

# NOMA

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF MINORITY ARCHITECTS  
SPRING 2013

## 2012 NOMA DESIGN EXCELLENCE AWARDS

GIVING BACK  
IN DETROIT

CHANGE  
BEGINS WITHIN  
*The SEED Network Story*





From the very beginning  
Design Excellence Award  
way of showing love,  
respect for the talented  
members. It is the high  
that our highly sustain  
the National Organ  
Architects can bestow

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Magazine  
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Edited by:  
Katherine Williams  
and  
Steve Lewis

Designed by:  
Lou Moriconi

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Correction:  
On Fall 2012 issue cover NOMA founder James C Dodd was incorrectly listed



# Fourteen years of service leads to NOMA presidency and vision for the future

Kathy Denise Dixon



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

For those who know me and my relationship with NOMA, this role has been a long time in the making. The first NOMA conference that I attended was held in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1998. I have not missed a conference since. Ironically at that conference there was a luncheon honoring the hundred or so licensed African-American women architects. It was a great thrill for me to be in the same room and be honored along with many women I may have only heard of, but greatly respected. Who knew that 14 years later I would become president of the organization?

At that time, I started helping the national board behind the scenes by assisting with the website. For twelve years I acted as the NOMA webmaster trying to communicate as much information as possible across the country to our many chapters and members.

Over the years, I've taken on a number of NOMA positions

at the local and national levels; chapter secretary, webmaster, regional vice-president, and now here I find myself accepting the presidency. I've seen our organization grow in a number of aspects including a much needed, high quality publication in the NOMA magazine, a well-attended and educational conference in major cities across the country, collaborations with AIA, GSA, EPA, and now USGBC, a highly anticipated student design competition, new chapters in New Jersey, Dallas, Boston, and South Florida, and national recognition in the form of the AIA's Whitney Young Jr award.

Although we've made these great strides, there is much work yet to be done. We enjoyed ourselves at our historic annual conference reminiscing, fellowshipping, and celebrating our past 40 years. But what happens now? Where do we go from here? Most importantly, are we still relevant in our fourth decade?

I believe we Are still relevant. When in 2013 African-American still only make up less than 2% of the country's licensed architects, we are still relevant. When nearly 30% of architects have lost their jobs in a recession, we are still relevant. When young architecture

school graduates cannot find work, we are still relevant. When buildings consume over 30% of the nation's energy and the industry is shifting its reliance away from traditional energy sources, we are still relevant. When there are still only 290 licensed black women architects in the country, **We are still relevant.**

So how do we remain relevant and ensure another 40 years of service? I believe a strong Executive Director role for the organization is needed. We must also promote our programs like Project Pipeline nationally with the dual purpose of promoting the architectural profession and increasing the numbers of minority architects. These are just a few ideas that I believe will strengthen our future. I have a vision for NOMA, but also want to hear your vision as well. Email me at [president@noma.net](mailto:president@noma.net) and let me know your thoughts.○

## SoFlo Noma

- In February, we hosted the NOMA Board of Directors during their retreat / annual meeting.
- Architects and Engineers are ramping up to participate in the \$2 billion dollar Dade County Public School bond to repair, upgrade or replace about 300 schools in Miami Dade County.
- We are currently working on a Linear Park in Liberty City, one of two predominately black areas' in Miami prior to the 70s. The significance of the park is a partially demolished segregation wall still exists and we are trying to make into a monument by creating a timeline of influential blacks and events in Miami.

## INOMA

- NOMA celebrates Black History with AIA Chicago reviewing 40 years of NOMA History and special presentation about Barbara Laurie. INOMA is hoping to also hear from past INOMA elders.
- NOMA is revisiting memorandum with Act-So program
- In January Midwest VP met with NAACP ACT-SO National Chair Anana Gambon to discuss renewing the MOU with NOMA and ACT-SO. INOMA will be the pilot chapter to support local ACT-SO Programs in Illinois.

- NOMA gave out \$2000 in scholarships at the annual Christmas party.
- Ms. Ellen Hart MARCH 14, 2014 –UIUC and Mr. Roy Mwale B.S.ARCH 2013 – UIC students were awarded cash scholarships at INOMA Annual Holiday Party. The event was hosted by Ujaama Construction and held at their Headquarters.
- Elected New officers

## Dallas

- Dallas NOMA assisted in the planning and hosting of the 2012 Strength through Diverse-Cities Multicultural Summit in Dallas, Texas on September 21 – 22, 2012. Sanford Garner, AIA, NOMA past president, was also in attendance at this event.
- Gianna Pigford, AIA, NOMA, LEED AP Elected as national Recording Secretary
- Derwin Broughton, AIA – 2013 National AIA Young Architect's Award Recipient.

## HNOMA

- The members of Houston NOMA participated in the NBA Cares Playground Build organized by the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corp. With the help of the non-profit organization KaBOOM! and NBA Cares All-Star Day of Service 2013, everyone worked together to build a new, safe playground for the hundreds of neighbors who will use the park on a daily and weekly basis.

- Houston NOMA will co-sponsor the Funkaar Studios A.R.E. Fast Course March 9, - March 16, 2013. This intense fast-paced course is designed for students traveling from out of town or those with limited time for testing. The course is taught over one week with condensed material for each exam division.
- Houston NOMA is currently registering volunteers to participate in Rebuilding Together Houston for the second year annual year. Work day will take place April 13, 2013.

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



An update  
on events  
and activities  
in student  
chapters  
across the  
country.

**Boston Architectural College**



In the 2011-2012 school year, BAC NOMAS hosted several events in support of its mission to foster inclusivity and equity within the design professions. The Chapter held model building workshops in fall and spring, a popular ongoing event that brings students together to share tips on craftsmanship, efficiency, and presentation in model-making. The Chapter also hosted its third annual "Breakthrough: Women in Design" lecture and panel discussion. Four highly accomplished female professionals from the Boston design community presented their unique bodies of work to the BAC community. This year's event was dedicated to the memory of Norma Merrick Sklarek (1928-2012), the nation's second female African American registered architect. The panel discussion focused on the challenges of attaining success in a male-dominated industry.

Also in 2012, BAC NOMAS partnered with the YWCA to host an event for the nationwide "Stand Against Racism." BAC students, faculty, staff, and administrators assembled to take a pledge to end discrimination, affirming the College's solidarity against racism. The inspiring day marked the College's first participation in the YWCA-sponsored event, and BAC NOMAS intends to establish the day as an annual tradition.

BAC NOMAS' goal for the 2012-2013 school year is to continue to bring enlightening and educational experiences to its members and to the College. In April 2013, the Chapter plans to partner with Big Sister of Greater Boston to host "Big for a Day," a design charrette and career day intended to introduce middle school girls to architecture and design as a career path.

**Georgia Institute of Technology**



2012 was a highly active year for Georgia Tech NOMAS, filled with social, cultural and educational events. In February 2012, the Chapter was proud to co-sponsor a performance by ARTech artist-in-residence Jade Simmons, an accomplished classical pianist. In April 2012, the group hosted a successful networking mixer for the Georgia Tech College of Architecture. Over 150 students and professionals, as well as representatives from fifteen local architecture firms, were in attendance. In September, the Chapter organized a two-week, intensive Introduction to Architecture course for a dozen fourth-graders at Centennial Place Elementary, an Atlanta Public School. The children built physical models, drew CAD plans, and made digital models for a building of their own design. The objective of the course was to empower children to question their built environment, and to encourage them, as future designers and consumers, to demand a higher quality of architecture. In October, Georgia Tech NOMAS was excited to be in attendance when NOMA Atlanta welcomed internationally renowned architect David Adjaye of David Adjaye Associates.

In 2013, Georgia Tech NOMAS plans to continue to support and educate its membership with social and educational activities, including a REVIT workshop, work with Mad Housers (a non-profit that builds temporary shelter for the homeless), organized firm visits, alongside regular monthly meetings.

**Hampton University**



HU has a very active NOMAS chapter that

organizes and hosts a number of social events and community activities throughout the school year. The Chapter kicks off every school year with Freshman Welcome Week events to welcome the first year architecture students. Community activities in the 2011-2012 school year included "Cans and Toys for Christmas Joy," a can and toy drive in partnership with Trinity Baptist Church in Newport News, VA, and "Adventures in Engineering," a workshop in partnership with HU's Department of Engineering, introducing architecture and engineering to children ages six to twelve. HU was proud to have a strong contingent of students at the NOMA National Conference in both 2011 and 2012.

The HU Chapter has a number of events planned for 2013. The theme for African American History month is, "What does being an aspiring African American architect mean to you?" A round table discussion on this question is planned for February 2013, and throughout the month, students are invited to write their responses to this question on signs posted throughout the building. The group is also celebrating African American history with a poster campaign displaying little known facts about African American architects throughout the school. Also in February, HU NOMAS will be volunteering at First Baptist Church Hampton providing meals and clothing for the homeless.

In March 2013, HU NOMAS will team with Kiwanis Young Professionals on two community-based projects, creating a design to restore an abandoned park, and teaching an eight-week professional course in architecture. In April, the Chapter will host "Architecture Barbie," a mentoring event informing young girls about careers in architecture.

**Kansas State University**



In 2012, in conjunction with KSU's Martin Luther King Jr. Week celebrations, KSU NOMAS was pleased to present a Q&A with Ray Huff of Huff + Gooden Architects. Huff is founding director and Assistant Professor of Architecture at the Clemson Architecture Center in Charleston, South Carolina. The topic of the Q&A was "Creating Your Own Practice." Students were invited to question the accomplished architect on his experiences starting a solo practice, given the everyday challenges of the profession, and the special challenges facing minorities in the profession.

