DeeDee and Herb Glimcher Lecture: Jonathan Moody

Lecture by renowned architect Jonathan Moody and conversation with Wexner Center for the Arts Executive Director Gaëtane Verna for the February 19, 2025, DeeDee and Herb Glimcher Lecture, an annual series featuring the world's leading artists, architects, and designers.

This transcription is provided as a record of the live conversation, for educational use. Read more about the Wexner Center for the Arts' Mission, Vision, and Values.

Transcript

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:00:20):

Good evening, everyone. Thanks for joining us tonight for the 2025 DeeDee and Herb Glimcher lecture with Jonathan Moody. I'm Dionne Custer Edwards, Head of Learning & Public Practice here at the Wexner Center for the Arts.

(00:00:35):

Before we begin and introduce our speaker, I would like to acknowledge and thank our generous donors. This lecture is made possible by DeeDee and Herb Glimcher, who established a program fund in their name that supports presentations by distinguished speakers in the fields of art, architecture, and design at the Wexner Center for the Arts. We want to express our heartfelt gratitude for their generosity and support of these fields, and hope you will join me in thanking DeeDee and Herb Glimcher, without whom we could not present these thought-provoking programs and lectures.

(00:01:07):

We would also like to express gratitude for our ongoing partnership with our colleagues at the Knowlton School at OSU. As such, I would like to thank our colleagues, Ashley Bigham, who's been a terrific thought partner, Curtis Roth, Ann Pendleton-Jullian, and all faculty and students who made it here this evening. Welcome, Knowlton.

(00:01:33):

This evening is organized by our Learning & Public Practice Department team and made possible by the support of CoverMyMeds and Huntington. Following the lecture, Executive Director of the Wexner Center for the Arts, Gaëtane Verna, will join onstage for a conversation before taking questions from the audience. If you'd like to ask a question, you can raise your hand if you're in the theater, or you can text a question to the Wex hotline. That number is (614) 813-3416. Again, the number is (614) 813-3416.

(00:02:10):

And now, it is with great honor to introduce this evening's speaker. Jonathan Moody's work resides at the intersection of architecture and service, bringing transformational design to underresourced communities. He believes architecture is a medium through which people can come together and participate in positive change. In 2020, Jonathan became CEO of the Columbus-based firm, Moody Nolan, championing the firm's growth

and service to the community. He believes focused efforts propel the profession toward empowering and uplifting diverse populations.

(00:02:47):

As CEO, he is driven by a passion to continue his father, Curtis Moody's, legacy of diversifying the practice of architecture, and is recognized by his peers as an exceptional leader and mentor. Jonathan's work is shaped by his commitment to serving the underserved. He regularly mentors at-risk youth and serves on local boards, leading community development projects for low-income neighborhoods. In all he does, Jonathan strives to create a more just and equitable future for all. Please join me in welcoming Jonathan Moody.

Jonathan Moody (00:03:22):

I didn't fall coming up to the stage. Step one. Well, thanks for coming out tonight. Thanks for… They said it was friends and family and that that would make it easier, and I'm like, "that may make it harder," but it is kind of great to see so many warm and welcoming faces. And I guess, I'm not always so comfortable with the idea of lecturing, right? So, as friends and family and a lot of—I just hope to tell a few stories, and I hope you enjoy the stories as they relate to the projects, the work, community, all the different things that you guys have heard a lot about.

(00:04:13):

So, I don't know how to share… Maybe, maybe? It's coming. I hope I don't have to dance. I think the... Okay, all right. Well, I'll go back one, just so you see the theme and the title is "Close the Gap," and I'll talk a little bit more about that. So, the AIA has this thing that they talk about that I think is worth mentioning about stories and about projects that, for the most part, design is… It is always a generation ahead. We always are trying to look ahead at what the next generation's problems and challenges will be and figure out what we can do as designers to kind of impact change, create better, and do all those great things. But stories are kind of the key word in there, that these stories that we tell for future generations and what they remember are critically important.

(00:05:10):

And I started this habit a while ago about reading, and I've kind of begrudgingly become… began to acknowledge that I am a reader. I don't know that I'd say I love reading on those, but I do a lot of reading, I've learned, and I think the overlap between the stories and the projects and design's ability to kind of influence that is important. So I'll tell you a lot about some stories, I'll tell you about some books that overlap with that. I find some of the things and things I learned connect with the projects in many ways.

(00:05:44):

But what is important when you talk about… it's February 19th, it's Black History Month, that started as Black History Week in the early 1900s and evolved into a month. There is this time that is kind of a challenge right now in thinking about what it means for people who haven't had their story told. And it's…this Maya Angelou quote is: There is no greater agony than having this story or having this idea that I want to share and not being able to do it.

(00:06:11):

So a couple of books that impacted me that I would say feel very patriotic for me—and that may sound strange—but Obama's book. The reason I say it's patriotic is this idea that I think aligns with architecture very much, around a promised land. Not the country the way it is, but the country we wish to create—this promise of what it could be. And Nikole Hannah-Jones's book. She starts off and she talks about her father who was in the military, and she's from Iowa, and he had this American flag in the yard. And how, more than anything, the people who build this country have the right to be patriotic. And so if you built this, you should feel patriotic, you should feel that "I'm a full-blooded American," and I stand behind that. But her concluding thoughts are really what resonate with me, because I do want to talk very specifically about the wealth gap.

(00:07:05):

The reason I—it's Black History Month, so I'll talk about the Black wealth gap. The reason I bring it up is her concluding thoughts as, you can argue what you want about 1619 and the *White Lion*, and the first ships that came, and the ripple throughout history. But what she talks about at the end is, if you polled most Americans, right, most Americans would acknowledge that there is a difference between Black wealth and white wealth. They would say that, "Hey," when you poll most Americans, they would say that, "Yeah, the wealth gap is probably for every $100 of white wealth, there's $80 or $90 of Black wealth."

(00:07:39):

The reality is, for every $100 of white wealth, there's $8 to $10 of Black wealth. And I would say that the bigger gap that we're trying to close or trying to address is that 70 to 80, because that's what leads to… it's not the perception gap. It's not so much that the gap exists, but the perception gap is what leads to, "Well, if you would just work harder," or "If you would just try harder," "If you just went to a better school," or "If you came from a two-parent household..." And I can tell you, it doesn't matter what you do, you can't close that kind of gap with just working harder or trying harder. And we are in a time where the gap has closed, and I'll get into this. The gap has closed, but the truth of the matter is, at its current pace—and maybe in the last four or five weeks that pace has slowed—the gap will close in about 700 years. That's the pace we're on.

(00:08:35):

And so, I think we're in a time that kind of goes back to that idea of, "What is the America we want to create for future generations with our work and the people that we serve?" Where it does take some kind of radical intervention. And I would argue that the history that my father had a part of, that the firm had a part of, is people took chances and they did radical things. And you get radical outcomes that kind of make bigger jumps or bigger leaps. But every building is important to engage in that conversation.

(00:09:08):

So a few more books, and I promise I'll get... Melvin Mitchell, he talks a lot about specific challenges that overlap the African American architects. And Will Haygood's book I love, because for me it kind of framed architecture and community in a very real... I think one of the things I appreciate about being here is we're not just randomly talking about communities or other things. It's like when he talks about East High School or Harley Field or the fairgrounds or Ohio State's campus, these are places that you can look and touch and see and feel. That book was kind of a real awakening for me, to really

understand. My parents grew up in the 60s. And that may not resonate, but it was one of those things that was like…for me, that was one of those moments of, I can't even imagine what it was like to say… all the things that you deal with, like being 17, 18, 19: "Does this girl like me? Are we going to prom? Or this happened and, oh yeah, by the way, Dr. King got assassinated." That's a… Whoa. My parents grew up in the 60s.

