

# ASLA

# LA2017

## Annual Meeting and EXPO

Los Angeles  
October 20-23

COMMON GROUND

#ASLA2017

## FRI-A10

### Unsanctioned Ideals:

*Future Scenarios from Diverse Experiences*

*Diverse young landscape architects will tell stories of alternative experiences of our urban and suburban landscapes. Experiments, actions and insights will be presented that express the undervalued, overlooked or disallowed landscapes and communities of today that set the future scenarios for this diverse set of young and emerging professionals.*

*Friday, October 20, 2017*

*8:30 AM - 10:00 AM*

*Room: 402*

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# Presentation Outline:

*This education session will provide a platform for 6 young or emerging professionals to present the passion, experience and research that frame their views of the future of the profession and discipline as they see it. This education session connects to young and established alike; it rekindles a belief in change as it simultaneously inspires action.*

*Each presenter will offer their diverse perspective on a singular topic whereas the collective group will present a snapshot of the issues that are may prove core to our disciplinary and professional future.*

*The presenters associated with this education session reflect the diverse community ASLA aspires to. Representatives include numerous cultural, gender, orientation and professional communities. This session directly provides a platform for the otherwise overlooked or unappreciated ideals and visions of landscape architecture as it is desired to be from these young and emerging professionals.*

*Session Moderator:  
Andrew O Wilcox, ASLA  
Professor and Chair, Cal Poly Pomona Department  
of Landscape Architecture*

## **Framing of the discussion of Unsanctioned Ideals**

Overview

Introduction of the Presenters

## **Unsanctioned Ideals Presentations**

5 minutes each:

**Sara Abed**

**Julie An**

**Monique Basse**

**Aaron Dang**

**Carlos Flores**

**Natasha Harkison**

Recap of Unsanctioned Ideals

## **Panel Discussion**

## **Audience Q+A**

# Learning Objectives:

## Learning Objectives:

•Gain insight into the motivations a world views that will shape the future professionals and leaders of landscape architecture- learn to identify the emerging trends and current issues that interest emerging talent most and the ethical values that motivate them.

•Examine strategies for leveraging the action oriented young professionals in your practices or communities to advance ideas and build more diverse connections.

•Learn how young landscape architects are discussing diversity in relationship to practice and the community of landscape architecture

•Identify the factors that influence emerging professionals beyond wages and benefits-what is the added value they are seeking in the office and from the profession.

## NOTES:

# Presenter + Ideals:



**Sara Abed**

## **Designer, SITESCAPES**

As a current Landscape Designer at SITESCAPES, Sara dedicates her skills towards understanding the cultural, social, ecological and structural conditions of complex landscape systems. She has a deep interest in problem solving within the context of a human scale and is passionate for contending with urban and social issues. The primary basis of her professional experience has been in large-scale residential communities in Southern California. Sara is the Co-director for 'Humanitarian Design Alliance', an organization that focuses on providing equitable design opportunities for disenfranchised groups. She has a strong interest in civic engagement and currently serves her community as a CA State Assembly District Delegate-District 68.

## **Silent No More:**

### **A 'Bravely Curious' Perspective of Landscape Architecture & Advocacy**

*I had a chance to practice democracy in its purest and simplest forms. I was just 15 years old. I stood at the corner of Wilshire and Sepulveda Blvd. in Los Angeles and held a poster in bold letters alongside my sister that read: "No War In Iraq." We wanted people to hear our calls for peace, freedom, and justice. Despite our youth, we understood that standing up and speaking out is important. My Syrian father and Mexican mother taught us that.*

*In college, I understood that diversity strengthens communities. Social justice became a passion of mine in my studies. My ideas were often influenced by political movements that made a mark in history. The labor movements led by Cesar Chavez influenced my design process as did the Civil Rights movements. Movements like Occupy 99% and my own protesting experiences made me reflect on alternative futures for our communities. I saw how masses of people can work together to do the right thing and its happening now across our country. I saw*

*how people can influence their environment and vice versa. There is a movement happening right now that will determine what kind of country we will be. As a delegate and designer, I want to fully participate in it.*

*I continue to elevate my voice as a democratic delegate representing Assembly District 68. I am proactive with our elected officials and running candidates that may one day represent our congressional districts, assembly districts, and senatorial districts. There are opportunities for me to endorse resolutions and to move resolutions such as supporting tuition-free higher education, affordable healthcare, etc. onto the CA Democratic Party platform where they may become bills. Later this year I will attend the CA Democratic Party Convention in San Diego to endorse one of our gubernatorial candidates.*

*I'm not sure what path my efforts in politics will lead me to. I'm only certain of one thing-the future will be brighter because my generation continuously refuses to be silent in the midst of Trump's presidency.*

