

## HOW MIGHT WE EMPLOY JOHN CARY'S SUGGESTIONS [HOW ARCHITECTURE CAN CREATE DIGNITY FOR ALL] IN PRACTICE?

An underlying theme in Cary's talk is that everyone deserves good design. He suggests that "designers need to dedicate their practice to the public good in the model of firms..." whose clients are the less fortunate/under privileged in society and who focus on humanitarian design. Although I find this to be extremely important, I also think it would be extremely challenging for most firms to accomplish, simply based on lack of resources, funding, and manpower. However, as I thought about it more, I do believe there are subtle ways designers can integrate a humanitarian design model into their everyday practice. On a broad level, I think having a good relationship and respect for everyone involved in the project is important for the success of the project. If the engineers, contractors, user groups, etc, all feel valued and respected, they will work with dignity. As an architect responsible for the coordination of different consultants and groups, we need to have the leadership and interpersonal skills that will foster this type of energy on a project. Intrinsically, I'd like to think that if the people working on the project feel better about it, it will be more successful and dignified upon completion. Additionally, I think that designers need to focus on all people who will use the space, not just the CEO in the corner office or the employees in the open floor plan. How can we design for the janitor maintaining the clean work environment or security guard in the lobby? The use and placement of materials is also integral to humanitarian design. For example, a natural material used in the lobby of an office building might be more welcoming for a visitor and might also be more comforting and calming for a receptionist or security officer, sitting there for 8 hours a day. A more holistic and careful approach to finishes, specs, and details would really influence how a person feels within a space. A third idea as to how a firm can implement a dignifying practice would be to volunteer or do more meaningful pro-bono work. If there's not overhead available to design a low-budget healthcare facility, employees could volunteer by building/designing popup healthcare workshops or homes with Habitat for Humanity. Albeit, these subtle changes would not be as impactful as the work of MASS Design or Studio Gang, however I do believe/hope it would be a tangible step forward in using architecture to create dignity for all.

Another topic Cary brings up is the need for our profession to "significantly diversify our ranks." I believe the root of this issue, as Cary mentioned, lies in the educational structure of architects and the public's perception of the field. The select few architects that are highlighted in the public eye for designing beautiful, grand, and interesting buildings, are often designing for the wrong reasons. These "starchitects," as I like to call them, design purely for aesthetics in a city skyline and/or their own personal fame. The romantic image of an architect who designs impressive and eccentric buildings is not what the profession is about and does not attract the type of people the profession needs. In order to change that, I believe the profession needs to be better about highlighting collaborative firms and architects that design beautiful, functional and sustainable buildings. If we can portray architects that design for dignity to the public eye, then the "warped view of our professional responsibility" might be eliminated. A stronger, more diverse group of people would be attracted to the profession and be ready to take on the rigorous education plan. I do agree with Cary when he the "profession is largely disconnected from the people most directly impacted by its work," and I believe this begins with studio culture. Projects are all taught as theoretical design, so students don't understand the social implications of their work once they start practicing in the real world. Architects need to be instilled with a humbling sense of pride because we are learning to be, and should want to be, public servants who will design

spaces that are dignifying. Along with that, our educational training should emphasize the importance of social interactions with people from a variety of backgrounds - the CEO of an office to the janitor that will clean the building. How can we expect to be a diverse profession if we don't know how to connect with the diverse people for which we are designing? The redefinition of an architectural education is a can of worms that needs to be opened. As professionals, we need to be better prepared for societal issues so that we may rise to the responsibility of designing quality and dignifying spaces for all.