(00:10:10):

But I do want to draw particular attention to Melvin's book in the middle, because I reflect on that book every February for the last five years. It came out in February of 2020. And what he talked a lot about is the need for kind of a radical change or the radical difference in looking at the profession and how we practice and what buildings are. Because the reality is, what his challenge was is when we look ahead 20, 30 years or for the future generation, that we don't look back and say, "Oh, I wished we would've done different," or, "I wished that there was an opportunity to say, hey, the reality is most development happens in cities." Most cities are urban, they're diverse, and generally the wealth that's created in those cities, it's always been done a certain way and don't want to look back in 20 years and say, "I wish we would've done something different." He really promotes kind of this by-the-block idea.

(00:11:05):

And he says this funny thing that I would say in schools that you don't really get, that's like, school is like, "You're the creator, you're the designer." And we carry that a lot into the profession. And the reality is, it's like, everybody but architects knows that architects don't make architecture, right? Architecture comes from wealth, from power, right? And so, it's like if you're not a part of that, you're not really making a significant impact. It's known by everybody but architects.

(00:11:34):

And he challenged us to say that this new generation that—I see a lot of you here tonight—have to think differently about how we build. And for me, simply put, the simple idea of who funds the project, who owns the projects, who develops the project, can't be a hard barrier. It's got to be kind of a broader idea. I don't have all the answers, but I know the way we currently do it, it doesn't really close the gap, so to speak.

(00:12:00):

So, I'll tell you a few more books. These are Moody Nolan books, right? So a little bit of the history of the firm that I do have the honor of leading, which is mostly just leading great people, some of them are here tonight. I joke that that black-and-white picture that you see is, that was our high-tech picture. That was the "show the media how forward-thinking we are" because that was the AutoCAD machine, right?

(00:12:24):

So that's my father and Howard there in probably 19-early-80-something. The middle picture is one of our first office locations, and the church you see there is Moody Nolan's first church, which is New Life Apostolic over on Mock Road, because people can go see it and touch it. But had a lot of breakthrough moments. Like, my connection, I say that I grew up with the firm. So I still remember my father when he won the Whitney Young Award. I didn't know what it was; I didn't know who Whitney Young was.

(00:12:54):

But I said, “Hey, I’m going to do a drawing of my dad because he got this award.” So that was my drawing from early on. And over the years we’ve had locations on Broad Street, the Sawyer Towers you see up there, the early John Glenn Terminal stuff, and our current office is downtown. But really, a lot of how it started is not so different than the church. It’s the—you work for people you know; you serve people whose needs need help. So, churches and libraries and schools, and really, how we evolved over the years, we just never really left a project type behind. It was like we built a lot on partnerships where we could say, “Hey, can we partner with somebody, learn how to do a project together with them?” Keep learning how to do it, and then at some point, “Do we learn enough that we can lead it?” And that… maybe that relationship flips and we partner differently.

(00:13:50):

But I would say… So this is Cleveland School of the Arts. It’s a performing arts school in Cleveland that we had done. Malcolm X College in Chicago, which was “Can you take a whole nursing school and put it in a city block?” We partnered with CannonDesign on that one. César Pelli Wintrust Arena and Event Center in Chicago is another project that we’d worked on and completed. This fun guy, Larry Connor that—Jon may laugh over there—but he says, if you can imagine, he says he likes “buildings that match his personality.” So you take that for what it is. The University of Pittsburgh rec center. I think this project will open later this fall. Can Brian shake his head or somebody?

(00:14:37):

Yeah, this… typically when you do rec centers, they’re usually one- or two-story buildings, but if you’ve ever been to Pittsburgh, you can’t really do one or two stories into a hillside. So this is a nine-story rec center where we stack gyms and pools and all those fun things. One that you guys would probably have known and heard, but these are the kind of breakthrough moments where, hey, we’d partnered and done a lot of work in sports.

(00:15:01):

My dad played basketball at Ohio State and said, “Hey, could we lead the whole arena?” And the answer was “yes,” or… “could somebody take a chance on us?” The Schottenstein Center was completed. The Ohio State student union with Michael Dennis that we worked with on that. A lot of projects in and around Columbus: the Ty Tucker Tennis Center—a lot of sports and rec projects; The Pelotonia Center, we’ve done a lot for Ohio State if you hadn’t gathered; the Energy Advancement and Innovation Center, we partnered with Smith-Miller + Hawkinson, that I think will be one of the highest performing buildings in central Ohio, or the state, or the region.

(00:15:46):

And then even this one is like—we didn’t do the Obama Presidential Library; that’s the image in the foreground. But I would say that if you know anything about the former president, he was an athlete and he was big into basketball. He is also big in community. But if you see that thing on the top, he kind of had a pet project that he peeled off and said, “Hey, could we do something where it’s like a basketball court for the community?” And it’s not necessarily like the library… kind of like a museum complex—that it’s more of a community center. So we actually had the topping out ceremony for what’ll be called

the Obama Foundation's Home Court that—the secret—I think it'll actually be done before the library. But we…

(00:16:33):

And then even recently, if you did fly in or out, or if you had somebody… you had to take in for the holidays—yes, we are to blame partially—we partnered with Gensler for the new terminal project… John Glenn Airport. But the practice that we built was really, again, never really leaving a project type behind, and kind of, I would say, a supercharged idea of diverse by design. Meaning not just diverse people coming from diverse backgrounds, but also a lot of different diverse thinking around different project types that complement one another. And through our history and over the years, I'd say our 12 offices—every one of them has a story where somebody took a chance and took a risk and that we were able to deliver and to continue in and around that.

(00:17:28):

So as my father would say, I do feel honored to represent the firm, but architecture is a platform, and the things that we do have a lasting impact on society. I feel tremendously honored to be able to walk around this campus and this community and talk about the impact that he and the firm have created. But I've also got a 9-year-old and a 12-year-old, and those big thick books, they're like, "What is that? I need pictures." And I've actually would say that I've found that kids' books are a helpful tool because they're able to take these big, hairy adult issues and distill them down into "What is the essence of what we're talking about. How do you explain this to a six-year-old?" So this is a book, *Daddy, There's a Noise Outside* by Kenneth Braswell. And there's a demonstration that night—they heard things, the kids—and the next morning they came down at dinner and they're like, "We have to talk about it as a family of what happened."

(00:18:26):

And so one of the quotes from the kids is, "Dad, what is civil disobedience?"—right? Like, these big, hairy adult topics. So wealth is a tricky, fun thing. And with, again, everybody but architects knows that it's wealth that funds these projects. So this is the Topiary Park in downtown Columbus. And we did a project there that I would say we talked a lot about, what does it mean to say that there's an investment from a company to create housing? What does that mean in terms of a distribution of wealth of sorts? Probably to create more wealth in this type of community. Even aesthetically, it was the how do we create—although it's not my favorite style, just full transparency—but it's the how do we create something that gives the appearance of value or wealth because that generates or creates more value? And I remember I hated these renderings that we did, and the reason I hated them is because we were asked to do these renderings when we were, I think, a week away from substantial completion, which if you know, that's kind of near the finish of a project.

