpstart funding for subsequent projects. Currently I fund my projects by having the more lucrative ones support those less fortunate and by applying for grants. This hybrid approach is working so far but if we are to have a sustainable future in this arena, and to have greater impact we may need to investigate larger sources of funding through impact investment models and strong partnerships with profitable companies that have much to gain by hiring us to build stronger communities.

In April of 2014 the Public Interest Design movement will have their first international conference in Paris where the investigation of new financial models for design will be a primary topic of conversation. I will be there both to learn how we can fund working for social change, and also to gain greater insight on how we can work more effectively across industry silos. As our profession changes rapidly and the role of the architect and designer moves beyond the design-bid-build model, we will need to investigate and develop practices that help us to do this better. We must exchange our few projects for many by realizing that there are new frontiers, paradigms and social movements that we can support. There are deserts to water, we just have to find them. ○

Photography by By Theodor Rzad



Peacemaking Room for Castlemont H.S.- After

Peacemaking Room Castlemont H.S.-Before



The Witness Video Game courtesy of Thekla Inc.



## Conquering MEP

# THE POWER OF DESPERATION AND PRAYER

Garfield L. Peart, MBA, AIA, NOMA, LEED Green Assoc.



Garfield Peart, the 2013 President-Elect for the NOMAtlanta Chapter, is an Architect and Sustainable Business Consultant. He received the 2012 Ford Freedom Unsung Heroes Award by the Ford Motor Company and Atlanta Center for Civil and Human Rights for his positive impact on his community and ability to enlighten and inspire other. He received his B. Arch. at Howard University and MBA in Sustainable Business with a concentration in Green Development from Marylhurst University.

As I think about my ARE experience, there are a few stories I could tell to describe the emotions of my three year journey of licensure. However, few embody the utter power of desperation and prayer as my experience with the Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing (MEP) Exam. I started in 2006 on ARE 3.1 with nine sections, and completed the process shortly before the transition to ARE 4.0 in October 2009. As many candidates remember

during that period, as the transition got closer, if you were not finished with ARE 3.1, you feared having to retake portions of the exam under the new ARE 4.0. That fear was a constant backdrop of my ARE experience and came to a dramatic climax with MEP.

Now, it was well known among ARE candidates at the time that one of the hardest tests in the ARE process was MEP and I was scared to death. By November 2008 the pressure was building; I had only two months to finish MEP if I was going to give myself a second shot at it before the deadline in June of 2009. If I missed the deadline, I would have to wait to retake it under the new format starting in October and who knew what that would be like. I had to try and complete one of the hardest tests within two months over the Christmas holidays! It usually takes over 6 months

to prepare for MEP. So I consulted the most experienced expert I could find - my buddy, who at that time had had taken MEP 3-times without passing. He later passed it with ARE 4.0 and is registered today. He showed me specific materials and calculations that you can only know from such extensive experience with the test; with so much out there, I would have never found this material on my own. Even with all that great information and the holidays fast approaching, I felt like I was cramming for a test that was almost impossible to pass.

The 2008 Christmas holidays came and went with nothing on my mind but MEP! I had to schedule the exam in Macon, Georgia, just THREE Days after Christmas because it was not available in any of the three testing centers in Atlanta. So the whole two months came down to just a few days and I still did not feel prepared for

*My plan was to disappear for 48 hours, lock myself in a hotel room and do one final cram session for the test.*

the test. I came up with a crazy plan that could have only been born from true desperation. My plan was to disappear for 48 hours, lock myself in a hotel room and do one final cram session for the test (Note - this is usually what you don't want to do with the ARE exams because you run the risk of losing information). Those two days were two of the longest days of my life. I

just tried to stuff as much information in my head as possible. Feeling exhausted from working almost around the clock - test day finally came. With a final prayer, I went in and took the test first thing in the morning. When I came out, I had mixed feelings because I only saw some of what I managed to remember but felt I did some quality guessing on others; it was anyone's test at that point. They say if you felt you passed, most times you didn't and vice-a-versa. Following that philosophy, I felt that was in good shape because I felt almost the same way I did going in. A couple weeks later I got the best New Year's present in my life and a feeling of euphoria filled my being - I PASSED MEP! I had conquered the beast and passed it on the first time! So here comes a valuable lesson on ARE - Sometimes you do whatever you have to do to

pass; if you want it bad enough and pray, good things happen.

