



PANELISTS:

Robert Holzbach, AIA	President, AIA DC	(RH)
Marc Fairbrother, AIA	Immediate Past President, AIA DC	(MF)
Yiselle Santos Rivera, AIA	Secretary, AIA DC	(YS)
Mide Akinsade, AIA	Board Member, AIA DC	(MA)
Chris McCabe, AIA	Board Member, AIA DC	(CM)
Howard Mack	Guest Panelist	(HM)
Michael Marshall, AIA	Guest Panelist	(MM)
Mary Fitch	Executive Director, AIA DC Moderator	(Mary)

QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE:

1. Please clarify what is meant by leveraging trust. How can we embody trust by extending ourselves to benefit the communities we impact and being selective when it comes to partnerships with clients and consultants?

Caroline Meyer

(RH)

There are multiple ways that architects and designers can leverage trust in our communities, but they all require getting involved. From the citizen's side we can join ANCs or local organizations and use our problem-solving skill set to bring disparate groups of people together around a common vision. From the partnership/client side we need to make more of an effort to show our clients the value of engaging

communities as part of the process. In my experience, our clients have had more success when the local community members are treated as partners. The discussion with our clients is similar to when we discuss the benefits of sustainable design on a project, we need to highlight the value to our clients of doing the right thing and we need data to back it up.

2. Is AIA|DC willing to introduce programming and resources that examine the profession's complicity in furthering racial injustice, such as redlining, CPTED and prison design?

Anonyme

(Mary)

a. Profession's complicity – looking at resources to reveal the whole problem including #archsowhite, diversity study done by the AIA Kansas City and a recent survey sponsored by NOMA and NCARB. One option is to repeat the KC study in DC looking into funding/partnership options for that.

b. Redlining – we have been doing work in this area principally through our public programming and exhibitions. We are looking to bring our past content online and also to do more programming in this area.

c. CPTED – great idea; this has kind of fallen off the radar, we will be some programming here.

d. Prison design: while we haven't done anything on prison design we have taken two related actions: 1) we've reached out to DCRA to ask whether prisons are subject to the building code (they are) so we can stay on top of overcrowding in the DC jail and other places of incarceration; and, the Washington Architectural Foundation is reviving a program to bring it's Architecture in the Schools to incarcerated youth (Mary)

3. Like y'all have said, the pursuit of equity is a journey, not a finish line. Question for the group: how can AIA|DC and other component groups make spaces in their committees, firms, programs and the Board that people of color actually feel comfortable filling. Elevating voices and working on the pipeline can only go so far, right?

Anonyme

(Mary)

People of color felt comfortable being on the Board and in committees ten or 15 years ago. (See attached chart) Its only in recent years that the percentage of persons of color has declined. Between 2005 and 2010 the percentage of non-white individuals was generally north of 20%. The representation of women on the Board was much higher in those years as well.

(RH)

Thanks for your participation in our event! As a white male, I can only assume what would make people of color feel comfortable filling positions in the AIA|DC. I would greatly appreciate your opinions on that and hope you will follow-up with ideas. To answer directly, I would assume that seeing people of color already in leadership positions within an organization would move us in the right direction. Regarding the Board of Directors, one of my primary goals for 2020 was to diversify the Board. Just

looking at the numbers, in 2019 our Board was 82% Male and 17% Female, with 12% being Nonwhite. In 2020 our Board is 56% Male and 45% Female, but we're still only 17% Nonwhite. We've been successful in getting a closer balance on Gender, but still have a way to go with Race. I can only say that we're making a genuine effort to engage and identify ways that our Chapter can be part of the solution, and we welcome your ideas, opinions, and critique; and we hope you take our invitation to get involved at face value. We need voices like yours within our organization.

(MA)

We discussed setting up a grant to study Firms in our chapter about diversity numbers in Leadership (Board) and their offices. This is not a quick fix solution and the time needed to do the work right will be worth it.

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4. As a profession as we begin to discuss and examine ways to make the profession more diverse and more equitable particularly for minority-owned and women-owned practices, one question I think is mission is what are you willing to sacrifice? Especially those large majority white firms who overwhelmingly receive the major design contracts, are they willing to sacrifice those contracts to create a more equitable and just profession? I don't think we can create true equity without sacrifice and I am curious on the panel's thoughts.

Robert Grooms

(MF)

For me, this is a difficult and complex question to address. You would like to believe the "free market" can evolve to embrace and integrate social justice and equity metrics into the financial reward equation and mete out a fair and equitable distribution of wealth. That said, history has shown without legislation this outcome is highly unlikely. In my

opinion, to achieve real, measurable, and sustainable change, we must engage with the entire community involved in creating the built environment. Architects can show the way as we are agents of change. Our clients, the secondary markets who provides financing, Jurisdictional mandates all have must evolve in unison to effect real change.

5. Could there be an HR AIA membership? An offshoot of AIA, if I may? A group that focuses on the shape and forms of architectural firms from within. I'm not interested in speaking today 😊 But I think this is a great idea and I'd be interested in participating and being a member, possibly even being a leader in this endeavor.

Amy Smith

(Mary)

Yes there is something called Professional Affiliate Membership that would be perfect for that. I will reach out directory.

6. Language has power. Possible for the DC architectural and design community to move away from the term "MINORITY" and instead use "BiPOC" or "Global Majority" as in terms of demographics/population we are large in numbers globally. My name is pronounced Ray-ah. Thanks for the discussion!

Rhea Vafior

(Mary)

We have begun to use BIPOC at your suggestion, although we are still likely to use minority from time to time given that it's in NOMA's name. We will be more careful to use it intentionally and sparingly and not as a blanket description.