As part of KSU NOMAS' ongoing goal to introduce its members to diverse cultures, every year the group hosts a Diversity Week, a series of events with different cultural themes. One theme for 2012 was the cultures of South East Asia, featuring faculty members and guest speakers from Nepal and India. There was also a night dedicated to African cultures, with guest drummers, an introduction to African dance, and a fashion show. The Chapter looks forward to this year's Diversity Week, planned for April 2013.

**Louisiana State University**



The LSU NOMAS chapter has a strong commitment to NOMA's mission of supporting the professional development of its members and mentoring youth. The Chapter has continued to develop its mentoring program, which pairs upperclassmen with less experienced students for advice and support. Also, in order to better prepare students for careers after graduation, the Chapter organizes portfolio reviews where upperclassmen, professors, alumni,

and professionals are invited to critique student portfolios, resumes, and interview skills. In addition, every semester LSU NOMAS coordinates with the local Habitat for Humanity to provide opportunities for students to gain experience and perform community service.

LSU NOMAS currently has two ongoing youth mentoring projects. 2012 saw the launch of the "Light a Fire" program, in which LSU students travel to local area high schools to educate students about careers in architecture. The high school students participate in short teaching sessions and charrettes, gaining exposure to the practice of architecture and the design process. The Chapter also organizes "shadowing days" for high school students. The shadowing program exposes high schoolers to "a day in the life" of an LSU Architecture student; the students have an opportunity to tour the University and spend time in studio with an LSU NOMAS member.

One of LSU NOMAS' stated goals for the 2012-2013 school year is to create a greater sense of unity within the school. With this goal in mind, LSU NOMAS teamed with the LSU AIAS students for a studio vs. studio design tournament, creating a fun opportunity for design students to work and play together.

**University of Oklahoma**



OU NOMAS is a relatively young chapter working to increase its membership and campus presence through monthly meetings and combined meetings with the University's AIAS chapter. In February 2012, the Chapter sponsored a poster series for African American History Month, and in October 2012 the group sent a contingent the 40th Annual NOMA National Conference in Detroit. The group was proud to represent the OU College of Architecture for the very

first time at the NOMA Student Design Competition, with a project entitled "Envisioning Sustainable Communities." The Chapter's current focus is on increasing its fundraising efforts in order to host a lecture series highlighting the work of minorities in architecture.

**University of Virginia**



The highlight of UVA NOMAS 2011-2012 school year was the co-sponsorship of the symposium, Re-Imagining the Public Realm: The Design of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. The symposium focused on the challenges, problems and issues of representing African American culture on The National Mall. Guest panelists included Marcel C. Acosta, Executive Director for the National Capital Planning Commission; Fath Davis Ruffins, Curator of African American History and Culture at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History; Kenneth Walton, Project Manager for the NMAAHC at the National Capital Planning Commissions; and Mabel Wilson, Associate Professor of Architecture at Columbia University. The panel discussion was followed by a lecture by Philip Freelon, FAIA, NOMA, founder of the Freelon Group, architect for the NMAAHC.

In the 2012-2013 academic year, UVA NOMAS has organized social events and technical workshops to continue to engage and educate their membership. Their primary goal for this year is to increase and strengthen membership by creating opportunities for students to engage and serve the community. With this goal in mind, the chapter has been developing relationships with local community service organizations Habitat for Humanity and New Haven Volunteering. ○



Dejeana Chappell

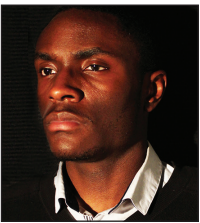


Dejeana Chappell is a Master of Architecture student at Cornell University graduating in December of 2013. She is in her second year serving as NOMA National Student Representative. NOMA has provided Dejeana with a platform for student outreach as well as an opportunity to make an impact on a larger scale as it relates to diversity and advocacy in the field of architecture. As a liaison between the student body of NOMAS and the NOMA Board of Directors, Dejeana champions the student perspective and works to create an open dialogue with participating NOMAS chapters.

Dejeana was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, and is a lady of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. Her undergraduate studies were in Finance and Entrepreneurship, and she held several positions in hi-tech sales and consulting at a Fortune 100 firm before her return to graduate school. She is particularly interested in the integration of business management and architecture, and is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP).

One of her initiatives for 2013 is Professional Development. Dejeana is currently working on a new series: How to Survive your First Job, where she will survey recent graduates for best practices and success stories on how one should conduct themselves in a professional environment, how to add immediate value, IDP advice & more.○

Via'Ronic Snow-Hill



Via'Ronic Snow-Hill is the NOMA National Board's newest appointee, an undergraduate student in the Masters of Architecture program at Hampton University. In his time at Hampton U, Via'Ronic has been an active member of NOMAS and AIAS, coordinating programs and events with his fellow officers to get students actively participating in the social aspects of architecture. He believes that NOMA is an organization that helps to increase the awareness and prevalence of minority architects, while equipping individuals with the tools they need for success.

Via'Ronic is passionate about helping his peers to develop the capacity to compete at any level. He has taken on the role of NOMA Student Representative hoping to encourage his peers, younger individuals, and future "thought leaders." He takes the opportunity to mentor young people whenever possible, and is involved with the local Big Brother/Big Sister organization through NOMAS and AIAS.

Via'Ronic has a strong interest in urban design and planning, and has joined Hampton City to help develop a partial revitalization plan for downtown Hampton, VA. He is a native of Baltimore, Maryland. ○

NOMA Magazine introduces the two students currently appointed as Student Representatives on the NOMA National Board.

**Wendell Carl Harp**, local architect, developer, and civic leader; passed away on December 02, 2011 in New Haven, Connecticut. He earned a Bachelor of Architecture degree from Howard University in 1969 and two Master's degrees from Yale University, City Planning in 1970 and Architecture in 1971.

In 1973, Wendell was noted as the youngest registered architect in the nation after successfully completing the qualifications to become a registered member of the American Institute of Architects.

He will be remembered as a great mentor; a leading black political strategist and campaign fund-raiser; as well as one of New Haven's most prominent architects.

2011

Wendell Carl Harp

Henry Louis "Dickie" Thurman Jr.

**Henry Louis "Dickie" Thurman Jr.**, professor of architecture at Southern University passed away on April 10, 2011. He was the first African American to become a registered architect in the state of Louisiana by virtue of passing the licensing exam.

2012

James Hall III

John Chase

Norma Merrick Sklarek

A firm believer in higher education, he was founder of the Southern University, School of Architecture & College of Engineering. Henry received his Bachelor of Science in Architectural Engineering from Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) in 1947 and a Master of Science Architectural Engineering degree from the University of Illinois in 1949. Further studies were also completed at the University of Colorado, Wisconsin, UCLA and LSU.

**James Hall III**, professor of Architecture at Hampton University passed away on May 31, 2012. Known for his wit, attention to detail and dedication to his students he was a graduate of Hampton Institute and a professor at Hampton University until his retirement.

**John S. Chase**, National Organization of Minority Architects co-founder; prolific modern architect and federal government appointee was laid to rest on March 29, 2012.

His education began with a Bachelor of Science in Architecture from Hampton University in 1948. Following his undergraduate degree he became the first African American to enroll in the University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture receiving a Masters in Architecture in 1952. That same year he was appointed as assistant professor of architectural drafting at Texas Southern University and also founded John S. Chase, A.I.A. Architect, Inc.

John Chase was a man of firsts, being the first African American licensed to practice Architecture in the State of Texas, first African American admitted to the Texas Society of Architects and the Houston Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the first African American to serve on the United States Commission on Fine Arts appointed by President Jimmy Carter in 1980.

Bestowed with many honors and awards John Chase was a dedicated father; decorated soldier and role model for many who admired his drive and determination.

**Norma Merrick Sklarek**, a pioneering female architect, once called the "Rosa Parks of Architecture" passed on February 06, 2012. After receiving her Bachelor of Architecture degree from Bernard College at Columbia University in 1950 Norma applied for jobs but was turned down 19 times.

This did not deter her however; it ignited a flame that lit the path to a successful career. In 1954, on her first try, she passed the four-day state licensing exam and became the first African-American woman to pass the New York state exam. In 1962, she became the first black woman to earn a license in California. Continuing her legacy of firsts, in 1966, she was the first African-American director of architecture at Gruen and Associates in Los Angeles, CA and in 1980, the first African-American woman elected a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.

When asked about her career direction Norma said, "In architecture, I had

absolutely no role model. I'm happy today to be a role model for others that follow." She led by example and set the bar high for those following in her footsteps.

**Barbara G Laurie**, dedicated mentor to students and interns, professor and architect passed away on February 7, 2013. Professor Laurie drew inspiration from "the young ones" while pushing them to realize their potential.

In 1985, she received her Bachelor of Architecture degree from Howard University. She served the University for 20 years, most recently as Associate Professor of Architecture.

When asked about her inspiration she was replied "A lot of my inspiration now comes from wanting to be involved with young people in coming up with solutions." While an associate at Devroux & Purnell she said, "I love the interns and the younger architects at my office. Some of them actually are my past students. I teach at school to get re-energized because the students are just so bright and positive and they want to be great designers one day. I see the younger people here as students. You want to teach them everything and you want to listen to what they're saying about their project ideas because usually their perspective is very pure and simple."

Professor Laurie provided focused visibility for African American women in architecture and inspired many generations of students both in practice and at school. She believed to increase the visibility of minorities in the profession you had to see yourself. She lived as an example and touched the lives of many; her spirit will be greatly missed.



# National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA): 40 years AND counting

Kevin M. Holland, AIA NOMA LEED AP | Kathy Denise Dixon, AIA, NOMA, LEED AP BD+C  
Originally published *Blacklines Magazine*

The outcome of these discussions was a recognized and desperate need for an affiliation dedicated to the development and advancement of multi-cultural architects.

