

**NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF MINORITY ARCHITECTS MEMBERS & PARTNERS
GATHER IN PORTLAND FOR SOLD-OUT 2023 ANNUAL CONFERENCE TO STRENGTHEN
THE CALL TO ACTION FOR A MORE DIVERSE ARCHITECTURE INDUSTRY**

Industry leaders Toshiko Mori, FAIA, Nina Cooke John, AIA, NOMA, Olelekan Jeyifous and others converge to discuss topics relevant to the BIPOC community including affirmative action and accurate historical storytelling in acknowledgement of the conference theme of “Building Bridges Towards Just and Joyful Futures”

WASHINGTON, D.C., Sept. 28, 2023 -- The National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) announced it is hosting its national conference October 11-15, 2023, in Portland, Oregon, bringing together industry voices such as Toshiko Mori, FAIA, Nina Cooke John, AIA, NOMA, NCARB, and Olelekan Jeyifous for riveting conversations on topics impacting BIPOC architects and the industry. The conference, *Building Bridges Towards Just and Joyful Futures*, will bring more than 1,200 NOMA members, partners and allies together from 38 states, one U.S. territory and four countries, at its third sold-out conference. Attendees will engage in thought-provoking seminar sessions, connect with industry experts and celebrate member achievements, while also addressing the need for a more inclusive and diverse architecture industry.

“We gather as distinguished leaders in the profession to address topics that impact and fuel BIPOC communities and to shine a light on the issues that influence and affect us personally and professionally,” says Pascale Sablan, FAIA, NOMA, LEED AP, 2023-2024 NOMA President and Associate Principal at Adjaye Associates. “Hearing perspectives from field allies and voices such as Toshiko Mori, Nina Cooke John and Olelekan Jeyifous serves to inspire, motivate and challenge NOMA membership as we continue to push forward to address industry challenges and fight to achieve equal representation in the field.”

Held at the Hilton Portland Downtown and organized by NOMA national staff, volunteers and the NOMA Portland (PDX) chapter, the five-day conference theme was inspired by the collection of 12 bridges in Portland, connecting the east and west sides of the city. *Building Bridges Towards Just and Joyful Futures* is a reminder that NOMA has created a rich organization steeped in history, leaning on its members to overcome significant barriers and continuing to build bridges over various forms of oppression. Attendees will delve into sessions that focus on the profound impact the built environment plays in creating inclusivity and accessibility, paving a way for a healthier, more just and equitable future.

“This is a community where innovation, inclusivity and inspiration intersect,” says Tiffany Brown, MBA, NOMA, Assoc. AIA, NOMA Executive Director. “Portland has warmly welcomed us, and it’s important we host our annual conference in cities with a strong membership presence and where we can showcase the power and beauty of design.”

Portland is also the location of the 1968 American Institute of Architects Convention where civil rights activist Whitney M. Young Jr. delivered the critical keynote address that challenged architects to address issues of diversity and social responsibility in the profession—a wake-up call to the industry. This is the first time NOMA is hosting its conference in Portland, more than 50 years after the organization's founding and motivated by that historical moment.

“NOMA is steeped in history with a mission founded out of need and call to action. As we gather in this historically significant city to NOMA, we recognize that every NOMA member brings their unique gifts and experiences to our conference,” says Sablan. “Collectively we create a dynamic shared space, based on the lessons and success from our past, but with the hopes, dreams and talents of our future. We cannot wait for the convergence of architectural visionaries, trailblazers, and forward-thinkers at the NOMA Conference in Portland as together, we shape a more inclusive, powerful, and awe-inspiring future.”

Conference Keynotes:

Designed to provoke discussion and new thinking, NOMA is presenting two impactful keynote sessions.

- Thursday, Oct. 12: **Just Practice, Joyful Learning Panel**
 - Moderated by [Wilson Smith](#), Professor of Product Design at University of Oregon and NIKE Design Intelligence Manager of Creative Outreach. Panelists:
 - [Toshiko Mori](#), FAIA, founding principal of Toshiko Mori Architect PLLC, and the Robert P. Hubbard Professor in the Practice of Architecture at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design (GSD)
 - [Robert L. Easter](#), FAIA, NOMAC, chair of the department of architecture at Hampton University
 - [Cruz Garcia](#), designer, educator, author, artist, and co-founder of WAI Architecture Think Tank
 - [Daisy-O'lice Williams](#), associate Professor in the Department of Architecture at University of Oregon
 - Overview: The cultivation of successful professionals begins during educational training. Since its inception, architecture has been criticized for being a profession best suited for affluent white males. As the demographics on this planet continue to change, "minorities" are growing as the global majority. The past few years have heralded an inspired emphasis of diversity, equity, justice and inclusion across most of the design schools worldwide, alluding to a major shift in design education. Still, this growth has been set against an overall environment that has seen female deans targeted in the media, student and educator protests, public call outs of accreditation entities regarding their history of biased processes, monumental lawsuits against Affirmative Action, and the striking of critical race theory from curricula in the US. The panel will address questions focused on what needs to change in the education system and what new systems need to be implemented and supported.