(MA)

AIA|DC supports all members of the community with regards to how they choose to refer to themselves

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7. As a Howard grad 2002, a small step would be to facilitate outreach/participation to HU through the connection of architecture schools in the region.

Grizform Design

(Mary)

We've had a good relationship with Howard in the past but that has declined since Barbara Laurie passed away even though we know many of the faculty quite well. If you could help us reestablish that would be great. We have frequent contact with UDC.

(MF)

My firm, CallisonRTKL will commit to participate with HU.

8. What are the action items that I, as a white person who has benefited from the system and is in a leadership position at my firm, can take to promote conversations and change about social injustice.
- Cristina Bump*

(MF)

The first step is an honest and objective evaluation of where your firm stands in terms of social justice and equity. Our firm has evaluated where we stand using the Just program, see link provided. This program demonstrates areas of strength and where improvements are needed. It's not an end all be all but a good place to start. <http://justorganizations.com/content/about>

(RH)

I face the same question myself and the first thing I did was accept that I had a lot to learn and it's my responsibility to do that. I don't think that we can make assumptions about solutions because we don't have similar life experiences. We are in leadership positions, therefore we can open a dialogue, but we need to ensure it's a safe space for people to engage. Sometimes that means stepping aside and allowing a different person to be a conduit to leadership which allows a level of anonymity and a more frank discussion. We need to make sure to listen with empathy and make sure to follow-up with action.

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9. One of the biggest challenges for the design community with regard to the communities we design for and how we stay in business when our business is sometimes part of the problem, i.e., gentrification. How do we as designers work with some of our biggest clients who are developers to challenge the work we do, or reevaluate the impacts of our work? How do we as designers make change to systemic racism when it comes with the compromise of lost business?

Anonyme

(RH)

I think this discussion is similar to convincing our clients to incorporate sustainable design features as part of the project. We need to highlight the benefits to them in doing the right thing and have data

to back it up. Unfortunately the biggest drivers for change are when the laws force change to occur. We can get active in our local communities to change the laws.

10. How are firms evaluating their practices and “optics” to signal to people of color they are welcome? It’s more than a diverse picture on the site. How are you building networks of sponsorship to connect people of color with firms? Jobs are gotten from networks, not applications. How are you challenging your membership to be better sponsors and connectors?

Anonyme

(RH)

I would recommend that firms utilize the AIA Guides for Equitable Practice: <https://www.aia.org/resources/6246433-guides-for-equitable-practice>.

Another great resource is the JUST Program, part of the International Living Future Institute: <http://justorganizations.com/> My firm just launched this program and we’re expecting to complete it by the end of 2020. The program’s goal is to, “Help your organization optimize policies that improve social equity and enhance employee engagement.” Fol-

lowing these guides/programs will go a long way to making places truly diverse. The first step is making the decision that you WANT to change.

We also need to be intentional about making connections to HBCU’s and mentorship at the high school and middle school levels. (RH)

(MA)

We should work with AIA National to make Social Justice and Equity a part of AIA credits for membership retention and renewal

11. I have witnessed an office location of my firm struggle to increase diversity – of race, culture, sexual orientation etc. even though we are supportive of EDI. What strategies or practices can you recommend to help firms increase EDI and allow our offices be more attractive to all of humanity? And how do you ask a prospective employee to be a pioneer in that environment?

Kelley Holmes

(RH)

This sounds like an issue of one office within a larger organization. Does the local leadership truly value EDI and want to make improvements? Is there accountability associated with lack of progress? Are there incentives for making progress? Similar to my answer to the prior question, The AIA Guide to

Equitable Practice and JUST are great programs that can be used as a framework for change. If you’re recruiting within this environment, you need to be honest about what’s happening and make sure the candidate understands that they can be part of the change that needs to happen. Those who accept the challenge will be great employees for your firm!

12. What are ways that all of your firms are addressing lack of diversity in your offices? My office is looking for action steps, but we having a hard time knowing what steps to take.

Anonyme

(RH)

My firm just launched the JUST Program. We also sent out a survey to start a dialogue in our office. We’re considering a scholarship/internship pro-

gram and are planning to develop outreach to local HBCU’s. We’re also planning to provide a series of training seminars on topics ranging from Unconscious Bias to Systemic Racism.

13. Too often design has been used to oppress. How do we begin to counteract or undo the damage that has been done by racist practices like redlining? How do we encourage developers to invest in black communities while counteracting the effects of gentrification.

Amber

See answer to #9

14. Do we have a plan to raise people of color in the profession through both education and helping with the high cost of an architectural degree and to change the community and legislative barriers that prevent the growth of lower income communities?

Kelly Ormsby

(RH)

The purpose of this Town Hall is to start the dialogue and develop ideas. The AIA|DC is already doing many things to support people of color, but we recognize we need to do more. Please stay tuned for more action items to come from our Chapter.

(Mary)

WAF's Barbara Laurie Scholarship Program – supports students through all five years; currently four scholars.

AIA|DC BOARD COMPOSITON 2005 -2020

Year	Male	Female	Nonwhite
2005	73%	27%	33%
2006	61%	39%	39%
2007	50%	50%	17%
2008	46%	54%	23%
2009	64%	36%	21%
2010	71%	29%	14%
2011	66%	33%	6%
2012	56%	31%	6%
2013	76%	24%	12%
2014	80%	20%	6%
2015	69%	31%	13%
2016	69%	31%	13%
2017	81%	19%	6%
2018	76%	24%	12%
2019	82%	17%	12%
2020	56%	45%	17%
DC Population by gender and race	About 50%	A little over 50%	56%
Arch Profession generally	70-80%	20-30%	2%