About the BSA

The Boston Society for Architecture is a community committed to improving the quality of life for everyone through architecture and design.

We are a chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and a community nonprofit.

Architecture is for everyone.
Race and Architecture: Where do we go from here? A conversation with M. David Lee FAIA

Tuesday, August 25, 2020
NATASHA ESPADA AIA NOMA
Founder and Principal, STUDIO ENÉE
2020 President, Boston Society for Architecture
Guidelines and Updates

BSA PROGRAMS
Please visit architects.org for information on upcoming programs and Knowledge Community meetings. We also encourage you to join the “BSA Connect” LinkedIn forum and follow BSA on Twitter and Instagram @BSAAIA. “BSA Forum” is also a new platform on architects.org to discuss topics from racial equity to climate and sustainability, and architecture.

EQUITY IN ARCHITECTURE & EDI NETWORK
The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Network is a place for individuals in the design industry to engage in meaningful conversations; support, promote, and build awareness; and to share best practices related to issues of EDI within the profession.

Q&A
For our Q&A period, we have selected a number of questions that were submitted ahead of time. Thank you for sharing these. We also encourage you to join in the discussions by using the chat function. Please keep yourself muted during discussions and raise your hand to ask any questions. We will use all other questions and comments to shape future BSA programs in this series.

RECORDING
This session will be recorded and posted on architects.org in a few days.

RACE & ARCHITECTURE SERIES
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 | 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM
PANEL CONVERSATION ON SOCIAL ECONOMIC JUSTICE & POLICIES
Race and Architecture – identity developed by Artists for Humanity
Equity in Practice

A chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) + a community nonprofit.
Moderator

GREGORY O. MINOTT AIA
Managing Principal, DREAM Collaborative
2020 Vice-President/President Elect, BSA
Presenter

M. DAVID LEE FAIA
President and Managing Partner, Stull and Lee Incorporated, Architects
1992 President, BSA
BSA Conversation
Race and Architecture

M. David Lee, FAIA
August 25, 2020
“Not everything that is faced can be changed but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

African-American writer James Baldwin
“A white gentleman’s profession.”
At the 1968 AIA Convention, Whitney M. Young Jr., executive director of the National Urban League, chastised architects for failing to support civil rights. A half century later, black practitioners revisit the text as the benchmark for a continuing struggle.
WHAT PERCENTAGE OF LICENSED ARCHITECTS IN THE UNITED STATES ARE BLACK WOMEN?

0.2%
Some Formidable Hurdles

Architecture is one of the few arts that cannot be realized without a client. Generally large sums of money are involved.

A veritable minefield of rules and regulations must be negotiated to get a project built.

AND

At each of those decision points there are often no persons of color empowered to make a call whether it is in hiring staff or hiring a minority firm.
The *Culture* of Architecture
Raising the Stakes

Architecture education is facing both great challenges and great opportunities.

By N. J. O’Cull

Few moments elicit as much fear and trepidation in architecture school as the studio review or critique—the “crit”—where students’ designs are dissected, discussed, and—all too often—demeaned. A 2017 piece in The Guardian stated that the architecture crit is often “a nightmare ... an emotional and theatrical assault course all architecture students have to get through.” Do they, though?

Emotionally draining crits are just one aspect of traditional architecture education currently being taxed in the time and reviewed. Often, architecture students leave school saddled with huge debts just to enter a profession where the work they are asked to do feels different than when their professors taught, and for far less pay that they might have received in a comparably licensed field such as medicine or law.

As a result, a significant percentage of trained architects leave the profession after a few years or never get licensed. Unsettled numbers of others, particularly women and people of color, face barriers related to finances, work-life balance, and discrimination that prevent them from entering the profession in the first place. Compounding the problem is the fact that architecture itself faces challenges with regard to competition, automation, and complex environmental issues such as climate change. The American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the other collateral architecture associations such as the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NAERB) are now working with the AIA Strategic Council’s working group on architectural education to address these challenges.

But that community-college student pipeline that benefited him is one that is drying up. Hudson says, “The students that are not in college have felt increasing pressure to attend only large accredited architecture schools. These schools are, of course, more expensive to attend, with the attendant need for new and emerging professionals who choose to attend architecture school.”

To Hudson and others working in this area, there is no fundamental disconnect between what’s taught and what’s practiced. A design studio in school, they say, is a world apart from a typical day as an entry-level architect plugging away in a cubicle, a small fish in a vast ocean. The academic world is often about individual dreams, whereas practice is more about collective practicalities. They say.

Barriers to Entry and Retention

Nate Hudson, AIA, can remember when he first decided to study architecture. He had a mechanical engineering major at the University of Nevada but had met an inspiring architecture professor at a community college. “There was something captivating about architecture, about doing something to your community that outlasts you, and that affects conditions of urban living,” Hudson says. He says he knows too.

He was given the opportunity to begin his architectural training at the community college. This eventually led him back to university and to a dual-track career in both teaching and private practice. Founding partner and principal at Hudson Studio, Hudson now co-chairs the AIA Strategic Council’s working group on architectural education.

A.A. Hudson Studio is a not-for-profit organization that provides a platform for the AIA Strategic Council’s working group on architectural education. The AIA and the other collateral architecture associations (American Institute of Architects, National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, and Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture) met in Chicago in July to address a range of accreditation procedures and a formation of a new task force. What they accomplish in the coming years could have long-term effects on the future of the profession.
Stress Levels

MOST STRESSFUL CAREERS
1. Commercial Pilot
2. Public Relations Officer
3. Corporate Executive
4. Photojournalist
5. Newscaster
6. Advertising Account Executive
7. Architect
8. Stockbroker
9. Emergency Medical Technician
10. Real Estate Agent

IT COULD BE WORSE. You could be a roustabout, doing maintenance on an oil rig. According to CareerCast, roustabout is the single worst job out of 200 considered in the online job service’s 2011 Jobs Rated report.