Driven with a passion for the craft they so loved, twelve African-American architects met, in 1971, at the American Institute of Architects (AIA) National Convention in Detroit where they discussed the issues of being black architects in the United States. They discussed the lack of project opportunities, and; the need to positively affect change in the communities from which they came. The outcome of these discussions was a recognized and desperate need for an affiliation dedicated to the development and advancement of multi-cultural architects.

That initial meeting, where the framework, mission and aims were formed, was attended by architects, William Brown, AIA, NOMAC; Leroy Campbell, FAIA, NOMAC; Wendell Campbell, FAIA, NOMAC; John S. Chase, FAIA, NOMAC; James C. Dodd, FAIA, NOMAC; Kenneth B. Groggs, FAIA; Nelson Harris, AIA, NOMAC; Jeh Johnson, FAIA; E.H. McDowell, FAIA; Robert J. Nash, FAIA, NOMAC; Harold Williams, FAIA, NOMAC; and Robert Wilson, AIA, NOMAC all of whom made the giant step to establish the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) 40 years ago. They wanted underrepresented design professionals to fight against the discriminatory policies that limited architects of diverse backgrounds from participating in robust design

opportunities that were usually afforded to a class of privileged architects whose racial, ethnic and financial pedigree merited special invitation to participate.

These men recognized that, although the perception was that there was yet, another “black” version of a mainstream organization—which was so prevalent in the post-Civil Rights Era—NOMA had become a necessity. There may have been many justifications for the creation of yet another organization. Near the top of this list was that the mainstream organizations were perceived as either not being responsive to the needs of its Black members, or, in some cases, not being readily accepting of membership for blacks.

This Civil Rights Era was one in which an Act of Congress, forever known as the Civil Rights Bill of 1965, just six years prior, was deemed necessary to reconfirm and enforce the laws already afforded under the 15th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. It was just 17 years earlier that the United States Supreme Court upheld in the landmark case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, that “separate was not equal.”

This was the sociopolitical climate in which many of these men came of age, obtained their college educations, and launched their

professional practices. Despite any majority culture claims of separation, or threats of being labeled ‘radicals,’ these men were equally proud of their heritage, race, nation, and their profession—which tended to disregard the opinions, needs and voice of an entire segment of its professional colleagues and their communities. Those founders of NOMA rightfully surmised that the formation of a new organization simply for the sake of its formation would serve as a miscarriage of justice to the ideas, aims, and vision which were the true motivators and impetus behind NOMA’s historic formation. NOMA was the logical and unified response to discrimination towards architects of color.

Ironically, NOMA, founded as the voice of architects of color—particularly, African-American architects—disappointed with the status quo of the architectural profession, was recognized by the AIA, in 2007, as the recipient of the Whitney M. Young Jr. Award. The Whitney Young Award is given to “an architect or organization that exemplifies the profession’s responsibility to society.” In her recommendation of NOMA, Jane Weinzapfel, FAIA, declared that “NOMA was selected for its un-failing dedication to promoting the architecture profession with the goal of increasing diversity among practitioners.” ○



in 1971 was just the beginning of the NOMA movement. Forty-one years later, Detroit was the location of the 40th Annual NOMA Conference and Exposition and the historic, Westin Book Cadillac Hotel was the chosen venue.



The theme of this year’s conference was “A Legacy Driven by Design.” The Westin Book Cadillac Hotel, a historic legend in its own right, has hosted presidents Benjamin Harrison, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, along with other notable individuals like Martin Luther King Jr., first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Babe

Ruth, Joe DiMaggio and many more. From October 18-20th, the Italian Renaissance inspired architectural design was a fitting host for the auspicious birthday commemoration of NOMA.

Exploring the trends and use of technological advances in the challenging economic market were strong themes of the conference seminar discussions. Firm management, understanding contracts, African-inspired interiors, sustainability, and using mergers and acquisitions as methods for firm growth were just a few of the topics presented by a myriad of experts. Other topics included the redevelopment of Southwest Detroit, rebuilding communities through design, managing complex projects, collaborating for the future, engaging youth in design, intern development, and an insightful presentation on Asian-American Architects by the newly elected NOMA West Region Vice President, Rod Hemni, FAIA, NOMA.



NOMA always remembers to celebrate its members who have obtained their architecture license. Attending this conference were three new registered architects. The organization strongly encourages its members to become licensed and offers conference goers the opportunity to obtain continuing educational credits for seminars attended which is required by both, state architectural boards and the AIA to maintain licensure and membership, respectively.

The annual conference is designed to be heavily scheduled with information from keynote speakers, sponsors, exhibitors, and panelists to encourage dialogue

among students and professionals. In addition to design competitions for students and professionals, historical bus and walking tours were part of the three-day agenda. The Mayor of Detroit, Hon. Dave Bing, and Michigan State Governor, Hon. Richard Snyder were also invited participants.



NOMA Detroit chapter president, Rainy Hamilton Jr., FAIA, NOMA, and his fellow chapter officers, Tiffany Brown, Assoc. AIA, NOMA, and Sandra Little, AIA, NOMA, did an awesome job in hosting the historic occasion in The Motor City. Local tours included Frank Lloyd Wright Homes, Motown Museum, a tour of Detroit, the Lafayette Park Cultural walking tour, and the historic tour of the Book Cadillac Hotel itself.

Highlights of the conference included luncheon keynote speaker Monica Ponce de Leon, Dean and Professor of Architecture at the A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Michigan

who spoke about organic forms in architecture. The conference attendees also enjoyed a presentation by Karen E. Hudson, the granddaughter of the legendary, African-American architect, Paul R. Williams, FAIA. The presentation was entitled, "Classical Hollywood Style" and Mrs. Hudson recounted her experience and recollections of her grandfather and described the experience of living in his designs. Ms. Ponce de Leon and Mrs. Hudson were among the many influential women who are making a difference in the industry. Over 400 NOMA members, affiliates and students attended the 40th anniversary Conference celebration.

One of the highlights of the presentation

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panels was the discussion with the two of the Founders, Harold Williams and Jeh Johnson, their wives and other supporters which gave them an opportunity to express their memories of the birth of the organization as well as their opinions on

its growth over forty years. The audience was engrossed as the Founders and their spouses articulated the challenges and experiences of the veteran members. Moreover, the audience was encouraged by the stories of how far NOMA has come as an organization over the past four decades.

Sanford Garner, AIA, NOMAC, has served as the 2011-2012 NOMA President and the Garner Administration comes to its completion as of December 31. The Annual Conference serves as the passing of the mantle of leadership to its President-Elect, Kathy Dixon, AIA, NOMA, who will serve as the National President during the years 2013-2014.

THURSDAY



FRIDAY





Although architecture is still heavily a male-dominated field, it does not mean that there have not been women contributors to the organization. After all, no village can thrive without the nurturing hands of mothers molding and prepping. Dixon is following two other women who held this position in the past, Roberta Washington, FAIA, NOMAC, and Cheryl McAfee, FAIA, NOMAC. Many women have served at various levels and have held influential positions giving truthful meaning to the word “diverse”.

*Blacklines* wishes to congratulate Mr. Garner, the NOMA Board of Directors and the Detroit NOMA chapter on a job well done! The theme of reflecting on

the past and planning toward the future was very clear throughout the event which was deemed to be a great success. Overall the attendees were inspired by the past events and motivated to achieve even further in the future to continue the NOMA Legacy. If the past forty years are any indication, then the next forty years, beginning with the 41st Annual NOMA Conference and Exposition in Indianapolis, are guaranteed to be fruitful and fulfilling for NOMA and its members. ○

Kevin M. Holland, AIA NOMA LEED AP  
Managing Director  
wgArchitecture llc

Conference photos:  
Neville Simpson, N'Sight Photography

## PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVE



Marcus Huff  
Brailsford and  
Dunlavey

This year's NOMA conference was the first one I have ever attended and I was grateful to share in this historic conference. It was great to present with a friend and co-presenter, Kimberly Dokes, as we discussed our program management experiences on a \$500M Bond Program for Detroit Public Schools. The presentation was well received and the dialogue at the end was just as spirited. It was encouraging to learn about similar positive and challenging experiences

and to know that other firms and individuals in the architectural and construction industry endure similar challenges on a daily basis. After the discussion, I was approached by a college student who was interested in furthering his exposure to the program management field as well as his career and asked me for any advice. I was humbled and excited because I have been him many times before and I was glad to be able to share this time.

The conference was also very diverse and well-attended. There were individuals not only from the architecture industry, but from many other professions as well. You never know who you may run into and it was pleasantly surprising for me to run into my elementary school art teacher, Hubert Massey. Mr. Massey is nationally recognized for his artistic murals and to cross paths with him at architecture conference speaks volumes to the caliber of attendees this conference draws. We were able to reconnect and exchange information solely because I attended the conference.

My company, Brailsford & Dunlavey's purpose is to inspire, empower and advance communities, and I felt that this conference embodied that principle. I expressed the great opportunity this experience had been to connect with inspiring individuals within our industry. I felt as if the conference directly aligned with our strategic goals, culture, and brand and we discussed the importance of having greater exposure to future NOMA conferences and my continued involvement with the organization. ○

“I was humbled and excited because I have been him many times before and I was glad to be able to share this time. They motivate me to continue my path of making a difference and being a force in my corner of this industry. The NOMA Conference has once again, provided me with a platform to voice my architectural ideologies to a wide audience.”







Kimberly N. Dokes  
AIA NCARB  
DokesDesign+  
Architecture, LLC.