# Presenter + Ideals:



## **Julie An**

### **Project Manager, Miller Landscape Architecture**

*Julie believes that good design is relevant to current issues and diverse populations who experience them. While at the University of Southern California, Julie explored her passion for serving the under-served through a perceptive design approach for her Masters' thesis project. Her effective and sensitive methods of site analysis informed the design of a distributed park system in a disadvantaged neighborhood in South Los Angeles.*

*As a reestablished Bay Area native wanting to help her community, Julie is currently advocating for sanctioned housing communities in Oakland. She is hopeful for a solution to the homeless crisis that all parties can support and is applying her skills as a landscape designer to achieve that solution.*

*Julie is currently a Project Manager at Miller Landscape Architecture in Oakland where she utilizes both analytical and technical design skills on residential, commercial, and hospitality projects.*

## **Public Land for People's Needs**

*Unsanctioned homeless encampments in Oakland signify the greater issue that people are not being allowed to live in unfit conditions without any alternatives. The different sides to this story come from very different groups but they all want sanctioned housing communities in the city.*

*On one hand, the unsheltered population is struggling daily to live and they are also being supported by local activists and advocacy groups. They seek sanctioned housing with self-governance and self-management. On the other hand, the City of Oakland is facing pressure from community members to act quickly and the State of California is requiring jurisdictions to identify zones for emergency shelters. In addition, the city wants the design and installation to be orderly and they also want a clear plan of operations and administration.*

*There are several precedents and models of encampments and more permanent villages throughout the country. Some have been more successful than others but they are all adapted to the specific political, social and environmental contexts of the locale.*

*The City of Oakland and non-profit organizations such as The Village and the Homeless Advocacy Working Group are trying to resolve the issue of homelessness together amid many challenges. Hopefully, they can come to an agreement and build villages that will succeed into the future.*

# Presenter + Ideals:



## **Monique Bassey**

### **Landscape Designer, SmithGroupJJR**

Monique Bassey is a Los Angeles native, a graduate of the University of Arizona's Bachelors of Architecture and Masters of Landscape Architecture program, and a Landscape designer at SmithGroupJJR in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Monique's interdisciplinary background has taught her to appreciate projects that not only serve human needs through built form, but also respect the delicate nature of our environment. She is enthusiastic about bringing diverse perspectives to her project teams, and contributing to more innovative and creative design solutions. Regardless of the scale of her projects, from plaza design to district framework plans, Monique brings a unique insight and a passionate effort. She is a very active member of ASLA both at a state and national level. She was selected to participate in the 2016 ASLA Diversity Summit and 2017 ASLA Diversity Super Summit where she traveled to Washington DC to work alongside passionate African American and Latinx Landscape Architects. There, she discussed the importance of diversity in our profession and developed initiatives to inspire and educate young people of color about Landscape Architecture.

## **Immersive Design:**

No matter how diverse we are as people, the beauty of life is that we are all interdependent of one another. Those relationships which are rooted in trust and empathy are ones that are memorable and long-lasting. As landscape architects, there is great value in authentically immersing ourselves in communities and cultures that are different than our own in order to understand their needs, empower their lives, and enrich our own.

There is a need for designers to use our expertise of place-making to help communities who are marginalized and underrepresented connect to space, and establish a sense of place and belonging. This allows their otherwise neglected voices to be heard and magnified.

I saw this firsthand in 2010 when I spent the summer in Palestine working with RIWAQ, an NGO architectural firm to assist in designing a Master Plan for the Village of Birzeit. Another immersion opportunity presented itself in 2012 when I took a yearlong break from the profession to work for United Friends of the Children, an organization who supports and empowers foster youth in Los Angeles. Working alongside both of these organizations has informed my work as a designer and my purpose in society.

This talk will offer participants the opportunity to engage in a discussion on how we can begin to break the mold that defines the limits of our profession. How can we get to a point where it can be ingrained in our lives and in our careers to step up, speak up, inspire, and put into action our services for those in need.

# Presenter + Ideals:



**Aaron Dang**  
**Associate, Studio-MLA**

Aaron Dang is an Associate at Studio MLA and received his B.S. Landscape Architecture from Cal Poly Pomona. Aaron views landscape architecture as an infrastructure for supporting healthy living. He is committed to creating a responsible environment through the practice of landscape architecture and urban design. Aaron is a native Angeleno and strives to enhance the urban fabric of Los Angeles. His passion transpired from the rich landscapes and diverse communities he grew up in. Aaron has worked on large scale environmental projects as well as urban scale civic projects with expertise in construction documentation and project implementation.