(00:19:34):

So it was kind of like, "Why are we doing renderings? You can just go take a picture." And I'll never forget, if you go back—so this is five years ago, May of five years ago—and I remember it was kind of a big news event, which was George Floyd's murder on a Tuesday. And toward the end of the week it was kind of like, "Yeah, things are kind of getting dicey in and around town." And it was like, "My wife and I, we should drive. We should get out of town." So I get out of town.

(00:20:02):

And I remember on a Sunday morning, I had a text from Mike Fitzpatrick from Elford. He said, “Had you seen the news?” It was 6 AM Sunday. Anytime somebody texts you about a project at six in the morning, “What is going on?” And yeah, I woke up to the news of, during the unrest in and around Columbus, what wasn’t talked about—and we couldn’t really talk about… And I still reflect on it a lot, given the news of the last five years, of what does it mean when people demonstrate and that something that you work on is kind of in the crosshairs?

(00:20:36):

What does it mean when someone acts out against your work? And in this one is one that, I don’t know if it was intentional. I don’t know if it’s unintentional. I don’t know if it was because the building was a symbol of wealth or what it meant.

(00:20:51):

I still reflect on this a lot today because this was one that hit home. But I’d say what I do know is, what we do is we think a lot, not just about the current generation but about future generations and we build. And so it was very meaningful to say that the conclusion of all of that, when your work is destroyed is to say, “We can rebuild, we can keep going because it matters and it’s important.” And so every milestone of groundbreaking, breaking the ground again, or topping out, or the final ribbon cutting were significant moments. But it does place the project within the context of civil disobedience within the city of Columbus and what does it mean as a symbol.

(00:21:35):

But yeah, I’m very much proud of this project for many different reasons. I keep the ribbon at my desk from the ribbon cutting. But a lot of… what the tools that we have at our disposal that are part of the story is empathy, is that sometimes when you can see the world through someone else’s eyes, even through your work, that it’s an important reflection of what that value is and what it represents. Around that same time, just before we got sent home, the last community meeting I went to was for a library in the Cleveland area, and this very passionate city council member—who you see there as we were engaging kids and other things—he kept talking about this project saying, “We’re going to do this library,” and how important it is for the Hough neighborhood, and that this library had to be a symbol of reflecting on the history of the neighborhood and the Hough Uprising.

(00:22:32):

And I felt a little bit like, we’ve done a lot of work and research, but I hadn’t heard anything about the Hough Uprising. So I went back and looked to figure it out, and it turned out that that’s not how the Cleveland newspapers portrayed the Hough Uprising. They called it the Hough Riots, but it was kind of this full-circle moment of while you’re working on projects, and what does it mean to say you’re going to take, again, public dollars to distribute to the public or create these tools. But isn’t it more important than ever that a library is the place that you reflect and remember that history, that it keeps the record and it keeps the memory of it? So through that and through the times of reflecting on summer of 2020, the process of this was important. We talked about this idea of *sankofa* and this idea of saying, “Hey, it’s a simple metaphor that it’s like a bird that flies forward while it’s looking back.”

(00:23:24):

And it's like, couldn't this library be with the times and be of that memory of what this neighborhood and community represents? So we said, "Couldn't it literally take that shape?" And it was catty-corner from League Park—which, League Park is no longer; it's kind of a landscape moment—but League Park is where the Cleveland Buckeyes had played, which was the Negro League team in Cleveland. And we thought, "Well, couldn't it be that the building is kind of an echo of what that memory would be? And wouldn't that makes sense in and around it?" It's a very, not a big project, 70… we called it the postage stamp library, because it was 7,500 square feet.

(00:24:05):

But we did complete it. And I remember, Nikki Giovanni came to the ribbon cutting for this project. And my team always makes fun of me because I like snow photography. I feel like it's honest. You've all been outside today, that this is honest, right? But it creates these moments of, again, rethinking what is wealth, what is something intentional and what is the value of a memory, of saying, "Hey, maybe this is just a library, maybe it's a public investment of dollars that gets distributed to a lot of different people, but wouldn't it be important to have this moment where you sit here and people who know the history would really understand kind of the full-circle moment of what the Hough neighborhood represented and that one building that's left from League Park that you could see it from this corner."

(00:24:58):

And so I still remember in this time—I couldn't stand it—they had this phrase that everybody loved. It's like, "I can't wait until we get back to normal." Everybody loved that phrase. I said, "Well, I'm going to find a different phrase." I did the thing that you do when you're trying to find—I went to a thesaurus and I said, "I'm going to find a different word for normal," and I'll say it got worse. I got really upset about it at the time because at the time we kept saying, "Let's get back to normal." And it's like, who would ever want "average?" Let's get back to "unexceptional?" Who wants that, right? It's like, it's not that—we want better, right? And I think a lot of the conversations that we have in and around our projects, where our clients and the communities are challenging us to say, "This is a big, meaningful investment"; they want something great; they want something better that considers it beyond that.

(00:25:53):

Another one of my favorite books, what a lot of, not people are aware of, is companion book to Nikole Hannah-Jones's *1619*—the big phone book book—is a children's book called *Born on the Water.* And I actually learned that the illustrations from this book were actually done by an architecture student from Hampton. That's who Nicholas Smith is. But I really related to this book a lot for many different reasons because—so the way it goes… so I know there are some Cornellians in the house tonight. Yeah, well, when you go to school in upstate New York, but you grow up in Ohio, and you get there and people are meeting people, making new friends and they're like, "Oh, where are you from?" And I'm like, "Ohio." And they're like, "Yeah, yeah, but where's your family from?" I'm like, "Ohio and West Virginia maybe, or somewhere." And the thing was, when you get there, everybody from New York is from somewhere. That was, I would say, the moment where I learned I was just a regular Black person.

(00:26:57):

And everybody in New York was like, “Oh, I’m Jamaican,” or “I’m Haitian,” or “We’re Nigerian.” And I’m like, “I don’t know any of that, right?” The formal thing, Black History Month, is American descendants of slaves. So in the book, the girl, she goes to class and she has this assignment and the assignment—the teacher says, “Hey, everybody, take out a white sheet of paper and draw the flag of your family’s origins.” And you see the look on that little girl’s face, right? And she had to go back and talk to her grandmother because she said, “Grandma, I don’t know where I begin, what my story is,” which matters. So that takes us to Charleston. So the older image that you see there is the historic image… of a historic map overlay that was Gadsden’s Wharf. And the newer image that you see is the current day.

(00:27:52):

So the red line marks where the water was. Where… I’ll say, the end of one journey and the beginning of another, which was the Middle Passage or the transatlantic slave trade, where Gadsden’s Wharf is a unique place in that over 40% of all African Americans can trace their first ancestors through this spot. It was one of the largest slave ports in the world before it shut down. And we realized that—honestly, kind of a fun, full-circle moment; I think the last time I was in this place was hearing Harry Cobb lecture, talking about his 65 years of architectural practice—but we worked with Harry Cobb, Pei Cobb Freed, and we worked with Walter Hood on this project. But we realized that the building was not so important as the site, and that line, and what that line meant for so many people. So it kind of turned into a non-building building.

(00:28:53):

And the importance of it was to say, “Hey, let’s make a reflection of what that line represented, what it means for so many people’s journeys into America.” And it’s not about the building, it becomes about this—the building is supposed to fade into the background. And the water—I guess we still call it a fountain. I don’t know if that’s quite appropriate—but the water raises and lowers like tides, and it kind of reveals these imprints, which represents all of the people who would’ve been lost in the Middle Passage. And more important than anything is just to have a place where you can go and be and know that this site exists and know that it’s a touchstone. I mean, there are the important things that you have to have. I mean, it’s a complicated story to talk about slavery in America and the history of enslaved people to and through the Americas.