When asked to be a presenter at the 2012 NOMA Conference, I had substantial feelings of honor and appreciation. I thought of past conference presenters, which inspire my journey as an African American Female Architect and entrepreneur. Presenters and panel members, such as Dina Griffin and Jack Travis, from the 2011 conference all gave me a sense of strength and courage. They motivate me to continue my path of making a difference and being a force in my corner of this industry.

With that, I was very excited to be a presenter on the topic of small businesses participating in large budget capital improvement projects/programs. This is always a sensitive subject for reasons of self-value, and my objective was to express a positive perspective about how the objectives of minority participation can actually provide growth and exposure from such projects. The discussion that ensued was a spirited dialog about a local fast track, ambitiously scheduled, capital improvements program. My co-presenter and my organization participated as members of the owner's representative team. This program was regarded as contentious in the design community because the minority Architects felt they were utilized in a manner that exposed them to risk and lessened their value as Architects.

We discussed points like better contract language, fully understanding scope of work or lack thereof, realistic project schedules, quality of service provided, and the outlook of the majority as it relates to minority Architects. My co-presenter and I feel we did our best to discuss and provide answers to high-level expectations from the owner/project management team's side. We had to answer specific questions of why certain processes were utilized, and listen to responses of how things could have been approached differently. At the end of our hour-long presentation, I felt we needed three more hours of discussion time. However, I felt we covered a lot of great points about how minority architects engage large projects. It was a great experience and my co-presenter and I gained a wealth of knowledge in the exchange. ○



Michael Ford  
I am a 2006 graduate of The University of Detroit Mercy, where my graduate thesis was titled, Hip-Hop Inspired Architecture and Design. I am originally from Detroit, but now located in Madison, Wisconsin working at Flad Architects.

## The parallel roots of NOMA and Hip-hop

Nearly 40 years ago, in the South Bronx, a new culture was birthed, it was, and still is, a social response to economical, social and political deprivations instituted by the architectural design of public housing. That culture is hip-hop. It is a rage against both deprivation and definitions of societal norms; it boasts its own sense of innovation and aesthetics. Coincidentally, during that same time period, in Detroit Michigan, a city known for its innovation (Motown), a new architectural organization was formed, NOMA. The societal settings which prompted the birth of hip-hop are closely related to those which prompted our charter members to form NOMA. This time

parallel served as the perfect justification for me to put aside my ARE Exams for a month and come present my research at the 40th Annual NOMA Conference, in my hometown of Detroit.

My seminar, Hip Hop Inspired Architecture and Design, was based upon my research and efforts to study the extreme modernist visions and environments which unintentionally contributed to the birth of hip-hop, as well as my efforts to create a new architecture, one based on hip-hop's four elements: mcing, breaking, djing and graffiti. As I prepared for the conference, I anticipated an audience of young professionals and students. I was pleasantly surprised by not only the varying professional levels of the attendees, but also the sheer number of individuals in attendance. The attendees included the current Mayor of Highland Park, Michigan, DeAndre Windom, who has been dubbed, the hip-hop mayor. He is married to Grammy nominated rapper and actress, Yo Yo (Yolanda Whittaker). The presentation prompted a great deal of conversation and questions, from what is the essence of hip-hop, to is this research and innovation an avenue for young, talented, African American architects and designers to transcend the limitations that typically encumber us from becoming "starchitects". The NOMA Conference has once again, provided me with a platform to voice my architectural ideologies to a wide audience and encourage my peers to incorporate our culture and artistry into our profession. ○



Shirl Buss  
Ph.D., Assoc. AIA  
Creative Director at the Center for Cities & Schools, University of California, Berkeley

I was honored to be invited to attend the NOMA Conference in October by a team of colleagues (Prescott Reavis, Katherine Williams, and Rommel Taylor) to present our work with elementary school students. For the past four years we have facilitated our program, *Children's Architecture Think Tank: Pathways to a Healthy, Sustainable Community* at Malcolm X Academy, a collaboration between UC Berkeley Y-PLAN, local housing developers, and the City of San Francisco.

While I have been an admirer and ally of NOMA for a long time, this was my first National Conference. As a white woman, I was touched by the warmth, openness and positive energy everyone extended to me throughout the conference.

The whole experience was powerful and inspiring, from the beautifully restored Cadillac Hotel, to high-quality presentations, to the substantive site tours throughout Detroit. I was able to witness and be a part of the excitement and reverence the local community offered to NOMA as they opened their doors and hearts to all of us.

One experience stood out for me. As people were discussing the NOMA Pipeline Project in one of the workshops, someone asked, "What is the youngest age at which we can introduce architecture to young people?"

Based upon the experience of our team, and my own years of experience working with the younger set, I would emphatically say: elementary school! The methods found in the best design studios — critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork and cross-disciplinary work — can ignite children's creativity and whet their appetite for lifelong learning. Curiosity, passion, resilience, and imagination are attributes that do not arise suddenly in adulthood, but must be fostered directly from an early age. The extent to which young people are given the opportunity to develop in these areas, may indeed lead to academic and professional success as they move through the educational pipeline—and hopefully for some—the NOMA pipeline.

It is also significant and powerful that the young children in our program have been able to work side by side with strong African American professionals. My colleague Prescott Reavis once said, "When these kids become adults and they hear someone say the age old excuse, **'We can't find any African American architects'**", I hope they respond and say, "When I was in 3rd grade we had three of them!" ○



Mykayla Fernandes  
I am a second year undergraduate architecture student at Virginia Tech. I play the piano and the ukulele. I enjoy good stories, cartoons, video games, music, and adventures. I hope to become a licensed architect one day.

## Polymaths

How many different roles can the architectural mind take on? While attending the NOMA 2012 Conference in Detroit, I saw that numerous opportunities for those who have received an architectural education expand beyond the field of architecture. There were so many people of similar educational backgrounds with a variety of specialties; many different paths were taken as a result. Helene Dreiling (FAIA, Elected National AIA President) is an architect who is also a leader educating people, reaching out to the public, and building relationships embodying the social responsibility of the architect. Dan Pitera (FAIA, ACD), a professor and collaborator,

works with people from many different fields to use design as a social and political catalyst for healthy communities. Devanne Pena (Assoc. AIA), about my age, is extending her reach into related fields teaching architectural and engineering drafting, practicing in a firm, and working as an editor for an architecture magazine. Each person was doing something unique with their architecture education. It made the interaction with rooms full of people seem less intimidating and instead an opportunity to learn the true dexterity of the architect. As a second year undergraduate architecture student, the traditional route of practicing in a firm has been taught most as our future after school. At the conference, architecture graduates who pursued careers in writing, teaching, and leadership were alongside those who practice in a firm.

Throughout history we see architects skilled in many other trades such as Imhotep (Third Dynasty, ancient Egypt), Apollodorus of Damascus (Nerva-Antonine Dynasty, ancient Roman Empire) and Leon Battista Alberti (Renaissance Italy). A modern example is Ken Adam, designer of the 60's and 70's James Bond movie sets, who graduated with a degree in architecture. Zaha Hadid always practiced architecture, later on she began teaching, designing furniture and getting involved in fashion design. Frank Gehry, another famous architect, has a line of jewelry and furniture and is even involved in software development.

Today we see a chain reaction of successfully practicing one skill until it leads to the successful practice of another closely related skill. Architecture can easily lead to practicing industrial design, fashion design, carpentry, set design, sculpting, concept art, and so much more. Pursuing architecture does not mean that only architecture can be produced at the end of the day. After meeting so many different people at the conference, it became clear that there are no boundaries in architecture. ○



# 2012 NOMA DESIGN EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Renee Kemp Rotan, NOMA

A wide range  
of building  
types were  
represented:  
from museums  
to schools,  
from parks to  
libraries, from  
universities to  
student unions,  
from houses  
to historic  
preservation  
projects.

Every year the NOMA Awards are special, but the 2012 NOMA Awards are considered extra-special. And why? Because, 2012 marked the 40th Anniversary of the founding of NOMA. Yes, 2012 was the big 40! Our really big *kahuna* year. And just as we are taught to say grace over food before we eat, this 2012 Awards ceremony began by asking all to praise our forward thinking NOMA Founders—known as forefathers (who with their supportive wives—our early NOMA foremothers) served NOMA, tirelessly in the early days. Those pioneer wives who stood behind the early NOMA founders we now call our NOMA QUEEN MOTHERS. We asked the original NOMA Founders, *also known as brothers from another mother*, to stand so we might applaud. ASHAY. We asked the original NOMA QUEEN MOTHERS to stand and be recognized. ASHAY. As the wise folks, say: “Behind every great minority designer is a compassionate and dedicated organization that acts as a family to serve them!” So Happy Birthday to NOMA.

Happy Birthday to us.

Each year I am asked, “What are you going to do at the NOMA Awards this year?” One year we presented the NOMA Awards in Hip Hop rhyming language—quite poetic and a student favorite! One year we gave the awards to the NOMA winners as “the gladiators of design”. This year I

finally completed my opera “Will: A Novel Opera Ballet on Self-Determination and the Persecution of Creative Genius.” So with the opening of the 40th Anniversary award dinner— I decided to sing... Indeed I did sing. I sang the praises of NOMA in 2012. I sang words of wisdom spoken at the Detroit Museum of African American History—I sang wise words repeated from the mouths of our NOMA forefathers and queen mothers—As we go forth to claim our birthright as builders and to claim our destiny as the architects of future generations—these are the words of wisdom we should try to retain:

I do not expect to save the world  
But, I do expect to love those  
with whom I sleep  
Share happiness of those whom I  
call friend  
Encourage those amongst me  
who are visionary  
Thus, remove from my life those  
who offer me depression,  
despair and any disrespect.  
—From Nikki Giovanni’s,  
“Cotton Candy on a Rainy Day”.