Architect ranks as the seventh-most stressful job. But before you call your significant other in triumph—“See, I have proof!”—consider that according to the report’s research method, stress is just a subset, one of five metrics that go into CareerCast’s overall ratings of best and worst jobs. In other words, a job can make you miserable in lots of ways.

The “Environment” category rates working conditions. And as lousy as your workstation may be, it’s not an oil rig.

The “Income” category should feel like a win, too, even though you probably deserve a raise. An architect’s average annual salary is $98,800, according to CareerCast, and a roustabout’s is $31,143.

“Physical Demands” tabulates the amount of physical weight a person is required to lift. If you lift fewer than 10 pounds at a time on an average work day according to the U.S. Department of Labor, your job qualifies as “sedentary”—and unless you work in the model shop, you’re most definitely qualifies.

“Outlook” looks at the potential for income growth and the risk of unemployment, which leads us back to “Stress.” To evaluate a job’s potential to cause stress, CareerCast looked at variables such as intensity of deadlines (check) and competitiveness (check). So what’s the bottom-line reason that an architect’s job is so stressful? “There is a lot of competition for contracts and individual jobs,” says CareerCast publisher Tony Lee. Check.
What we celebrate in studio, awards programs and publications

Relevance to identity or lived experience?
Star Ship

A picturesque fire station on the city’s docks is transformed into a striking office building by a multifaceted glass top.
Where do we go from here?
A few thoughts
Stop and Listen

Companies can tout diversity all they want in their vision statements, but unless those grand ideas are reflected in the trenches, it won’t mean much. “It all comes back to the behaviors you reward on a day-to-day basis,” says Andre Martin, chief learning officer at global brands including Nike and Marc Inc., Portland, Oregon, USA.

When companies promote authoritarian leaders and celebrate individual results over team efforts, it sends the message that diverse opinions aren’t valued — and may even incur ire from the C-suite.

That toxic brew can be avoided if leaders actively create a collaborative team culture. “The goal is to create a space where everyone’s opinions can be shared and debated,” Martin says. That requires leaders willing to listen and get out of the way.

Martin doesn’t try to drive brainstorming. Instead, he writes a detailed brief laying out the challenge, the required criteria, and any boundaries. He then leaves team members to it. “This model gives them a clear understanding of the problem and empowers them to solve it,” he says. “That’s how you expose the amazing capabilities on your team that would otherwise sit dormant.”

At HOK, emerging professionals are encouraged to share their perspectives in design meetings, regardless of their seniority. “We give everyone the opportunity to make presentations,” says director of human resources Jan Hamoss, Los Angeles, California, USA. “It gives them a platform and ensures the strongest voices in the room are hearing from all of their team members and understanding the value of their contributions.”

This tactic lets HOK find the best ideas from wherever they may bubble up in the company, says Polucci.

On a recent healthcare project, for example, HOK selected a team leader who specialized in hospitality design. “She was the right fit for the client in terms of their goals, aspirations, and mindset, and that was more important than the fact that she lacked experience in healthcare interior design,” Polucci says. “Her team included good people who knew healthcare design, and they came together to create something special.”

HOK has also introduced one-on-one and group mentoring across disciplines, roles, and geographic locations, says Hamoss. “The more interaction our teams have, the more they begin to see what is missing from the mix, which sparks conversations about how to bring in diverse points of view.”

For all the benefits of cognitive diversity, it can leave teams mired in a cacophony of voices. Leaders must find ways to ensure the diversity of opinions is heard, and that teams still make the decisions necessary to move projects forward. Google Ventures relies on a “vote-and-vote” approach, combining independent brainstorming and group votes to keep things moving.

There’s no question diversity requires serious leadership management chops, which is why many companies don’t move beyond paying lip service to the idea. But all the effort is worth it, Hamoss says. “There are challenges in bringing any team together because people and personalities are complicated. But we’re so dedicated to the idea that we’ll have better ideas if we have multiple points of view looking at it that we are willing to embrace that challenge.”

Companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 35% more likely to have higher financial returns than their industry average.

Whither Affirmative Action
“Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance”.

Verna Myers
“...thinking outside of the box, not aimlessly checking one.”

Ms. Imani Day Associate AIA
**Q & A**

- We have selected a few key questions to address at this time. We will use all other questions to shape future BSA programs in this series.

- Feel free to use the chat option on the lower middle right side of your screen to interact with other participants, as well as the Q&A option to ask a question directly to the presenters, if time permits.
Race and Architecture – Next Steps

PROGRAMS WILL TAKE PLACE ON THE 4TH TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH
This moderated series will include a range of programs from stories about life as a Black architect to panels with public agencies, and more as we start to find not only answers, but the right questions.

SAVE THE DATE – TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 12:00-1:30PM
PANEL CONVERSATION ON SOCIAL ECONOMIC JUSTICE & POLICIES

SPONSORSHIP
The BSA is committed to providing resources that are valuable and useful for our members and community, including the Race and Architecture series. To discuss sponsorship and collaboration opportunities, please contact Patricia Olshan polshan@architects.org
Thank you!

Your feedback is important. Write bsa@architects.org with feedback, comments, or suggestions on this series or other BSA programs.

Visit architects.org to stay up to date on this series and other BSA programs.

Join the conversation on social media with @BSAAIA on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter. And, continue conversations on BSA Forum.