I later went on to take and pass my final ARE exam a couple months later and the rest was ARE history. The ARE was one of the most stressful and rewarding experiences I have had in my life. I now understand why it is the one bond that holds all Architects together. I think every person who wants to truly call themselves an architect needs to have this experience because it gives you a much greater appreciation of what other professionals - doctors, lawyers and engineers - have to go through to be a licensed professional. The experience can really take you to the brink and shows you what you're made of. My ARE experience will forever shape my professional and personal lives, and in retrospect, I would not of wanted it any other way, well, maybe with just a couple adjustments on MEP. ○

# Life Without Fear

## Distilling the Spirit of Practice

Louis B. Smith

Perhaps you, like I, have seen the economic downturn as a temporary contraction of your business in hopes of getting to a future expansion. This is my perspective as I laid off all my staff and stopped hiring contract labor, at least for the moment.



Louis B. Smith lives and practices architecture primarily in Charlotte North Carolina. He also practices in poetry, photography, prayer and piano among other creative pursuits. Learn more about Louis' work online at [www.eloquentideas.com](http://www.eloquentideas.com)

I moved my office into my home and gave up the moderately expensive lease space. My practice, however, was not and is not collapsing. It is in no danger of failing.

My practice, much like what I believe is happening to the architectural industry as a whole, was being distilled. The heat and pressure of the dire

economic situation of the past few years at first seemed to indicate that I should broaden my services and go after more markets. It didn't work. As roughly 30 thousand architects lost their jobs in the downturn (AIA figures) firms in the Charlotte area laid off mid management, then production staff and in some cases even most marketing folks.

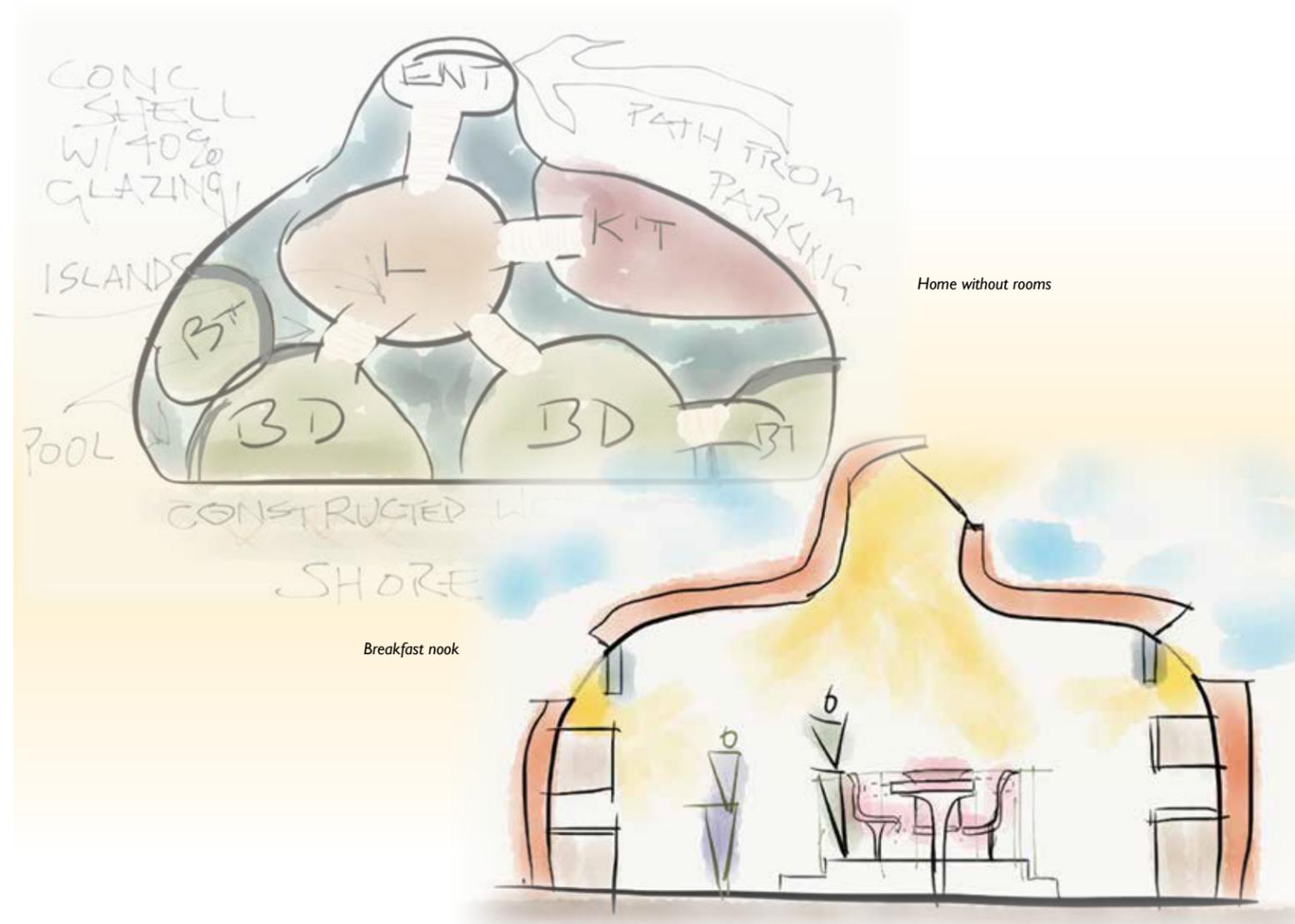
Some professionals, as I did, opened their own firms in a not quite desperate attempt to get some work on even small projects. There was enough success to survive but

