2020 Call-to-Action

The Call-to-Action Packet
Your support is imperative

NOMA NW would like to invite every firm and organization within the local AEC industry to pledge to the Call-to-Action. We believe the fulfillment of these commitments helps lay the foundation for the reconstruction of a truly unified and anti-racist architectural, engineering, construction, and design community. This list of commitments is by no means exhaustive, and therefore, we welcome all voices to contribute to the building of this new framework by submitting feedback to us.

We recognize that this work will be difficult, as it will require critical conversations from leadership and staff, internal reflection, and a long-term commitment to systemic changes. This uncharted territory calls upon each contributing firm/organization to brave the daily discomfort and uncertainty, to make mistakes along the way, and to challenge the complacency of the status quo. Ultimately - with courage, conviction, and struggle - collectively we can re-imagine and rebuild our profession, one person at a time.

We thank both the AIA Seattle and Planning in Color for endorsing this Call-to-Action, and for their ongoing support of this critical initiative.

Terminology

When we uplift our most vulnerable and disenfranchised communities, we all benefit. Throughout this document we use the acronym BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color). We take this acronym to mean, colloquially, “black” and “brown” peoples represented by the African American, Native American, Latin American, Middle Eastern, and South/East Asian communities. We acknowledge that every cultural group holds their own histories, perspectives, traumas, and social and cultural experiences in relation to this country’s history of systemic racism and “othering.” It is impossible to address them all in this one Call-to-Action. Therefore, the focus is on building bridges across a deep and persistent fissure in this country and profession: The Black/African American experience. We believe that by channeling efforts towards rooting out biases and injustices against one of the most historically disinheritied and generationally traumatized communities, we - by extension - also uplift all other marginalized communities in the process (Native American/Indigenous people, POC, LGBTQIA+, Women).

Co-conspirator: Co-conspiracy is about what we do in action, not just in language. It is the move through guilt into acknowledgement. Being a co-conspirator is activating one’s privilege and courage to call-out and interrupt racist or biased behavior and practices, for the equal treatment and advancement of all.

NOMA NW stands firmly with our National organization’s guiding JE:DI principle:

To Pursue Justice and Equity to yield Diversity and Inclusion
NOMA|NW Call-to-Action Pledge

We invite all individuals and firms/organizations who are ready to affect real change to join us by adding your name as a signatory to this Call-to-Action Pledge.

We, ________________________________, pledge to take the following accountable actions starting now, in an on-going effort to foster better cultural competency, equity, and diversity within our firm/organization’s culture and policies. We understand the significance and impact of looking inward and starting within our own spheres of influence to affect lasting change. Our firm/organization pledges, on this ___ day of ____________ 2020 to fulfill all of the below prerequisites, and to complete at least (4) out of the (7) Baseline Commitments within one year of signing this Call-to-Action. Within two consecutive years, from date of signing, we pledge to satisfy all commitments and become active contributors and co-conspirators of progress within the profession for the advancement of all.

Prerequisites

1. Know where you and your office stands before engaging in the subsequent pledges (from individual employees to policies and practices). This is a pivotal first step for any entity looking to make effective change. Conduct cultural competency interviews, starting with leadership. A third-party EDI professional from the BIPOC community should be brought in to conduct and assess this office-wide effort.
   a. The effects of racism persist within organizations because people within organizations have internalized racist stereotypes. Organizations must be prepared to have difficult discussions about the impact of stereotypes, and how they affect decisions that are made within the practice, in order to make progress toward eradicating injustices and supporting equality.

2. Openly stating that Black Lives Matter, and following through with actionable systemic changes, works towards transforming the workplace into a safer space not just for BIPOC, but for all staff. When all staff feel valued, seen and heard, employee retention is improved. Start this Call-to-Action by creating a safe space for current and future BIPOC staff.

3. Acknowledge that systemic racism/anti-black sentiment and gender inequality have historically existed within the United States, and continue to persist in new forms to the present day. Holistic buy-in from leadership, middle management, and staff on the reality and urgency of this plain truth is critical in establishing a common point of reference for which to begin the work.

4. Be a co-conspirator everyday. Acknowledge, validate, amplify, and credit the voices of BIPOC staff at formal and informal meetings, both within and outside of your firm/organization’s domain.
Baseline Commitments:

1. Conduct at least (2) annual firm-wide workshops on cultural competency. Secure the services of a BIPOC expert/specialist on anti-racist educational initiatives.
2. Develop a mentorship program within your firm/organization and/or participate in an external mentoring program to connect and support BIPOC staff in their career development within the profession.
3. Decolonize the office and interior design libraries. Integrate BIPOC books, materials and vendors into the office’s circulation of reference materials. Support and promote the BIPOC community’s contributions to architectural history and the built environment.
4. Publish and uphold objective, clearly-defined path-to-leadership job descriptions, made accessible to all staff.
5. Commit to hiring at least one BIPOC intern from historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), or from a local architecture school, and provide a fair industry-standard annual salary.
6. Commit to actively recruiting and hiring BIPOC professionals for the firm’s primary services, and provide a competitive industry-standard salary.
7. Commit to building an equitable, diverse, and inclusive firm. This means:
   a. **Diversifying recruitment**: Include at least one BIPOC in the interview and decision-making hiring processes.
   b. **Diversifying staff**: A minimum of (2) employees from each BIPOC community (African American, Native American, Latin American, Middle Eastern, and South/East Asian) to contribute in design studio, as well as administrative support, staff roles.
   c. **Diversifying leadership**: A minimum of (1) employee from each BIPOC community (African American, Native American, Latin American, Middle Eastern, and South/East Asian) to contribute at all tiers of leadership--Partner, Principal, Senior Associate, Project Manager.

