

Paradoxes and Crises

MELVIN L. MITCHELL, FAIA
Morgan State University

I am pleased at this opportunity to share with you observations that might represent a fortuitous intersection of the conference theme of “Paradoxes of Progress,” and my forthcoming book titled *The Crisis of the African-American Architect: Conflicting Cultures of Architecture and (Black) Power*. If you haven’t already figured this out, Harold Cruse’s seminal 1967 book, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* is a big influence on my worldview and therefore on the concept of my book. I ask your indulgence as I first establish a 20th century context for these observations and thoughts. I am going to use the next 45 minutes to look briefly at three issues that I cover more fully in my book:

- The first issue is architecture and race over the first half of the 20th century in a climate that found the notion of blackness and architecture to be somewhat of an oxymoron in the white as well as much of the black world.
- The secondly issue is a brief overview of my book’s central thesis on the need for an ending of the eighty-year-old cultural estrangement between African-American architects and Black America. I pose four new contemporary role models as bookends to the early 20th century models from Tuskegee and Howard University that I touch on under the first issue.
- And lastly I come to the question “is there a fit between the agenda and mission of the typical Historically Black College & University (HBCU) program” the endemic orthodox culture of architecture, and the needs of Black America as a cultural and economic construct. Along the way, I touch briefly on the Carnegie-Boyer Report.

ISSUE ONE

In the final decade of the 19th century a big event that symbolized the architectural energy and aspirations of America was probably the Columbian Exposition, commonly known as the Chicago World’s Fair. That event also symbolized America’s growing inferiority complex towards things European. We know that the “White City” as the Fair also came to be known, was not just a reference to the dominant color scheme of the major structures. Still, I remain cap-

tivated by Daniel Burnham, the executive architect of the Fair, and his now famous dictum “*make no little plans for they fail to stir the hearts of men.*”

So in 1893, the year the Fair opened, a question you might be asking yourself right now is “*what possible architectural event could have been happening in the world of 5 million people of African descent on American soil - 4 million of them still only 30 years removed from chattel slavery – what indeed, that warrants mentioning in the same breath as the magnificent 650 acre Chicago World’s Fair and its many structures designed by an elite group of American architects to trumpet the might and majesty of American power and genius to the rest of the world?*”

It just so happens that at that very moment in time a few hundred miles to the south of Chicago a man named Booker T. Washington was in the critical take-off phases of transforming a barren 100 acre farm that he had acquired a decade earlier. Because of Mr. Washington’s vision and faith, it was here that men whose parents may have been born into slavery could realistically harbor Burnham type dreams and build big important buildings. By 1900 that 100-acre farm would be a 2,000-acre campus with 50 substantial structures for nearly 1,500 students.

Five years earlier Washington had ignited a debate between himself and W.E.B. Du Bois with that famous Atlanta Compromise speech. Du Bois of course responded bitterly in that equally famous chapter titled “On Mr. Washington and Others” in the now classic little book *The Souls of Black Folk*. It should now be clear that both men were right; Washington was simply positing that Black America needed to be left alone to build on a prodigious scale by drawing on the skills, brains, and creativity of her people. Du Bois was merely reminding Washington that without the protection of the vote, the law of the land, and full civil rights, those buildings were at the mercy of white caprice – witness later Tulsa, Oklahoma and Rosewood, Florida. Fortunately, that Washington-Du Bois conundrum of a hundred years ago is no longer in existence today.

If we step back thirty years prior to the 1865 year of black emancipation, William Ware was establishing America’s first architecture school at MIT in Boston. Twenty-five years later MIT would matricu-

late the first African-American, who, through Mr. Washington's patronage at Tuskegee, would become Black America's composite of Ware and Burnham. Robert Robinson Taylor, the son of a successful Durham, North Carolina builder. Taylor would graduate as valedictorian of his architecture school class at MIT in 1892 just as Burnham was preparing for the opening of the Chicago Fair. Taylor is the same man that the ACSA Robert R. Taylor Awards Program is named after. Washington also saw in Taylor the perfect synthesis of the growing Washington-Du Bois dialectic.