From the very beginning, the NOMA Design Excellence Awards have been our way of showing love, encouragement and respect for the talents of fellow NOMA members. It is the highest award of honor that our highly sustainable organization—the National Organization of Minority Architects can bestow upon our members.

Indeed, the jurors of the NOMA Design Excellence Awards, Bob

Thiel, GSA/AIA, David Harmon, AIA/NOMA and I do not take this job lightly. You must believe that.

In 2012, we received 22 entries in two categories, the built and unbuilt categories. A wide range of building types were represented: from museums to schools, from parks to libraries, from universities to student unions, from houses to historic preservation projects. All entries were anonymous. While everyone who submits cannot win—those who do not submit, can never be chosen. Each year we ask all NOMA members to submit projects for review. Each year there are projects that rise to the top to become stellar examples of what NOMA represents—design excellence in thought, speech and action.

In 2012, there were five awards in the *built* and the *unbuilt* categories, including: Two citations in the *unbuilt* category AND two citations and one honor award in the *built* category.

Renee Kemp-Rotan, Syracuse B.Arch, Cum Laude; Columbia MSUP; Architectural Assoc. London, serving many US Mayors on Urban Design/Economic Development policy; lectured at Sorbonne, Cairo University, MIT, Columbia, Smithsonian, Michigan, City College, Corcoran, Cooper Hewitt, Georgia Tech, FAMU, Howard U. etc.; published in *First Encyclopedia of World Vernacular Architecture*, Cambridge Univ. Press, ed., Paul Oliver receiving Royal Institute of British Architects Banister Fletcher History Award; included in *2009 African American National Biography*, published by Harvard & works archived at Oxford University Center for African American Studies/Archives UK; placed 21st of 2000 international entries for Grand Egyptian Museum Competition; received 2010 American Heritage Award from American Legacy Magazine for design of Birmingham Civil Right Heritage Trail. She now turns attention to Haiti as author/editor of *Haiti Culture Code: Design, Disaster and the Diaspora*. She is Co-founder of *Black Design News Network*. She has traveled extensively to 25 countries.



OF THEE WE PRAISE: “THE ARCHITECT AS EDUCATOR”

Horace Mann Elementary School | Washington DC | Marshall Moya Design

Horace Mann will serve as a paragon for public schools in the DC area, and is scheduled to achieve LEED Silver certification by the U.S. Green Building Council.

Public school design is always mixed-bag for NOMA jurors to consider. Yes, we know that our children are our future. We also know that the learning environments created for them—can have highly deterministic consequences.

Horace Mann Elementary School is designed to connect a new addition to an old building. Dialogue between old and new creates architectonic tension. As the old building stands guard, new forms celebrate free-flowing interior spaces that accommodate the busyness of children at work and at play. The school’s new entry creates a lobby of immediate wonder and discovery with high atrium ceilings and classrooms constructed like black box theaters—capable of adapting to the ever-changing interactions between children and teachers. New interiors are designed as highly flexible theater sets that readily accept the swirling influx of children’s activities. Yet, old and new buildings merge to create defensible courtyards where child’s play can be watched from every neighborhood angle. Here our children are both cherished and protected. This school is cool.

Thus, we the NOMA Jury proudly bestow the NOMA Citation Award upon Marshall/Moya in the name of *causa educare*.







Affordable Senior Housing Building | Oakland CA | Rod Henmi, FAIA

The solution provides a compact but gracious building mass that defines the fourth side of the park and creates an elegant public façade.

OF THEE WE PRAISE: "THE ARCHITECT AS CAREGIVER"

Well-designed, affordable housing is always good medicine for the ageless senior soul.

We praise your design for its ability to make aesthetic connections to other phases of a mixed-income, intergenerational residential project. We love your ability to knit a variety of buildings together in stimulating, yet unpredictable combinations.

We view your facades from many vantage points in the community as you amplify and enliven our encounter with each and every piece of the architectural puzzle. You make this community accessible to all those with disabilities and those who come to visit the infirm. Yet, you do not bore us with cookie-cutter solutions. This project invites seniors to sit on the porch and look to their neighbors for assistance. It gives all the chance to gaze respectfully at the progressive stages of rebuilding community. It allows us to heal from the old wounds of poor public housing while encouraging us to applaud the thoughtful beauty of the new affordable home.

For your ability to package affordable housing in very powerful ways, we the NOMA Jury proudly bestow the NOMA Citation Award upon HKIT and Rod Henmi, FAIA in the name of *causa economica*.



UNC/ECSU School of Pharmacy | Elizabeth City NC | The Freelon Group, Phil Freelon FAIA, NOMA

The design of this building exterior is inspired by the historical Apothecary's chest, where pharmacists categorized and quantified the elements used in their medicines.

OF THEE WE PRAISE: "THE ARCHITECT AS SCIENTIST"

We applaud your ability to design this oddly artful building for such distinguished scientific service. Your progressive integration of form and function submits to highly disciplined architectural moves. Portions of this building function like an erector set with structure honestly revealed.

While façades symbolize old medicine chests organized as a fresh set of apothecary shelves. Floor plans fulfill every researcher's dream—the ability to discover new medicines within arm's reach. Here pharmacists compete to become the sorcerer's apprentice in a technologic work sphere—a no-nonsense place.

For your ability to brand campus buildings as magnets for new scientific thought, we the NOMA Jury proudly bestow the NOMA Citation Award upon The Freelon Group, Phil Freelon FAIA, NOMA in the name of *causa medicina*.







Founder's Garden | Midland MI | Hamilton Anderson, Rainy Hamilton Jr, FAIA NOMA

The park serves to visually link the downtown to the industrial plant that still symbolizes community success and hope for the future to the residents of the City.

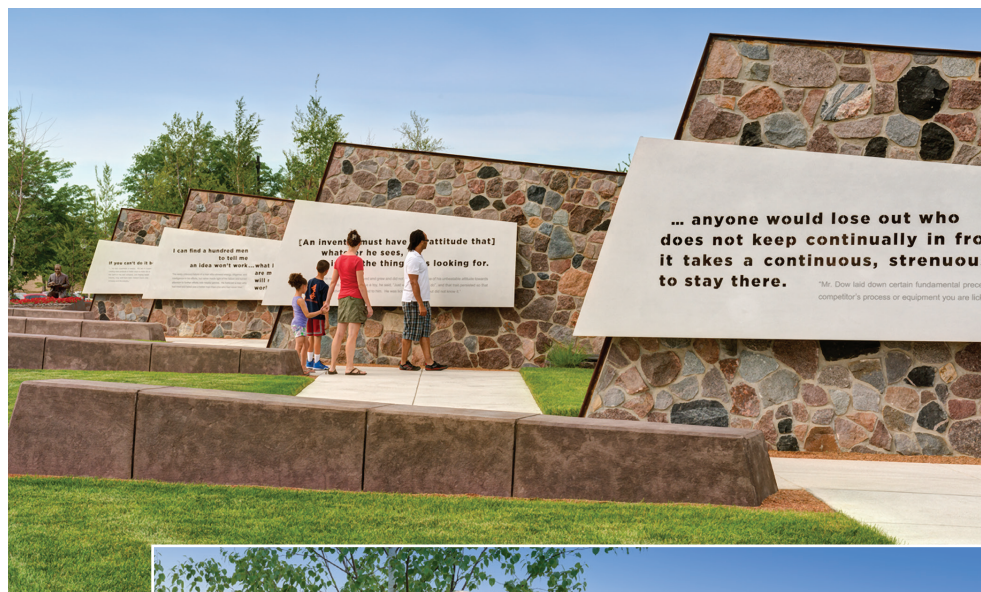
OF THEE WE PRAISE: "THE ARCHITECT AS INTERPRETER"

This urban park is designed to celebrate the founder of the DOW chemical company.

Nestled on land owned by the chemical company, this park is positioned to link an old industrial site to a new legacy of environmental sensitivity.

We praise your ability to design a highly interpretive park experience through a pre-determined series of sequential moves through open space. Careful, deliberate, cunning. This results in a set of well-choreographed and immersive environmental experiences. This project is about cultural memory—the remembrance of formulas and elements perched upon a single periodic chart. With thoughtful park furniture that works like musical chairs to escort visitors through the ins-and-outs of scientific discovery.

For your ability to create a highly interpretive masterpiece with strolls down DOWS memory lane, we the NOMA Jury proudly bestow the NOMA Citation Award upon Hamilton Anderson, Rainy Hamilton Jr., FAIA in the name of *causa historica*.



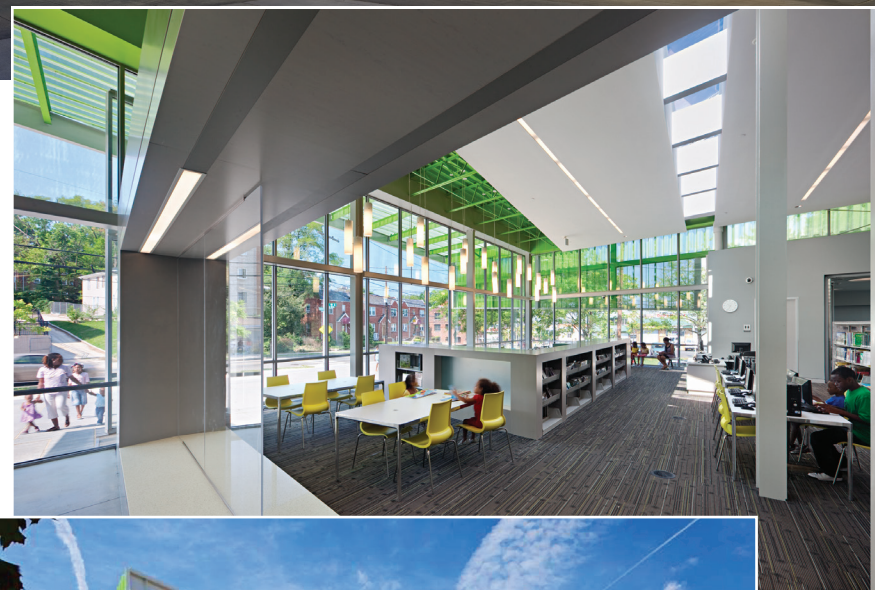
Anacostia Library | Washington DC | The Freelon Group, Phil Freelon, FAIA, NOMA

The design of Washington DC's Anacostia Neighborhood Library is a response to the residential character of one of the district's oldest neighborhoods.