(00:29:46):

But it’s relevant, it’s there. This project opened Juneteenth of 2023, and one side looks toward the Atlantic and the other side looks back towards the Americas. And, wait, did I go back the wrong way? I did. The other side looks back towards the Americas and there’s these windows that are important there—and what you can just make out in that image is actually the genealogy center, which we said—important is telling the story of this place and have people be able to make that connection to the place.

(00:30:19):

And so the genealogy center doesn’t have to be a physical location. There is one there, and there’s a person, but it’s an online resource. So I said, “Man, wow.” So I went, and I looked, and I asked parents and other things, and grandparents of relatives and said, “Hey, could we connect the dots?” You really need your mother’s grandmother’s maiden

name… is kind of one of the keys that you need to trace roots. But we said—I wondered, I said, "We found this guy Willis Spearman, who's our oldest ancestor, and he lived in Newbury, South Carolina." And I did it, I found a very… remnant of a document that was—this is the contract for Willis Spearman's freedom.

(00:31:02):

And I would say the power of that story that is beyond just dollars, in terms of wealth, was to be able to take my kids there and to have them not be like that little girl in the story. Very famous author I would say is Zora Neale Hurston. She's a historic figure in African American literature. She wrote this book called *Barracoon*. It is a tough read because it is written exactly like some old guy from the South talks. I mean that she writes it very phonetically. But the important story of that book that—there's not necessarily a direct project tie to this one, to that book in particular—but that guy is… It tells the story of one of the last recorded slave ships from Africa. And what had happened is they brought that slave ship into Alabama area and then they realized, well, slavery was illegal, so they burned the ship.

(00:32:09):

But it was after that they had transported those slaves that they had… slavery was abolished. They were like, so they asked if they could go back. And obviously after they had burned the ship, they're like, "You can't go back." So they started a town that was called Africatown, but his—and that's in the bottom of Alabama. But his story, the reason I think this book is a worthwhile read—his perspective is before, during, and after, meaning he has memories that he talks about from Africa of growing up in Africa, what it means. He has tangible memories of the Middle Passage and he has memories from living here in America. So it's a wild book and story. That's just one I recommend.

(00:32:58):

But we did a project here in Columbus that we have the designer—I didn't do a whole lot, I just got out of their way—It's called *Zora's House*. But it challenged this idea of who pays for and who does a project, if projects come from wealth, and not necessarily architects, who funds that? But this powerhouse of a person that is LC Johnson. She has this quote that says, "Imagine your favorite coffee shop and your homegirl's house had a baby—that's *Zora's House*." She's kind of undescribable in terms of her approach. And again, I felt like our job in this story was really just kind of getting out of the way because she went on the Kelly Clarkson show, she fundraised the whole thing, kind of a very grassroots effort. But you see that that was a cold day like today—that construction site with all the hard hats, but… did it on our own, kind of saying, "Hey, we've got this idea. We want to create it. We're going to bring the resources to make it happen." There's a rendering. We haven't finished some of the photography yet. I just felt like my job was to get out of the way of the team because the importance and significance of the project is kind of what that wall says—is to tell the community to do some radical type of intervention that says, "Hey, I know this is how projects are typically funded. We're not going to do that because this is created by a Black woman." And what that allows… When you have that kind of intervention or that kind of leadership, it allows you to think differently about certain things, that maybe you wouldn't fund that in another type of project, or maybe somebody else wouldn't pay for that.

(00:34:46):

But it's a very subtle but minor thing is… that image you see there on the bottom right; those are beds because a lot of women, surprisingly, in and around this community have to deal with challenges about human trafficking. And maybe they just need a woman to understand or to empathize what it means to have a safe space or to just have a space that, this is for us and this is ours. And it's not necessarily mine, but it belongs to many different people. So Zora has this quote that—and it kind of speaks to the need and the importance of it—is, "If you're silent about the pain," or you're not able to articulate or tell your story, it says, yeah, "they'll kill you and say you enjoyed it."

(00:35:35):

A couple more books. So Dr. King himself wrote eight books. So there are many people who wrote about Dr. King, but he himself wrote eight books. And they were very much at the center of the inspiration when we talked about the Martin Luther King library, because in his book *Where Do We Go From Here*, he actually has a few references, not kind of high-level or philosophical, where he talks about buildings. I really like this quote. I think it's very important for right now in talking about, what does it mean to have a community center?... What does it have a training center?

(00:36:13):

And more often than not, you see these when we talk about the distribution of wealth, it's happening in, he uses the word "slum areas," but the importance of it, what is the value of making that investment is to say it's not just an electorate, "not merely an electorate" that has access to that knowledge, but an "alert and informed people who know their direction and whose collective wisdom and vitality commands respect." That's a powerful place. So yeah, we had a lot to live up to when we worked on the Martin Luther King library here in Columbus.

(00:36:53):

And I think one of the things we talked a lot about this project was that this could be the place… like that, if our community was making this kind of investment into something that's essentially a training center of sorts that addresses when you distribute wealth in that way, that you address things like kindergarten readiness. You address things like third-grade reading. You address things like homework help, or after school, or lack of childcare, or the ability to say, "Hey, I don't have internet access." A lot of people aren't aware, but in a neighborhood like the East Side, I think something like 11% of people don't have access to the internet. The library is their resource to do those things. But we said that maybe it could be a space of protests of sorts, because before every demonstration Dr. King and his group—you see the image on the bottom left, the famous with John Lewis.

(00:37:48):

But before every demonstration they would kneel to pray, and they would come up and they would link arms and connect. And at the time we talked a lot about this phrase of libraries used to be places of collection and they now need to be places of connection—really kind of making that like, can a library not just be a building that we pay for, but it connects people to resources? So we said, "Could the literal form of the building take that on, or could it really feel like a living room that people came and connected to?" But it also needs to respond to the community that it's in. And one of the things that we talked about is when you look at the history of many neighborhoods in and around the

US, they have—it's kind of sad, but it's consistent that literally, typically in cities like Columbus or Cleveland, or if it's Indianapolis, or if it's Pittsburgh—there's a thriving African American neighborhood.

(00:38:42):

And then somewhere in the 70s or 80s they build a freeway that kind of cuts it off from downtown. And historically, people loved their porches. People were actively engaging in the community. It was kind of the space where it was like, I could engage and I could make a change. If I see something bad happen, I yell and tell that kid to stop, or I tell that person to do something different. But it was that part of that space between my private dwelling and the public realm, but a space of engagement. And so, freeway gets built—usually you talk about drugs and things in the 80s that kind of destroy these kind of neighborhoods. And just now is really when you're talking about again, an investment of wealth, and could you do something radical? And it says, "Could this idea of taking that history and flipping it to say that for the library's porch, that this could be the space that people begin to kind of engage and make those changes, or kind of engage with the physical realm again?"

(00:39:42):

And what I remember most about this project when we had a groundbreaking—and speaking and thinking about different generations—is nobody really cared about the building when it opened. I think people were just excited that this building was kind of a manifestation or a realization of a broader community investment that says that somebody invested in me and cared about me. And so, yeah, these pictures that from the ribbon cuttings… the building kind of fades away into the background. And it is a very unique, generational moment talking about Columbus having one of the first libraries that was dedicated by Martin Luther King, Sr. to his son who had passed, and then the new library had Martin Luther King III to dedicate this new project to his father, was kind of like this full circle.