Mr. Washington literally plucked Taylor out of the graduation commencement line at MIT and brought him to the Tuskegee, Alabama campus. Thanks to the research and doctoral dissertation of Florida A & M professor Richard Dozier - also formerly a professor here at Morgan - we have intimate details about the Washington-Taylor relationship.

Mr. Washington's first charges to Taylor was to oversee the design of the major structures needed to house the growing Tuskegee enterprise. Washington was not prepared to farm out this task of building his *Black City* to white architects. Taylor was also charged with establishing an architecture program to train the children of former slaves to facilitate Mr. Washington's agenda of completing the design of the Tuskegee campus and the school houses, churches, and homes throughout the deep south. Kendrick Gradison, a University of Michigan landscape architecture professor wrote an insightful paper a few years ago that placed these activities at Tuskegee inside of a more nuanced black cultural context of community development.

Equally important to Washington was his belief in the primacy of descriptive geometry based drawing as an important tool in cognitive development. Like the preceding arch American architect father figure Thomas Jefferson at the University of Virginia, Washington had a passionate belief in the relationship between the physical setting and the learning process. Accordingly, Taylor's other charge from Washington was to prepare and organize the students to actually construct these campus structures with their own hands including the making of their own bricks. ***Unfortunately, it is solely this last charge that is most popularly known and associated with Mr. Washington today.***

Taylor quickly recruited several men while training several others to assist him in his charges. The most historically notable man was William Sidney Pittman. Aside from being a talented architect, Pittman also had the good sense to marry Portia Washington, the comely daughter of Booker T. Washington. By 1907 Pittman would go on to win the competition to design the Negro Building, one of a series of large exhibition halls similar to the first one that Washington had Taylor and his students build at the 1895 Cotton States Exhibition in Atlanta. Pittman's completed building was for the Jamestown, Virginia Tercentennial Exhibition. To me the real architectural significance of this project is that its picture - along with Pittman's picture and the story of the project - would fall into the hands of a 15 year old high school newspaper boy in Los Angeles whose teachers were telling him that his notion about being an architect was postposterous.

That youngster, named Paul Revere Williams, would go on to become the most celebrated African-American architect of the 20th century. Thanks to the research and 1992 doctoral dissertation of African-American architect Wesley Henderson, we know about the life and times of Williams in great detail. In a 1993 released book *Paul R. Williams: A Legacy of Style*, Williams' granddaughter Karen Hudson provides stunning visual evidence that her grandfather was a first rate American architect by any fair measure. Williams went on to act as the fountainhead to an important school of black west coast architects during the 1940 to 1980 period. Several of those men were also featured in Henderson's dissertation.

By 1910, William Augustus Hazel, another North Carolina born black architect was at Tuskegee helping Taylor to train black architects and builders. By 1920 - several years after Mr. Washington's death and with Tuskegee substantially built-up - Hazel would follow several other Tuskegee graduates to Washington, DC. Hazel would land at Howard University and offer the first courses in architecture taught there that same year. The shift in the centroid of architectural training for blacks from Tuskegee to Howard was now underway. Hazel would be the magnet for another Tuskegee instructor coming to Howard. Albert Irving Cassell, born in 1895 right here outside of Baltimore in Towson, had come to Tuskegee after graduating from the Cornell architecture program in 1919, to later join the Howard faculty in 1924.

In 1925, young Cassell welcomed the arrival of Mordecai Johnson, Howard University's first black president. Johnson could have easily passed for a white man but choose to live out his productive life by the country's "one acknowledged drop of African blood" rule. In 1926 Cassell handed the academic reins to young Washingtonian Hilyard Robinson who also doubled as a designer in the on-campus office that Johnson had Cassell establish. From 1926 to 1938, Cassell would use Johnson's patronage to master plan and design-build several of the most important structures on campus. Like Taylor at Tuskegee, Cassell would train others to carry on building at Howard and throughout Washington, DC.