not enough to thrive. As the economy continued to cool the essence of my practice became more clear. The bleed off of staff and resources made me reconsider what I was willing to do on my own. I gave up the attempt to invent my firm in some bigger image. I resolved to work on projects that did not require staff and elaborate proposals and qualifications statements. I went back to working for friends and family with occasional advice to larger firms and projects. My firm was reduced to its core identity as I myself was.

I have found that these changes have allowed me to determine what is really important to me and to my practice. The inevitable marketing challenges have persuaded me to examine where I bring the most value to architecture. I have been treated with the opportunity to reassess not only my talents but the sources of joy in my life. I may never go back to practice as it was again. My daily schedule now fits me. I start work early, creating, at or before the sunrise. I punctuate my days with long prayerful problem solving sessions walking in the local greenway. I spend my afternoons conversing and sharing information and solutions. I write or practice music or read in the evening.

I have found my joy is in creation and in the manipulation of ideas. Courtesy of a program developed by the Gallup organization called StrengthQuest, I have discovered my strongest talent is in ideation: the ability to connect seemingly disparate ideas into something greater. This realization has led me far beyond architecture. I am led to study music and to increase my writing. I have completed the first draft of a novel and am self-publishing a books of prayers and photographs. I have developed many design ideas for urban projects and private homes that go far beyond what clients usually ask for. I have discovered that designs for how people live or live/work is where my joy is focused. Not hospitals, not government work, not industrial or office design.

As examples of my creativity I cite three homes. The first, in Seattle, is based on the theme of Modern Monastery, steps down a hill side and tries to evoke but not copy the simplicity and texture of medieval Mediterranean architecture fused to a simple modern aesthetic. The second in Ypsilanti, Michigan, is an earth sheltered structure called the Underground Tea House. The third is a recent creation called Heaven's Bridge which is sited in a modest subdivision in Charlotte on an otherwise unbuildable lot. The house is envisioned as the enclosure of a railroad bridge, suspended over the landscape and connecting the subdivision to some distant ethereal realm. I am fortunate enough to have found one person who believes in my creation abilities sufficiently to be attempting to build one of these visions.