OF THEE WE PRAISE: "THE ARCHITECT AS LITERATI"

This public library demonstrates your ability to communicate, most fluently, in three architectural languages: the language of aesthetics, the language of technology and the language of structural integrity. Your environmental sensitivity creates strong design poetics that beckon future public buildings to go and stay green—like your great green roof that wraps the building and then folds across windows to shield against sun. Your attention to detail solves the formal, spatial and technologic challenges of a modern day library, in new but funky ways. Your high regard for books (and for the people who still read them) has opened new ways of organizing large volumes of public information in the most inviting ways.

For your ability to design libraries as the new town centers for mass communication, we the NOMA Jury proudly bestow the NOMA Honor Award upon The Freelon Group, Phil Freelon, FAIA, NOMA as the true masters of *causa bibliotheca*, *causa environmenta* and *causa meticolata*.





# 2012 NOMA STUDENT DESIGN AWARDS

## Envisioning Sustainable Communities

Design teams must articulate how they will incorporate new urban spaces and programming into the existing landscape of the City. Each team should present the role of context and be sensitive to the current and future resident's needs, lifestyles and community culture.

I: The first component is an urban planning study of the Southwest Detroit neighborhoods for the development of new Urban Spaces, located off of Michigan Avenue [US12].

II: The second component calls for a cohesive urban planning scheme that incorporates key elements from The Greening of Detroit initiative with the design of a new Sustainable Training Center known as "The Idea Center". The center will serve as the hub of the revitalization, a nucleus for education and information focusing on holistic and healthy living.



Jury: (left to right in the picture) Emmanuel Pratt (Sweet Water Foundation & Chicago State University Aquaponics); Helene Combs Dreiling FAIA (AIA President-elect); Kenneth Crutcher NOMA AIA (Crutcher Studio) Jury Chair; Dan Pitera FAIA ACD (Detroit Collaborative Design Center).  
Jury Accommodation: Virginia Tech

**Emmanuel Pratt** earned his BArch from Cornell University, his MSAUD from Columbia University, and is presently in the fifth year of his doctoral work in the PhD program of Urban Planning at the University of Columbia in New York. Emmanuel's professional and academic work has involved explorations and investigations in such topics as urbanization, race/identity, gentrification, and most recently transformative processes of community development through intersections of food security and sustainable design innovation.

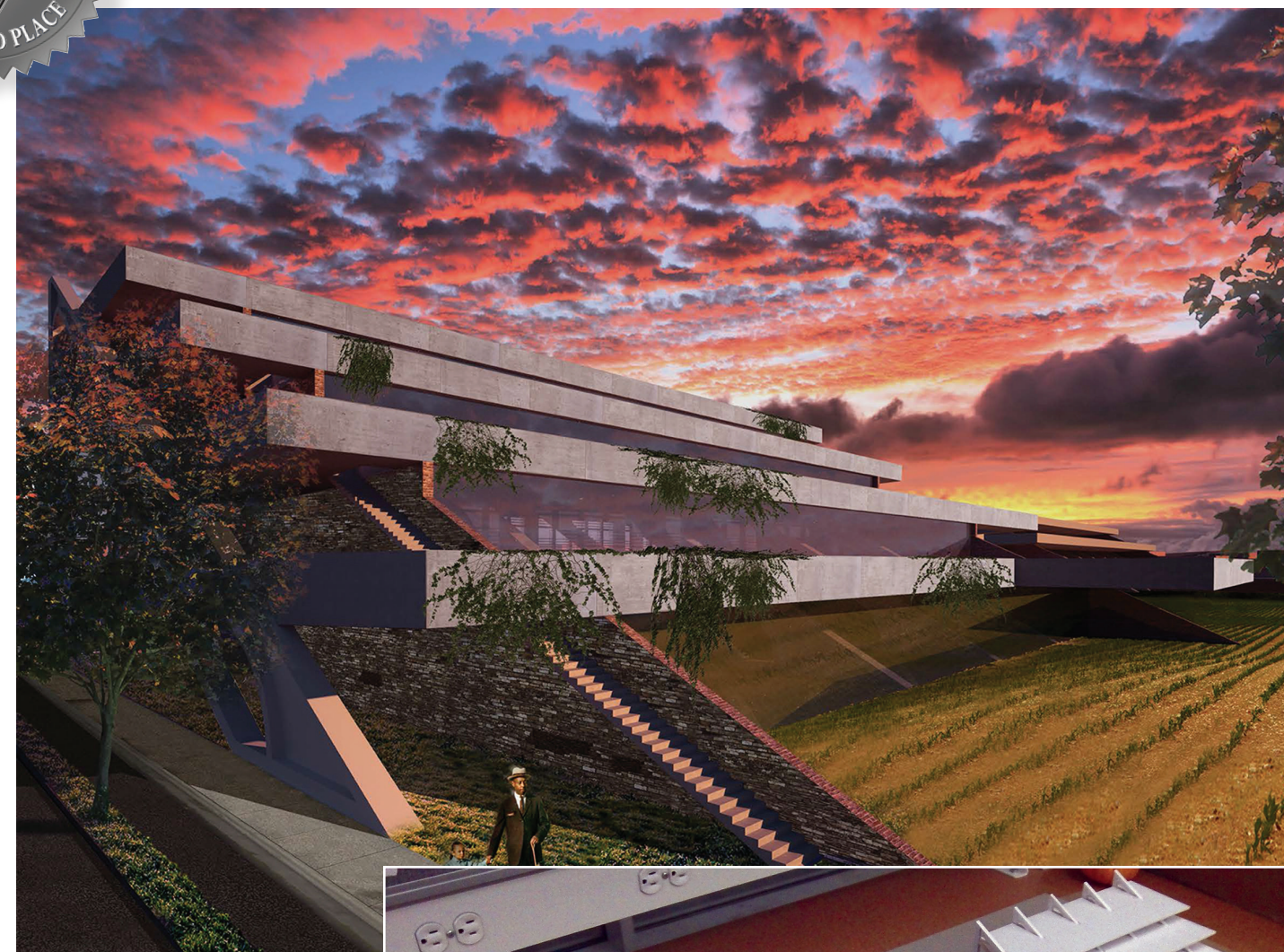
**Helene Combs Dreiling** currently serves as executive director of the Virginia Center for Architecture, a non-profit that develops the public understanding of architecture through various programs. With more than 18 years of national AIA service, Dreiling has held numerous leadership positions including AIA secretary (2011-12) and national vice president (2000). She served on the board of trustees of the American Architectural Foundation and as president of the Virginia Society, AIA and AIA Blue Ridge. From 2000-2009 Dreiling held several positions at AIA National. Dreiling previously ran two private firms The Plum Studio, and The Dreiling Partnership Architects. She holds a bachelor of architecture degree from the College of Architecture and Urban Studies at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va.

**Kenneth Crutcher** is a licensed Michigan architect and has maintained his own design practice since 1998. Currently, Mr. Crutcher holds the position on the Board of Directors of the Detroit Chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects. He is a past AIA Detroit Board Member where he held the position of Associate Director. Mr. Crutcher is also active in the community as a member of the City of Farmington Michigan Planning Commission. He also is currently a member of the Pewabic Society, Inc. Board of Trustees. Mr. Crutcher is currently an adjunct faculty at Lawrence Technological University teaching design studio courses. He holds a Master of Architecture University of Michigan, College of Architecture and Urban Planning.

**Dan Pitera** is a political and social activist masquerading as an architect. He is the Executive Director of the Detroit Collaborative Design Center at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture. Mr. Pitera is also co-leading the Civic Engagement process for the Detroit Works Long Term Planning initiated by Mayor Bing in 2010. Mr. Pitera was a 2004-2005 Loeb Fellow at Harvard University. Under his direction since 2000, the Design Center won the 2011 and 2002 Dedalo Minosse International Prize, was awarded the 2011 SEED Award, was included in the US Pavilion of the 2008 Venice Biennale in Architecture, and won the 2009 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Design Excellence for the St. Joseph Rebuild Center in New Orleans.