By the mid-1920s during the Harlem Renaissance in New York City, the transition of the center of black architectural education from Tuskegee to Howard was nearly complete. Even though the Harlem Renaissance was being quarterbacked from Howard's campus by commuting philosophy professor Alain Locke, there was only a tangential connection of architecture to the Renaissance. That connection was through Robinson, the first black modernist with avant-garde leanings. During the latter part of the Renaissance decade Robinson, while chairing the architecture program at Howard, was also advocating as well as designing European modernist style social housing in DC.

The downside here is that the Penn and Columbia educated Robinson, along with similarly educated and socialized incoming black architect-professors, unwittingly abandoned the Tuskegee-Booker T. Washington mode of practice. Not realizing the implications, the new watchword for the Howard based Northerners was "professionalism" as championed by the separate white world of architecture. This word was actually code for "white high-class

gentleman professionals seeking a sharp separation from the crass world of building.” This was in marked contrast to the old Tuskegee master-builder architects who designed, employed and trained craftsmen, built, arranged loans, and developed small real estate projects through out the deep south in the manner they had been socialized from building the Tuskegee campus. Robinson and the new incoming Northerners, despite admirable CIAM type social housing advocacy stances, saw architecture in technical rather than cultural terms. To the extent that they thought about culture it was WASP culture.

I call this new Howard era the second big significant juncture after the Tuskegee era between African-American architects and Black America. This second juncture, lasting from 1920 up through the early 1960s, was actually a disconnection. For black architects, “*White Gentlemanly Professionalism*” ultimately triumphed over the greater need for a new modernist praxis based on black culture, aesthetics, music, and above all, economics.

Somewhat of an exception to the new trend was Cassell, who, despite his Ivy League education, remained more ideologically aligned with the old fading Tuskegee paradigm. Before he died Cassell, had acquired land and was pursuing a large FHA loan to build a black new town in Calvert County, Maryland.

In 1931 a new faculty member, Philadelphian and University of Pennsylvania trained Howard Hamilton Mackey, organized an exhibit at Howard of the work of the handful of black architects from around the country. This group included the old Tuskegee architects Taylor, Pittman, and John Lankford, who had built extensively in Washington, DC. The exhibit also included the work of the Howardites Cassell, Mackey, Robinson, and Louis Fry, Sr. The pioneering residential work of Californian Paul R. Williams was also included. So was the work of Calvin and Moses McKissack, a family owned firm of licensed architects, engineers, and contractors in Nashville, Tennessee.

Out of this exhibit came several historic cross-continental joint ventures. The most important was the joining forces of young Hilyard Robinson’s fledgling Washington, DC office with the more seasoned west coast practice of Paul Williams. The two would be the beneficiaries of progressive minded – often Jewish – federal officials commissioning them to design large public housing projects including the now national historic register designated Langston Terrace Homes in DC. This 1935 built work caused influential critic Lewis Mumford to write in his New Yorker “Skyline” column that Robinson’s design rivaled the best social housing work then being produced throughout Western Europe by modernist architect icons.

Robinson would eventually also hook up with the McKissacks on an interesting 1940 commission from the US War Department to design and construct an airbase near the Tuskegee campus. This was part of a larger experiment that progressive white Americans inside of the War Department at the Pentagon had to undertake in order to overturn a white supremacist article of faith that black people were not capable of flying combat warplanes.

The Robinson-Williams transcontinental joint-venture, through the continued patronage of Mordecai Johnson, would go on to design several other major structures on Howard’s campus. Perhaps the most significant one of all relative to black architects was the 1946 commission to design the 100,000 SF School of Engineering and Architecture Building which would open in 1952.

Having firmly taken the academic reins by 1934 Mackey, along with Fry – the first African-American to graduate from the Gropius led Harvard Graduate of Design in 1945 - led Howard to ACSA accreditation by 1950. By the time these two men would retire in the early 1970s, they could lay claim to having trained over 50% of the black architects in the US as well as scores of others throughout the African Diaspora, and natives of India, Iran, and Central America.

ISSUE TWO

In Washington, DC on the night of April 4, 1968 after the assassination of Dr. King, *everything changed*. By the end of this period of the Black Power sixties Black America was insistently demanding several things on behalf of those African-Americans who aspired to architectural life. One was that black architects be given some of the publicly funded commissions to design projects in black communities. Another was for the enrollment of black students in elite white architecture schools. Black America also asked that black architects be given major design opportunities in White America but that demand was highly problematic. Given the reality that architecture in White America occurs at the intersection of power and culture, Black America had no serious leverage in the power corridor.