(00:40:33):

I can't describe it. It is just kind of one of those joyous moments that you think about with—I think my dad said he was going to track him down, and I didn't think he noticed we snuck a picture of him with him there, with Martin Luther King III. But I think it is that reminder that this gap of perception or this gap that we're trying to close, that sometimes … another one of those quotes from Dr. King's book is, "Our charge is to be creative dissenters." And maybe now in these times, more than ever when you see something that's like, "I don't think this is right,"—maybe our craft or the things that we do is that opportunity to dissent that will call our nation to a higher destiny.

(00:41:17):

This is one of my absolute favorites. I used to read it to my kids, not every night, but every other night because it is an award-winning book. It's cool. It talks about heroes and maybe in February it's particularly important—all these heroes that people may not even know, including… and the undiscovered heroes like these next generations that we may not even know about… Because I still remember when I was growing up—This was Karl Road library, and I remember being in preschool, and I remember telling my preschool class, this is… "My dad drew that library." That's all I knew to say.

(00:41:55):

And the way my dad explained it, he said that this was… he said it was supposed to be like a "mall for learning" was the idea behind it. But we said, if you know anything about this area of Columbus, it's changed. And there's a lot of different international people from all over the world. And really not such a big departure, but still this idea of could this be a place of connection where people from all different cultures in this community that's changing—that the wealth dynamic is shifting in this community—could this still be a place where they could come together? And could, literally, the building form itself kind of be a representation of people coming from different walks of life still be a part of that, and this be the place of connection?"

(00:42:37):

And we had this fun moment in this project where if you see the red outline up there, the mall for learning was different than the public-engaging, street-presence library that we talk about today. But there's room to build the new library in front of the old library. And we said, "Oh, but…" so first that saved on relocation costs, all that kind of thing. But it also created this moment that we're like, "Oh, this would be really cool to have the old building and the new building together" to say "we got to take a picture of both of them there." But my father worked on the original library. I worked on the second…on this current generation. But this was the team of—because the story that not a lot of people know is in the 80s, it was my father—but it was also Steve Glass, right?

(00:43:25):

That's who you see on the left. Wait, yeah, on your left. And Kyle Glass and I got to be the second generation, so we thought this was just a really cool moment, but talking about what is this dynamic of what it means to have different generations, and what is the wealth and stories that we share and transfer from one another for a project like this? They eventually did have to tear down the other library, but the library itself is open. I think it's been open. This was one that I think we built through the pandemic to be that space. I think there's a quilt in mosaic art up there.

(00:44:02):

But one of the important things in thinking—not just for what we're doing now—but what is kind of these radical interventions that you do for future generations, because this seems like just a simple photo of the children's area, but if you look closely, that's my brother and that's my niece and nephew. And so I said more than anything, when we talk about what is the value, what is generational wealth, what does it mean, and what does it mean not just for what my father gave me, but what we could give to future generations. The conclusion of Kwame Alexander's book is very simple. He says, "This is for you, and you, and you, and you, this is for us." This is a future generation that we talk about. So with all that said, we had to… I've told you about kids' books. We had to make the kids' book. So we did, right?

(00:44:54):

So we made our own Moody Nolan kids' book. And my father—he had many different things he had dealt with—but at the time, he had said, "Hey," he had this crazy idea of saying, "We're going to do…" We did the book. And then he said, I'll never forget, he called me in his office in January and he said, "We're going to build a house." And I'm like, I felt like it was because he was at home, he was reviewing budgets and what we spent on what. He was seeing letters of people saying, "Hey, I need help. I don't have

wealth. I can't do these certain things." And then we think he was watching too much HGTV because he's like, "We're going to build a tiny home and we're going to give it away." And I'm like... I'll tell you, he was, honestly, at the time, he was battling cancer.

(00:45:46):

So it was kind of like, "Should we really be doing this right now?" He said, "No, right now because you never know when we'll get the chance to do it again." So he said, "Yeah…" And I would say this was one of the hardest projects we had done because if there's anything I've learned about what it means in terms of people and contributors—and I'll say, cooks and designers in the kitchen, if there's anything I learned about the clients who can't make decisions and miss deadlines—and architects are the worst. It was much harder than we thought. But we did. We were able to kind of push forward. And we did talk a lot about what this gift would mean from a broader community sense, how it fits into a bigger urban context of porches and community and engagement, and even access to infrastructure. These are the famous Brian Sell's diagrams, but it didn't actually technically end up being a tiny home.

(00:46:47):

It's technically 750 square foot, which I think by definition is not a tiny home. It's just a house. But it does touch on some of these broader challenges. And just, I would say, this overall challenge that is human psychology. Human psychology—I bring that up because we don't deal well with big numbers. So the idea of saying that you want to close a gap that's taken 400 years to create, and it'll take 700… that feels incomprehensible. Our general nature is that when numbers get so big, we just get overwhelmed and we stop. So when you talk about affordable housing and affordability in and around central Ohio—and I think the number is 50 to 60,000 of affordable housing units is the gap that we have to make up to—And it's like, what is one house going to do? But the opposite is true. So we can't deal with big numbers, but we can deal with small numbers, as a species.

(00:47:44):

No, we can't build or create or fund 54,000 or 55,000, but we can do one. And what does it take for us to do one house for one family? And so what that idea or mindset evolved is… that "Do what you can when you can." It wasn't "How do you solve the whole problem, how do you close an entire wealth gap?" But it was like, "How do you do it for one family?" So we had furniture vendors that said, "I could donate some furniture." We had flooring people say, "I could donate some flooring." We had roofing companies, "I could donate roofing." We got some construction people that said, "I got some guys that can come out and work on a foundation." We had team members, firm people, said, "I can come out and paint for a weekend or do something." And those little bits of things, they do add up to a lot. And no, it doesn't close the entire gap in Columbus, but it does make a pretty big dent for that one family.

(00:48:43):

So the house, I think completed, it took—we don't talk about schedules because they keep going—But it was just amazing how people showed up and asked that question, if there was a radical idea of not how do you solve it all, but how do you solve this little piece? And so there were so many partners and so many names of people who said, "Yes, we could do it." And as my dad has always done, he's like, "We could do it again."

So he's like, "Nashville," right? Because we have 12 offices, and he's left me with the "We should do this in every city that we're in."

(00:49:20):

So we started that conversation in Nashville, said, "All right, well, what would it take in Nashville?" Or "It needs to be the same," but probably, "What are some of the lessons we've learned? This second time around, what will we do differently?" So we completed the house in Nashville. It is a little different. And I'd say right now, I think one of the things we've learned in this conversation is that we're talking about something that's not standard, it's not the norm. It's not the typical how projects get funded, but it probably does need to look different in each community.

(00:49:58):

So when we talk about Chicago, we're starting those conversations now. It's like, maybe it should be a renovation or maybe it should be something different. But—I know I'm being recorded—but I think what we remember most in the conversation is not necessarily the sticks and the bricks, but the people who are involved. And I would say what's not really talked about, because it's not the brightest news, it's not whatever, it's not the apple-pie story, but the occupant of the first house in Columbus actually ran into some, I'll just say, some financial challenges and ended up selling the house. And it's like I put my head down.

