

THE NEW BLACK IS GREEN

ARCHITECTS, AS LEADERS IN THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, HAVE THE POWER TO BE AGENTS OF CHANGE FOR OUR NATION'S ENERGY PROBLEM.

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Empowering A New Green Economy

Architecture 2030

IT IS A UNIQUE TIME TO BE AN ARCHITECT IN THE UNITED STATES, LET ALONE AN ARCHITECT OF COLOR. IN A TIME OF PROFOUND CHANGE, WE HAVE AN EXCEPTIONAL OPPORTUNITY AND A RESPONSIBILITY TO LEAD. In a publication released in December 2008 called Green Building Facts, the US Green Building Council noted that residential, commercial, and public buildings account for 38% of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions, and consume 72% of the nation's energy. Seeing a presentation by Ed Mazria on Architecture 2030 at the American Institute of Architects Regional Convention in Hawaii, it became clear to me how, as leaders in the design and construction industry, we have the power to be agents of change for our nation's energy problem. Driven by substantial change within our industry, how we design, and what we advocate for, architects can lead the charge to free Americans from our dependence on fossil fuels and drive down energy consumption by 48%. If we can do that nationally, we can lead by example and effect that same change internationally.

Social Sustainability and The New Economy

For those architects and firms well-established in low-income communities, combining green building applications with a concern for economic and social equity may already be a standard practice or a logical next step. However, broadly speaking, sustainable design has not been promoted or perceived as benefiting our community clients or being attainable within the extremely limited budgetary constraints that so often define the limits of our design program. Until recently, most members of underserved populations have been excluded from the movement of green design and construction altogether. In 2007, however, change began with the introduction of Van Jones to a national audience. A long time advocate for social justice based out of Oakland, Jones began a movement founded on the idea that environmental advocacy

must be rooted in the inner city and lead by the minority population to gain the benefit of the creation of millions of jobs in green construction and alternate energy industries.

In September of 2007, at the Clinton Global Initiative, he announced his plans to launch Green For All, a national organization focused on creating a path out of poverty via green job creation. In accepting the first-ever environmental grant from Full Circle Fund in November of the same year, he captivated an audience at San Francisco city hall by declaring that "when we bring together the best of the business community and the best of the tech community and the best of the racial-justice community, we'll get the coalition we always wanted (and) we'll get the country we always wanted." Green for All began its mission in January of 2008 and has laid the foundation for what lies ahead. Less than two years later, in March of 2009, Van Jones was appointed as Special Advisor for Green Jobs to the White House Council on Environmental Quality. The creation of the position and Jones' appointment are both clear testament to the strength of his message and the national need for substantive change in how we do business.

Minority cultures have a long tradition of investment in community and making the most of limited resources. With a depressed economy and an energy crisis that has no clear path toward resolution, the importance of a more modest and respectful model for living has reached the national stage. This model is one that is now needed by the majority culture, supported by the Obama administration, and owned by us as minority business owners, community leaders, and designers of the built environment. As minority architects, we must see this legacy forward.

Seizing Opportunity

At the AIA National Convention in San Francisco in May of this year, it was

pointed out that 95% of the building stock in the U.S. is made up of buildings greater than ten years in age. As a green building industry has emerged in the last decade, the focus of efforts by most designers has been on new construction, but if we are to make substantive change, we will need to address the legacy and promise of the existing built environment. If a new model for sustainable design is grounded in maximizing existing resources and minimizing waste, the federal funding for building weatherization has the potential to be seed money for a new movement in green architecture and adaptive reuse. Within the next ten years, driven by public agencies, a new national agenda, and the Architecture 2030 movement, the new frontier will be the renovation and reuse of existing buildings that are carbon neutral and energy independent.

This new movement could have an enormous impact on work with public housing authorities. Currently, HUD invests hundreds of millions of dollars each year in its existing building stock providing affordable and subsidized housing to communities in need. In 2009 alone, over \$4 billion will be invested in building weatherization and facility upgrades at public housing properties nationally. With green jobs on the one hand and emerging green architecture technologies on the other, reinvestment in these communities is rich with opportunity to define a new social sustainability. We are uniquely poised to lead in this new green economy. Our clients have always been clients who cared about the environments in which they lived and worked, and have, by the nature of their minority position, been required to conserve, to tread lightly, to develop and operate within their means. In this new economy, the means, resources, and grassroots network of the minority community must be looked to for reference and example as we seek a new model of inclusion and equity. We can be that change. We are that change. ✕