But as to the architectural work in Black America, every since the 1920s Harlem Renaissance era “professionalism” had been contributing to the overall estrangement of black architects from Black America on several levels. First, black architects had been relentlessly socialized in white as well as the handful of black architectural schools to believe that modern architecture had no color. We believed that glorious Heroic International Style Modern Architecture was politically innocent and not a vehicle to express black culture. Yet white culture was precisely what Wright was unabashedly expressing in “Organism” and “Broad-Acre Cites.” White European culture in the Machine Age was precisely what Corbu was attempting to express.

Cornel West of the Du Bois Institute at Harvard makes some even more provocative observations about Corbu and black music, black-brown-red-female bodies, and “other” in the chapter titled “Race and Architecture” in his most recent book *The Cornel West Reader*. In my book I expand on this through my notion that somewhere along the way black architects failed to note what was evident to black artists like Aaron Douglas of the Harlem Renaissance era and Romare Bearden of the second Renaissance era of the Black Power Movement sixties. Both men were deeply conscious of the reality that the entire modern art and architecture movement was early 1900s Picasso-Cubist based, and that Cubism was West Afri-

can culture based. This was apparently lost on black as well as today's white architects. I speculate about what might have been had these two giants set their sights on architecture.

In the third critical juncture between the end of the sixties and today's Information Revolution Age, larger political acts throughout Black America caused a growth spurt in the number of black architects. There were now twenty times as many black architects and practices than would exist were it not for the earlier vision of Booker T. Washington, along with the aggressive exercise of raw political power in the turbulent 1960s and 1970s by black elected officials, black private, public, and institutional based citizens, and a handful of courageous and creative white people.

We have Brad Grant and Dennis Mann's early 1990s research to thank for our "good news-bad news" knowledge about the actual numbers. As raw numbers as well as percentages of total national figures, there were a lot more black architects in 1993 than had existed just thirty years earlier. But the percentage numbers were still nowhere near to being in the same league with the growing percentage numbers for black lawyers, doctors, engineers, business managers, and even some branches of science.

Professionalism, buttressed by the myths, rituals, and shibboleths of the academy including the small black wing, were indirectly telling black practitioners, students, and secondary school prospects that black culture and Black America were barren sources for architecture. The message was that "architecture" was the signature buildings done in White America by white males. All else, especially housing and community development, was categorized as "building" or exotic sideshows. The message was that to do "architecture" you needed powerful white clients and patrons. So prospective black architects in secondary schools made rational decisions. They instead went into medicine, law, business, engineering, and even some sciences. Those were areas of national life that were sending a different and more coherent set of messages to black youth.

Meanwhile Black America's 1960s to today's culture has been scaling new heights of world acclaim – particularly the music, be it the blues, jazz, hip-hop, or "urban" R & B pops. Black cultural arts were flowering – dance, theater, literature, film, and other forms of communications. And all of these cultural arts had physical, business, and financial implications for architects. Spike Lee and a rash of young black filmmakers were breaking new ground while reflecting and respecting black culture. The Marsalis boys and the new wave of young jazz lions were demonstrating how much all of America was in debt to Armstrong, Ellington, Holiday, Parker, Miles, Coltrane, Sarah, and Ella.

Cultures are triptychs of art-music-architecture. American culture is a gumbo stew of white, black, brown, red, and yellow, just like her music. Black music – America's music – was surpassing all modernist architecture while actually influencing that architecture in so many ways. Where was the black cultural interpretation of modern architecture? Somehow that question was never seriously posed or debated even at the height of the searing hot Black Power Seventies.

But lest you think my book is all gloom and doom about the estranged relationship of African-American architects to Black America let me dispel such a notion right now. In New York City several important ideas have been brewing of late. A bright, energetic group of young New York City based African-American women architects recently launched a magazine called *blacklines*. They are calling for a re-integration of the black design-build-development community. And then they are calling for that community to re-integrate with the culture and cultural sectors of Black America. What they are doing is as important to black architects as were the cultural movements ignited by the Museum of Modern Art on behalf of white architects.