(00:50:42):

But in the grand scheme of things, when you talk about the kind of intervention that changes or significantly alters a wealth gap, it's like, well, wait. That was a massive transfer. And some of the challenges she could have never come close to overcoming without all the people who came together and said, "We could do this." So is it good? Is it bad? Is it the right—it's not the apple-pie story, but it does talk to this broader conversation of how can the wealth gap close, and what is it that one generation leaves towards another?

(00:51:20):

I'm in the—I'll say this, the last year has been hard for many reasons. I have appreciated some of the gifts that people have given me because I'm in the process of building a house right now. But I did one that I had inserted the gift that somebody gave me because I think it is meaningful in terms of building things and thinking about the next generation, and what is it that you want to leave behind? What are the gifts that you want to close the gap? And when you think about how one generation looks at another it's kind of... Yeah.

(00:52:08):

Yeah, so I feel like I'm allowed to be—We're family and friends, right?—So I'll be honest, the inauguration poem that I liked deals with this duality of "We have so many problems that we have to solve. We have so many challenges that we're trying to get over." And sometimes as architects, our work is at the center of it. But Amanda Gorman says, "Let the globe, if nothing else, say this. Well, even as we grieved, we grew, even as we hurt we hoped, even as we tired, we tried." And I don't know that this idea during Black History month of you guys are all going to go out and close the wealth gap is realistic or reasonable. But I do think the idea that we're all striving towards is not to solve it, but just

to close it a little bit. So that's my spiel. Thanks. And I've heard some people say it's a little strange for me, but they say I should do a book list, so I put in a slide.

Gaëtane Verna (00:53:45):

Oh, good.

Gaëtane Verna (00:53:54):

Well, thank you, Jonathan. This was really, really heartwarming, and your dad would be proud of you. So just going to say that. I want to hear more about you, because we heard about Moody Nolan, but I want us to know a bit more about Jonathan. And my first question would be, what prompted you to become an architect?

Jonathan Moody (00:54:21):

Yeah, I think my… hold on. I'm going to fix it to make sure it works. I think that's better.

Gaëtane Verna (00:54:28):

Yeah.

Jonathan Moody (00:54:29):

Well, so the stats that I know is I think over 90% of current practicing architects have met an architect by the time they were in middle school. So obviously I grew up—so I had met an architect well before middle school. I think there's definitely the… I was around it. So it helped with exposure. That's kind of a bigger challenge, but would say that, and I still remember stories… Like, they sound different…

(00:55:00):

I remember seeing some of the models and things from earlier today at the Knowlton School, but I remember going to the office and I'd see these little guys on the model that looked like GI Joes and I'm like, I'd pick them off and start playing with them. And then these looks from Moody Nolan people were kind of like, "Oh my gosh, don't do that." But I was around it… But I'd say I was around it, but I would say part of it… it is how I got to Cornell. I avoided Ohio State a little bit, but it was because I wasn't sure that I wanted it because I was around it, or if I wanted it because I wanted it. And so getting away, I think, helps to…

Gaëtane Verna (00:55:40):

To be in another environment and really find your calling. That's where you're not surrounded by the pressure of the… So then tell us, how does it feel to lead Moody Nolan at this point in time in your career? And is this something you always were thinking, this is what I want to do when I grow up, or…?

Jonathan Moody (00:56:00):

No, it wasn't always thinking about it. It was kind of like, it was there. And then I think there were the awkward phases of rebellion of, "I'm not doing that, and I'm going to be something completely different." But I think more than anything, I'll say, my dad surrounded the firm with great people. So it does seem easy and not as the weight of

leading an organization, it isn't like… well, it's more of empowering people to say you know this better than I do, and you're here for a reason, so I just need to get out of their way. And that's really a lot of what it is, not necessarily any... Yeah.

Gaëtane Verna (00:56:43):

So then, you are the second generation to lead Moody Nolan. So how do you acknowledge the past while charting a new future for the firm? Because that's a big responsibility to not only live in the past, but actually to be moving forward with your vision that's in conversation.

Jonathan Moody (00:57:06):

Yeah, because I do see the firm and the work very much as a platform, as I had said. And I think it's an amazing platform that is… it's very well-built, I'll put it that way. But a lot of it is, in looking at some of the context that we're working within right now and looking ahead at what the context will be in 15, 20 years, it is kind of that intentionality of saying, "The world is changing, it is growing, it is evolving, and the world that we're designing for is not necessarily the world we live in." So constantly kind of pushing the idea of "What does the world look like in 2040? What do cities look like? What do communities look like? And how do we position for that?" is… That's kind of the thought process and approach around it. Yeah.

Gaëtane Verna (00:57:59):

And then tell me, how do you continuously navigate the system that regulates the world of architecture? And what are the challenges that you feel? Are there things that you're constantly hitting yourself against and having to figure out ways to keep moving forward, but having to go around it?

Jonathan Moody (00:58:22):

That's a complicated question. So I would say one of the things that I've kind of lived by the last five or six years is not to… If you do think really far ahead, it gets overwhelming or it's too complex to manage. But as my dad said, "Every day is different and take things one day at a time," I will say. But there is, in some of the challenges that are, they feel more prevalent right now. But although they seem new, they feel like echoes of things that were old, which is, I would say this word that is qualification, because I find myself in spaces that a lot of people—I never thought I would be there. And I find myself asking myself if I'm qualified to be there.

(00:59:21):

But what I didn't quite realize that is kind of persisting and growing and becoming more challenging is people who I know are qualified, just because they work for Moody Nolan, they have their qualifications questioned. And that's, I would say, an awareness that really pushes us towards the reminder of excellence. That's like you have to be excellent no matter what. You have to constantly do your best work because it's like the things that are outside of our control are like, people will constantly question, "Are we qualified? Did we do this? Are we capable?" Even if our past says that we're more than capable, it is showing up every day and reproving that you are excellent and that you can do these things.

Gaëtane Verna (01:00:08):

Yeah. I would say it's good to know it. It's hard to have to deal with it all the time, but then we march ahead and we pick it up and we keep going. So then how do you stretch or expand or push the discipline of architecture today?

Jonathan Moody (01:00:30):

Today? Well, I think-

Gaëtane Verna (01:00:34):

I like when you talk about the fact that what you're building now is for future. But then how do you stretch the thinking, the materials? How do you stretch it in this goal to move it forward?

Jonathan Moody (01:00:49):

Yeah, I think, I'll joke some in the audience would appreciate this… I said that we have one in the studio. I almost want to rebrand us the Beg Forgiveness Studio, because we're not necessarily organized like most other firms that would be like us. And I do think that there's the pressure to say, "Hey, look over at these other models and follow their model." But I would say what we lean into, and what I push for is that… indirect kind of not what is expected, but space for innovation comes from—not, this is the way others have done it or this is the way we would do it, but more of the, if we take a piece or part, or from a different background, or different place and put them on a team to respond to a client in a way they won't expect, you get things that are different or unique.

(01:01:43):

And really it's kind of our diversity in all different forms, like project types, people, backgrounds, geographies is a resource to say, "Well hey, shouldn't we just have everybody sit together?" And it's like, "Or don't we get things that are unexpected and different from not doing that."

Gaëtane Verna (01:02:06):

But I picked up on, you said that you guys do things differently than other architectural firms. Can you tell me in which way?... is it structurally, is it how you approach a project?