## New Natural :

*Growing up in L.A., I found nature in the urban waterbodies where I would fish and explore. Bays and reservoirs drew me in like the ecosystem it hosts. Mallards, cormorants, and geese float around the surface as a tangled mix of arundo, bamboo, and where cattails break through concrete to reach the water edge. In harbors, barnacle coated pylons, man-made rock jetties, and bridge abutments is what I climb through just to make some casts. Submerged shopping carts, trash cans, and boat docks were obvious landmarks for “good fishing spots” as these foreign structures became fish habitat. The heart-stopping excitement of spotting a giant bass lurking in the most obscure concrete reservoir is like seeing bigfoot.*

*I loved spending time in this fuzzy transect of where the artificial world blends with the natural—where flora and fauna adapted and thrived in the built-environment. Rather grimy, usually polluted, dilapidated, and outdated in the shadows—some of these infrastructures weren’t the most accessible fishing grounds. Others were isolated or fenced-off, either vacant, abandoned, and just closed to the public. However, the quest for new fishing holes in these prohibited, private, and sometimes dangerous places was not only thrilling but the results that came out of there were surprisingly rewarding.*

*Any scale or type of wild seem to flourish in Los Angeles’ infrastructure amongst Angelenos which is what makes this city amazing. The way L.A. serves as such a weird landing pad for a diverse mix of immigrants and transplants directly reflects the blurred definition of native vs. invasive—natural vs. artificial. As the city transforms with new high-rises and communities shift in demographics, the unnatural and un-belonged will adapt and regenerate concurrently. Like L.A.’s biodiversity, the rich blend of racial, multi-cultural, and socio-economic defines the city’s true image. Those who can appreciate it will adore it while those offended will always hate it.*

*My thrill for outdoor adventures and recreation happened to begin in the rugged concrete urban wilderness and city infrastructure of L.A. These forbidden—stinky, daunting, unappealing, and posted “NO FISHING” places to most, is where the exploration and escapades take place for many like me. Although mountainous meadows, fields and glacier fed streams are glorious—it doesn’t take much glam to relish the art of fishing.*

# Presenter + Ideals:



**Carlos Flores**

**Landscape Architect**

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

*Carlos Flores, alumni of the MLA program at Cal Poly Pomona, is a first generation Mexican American immigrant, living in Southern California. For the past three years, he lived and worked deep in the Santa Monica Mountains, just west of Los Angeles, where he was a designer at the National Park Service. His main interests are access and stewardship in outdoor recreation, as well as ecological approaches in urban landscaping. He is a part time instructor of native garden design and landscape graphics.*

## **Nobody Walks in LA**

*During extremely long commutes on several modes of transport, Carlos uses social media to share photographic insights on the Southern California landscape, the urban-wildland interface, outdoor recreation, native plant communities and wildlife, as well as his sense of purpose and his chosen career path within landscape architecture.*

# Presenter + Ideals:



## **Natasha Harkison** **Urban Designer, SWA**

Natasha is an urban designer at SWA in Laguna Beach. She is most interested in creating public space and place-making initiatives that serve as the catalyst for 'S'urban transformation. With the belief that landscape architecture and urban design have the power to set the foundation for our greater urban real estate markets, her work has spanned a variety of scales including urban planning, outreach and big idea visioning, and site-specific landscape design. Her current work is focused on developing urban planning concepts that seek to stay ahead of the 'Burb's of America, dealing with issues related to market trends, economic prosperity, and resilient environments. Natasha earned her B.S. in Landscape Architecture from Cal Poly Pomona.

## **Ahead of the Burb**

*'Sub'urban: characteristic of a suburb, contemptibly dull, ordinary. The truth of this matter is that the 'burb's hold a special place in my heart, as this is where I grew up and into my own personal values. The burbs were all I knew- my car was everything to me, condos and single family houses were all I understood, and Disneyland, big-box stores and fast food surrounded me. Through this reality, I always had a profound interest in public spaces and parks, embracing culture and built heritage everywhere I went.*

*After studying landscape architecture and urban design, my depth of understanding and interest peaked when I realized there was so much more to our built environments- especially in the way landscape*

*architecture has the power to not only transform public space, 's'urban neighborhoods, but help cultural values flourish in a public setting. This realm of practice has been a focus that I've grown appreciation for, as many current work efforts are centered on suburban development planning. This talk will expand upon my passion as an urban designer, focused on staying ahead to find the best place making solutions. From studio and technical process and community-wide input, to approaches in how we plan communities, these strategies for staying ahead are important and critical to landscape architecture, regardless of a project's distinction as urban or 's'urban.*

# Contact Information:

## Presenters:

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## Resource: ASLA Diversity Reports

<https://www.asla.org/diversitysummit.aspx#DiversityReports>

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