Home without rooms

Breakfast nook

*...my strongest talent is in ideation: the ability to connect seemingly disparate ideas into something greater.*

I am competent enough at CAD in 2D and 3D. I can create reasonable construction details and understand water migration and the selection of finishes to enhance a theme. Yet, I now understand, I am not a technologist and that the fine details are not where I shine brightest. No, it is my creativity that shines brightest. As my practice moves forward it will continue to be very personal and idea based and all those other aspects will be distributed among those who prefer the technical to the creative, who perhaps understand architecture less as poetic metaphors and more as a technological business. There is room enough for all.

In surviving this downturn I have become more clearly aware of who I am and what

lives depended on it. They do, of course. Further, this rich quality of life, this potent and attractive elixir, is a far greater reward than can be obtained by mere salary. To paraphrase a friend, "I would rather eat Mac and cheese with my kids than to live a life harassed by any part of this business, clients included."

Resources:  
Talent assessment: [www.strengthquest.com](http://www.strengthquest.com)  
*Living Your Strengths: Discover Your God-Given Talents and Inspire Your Community* by Albert L. Winseman D.Min., Ph.D. Donald O. Clifton and Curt Liesveld M.Div. (Oct 10, 2004) ○

# The Story of DOCKr from Idea to Product

Megan Kent



Just as the economy had begun to present vast challenges for the architectural industry, Michael Marshall and Paola Moya were dreaming of developing design solutions for the mass consumer market.



Megan Kent is the Director of Marketing, Communications, and Public Relations at Marshall Moya Design and inNuevo. She has a master's degree from Georgetown University and a dual major undergraduate degree from the University of Mary Washington.

While industry prospects were drying up, these two architects could see opportunity in the need for superior and elegant design within this market. The recession gave them time to focus and explore their mutual passion for product and industrial design.

Marshall and Moya, together creating inNuevo, began developing conceptual design for products, just as they would as architects. The booming technology market presented a unique window of opportunity with the growing popularity of the iPad in the education, business, home, and many other sectors. The adoption rate of iPads has surpassed the rate of any new technology in the past, including telephones and cars. Marshall and Moya recognized a need within the electronics accessory market: too many iPad accessories with different functions. They saw potential:

iPads are social and economic equalizers (especially for the school-age population) that allow more people to have access to the internet, bridging the technological divide at a lower price. Providing a product that simulates a laptop could bridge this gap even more as a cost-effective alternative. They proposed a solution: combine the functions of different iPad accessories into one comprehensive device, blurring the distinction between the laptop and the tablet while expanding the iPad's capabilities.

The transition from architecture to product design was similar in process and form. It began with an analysis of the problem combined with research, then experimentation of the solution with sketches, collabo-

ration with experts along the way, input from engineers, development of models and prototypes, refinement of the design, testing, and finally production. A few differences between architecture and product design projects are the funding process (customers buy products after the project is funded and brought to market), and the selling process (includes marketing, advertising, distribution, and retail outlets). This complicates the entirety of the product design cycle. While some companies share or outsource different parts of the process, inNuevo chooses to solely manage the entire process from conceptual design to manufacturing and production to its website sales.

"My passion for design extends across different industries and typologies of projects," Marshall says, "so the transition from architecture to product design was exciting! There were new challenges to consider, and the consumer market is vastly different from the service industry. One aspect in common is the need for excellence in design." Marshall's firm is not the first to transition from architecture to product design. His personal design icons are architects, such as Antonio Citterio, Renzo Piano, and Norman Foster, who all have widely diverse portfolios that include product design.