Jonathan Moody (01:02:19):

Yeah, so most firms that are our size, they have, I would say, three to five focus areas. We probably have 12. So it's not just, we do these few things really well. We do a lot of things and sometimes we can't always use a person on a project who's done 13 of them. Maybe we have to use somebody… maybe they know something, maybe it's a school, but maybe they've worked on libraries. And what can we learn from libraries that might actually make better schools?

(01:02:48):

And again, most firms that are our size are typically one or two offices. We're 12.

Gaëtane Verna (01:02:52):

Twelve.

Jonathan Moody (01:02:53):

So it's like, "What are we learning in Atlanta or in Boston or in Cleveland that might actually change the way we think about a project in Columbus?" and "Could we and should we staff things with just the people who sit next to..." We could, but also there's a level of unexpected things that happen when it is people from all over.

Gaëtane Verna (01:03:12):

So do you move them around sometimes or what?... People from Columbus could work on a project in different parts of your offices?

Jonathan Moody (01:03:19):

I'd say the rule of thumb for Moody Nolan is most people are working on three and a half different projects at a time, and maybe one of them is located where they sit.

Gaëtane Verna (01:03:36):

At home. Okay. So the Wexner Center for the Arts is a multidisciplinary art center. We show film, visual arts, performing arts, and we're on a university campus. And I must ask this question, what is your relationship to arts or the visual arts? You did speak a lot about literature, but I ask this question because I think in looking at some of the projects that you showed, there is this sculptural nature to your projects. I love brutalist architecture. I don't need to live in a brutalist architecture, but as an object, there is something about how it shapes the landscape in which it is. And so I was really wondering if this is… Is art a factor, is sculpture, are there things that are really—that inspire you, or what's your relationship to the arts in general?

Jonathan Moody (01:04:39):

I don't know that it's a direct relationship to the arts. It's more of—to your point, I, as you can tell, I like stories. And I very much like the inspired by idea, and because I think that kind of lends itself to—you could probably tour the galleries here today or in many different places, and kind of question the way you might think about things or question the way you might approach a project or a thing. So as you said, a lot of our projects are very sculptural and a lot of times they are inspired by ideas that come from arts.

(01:05:15):

And I would say there's very few of our projects that don't have art as an integration with it. I think there's people here tonight that would talk about the art programs in many of the different projects and systems that we work with. But I don't—personally, I don't go further beyond that. It's just really like…we want to be inspired by many things and look at a lot of different things for inspiration, and it can come from anywhere.

Gaëtane Verna (01:05:46):

Yeah. So one last question, Ms. Emily, right? I'm allowed? I would say, because you work so hard on a project, so what is your relationship to a project once it's been delivered to the client, understanding that your work is done and that the project thus takes its own life?

Jonathan Moody (01:06:08):

Oh, it's never done. And I think there's rarely a project that there's not a thing or things that still bug you about the projects. I still go back to a lot of them. And the truth is, maybe an easy one would be when you really invest yourself into the story of a place, you are connected to it. So we had joked about when we had the family trip to Charleston, and I could not get my kids to stand still and say, "This is important to stand on this side." But it's like we'll have to go back and the next time we go back, I'll complain about the metal detectors or something that they put up there. But there's always an ongoing story and it always kind of continues. So I don't think it ever really is.

Gaëtane Verna (01:06:59):

But is it hard to let go then, right? In a certain sense?

Jonathan Moody (01:07:05):

It's hard, but it's necessary because I will say the other component that I guess wasn't talked about as much is the diversity of the different clients that we work for. And in order for the work to be responsive to their needs, it can't be, "It's only ours." It's kind of got to be theirs and you have to let go at some point.

Gaëtane Verna (01:07:32):

It is a conversation between the two—the client and the architect and the client having an idea. Maybe if they do, or you winning them over with your idea for their project.

Jonathan Moody (01:07:46):

Everybody's ideas though, yes.

Gaëtane Verna (01:07:48):

Yeah.

Jonathan Moody (01:07:48):

Yeah.

Gaëtane Verna (01:07:49):

Well, thank you so much. We're going to open it to questions and raise your hands if you want, would like to ask a question.

Jess Xiao Long (01:07:58):

We're going start in the front and then don't worry, I'll make it all the way around the theater.

Gaëtane Verna (01:08:03):

In the front.

Faith Folarin (01:08:04):

Hello, my name is Faith Folarin. I'm a G-II architecture student. So you spoke about the constant inner conflict of worrying whether you're good enough or whether you have the right qualifications. So I would ask what advice would you give to young architects and designers, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds who want to enter into the field of architecture?

Jonathan Moody (01:08:29):

Yeah, thank you for that question. So a couple of things that I would say. One is that it doesn't really matter what—well, sorry, I'll start this way. I think different for your generation than others, and it was different for me, is so often the conversation… I would say the questions that my dad had to answer was, "Are there any?" right, and "Can someone like him do this?" And I would say the emphatic answer that when I would ask those questions was always "yes," because he did. So I would say if you find examples of people that you can latch onto or gravitate or kind of connect and relate to, do that.

(01:09:21):

The other thing is one of the books that's not up there is—it's one of my favorites, it's Stephen Furtick, it's called *Unqualified*. But his idea when he talks about what is the reality of imposter syndrome is not that you have to do something to be qualified to go somewhere. It's more because you're there, you are qualified. So I would say that—and it is kind of what I feel like I have to do a lot of times is to trust the fact that if I'm here, and this is, honestly, this is one I struggle with—if I'm here it's like, "Am I really ready to lecture to a group like this?" That so many people made sacrifices so I could be here? And that maybe the unique perspective that I bring is exactly what everybody wants to hear. And not that I have to do something, but if I show up as anything other than my full self that I'm kind of underserving or underrepping... So it's the opposite. It's because you're there, you are qualified, no matter what room you go into.

Jack Ryan (01:10:30):

Hi, I'm Jack, graduate student at Knowlton in architecture and landscape architecture. I'm really attracted to the warmth that you have, the genuine warmth that you shared with us. Thank you for that. And it makes me really interested even more so to your approach as a leader. What is your ethic or approach to leadership that you've developed over the years?

Jonathan Moody (01:10:58):

So yeah, again, I didn't build Moody Nolan, and I feel that more often than not, when I'm talking about projects or work, I'm more often collaborating with people who have way more experience, and they really know better than I do. More often what I have to do is just to encourage and empower them, which, usually the conversation is not complicated. Usually, "Hey Jonathan, I'm looking at this and this and there are these things. What do you think we should do?" And it's, "What do you think we should do?" And they're like, "Well, I think I approached it like this and done it this way on this other project. I think that's what we should do."

(01:11:43):

But the mindset, I still remember. So five years ago—it's like the weight of saying, "Oh, I'm going to be CEO, what does that mean?" And did not know we were going into a

global pandemic. And I will say, I'll never forget, there was a church sermon that talked about David's leadership and I liked that a lot. I connected to it a lot. It's kind of how I approach it, which was David was young, he's inexperienced, he doesn't know anything about battle or war. David's not prepared to lead at all, but David's like, "Well, I use the tools that I have." And just show up every day and use the tools you have and maybe you could slay giants. It's kind of the mindset of how I approach leadership, yeah.

Jess Xiao Long (01:12:33):

All right. We got a question from the Hotline. Thank you for texting in. So someone asks, "Could your plans for the Legacy House and other affordable smaller housing be sold via catalog or otherwise made available for people to build on their own?"

