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Our Next Step on Anti-Racism in Design

PLACES EDITORS

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Protesting the murder of George Floyd, Washington D.C., June 6, 2020. [Ted Eytan]

Earlier this month the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture convened an online discussion on the “post-pandemic public,” an inquiry into how we might “frame our approach to public space in the immediate post-pandemic future and beyond.” Yet even as panelists were speaking in the shared isolation of the Zoom grid, the question was being answered by the countless street protestors organizing in reaction to the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers. For weeks now rallies and marches have been happening across the country and around the world, an epochal uprising amplified by social media feeds overflowing with images of multiracial crowds of masked activists seeking not only justice for Floyd but also an end to systemic racism and, in the words of Black Lives Matter, “a world free of anti-Blackness.”

As part of the national reckoning, the design disciplines are struggling with a long-standing complicity. Increasingly it is impossible to ignore the failure to diversify, or what two scholars call the “naturalized ideology of whiteness” that underlies both education and practice. The National Organization of Minority Architects, founded in 1971, is redoubling its efforts to fight the inequities that “prevent people of color from entering into and thriving in the profession of architecture”; meanwhile a U.K. survey reveals that “racism within the profession is becoming more widespread, not less.” Students everywhere are issuing cogent demands to restructure faculties, decolonize curricula, and invest in equity. The editors of the recently published *Race and Modern Architecture* introduce their anthology with this blunt assessment: “Architectural historians have traditionally avoided the topic of race. When they do acknowledge the subject, they often quickly dismiss its significance, or cast it outside the proper boundaries of the discipline.”

Here at *Places* we are grappling with our own role in these silences and erasures. Over the years we have made serious commitments to the issues of rising inequality and public responsibility; yet we know there is much more to do. We are gratified to announce that we

have received a generous grant from the Cravens Foundation to establish our 2020 Writers Fund, which will be dedicated to supporting the work of BIPOC authors and bringing significant new depth and range to our public scholarship on architecture, landscape, and urbanism. And doing so from this moment on: while we have named the new fund in recognition of this world-historical year, we are determined that it will continue to grow, and to shape our editorial production in all the years ahead.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Places Editors



Places is edited by Nancy Levinson, Deborah Lilley, and Frances Richard.