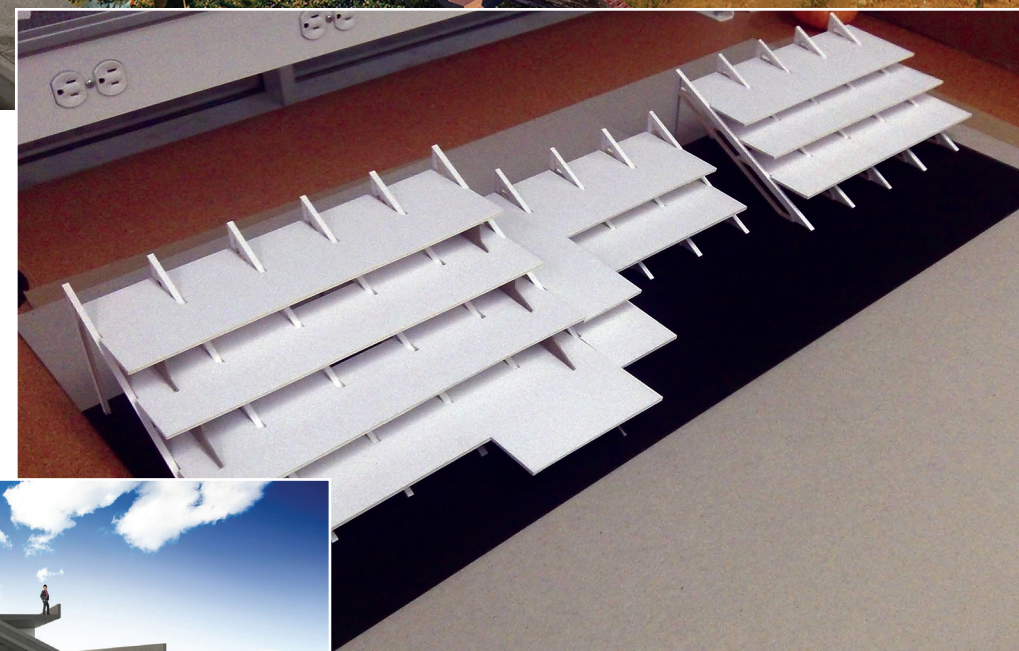


University North Carolina Charlotte



### Corktown Idea Center: A Catalyst for Revitalization

"Our design offers the mechanism of a new, green way of living that will be the catalyst from which Corktown will draw knowledge, leadership, and inspiration for years to come."







#### detroit feedback

Feedback is the reaction to a certain issue.

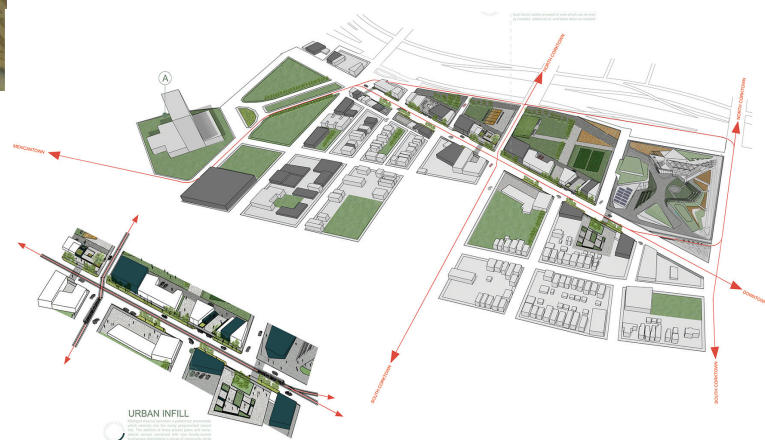
In the most literal sense, we create feedback by providing the resources to produce nutritious food and feed the people of Detroit.

Feedback is an echo.

The urban farming techniques learned at the Idea Center can be used in other areas of Detroit, prompting a chain reaction of economic growth and public green spaces throughout the city.

Feedback is the cycle of inputs and outputs.

The Idea Center serves as a cultural anchor for Corktown as it draws in visitors and residents alike and fosters education..



#### Renovation Cultivation Innovation

Renovate.

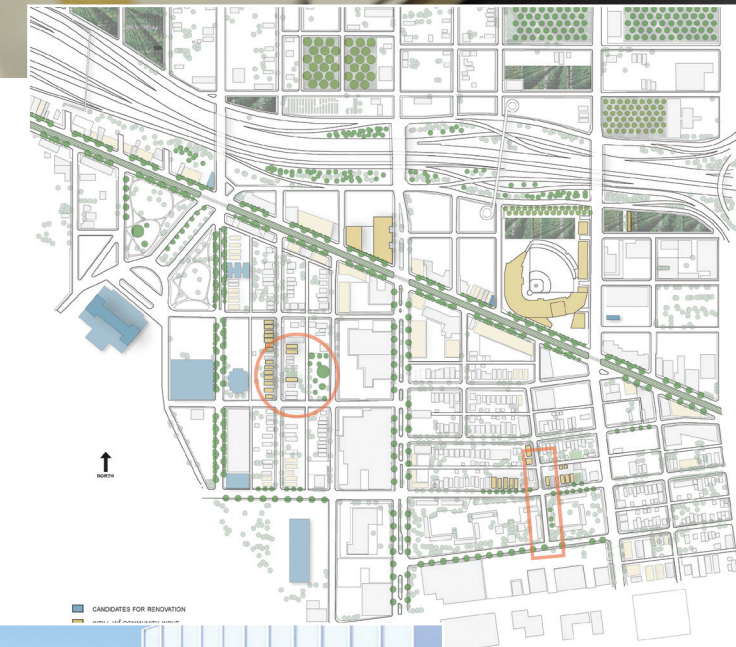
Our proposal intends to preserve the vast majority of the site and its historic buildings.

Cultivate.

There will be opportunities for productive landscape—that is, natural elements that can be enjoyed as part of a streetscape that benefits the community, business owners and the local ecosystem. This proposal refines the built environment with three street types: the boulevard, the residential street and the industrial corridor.

Innovate.

Build two institutions: a Farm Center, which layers learning, recreation and farming into a single site and the Institute for Global Urbanism (IGU), which is housed in the adaptively reused Michigan Central Station.





# GIVING BACK IN DETROIT

Andrew Thompson

Every NOMA conference I try to arrive a day early to participate in the Community Service Project. My schedule and commitments precludes me from getting there early. Most of the time, I arrive just in time to participate in the NOMA Board of Directors meeting that evening. | For NOMA's 40th anniversary I made a commitment to get there not only a day early but made sure to sign up for the Community Service project.



Andrew Thompson  
NOMA AIA is the  
current Northeast  
Region Vice President for  
NOMA.

He has a Bachelor of  
Architecture from  
Pratt Institute and is a  
graduate of Columbia  
University with a Mas-  
ters in Architecture and  
Urban Design.

The day arrived and I boarded the bus to go out to the WARM Center where we would begin our work. Lo and behold, my mentor Richard Franklin also joined us on the trip. Fellow board members Bryan Hudson and Tim Johnson were also present. The day began with us getting out sketch paper and using various dimensions of foam-core to envision ideas for transporting demonstration items for the WARM Center. These units would contain ways for saving energy in regards to electricity, water, and building materials.

They would have to be compact and mobile for demonstrations that would be conducted by WARM staff throughout

I was told to dress in jeans and "work" type clothes and be prepared to get "dirty". I was not told much about the project with the exception of being at the WARM Center (<http://www.warmtraining.org>) in Detroit and possible activities afterwards. I would just go with the flow once I arrived.

the Detroit area. WARM also provides weatherization training for homeowners and leads deconstruction projects throughout the city. Our Charrette session was very productive and we met some new faces who quickly became members of our NOMA "family". We worked on some sketch models and after a short wrap-up proceeded to our next task. I walked into a large workshop with other NOMA volunteers and there were saws and sanders buzzing and cutting around me. There was sawdust throughout the area and I could feel the excitement building. We were given various wooden shapes to sand down in the form of boats, airplanes, irons, etc. We were making the toys for local Detroit children who were being helped by the WARM Training Center in the Corktown community of Southwest Detroit. The buildings that were deconstructed contain certain products that can be re-purposed. Some of the reclaimed wood was used to create hand-made toys for local kids. We went hard at work and I quickly grew a "sawdust" crew cut on my bald head. All those involved were very intent on doing a good job and making sure all the tolerances expected were right (the architects in us). Various NOMA member volunteers came

in and out, contributing in various ways toward the Community Service project.

There was a great camaraderie amongst the group, enhancing the feeling of "family". It is enlightening to see professionals and interns come together in such a way every year and what makes this organization unique and special.

We took a lunch break for a presentation about WARM's work and a great piece about home "reclamation". Some vacant homes in Detroit are beyond repair, but the lumber and components is actually more valuable than the home. We went back to work and concluded the day with a visit from local school children from the Corktown community who helped to paint the toys along with WARM and NOMA volunteers.

Kimberly Dowdell who spearheaded this Service project five years ago was on hand to help give us the charge and lend support to NOMA members throughout the day. Detroit is also her hometown.

As I left my tasks and duties for the day, covered in sawdust and hands weary from sanding wood pieces all day, I was glad I made it and in the words of Ice Cube "Today Was a Good Day". ○





1963 4516 Sheridan Avenue  
my Aunt Irene's wedding

2011 4516 Sheridan Avenue  
an abandoned shell

2012 4516 Sheridan Avenue  
a vacant lot

# Change Begins Within The SEED Network Story

Kimberly Dowdell

Originally published in the APA *Planning in Black Communities* 2013 Winter Newsletter

SEED (Social Economic Environmental Design) began long before the summer of 2005. While the SEED Network is flourishing as an international phenomenon under the leadership of Design Corps today, SEED has been a part of my story for as long as I can remember.



Kimberly Dowdell, an Agent of Positive Change in the Built Environment + Society is the co-founder of SEED and works as a project manager for Leven and Company in New York City.

I made a decision to enter the design profession in middle school because I wanted to create positive change in my environment. Growing up in Detroit during the 80's and 90's exposed me to much more than I would like to recall at times. The first nine years of my life were spent on Detroit's east side in a home that my grandparents proudly purchased in the late 1940's, integrating an all white neighborhood. For decades, the family home was well maintained and surrounded by a true community

of other hard working residents. By the time I was born in the early 80's, the neighborhood had already transformed into a shell of what it had once been. My grandfather had passed away shortly after he retired from Ford Motor Company and shortly before I was born. My grandmother no longer wanted to maintain a big empty house on her own since she had already raised her six children. The house was available and my mom had just given birth to a baby girl. We moved in and continued to watch the neighborhood change.