Ongoing Commitments:

1. Actively promote or recruit BIPOC to positions of leadership in:
   a. Primary service roles - such as Project Manager, Senior Associate, Principal, and Partner positions.
   b. Secondary support roles - such as head of Human Resources, head of finance, head of marketing.
2. Partner and/or collaborate annually on projects with at least (2) Black or Minority Woman-Owned, or owned by underrepresented people of color, within the AEC Industry.
3. Provide pro-bono design and/or consulting services to organizations or businesses from historically disenherited communities of color each year.
4. Become engaged at the state and local levels in public, housing and education policy. Advocate for policies that promote integrated neighborhoods; legislation that benefits the growth, resources, infrastructure and, therefore, prosperity of all communities and demographics.
5. Provide support for architecture scholarships at HBCUs (historically black colleges and universities), and support BIPOC design students at other higher-education institutions.
6. Support local, state and national nonprofit organizations that are fighting at the legislative level for just causes, such as prison reform, police reform, bail funds, voting rights, and human and civil rights.

7. Develop internal practices for justice and equity. This can include, but is not limited, to:
   a. Creating protocols for actively and judiciously addressing microaggressions and implicit biases - against race, sexual orientation, religion - committed by or against staff, Principals, or any person(s) in a position of leadership. Recognize that gaslighting perpetuates injustice while protecting the perpetrator.
      i. According to the UW’s Center for the Science of Social Connection, "Microaggression is the modern form of racism. To reduce racism, we need to decrease microaggression. In the workplace, racism most often manifests itself through microaggressions--indirect, subtle or even unintentional acts of discrimination against members of marginalized groups. Microaggressions may take the form of stereotyping, “othering” or avoidance.”
   b. Compensating a BIPOC professional when asking for DEI or other consultation or advice
   c. Creating project teams that include Black and underrepresented women and people of color in prime design, management, partner, or consultant roles
   d. Allowing BIPOC and minority women employees equal opportunity to make mistakes, learn/grow, and to feel fully supported and valued while doing so
   e. Establishing and upholding safe professional environments for BIPOC staff (see all of the above)

8. Be thoughtful when including BIPOC staff in your firm/organization’s marketing materials, social media, and other professional publications.
   a. Include BIPOC in renderings to increase diversity and representation

9. Commit to the on-going work of developing cultural competency, both at the individual level and organizational level.

NOMA NW will track each firm’s progress as they embark on their internal journey to uphold their Call-to-Action pledge commitments. While this pledge is voluntary, firms are expected to submit bi-annual progress reports to NOMA NW, to be notated on our Chapter website. This public reporting works to encourage firms to collaborate and learn from each other throughout this (re)building process. When we do not challenge ourselves by fully committing, we risk the future of our very community and profession.

It is our hope that your firm/organization signs this Call-to-Action in a collective effort to combat racial and social injustice, and to foster new avenues for growth and unity, within the AEC profession. NOMA NW would like to maintain open lines of communication, encouragement, and support as you and your firm/organization pledge and begin implementing the actions listed above. We thank you for taking this first step in creating more equitable and diverse spaces within the industry, so that we may all thrive together.
For more information on the NOMA NW Chapter, please visit our website at nomanw.org, or email us at nomanw.seattle@gmail.com. Please refer to our Initiatives Packet for information on NOMA NW Chapter’s initiatives. For information on this organization at the national level, please visit the NOMA National website at noma.net. Follow us on social media for the most up-to-date news and events. We look forward to working towards a more equitable and just profession and society with the allyship and support of your firm/organization.

The National Organization of Minority Architects, Northwest Chapter

Please fill out the information below and email the completed form to nomanw.seattle@gmail.com, with the subject line, “Call-to-Action Pledge.”

By signing below, your firm/organization voluntarily pledges to take deliberate action in acknowledging and actively disrupting systemic racism within your own institution.

Name of Firm/Organization: ______________________________________________________________

Sign Name (Leadership/Managing Partner): _________________________________________________
Print Name (Leadership/Managing Partner): _________________________________________________
Date: _____________

Name of Primary Contact Person: _________________________________________________________
Email: ______________________________ Direct Phone: ______________________________

Name of Secondary Contact Person: _______________________________________________________
Email: ______________________________ Direct Phone: ______________________________

Firm/Organization’s Website: __________________________________________________________________

Endorsed by:

AIA Seattle
Planning in Color

nomanw.org | nomanw.seattle@gmail.com | noma_nw | NOMA NW