Building brand recognition around the new product design company came with its challenges, especially because Marshall and Moya's contacts knew them for their distinguished architecture and interior design company, Marshall Moya Design. People were confused as to why architects were creating products. This initial barrier had to be addressed, and it also presented an opportunity. In effort to mobilize the firm's existing network and contacts, while also introducing the product design company, inNuevo organized a launch party. It was held in the historic Howard Theatre, a venue with an interior designed by their architecture firm. With drinks, appetizers, entertainment, raffles, and product demonstrations, the party was a success; Marshall

and Moya introduced their product design company, the DOCKr, and the Kickstarter campaign. The party also debuted the professional commercial that inNuevo invested in to promote the DOCKr. The DOCKr Launch Party attracted over 400 people and helped to "kickstart" the campaign for DOCKr's journey to market.

inNuevo launched its Kickstarter campaign to offset some production costs, and to mobilize a network of initial customers. Kickstarter is an online, crowd-funded platform that is sponsored by individuals around the world who want to financially support creative projects to help them become realized. Funds garnered on Kickstarter are only transferred if the established financial "goal" is successfully met within the 30-60 day time frame. inNuevo's Kickstarter goal of \$15,000 was met and surpassed with an end dollar amount of \$16,700. The Kickstarter campaign helped to expand inNuevo's brand recognition, generate media coverage, and establish a group of supporters and customers.

If there is one quality that is needed during the product design and manufacturing process it is the need for flexibility. Things do not always go according to plan, and the production process presented several challenges and delays. Customer service is also paramount. Being transparent with customers about delays, gaining their trust,

and exceeding expectations are important. Building a relationship, starting a dialogue, and cultivating customers' loyalty are integral parts of building a brand.

Of the product design and manufacturing process, Moya says, "The process was exciting and in-depth because the physical weight and balance of the product presented unique design challenges specific to product design. Incorporating electronics like battery and speakers into the design-while upholding the integrity and elegance of the design-was a unique undertaking."

The media has given rave reviews of the DOCKr, calling it "the most complete iPad-to-laptop converter yet" (Cult of Mac), a "one do-it-all device" (Gizmag), and "the nearest thing to a Swiss army knife for the Apple iPad" (Innovanaut).

The DOCKr is available through inNuevo's website at [www.innuevo.com](http://www.innuevo.com) and is available in two models: one with electronics (including battery and speakers) and one without. The DOCKr with electronics and with keyboard retails for \$149.95 and the DOCKr without electronics with the keyboard is \$95.95. Customization options are available, including logos, sports teams, school mascots, and more. Contact inNuevo at [info@innuevo.com](mailto:info@innuevo.com) to learn more. ○

The DOCKr is a flexible, six-in-one iPad docking station, bridging the gap between the tablet and the laptop. The six features include:

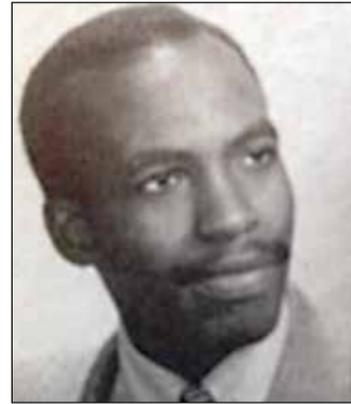
- Battery  
Charge any USB-compatible device, adding 4-6 hours of battery life
- Speakers  
Bluetooth compatible
- Keyboard  
Bluetooth connectivity  
Available in 5 colors



Photos courtesy Stacy Zarin

Also compatible with Apple Wireless Keyboard

- Flexible Viewing  
140 degrees of viewing angles  
Accommodates portrait and landscape viewing
- Protective carrying case  
Folds into a carrying case like a laptop  
Made with polycarbonate plastic to protect the iPad
- Color and Style  
5 colors available  
Customization options



2013

**Halevy "Hal" Hercules Simmons**

**Halevy "Hal" Hercules Simmons** died April 9, 2013, at his home in Creve Coeur age 83. He was one of the principal architects on one of downtown St. Louis' major hotels, the Adam's Mark.

Mr. Simmons operated his own architecture shop in New York and Montclair, N.J. He earned extra income from a restaurant and bar he owned, until the mid-1970s.

He moved his family to St. Louis figuring it had more opportunities for a builder.

He met Fred Kummer, president, CEO and owner of HBE, a major designer and builder of hotels, hospitals and medical buildings. There were few, if any, other black architects in St. Louis then, Mr. Simmons' family recalled.

Mr. Simmons applied through the personnel department and eventually ended up face-to-face with Kummer, the founder. They were two strong-willed individuals, who found that they shared a love of design.