My earliest memories occurred at 4516 Sheridan and included playing in the backyard with the mint leaves or gardening on the side of the house, next to Mrs. English's home. I would sometimes help my mom paint the curb or the base of the trees in the front of the house. I wasn't allowed to play outside by myself because

it just wasn't that kind of neighborhood anymore. Many of the neighbors that my grandparents knew were no longer living there. Some of the homes that had once made the block complete were now missing, like teeth. This was a different place now. When I was small, I made a little rhyme that my mom thought was clever, "east side, east side, what a place...don't leave home without your mace." While it may sound cute, that was our reality.

I was able to compare this environment to other places in Metro Detroit because I frequently visited with family members in Midtown, the west side and Southfield. I even went to school on the west side because my mom didn't feel comfortable with sending me to the local school that she had attended as one of the first black students more than three decades earlier. Jones School is now all black. I attended

another Detroit Public School, Burns Elementary, which was also all black, except for two white kids. For a long time, I didn't understand why we had to wake up so early and catch three city buses to take me to Burns on the other side of town. It took well over an hour to get to school every day. I saw a lot on those city buses along the way, making the journey itself like an education of sorts. On more than one occasion, I recall being abruptly awakened from a nap on my mom's shoulder by an alarming fight between bus passengers. Eventually, my mom was able to get a used car to avoid such incidents, but occasionally her various cars would be stolen and we would have to start all over again.

Part of the reason why she went through so much to take me to the west side for school was to give me a better chance. She knew that Sheridan no longer provided a viable neighborhood for raising a little girl. In 1992, we moved just a few blocks away from Burns Elementary. My commute was less than a ten-minute walk and I could finally go to school all by myself. We lived in a house on Strathmoore, which provided a better sense of community and more of a safe feeling than Sheridan. While it was still not the suburbs, it was a step in the right direction. There were more working families, better shopping areas, fewer missing houses and a more vibrant atmosphere. We had been renting a modest sized home that one of my mom's friends owned for a few years as I finished up at Burns and started attending Gibson, in Redford. One day, there was an eviction notice posted on the door and we were suddenly in the market for a new community. Temporarily, we stayed with relatives in the suburbs, but we eventually landed in a public housing complex in the New Center area of Detroit. That place didn't feel like much of a community at all, but it did have a pool.

I was fortunate to have been afforded the opportunity to attend boarding school



at Cranbrook, in an affluent suburb of Detroit. I finally got to see how the other half lived and began to understand what was missing in many of the communities that had been a part of my story prior to high school. Living in Bloomfield Hills, on Cranbrook's campus was an incredible experience that solidified the notion that successful environments are designed and they evolve over time to meet the needs of their inhabitants. Cranbrook wasn't just a school, it was an educational community and it was designed as such. I lived and breathed that life for four years and I really appreciated my time there. I left Metro Detroit for Cornell University in 2001. Much like Cranbrook, Cornell was designed with a mission and met the changing needs of the student population over its history. Studying architecture at Cornell was another invaluable experience that I deeply appreciated. It allowed me to process all that I had seen over my two decades of existence and understand it in a design context. I took classes in city and regional planning, business, real estate, the humanities and others that I thought could shed light on why Sheridan became such a tragedy. More importantly, I wanted to figure out how to turn it around, and the opportunity was closer than I realized.

I was interning at the General Services Administration (GSA), in the Office of the Chief Architect during the summer of 2005, just before my final year of architecture school. My supervisor was Steve Lewis, a dear friend and mentor of mine to this day. Steve handed me a copy of Metropolis and suggested that I take a look. Immediately, I was drawn into the article written by Lance Hosey entitled, "The Ethics of Brick". It addressed the triple bottom line, with a particular focus on social equity. In my opinion, social and economic issues are at the heart of why places like Sheridan fail over time. As I read Hosey's article and reminisced on my experience of growing up in Detroit, I had an epiphany, and I saw a solution.

The US Green Building Council had created a new rating system called Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design or LEED. After reading the article, the concept of augmenting LEED with a social focus in the development realm emerged. I simply suggested to Steve there

should be something like a LEED for social issues and we could call it "SEED."

**SEED's mission is to advance the right of every person to live in a socially, economically and environmentally healthy community.**

At that moment, SEED was born and has received the support of countless individuals and organizations since 2005. I'm incredibly proud of how my concept has grown into something very important in the design field and I am grateful to Steve for sharing my vision with the roundtable at Harvard's Graduate School of Design in October 2005. On the SEED website, this event is where SEED "is said" to have been created. In some ways, this is true because the roundtable led to the creation of the SEED Network which is "a principle-based network of individuals and organizations dedicated to building and supporting a culture of civic responsibility and engagement in the built environment and the public realm." However, SEED truthfully began the moment I started to feel that my neighborhood -- Sheridan -- should be a better place. I didn't know what to call it back then, but the truth remains that SEED has been apart of me since I was a little girl trying to make sense of my changing neighborhood in Detroit. I'm happy to share the SEED concept with society and hope that the SEED Network will continue to thrive and have an impact on communities all across the globe.

SEED's mission is to advance the right of every person to live in a socially, economically and environmentally healthy community. Through our custom evaluation process, SEED certifies the advancement of this mission in the projects that apply. We've received hundreds of applications and have recognized dozens of worldwide projects with SEED awards and honorable mentions. The SEED concept is one that has a tremendous amount of potential

to become truly transformative in places like Detroit, and on streets like Sheridan. Unfortunately, we were too late to save my family's old house. I was saddened to learn that it had been demolished in late 2012. I had just driven by to assess the damage in October and it was gone by November.

As I went to observe the empty lot where 4516 once stood, it broke my heart. I saw Mrs. English's home still barely standing up on one side and two other empty lots on the other side. Obviously, this place suffered from much more than what design can address alone. There were deep social and economic issues that played a major role in the decline of this once healthy community over the course of many decades. If nothing else, the legacy of Sheridan is that it created in me a vision and a desire to address the pressing issues that destroy neighborhoods and diminish people's quality of life. My coming of age experience in Detroit is largely to be credited with the emergence of SEED as a response to the internal stresses that I'd been feeling throughout my life. How can we fix this? What are the challenges and needs in my community? How can we meet these needs, not only by design, but with socially, economically and environmentally sustainable resources? What could have been done differently to save Sheridan? More importantly, what can we do as an industry working in collaboration with our broader society to prevent this kind of tragic loss of community in our urban core?

This story isn't about a demolished house. It is about a passion to build strong neighborhoods that can evolve with time to support and enrich the livelihood of its residents. SEED began in my mind many years ago, prompted by my heart, which was moved by what I saw with my young eyes in Detroit. With the name that I eventually realized in 2005, SEED continues today as a movement and an important tool that will help countless communities around the world think and act responsibly to rise up and create solutions to overcome their own critical challenges. ○

# 40 Years of Leadership and Going Strong

R. Steven Lewis



R. Steven Lewis, AIA, NOMAC, LEED AP

**Forty or so years ago, 12 Black architects heard the call of Whitney Young, Jr. and NOMA was born.**

As we gathered together in Detroit last October to celebrate NOMA's 40th anniversary, members in attendance faced the always daunting task of having to choose which seminars and events to attend, often lamenting their inability to be in more than one place at one time. This conference suffered no shortage of historic and noteworthy events, including a keynote address delivered to our Friday luncheon crowd by Mayor and former Detroit Piston star point guard Dave Bing; followed by a rousing rendition of the "Lose Yourself" anthem by Eminem known to all as the heart of Chrysler's car commercial, performed by the Selected of God Choir with lyrics customized for NOMA; a dynamic welcome performed by the nationally known Cass Technical High School marching band as our buses arrived at Lawrence Technological University for an evening that featured a presentation of the vision for Detroit's future under the Detroit Works project, and much more. Notwithstanding the plethora of fantastic options that we were presented with, there was one event that was particularly powerful in the

context of NOMA's 40 year journey — the forum that convened all former presidents in attendance at the conference. Forty or so years ago, 12 Black architects heard the call of Whitney Young, Jr. and NOMA was born. Since then, a few among us with the passion, integrity, talent, and willingness, if not desire to serve have stepped forward to lead the organization as president. The roster of those who have served is impressive, with each having invested time, resources, and above all, heart into building NOMA into the exemplary organization that you see today. Most have given of themselves freely, with no expectation of personal gain in exchange for their efforts, no matter the circumstances or environment surrounding their terms in office. NOMA presidents, while each having a particular agenda of their own, have collectively advanced the organization from one of pure advocacy on behalf of those who, by the nature of the profession and the society were marginalized, if not overtly discriminated against, to one that champions diversity within the design professions at all levels. With a focus on excellence in design, practice, and mentoring the next generation, NOMA presidents continue to exhibit leadership that will ensure that architects-of-color are relevant and

necessary in order to contribute to the built legacy of our time, as it should be. Twelve of the 29 former presidents, joined by founding member Jeh Johnson, were in attendance in Detroit, and came together in a structured session to reflect on their times in office, and more importantly, to share those experiences with other members and attendees. The session was conceived as a way to offer members — in particular our students and emerging professionals — the chance to meet these exceptional leaders and to hear their histories first hand. Each president was given an opportunity to reflect on the highs, and sometimes lows of their respective times in office, with other presidents providing lively "color commentary." The insight gained into NOMA's history and evolution was remarkable, even for those who've been active for years. If you were not present at the forum in Detroit, then you would well advised to be on the lookout for the next opportunity to interact with members of this esteemed fraternity — one that remains dedicated to the ongoing advancement of NOMA. ○



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Howard University  
2366 6th Street, NW  
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202.686.2780  
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