- Saturday, Oct. 14: **Neo Griots- Storytelling through Practice**
 - Discussion between [Nina Cooke John](#), AIA, NOMA, founder and principal of Studio Cooke John Architecture + Design and [Olelekan Jeyifous](#), artist and recipient of a Silver Lion at the 2023 Venice Architecture Biennale
 - Overview: Throughout history, narratives and history have been written over and retold through the lens of colonizers and erasers. Within cultural communities, architecture has long been a space of resistance to continue cultural traditions or embed ritual in iconography and details. Post George Floyd, telling a more inclusive story has been at the forefront of public discourse. Major shifts have been measured with recent new cultural commissions at the Smithsonian and from the Biden administrations, furthered by the Take Down the Monuments movement, focused around featuring more sites of intersectional significance. Discussion will focus on how the building industry continues to tell the stories and create moments of public reflection and joy and what are the new griots' tools being used.

Conference Seminars:

Over fifty educational sessions are offered, featuring a variety of disciplines and experts, including architects, urbanists, landscape designers, and urban planners. Sessions offer continuing education credits approved by the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

Conference seminar tracks include:

- **DESIGN:** The track focuses on new, award-winning and legacy design projects that express innovative design strategies in sustainability, material usage and/or technical expertise that was used in an innovative manner. Projects that have had a positive impact on the community that they serve, along with LEED, BREEAM, Living Building Challenge and WELLS buildings, are part of this track.
- **TECHNICAL:** The track focuses on new products and design techniques that introduce and review technical skills, materials, and systems that span all skill levels.
- **COMMUNITY & JUSTICE:** The track focuses on public and civic projects that benefit communities through social and environmental justice and social responsibility. Topics are tailored towards housing discrimination, education, home equity, environmental justice, sustainable design, etc.
- **BUSINESS:** The track will focus on starting a firm, marketing, firm growth, investing in the future, and succession planning. This track includes the development of emerging professionals – including but not limited to internships, ARE, AXP, mentorship, and aid in career growth.
- **REFRAMING PORTLANDIA:** Portland's quirky brand of progressive style, culture, and politics camouflages a complicated history of racial discrimination. This track explores how locals are working to reframe the story through creative, powerful, and joyful work to reimagine the city.

Other conference highlights include:

- Legacy Project: The conference begins with the [Legacy Project](#) on Oct. 11 where attendees will visit Portland-based [Black Food Sovereignty Coalition](#) and [Black Futures Farm](#) to explore how space and structures can represent Black agricultural histories and futures, develop design ideas for living walls and perimeter sound and privacy screens and work in the garden – collecting and saving seeds for future seasons, pruning berry bushes, mulching, and building garden structures.
- Awards Gala: NOMA members and students will be recognized for a variety of achievements from the year, including Professional Member and Chapter of the Year, Student of the Year and the Phil Freelon Professional Design Awards.
- Barbara G. Laurie Student Design Competition: Student chapters will compete to design a concept for the Williams & Russell Project, a restorative justice project that addresses systemic injustices against Portland’s Black community on land condemned by Prosper Portland and the City of Portland in the early 1970s for an expansion for Emanuel Hospital (now Legacy Health). The development will honor Portland’s Black community, create wealth, and carry on Legacy’s good health mission for the community. The student’s proposal must include a cohesive site that encompasses mixed-income housing, commercial/retail tenants, and community spaces.
- Portland Tours: Conference attendees have an opportunity to learn about Portland through eight tours this year, including the Portland Japanese Garden, Nike Worldwide Headquarters, Meyer Memorial Trust Headquarters and the PAE Living Building.
- Networking events: A variety of networking events throughout the conference, including the Host Chapter Party, the Bro’s Arts Masquerade Ball and the professionals vs. students Basketball Showdown.

Conference Diamond sponsors include partners American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB), as well as organizations such as Gensler, HKS, HOK, Perkins & Will and ZGF, and Diamond Elite sponsor Lamar Johnson Collaborative / Clayco. Please visit the [sponsor page](#) for a full list of supporting organizations.

To learn more about NOMA and the national conference, including how to register, please visit www.noma.net.

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About the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA):

The National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) was formed over 50 years ago to represent the needs of African American architects. Founded in 1971, the purpose of NOMA was to bolster and provide support for the handful of Black licensed architects around the country. Today, NOMA is a haven for architects of all origins who seek inclusion in the design industry. We continue to [advocate for the licensure of African American architects](#) (who account for only two percent of all licensed architects today), as well as those from other underrepresented backgrounds.

NOMA has more than 40 professional chapters and more than 110 student chapters, National Organization of Minority Architecture Students (NOMAS) — mentored by regional NOMA

chapters. NOMA and NOMAS membership is predominantly African-American, with other minority members including Native American, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, East Indian, and Asian, as well as an increasing segment of non-minority members who support NOMA's mission. NOMA supports its student members by providing mentorship, scholarships, and job opportunities to ensure their successful transition into the profession. www.noma.net