Which brings me to a short story. The *blacklines* ladies orchestrated a wonderful conference last fall at Pratt in Brooklyn. For three days black designers debated, read papers, networked, and commiserated about the state of affairs of Black "design" America. Columbia's dean Bernard Tschumi was there for a while looking ever so bored. Stephen Kliments, former editor of *Architectural Record* and still a doyen of the established mainstream architectural press, was also in attendance. I had heard earlier that Kliments was writing a book on black architects. I asked him to tell me just what was his *take* or *angle* on the subject. He responded that he was writing about and showcasing the work of a select group of black firms and their struggles for acceptance in mainstream (he meant "white") America. I told him that I was also writing a book on black architects and that my *angle* was their need to re-connect culturally with Black America. Kliments politely remarked that that sounded interesting. He then said what was *really* on his mind. He asked "do you think that there will ever be a black version of the 'New York Five'?"

Now we are getting down to brass tacks. My response was "if a Colin Rowe or Vincent Scully class academic, or a Phillip Johnson class "star" practitioner, and to boot, the New York Museum of Modern Art along with the rest of the architectural press establishment decides to anoint five black architects for whatever bizarre reasons, no problem." I got a quizzical look and an attempt to change the subject. Before letting him do that, I told him that what I thought would be more interesting is if five black New York architects were to begin to simultaneously excite the imaginations of black New York's communities of hip-hop moguls, dot.com entrepreneurs, writers, jazz and blues musicians, poets, intellectuals, investment bankers, real estate and building entrepreneurs, community development corporations, politicians, and the rest of the black middle class.

Which is precisely what the five young black women architects of blackline magazine were attempting to do. My point is simply that when it comes to black architects, the Kliments of the architectural establishment world can be counted on to miss the trees in their search for the forest.

Fortunately, in attendance at the *blacklines* conference were a number of young black architect-scholars like Craig Wilkens who is doing groundbreaking work on the potential connections between hip-hop and architecture. Wilkens is writing, theorizing, and researching matters that are going to be enormously helpful. But I

caution Craig that hip-hop culture and music – at least the stuff I see on videos – in its undiluted form is already a black architecture. There is a danger of hip-hop losing its potency once brought into the academy studios and conjoined with architectural “professionalism”

In my book I talk in some detail about four role models – parts of a new canon that must be constructed – for black (and deeply thinking non-black) architects. The first and perhaps most important role model is not actually an architect. She is someone who confesses to once seriously wanting to be an architect in her early youth. I can assure her that with her undergraduate liberal arts degree from Stanford and her doctorate in American culture from the University of California, along with her razor sharp mind full of cultural insights, she has as much that is important to say as any contemporary architectural theorist or star architect that I have read. And I’ve read most of them. This first model is *bell hooks*. You will just have to read her to know what I am talking about. Start with her book *Art On My Mind – Visual Politics* and go right to the chapter “Black Vernacular – Architecture as Cultural Practice.”

My second role model is a young New Yorker who has been an important figure in the black design world every since the 1991 release of his book *African-American Architects In Practice*. **Jack Travis**, of Harlem, is one of the few black architects on the scene today practicing and building while openly, unapologetically, and with celebration, embracing the notion of a *black architecture*. New York’s black élites are slowly beginning to seek him out to design what he calls “culturally specific” homes and offices. This is reminiscent of Corbu and his Villa period in Paris during the 1920s. Travis is debunking the still lingering myth that a black architecture would be a trivialized and devalued architecture. Travis is the spiritual godfather to the *blacklines magazine* ladies.

My third model is the late **Harry Simmons** of Brooklyn and Harlem. Simmons holds a special place in my heart. We struggled through Howard together back in those turbulent sixties – actually I struggled. He didn’t; calculus, physics, and structures courses were no more than childish games to Simmons. After graduate school at Pratt he planted his flag in Brooklyn while I was doing my thing in DC. His very first act was to purchase a four-story brownstone. He turned this home and office into a veritable community center in Brooklyn. His passion for housing his people in affordable, culturally thoughtful designs of new and rehabilitated structures was without bounds. He died tragically in his twin engine plane in 1994. He epitomized several important ideas. One is that the decision to be an architect is not also a decision to be personally poverty-stricken. Another is that the surface of meaningful work for creative, entrepreneur-architects in Black America has barely been scratched.