Jonathan Moody (01:12:50):

We've talked about it a lot. I think there's not necessarily as an online catalog type thing, but more of the idea of could it be replicated? I think the thing that we constantly run into—even in the housing studio we walked through earlier today, this challenge is so much bigger than one house, one collection of houses—I don't think that there's a singular plan or idea because there have been people who have asked to say, "Hey, we want to replicate it." And when it comes down to how to figure out how to fund it and make it happen, we've completed two. We've talked about many, we've completed two. So we're always open to the idea and it depends on who's asking and what their intentions are, but not necessarily as a catalog.

Gaëtane Verna (01:13:42):

Yeah.

Jonathan Moody (01:13:42):

As a catalog. Yeah.

Gaëtane Verna (01:13:43):

I think there's a question up here.

Jonathan Moody (01:13:44):

Yeah.

Audience 3 (01:13:52):

Thank you. Jonathan knows me well. I worked for Moody Nolan for 10 years under Curt. Curt and I were very, very close. And I want to tell you one story he told me. I had a lot of slow times that we were together in a room. And the one story he told me is when he was in high school, and I don't know if you've heard this or not, probably. He wanted to be an architect and he did drawings and then he went in to see the guidance counselor. And to the guidance counselor, he said, "I'd like to draw and I'd love to be an architect." He says, "You don't want to be an architect. Have you ever seen an architect that's Black?" He says, "Go be a draftsman." So I mean that's the stuff that people had to live with. So what I want to know is, there still are not a lot of Black architects. Is it 10% yet?

Jonathan Moody (01:14:42):

So there are about 2,600 because I know the numbers. I think it's out of 123,000 and a 100,000 AIA members. There are like 2,650 Black architects in the US, which is right around 2%. And I think a little under 600 Black female architects, which is-

Audience 3 (01:15:06):

Yeah, so we still have a lot to do in the future. My question is what is going on out there that interest young students in grade school, middle school, to be architects? Because they really don't see a lot of them. So I want to know what's being done on a national level and local to help stir that a little bit, to keep more coming in.

Jonathan Moody (01:15:31):

Yeah, I'm a part of a few different organizations that… I mean that's because it's a bigger, broader, complicated problem and the heart of the issue is exposure. So I think there are some things here locally when you talk about Camp Architecture or Project Pipeline, like NOMA has a national project. There's a lot of things where they kind of do these things. Again, that middle school number is key. How do you get to kids before they're in eighth grade? Especially now, usually when you start getting into eighth grade, you're already on that, "What career track or what classes should you start taking your first few years of high school so that you can get into a good college?" But a lot of it is a kind of all hands on deck, kind of firm-wide effort to get to middle school and high school kids.

(01:16:22):

But it's exposure. But that's… One of my favorite things to do, and everybody's always shocked by it, but we have boxes of those *Kid Architect* books, and you just go to a school for the career day and usually they all fall asleep because… it's just… But just say, "Hey, here's 28 books." And then they're like, "Oh, is this for me?" And they're like, "Yeah, these are yours to keep." But it's like the thought process is the book has everything you need if you're interested in architecture, and maybe you'll take it and share it with other… but I think the overall thing, again, big numbers, if you look at the big numbers, how do we get from two to however many percent? But if you just say, "How do I impact one class or one school or one community?"

Gaëtane Verna (01:17:11):

All right, right here.

Audience 4 (01:17:14):

Hi. I just have a quick question. One, I love your designs and love the homage to our history. What are your thoughts or perspectives on gentrification and the potential impact on this?

Jonathan Moody (01:17:33):

Thoughts on gentrification. So to a certain extent—and this is Jonathan Moody's opinions, right? So I signed something, this isn't Moody Nolan, this is Jonathan Moody—I am of the opinion that there are some things that are kind of unstoppable because they're fit within the umbrella of an overall capitalist challenge, a challenge of capitalism.

I don't think—Gentrification is comprised of a few different components. I don't think value creation is a problem because I talked a lot about wealth. The "don't sell grandma's house" thing can change the wealth dynamic of a family. So I'm not saying that it's a bad thing that the value of resources in a community changes is bad.

(01:18:25):

I would also say that the idea of right now that is the question of note in a lot of the communities that there's concerns about gentrification is that is the Melvin Mitchell dynamic that I think a lot about—which is, "Who's going to own it next and who's going to benefit from the next wave of wealth creation?"—are some questions we have to ask ourselves. "Oh, it's going to be them. Why not us? Why not me? Why not the people we know?" I think the problem with gentrification is the displacement aspect.

(01:19:00):

So I don't think value creation and the increased value is bad, and there are tools and levers that can be pulled from taxes and other things to kind of help stabilize. But I think when it gets to the point that people are being displaced, that is where it's problematic. I would say, I don't know that we've worked on an affordable-housing project or a housing project where our units were displacing residents. Even the ones that I felt like sounded controversial or people...

(01:19:32):

I remember there's one here locally, I'll leave it unnamed, but it was like—I think there were 650 units of housing at one point and it was kind of torn down and it was replaced with 670 units that were a mix of affordability—but it was like no one was technically displaced. I think that's where oftentimes when architects are brought into the picture, those conversations about who the housing will be for and how it's funded, we're too late, but there usually is a chance to say in Columbus, could that 10 to 15% of affordability be 15 or 20%? Or could the mix be a little bit different to hit the people at the margins?

Jess Xiao Long (01:20:17):

Any questions in the back here? Raise your hand up high. If not, I'll read one from the hotline. Yes, hotline. So Alice texted in, thank you, "Looking at the city of Columbus's Emerging Developer Accelerator Program to empower Black developers, women developers, et cetera. In that space the goal is for emerging developers to build wealth, to close that wealth gap, to build their balance sheet. But these developers are trying to reuse other people's plans, buying plans off the internet, not investing in energy sustainability. To do so requires more investment, which takes away from the investor's fee and profit. How do we balance entering the development world with valuing design and sustainability?"

Jonathan Moody (01:21:05):

That's a big, hairy question and I'm a big fan of the EDAP program for all of its ideas and the goals behind it. But there's a broader question that's beyond the program or anything that an architect would answer, which is a broader conversation about certain populations and access to capital, because I can't tell you how many—and they happen at the AIA where there's like, "Hey, there's an architect-turned-developer and he's going

to show us that… how you can enter the development space and make it look so easy." And then you go there and they're like, "Well, I had $6 million that was given to me from here." And it's like, but I mean because more often than not those developers, they're just trying to scrap together, to pull together some crazy complicated capital stack and, "If I can get this grant and that and I can get this abatement or these things..."

(01:22:00):

So I think what does—I do believe in the value of design, and I believe that that goes beyond a pro forma, meaning that good design is beyond what the market demands, and it is a differentiator in the market. So I don't know that an architect can dictate to a developer how to value, but what you can say is these are the projects that are well-designed that they were thoughtful in hiring. Obviously it sounds so certain architect, that it's shown that it's more than just kind of a copy-paste or kind of a quick churn and burn to get something out.

Gaëtane Verna (01:22:48):

If you want something to be memorable and to be distinct, you have to invest in the imagination of the architect.

Jonathan Moody (01:22:56):

Yeah.

Emily Haidet (01:22:59):

So I think that's all the time we have for this evening, but I just wanted to thank you both one more time, thank you Gaëtane and Jonathan. And thank you all for coming. I'm Emily Haidet, curator of public programs here at the Wex, and I just want to thank you all for spending this chilly night with us at the Glimcher Lecture. So thank you and have a great evening. Hopefully we'll see you back at the Wex.

Gaëtane Verna (01:23:31):

Thank you, Jonathan.