"He was a talented guy," Kummer said this week. He made Mr. Simmons one of the lead architects on the Adam's Mark and other projects.

Mr. Simmons quit after about 10 years to become an independent architect. Among his later projects, Mr. Simmons restored buildings for the St. Louis School District.

*Excerpted from BlackAmericaWeb.com.*



**Jumaane O. Stewart, RA, NYCOBA-NOMA** passed away Tuesday, July 30th .

Jumaane was the Vice President of NYCOBA-NOMA. He devoted countless hours and energy to volunteer programs such as ACT-SO –NAACP mentoring program and the Architecture Construction & Engineering (A.C.E) high school mentoring program.

He was the Principal of 3LG Design Studio; an Architectural practice focusing on residential projects of new construction and renovations and rehabilitation of existing structures. Before starting his own firm, Mr. Stewart was a Project Manager & Project Architect at Horsford & Poteat Development in Harlem, New York. With this company, he coordinated the acquisition, closing, Schematic Design and Design Development of 20 residential existing 2 and 3 family properties in East New York, Brooklyn, acquired by Horsford & Poteat Development through HUD 203K, New York City Housing Partnership and HPD programs. Mr. Stewart also was an Assistant Architect at the New York City Parks & Recreation Department, Capital Division and Project Manager & Construction Administrator at Roberta Washington Architects.

*Excerpted from bio at 3lgn.com.*

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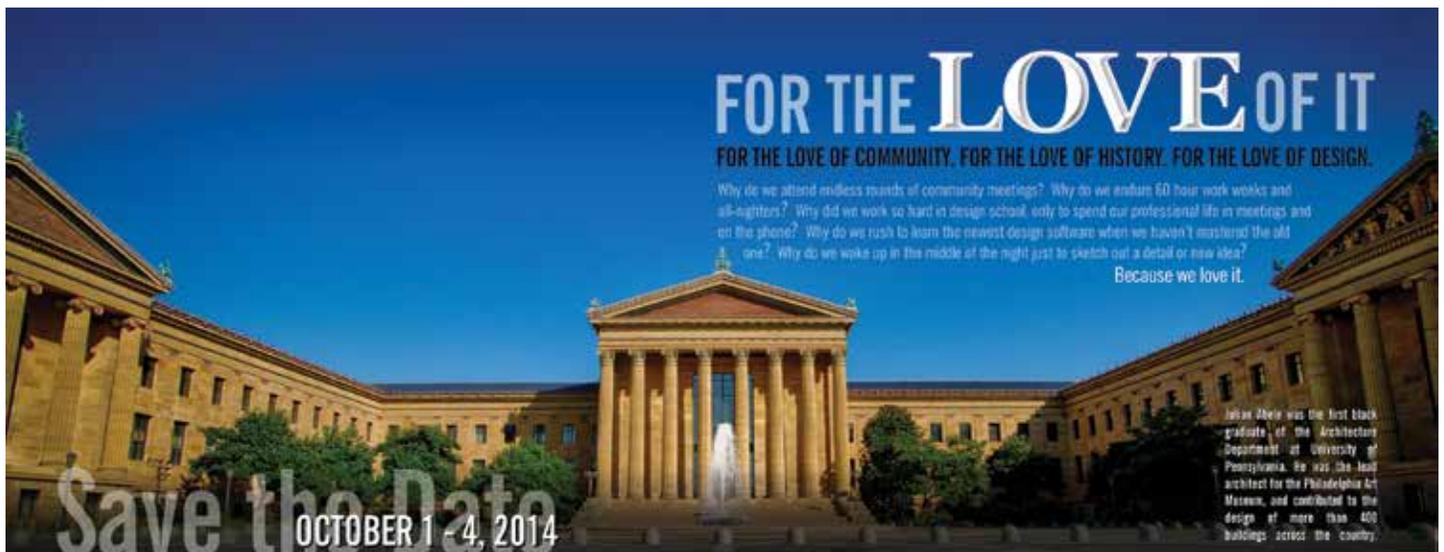
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