The fourth model and addition to the expanded canon is a giant of a man who built a successful high profile conventional practice in the mid-west but didn’t rest on his laurels. **Charles McAfee** of Kansas City, Wichita, and Atlanta put his money where many people’s mouths are. In the early 1990s he, along with a group of other African-American businessmen put together 20 million dollars in

debt and equity capital to build an inner-city modular housing plant. For McAfee this was a revival of a twenty-year old venture. He built his first modular housing plant in a depressed area of Wichita back in the seventies. Today his newest plant employs working and middle-class people in good paying skilled jobs building homes for themselves and their neighbors. These are homes and communities that Charles also designed. He is now the leader of a rapidly growing national movement of inner-city homebuilding factories. McAfee is now talking to countries throughout Africa about his ideas.

ISSUE THREE

The “academy” of 123 accredited architecture schools dispersed throughout the nation’s 3,000 four-year colleges also includes a well-oiled architectural media establishment and a lionized handful of rock star class globetrotting, museum designing architect-artists. The academy also includes a group of star-struck camp followers of the stars who like to be known as critics and even historians. All in all, the “academy” is one big happy incestuous affair. Nestled invisibly inside of the academy are the accredited programs at Historically Black Colleges & Universities, of which the program here at Morgan is counted. The important thing is this statistic provided from the research of Brad and Dennis: *those 7% of the schools in the American architectural academy currently enroll 45% of the African-American students in architectural school.*

Thomas Fisher, currently the dean of architecture at the University of Minnesota and formerly the editor of *Progressive Architecture Magazine* has written a thoughtful little book, *In the Scheme of Things*. He argues persuasively that the academy and the profession are in a state of crisis. He thinks that professionally, the public no longer believes that architects are essential to the making of the built environment. He also believes that the academy has no real clue about how to re-structure curricula around the realities of the now ubiquitous Information Age Revolution.

I am not prepared to go that far. I think that Dean Fisher somewhat overstates his case. But I do think that the architecture profession has for all practical purposes been deregulated. Architects are not irrelevant in the public’s mind. But they are on their own in the marketplace now dominated by the developer and the construction manager. Current remaining appearances of state regulatory protection of the architect’s role may now be only a fig leaf.

The collection of organizations that represent the interests of the academy and the profession recently joined forces and sought the assistance of the Carnegie Foundation in the research and writing of a detailed self-examination. Some people, myself included, naively thought that this new look at architecture would be as structurally reformist as was the 1910 Flexner Report on the state of medicine. Tom Fisher and I are on the same page here.

A graduate level research university based clinical model was born that we know as the teaching hospital. Supply and demand control issues resulted in a respected powerful and well-compensated prac-

tioner. This is still the case today despite the doctor's difficulties with the managed care accountants and lawyers.

But the recent Carnegie-Boyer Report did not fundamentally challenge any of the myths, rituals, fetishes, and paradigms of the architectural academy. It of course called for an end to racial apartheid; for an increased use of computers; and for a more seamless transition from the academy to the profession. *But nobody's status quo in the academy was threatened. Perhaps wisely.* In Philadelphia last year Gil Cook reminded some of us about the difference between an international terrorist and a tenured faculty member. According to Gil, *you can at least negotiate with an international terrorist.*

But what about Dean Fisher's other assertion that the schools really just don't know how they are supposed to deal with information technology reality? If you look closely you will find that there are several schools that know exactly what to do and they are doing it well. Pre-eminent among those would be none other than MIT - the oldest and, perhaps in retrospect, the most racially enlightened American architecture school. Architect-mathematician Nicholas Negraponte's closely affiliated MIT Media Lab is also a big tip-off that MIT has figured this thing out. The current MIT architecture dean has written several persuasive books. He once quipped - seemingly only facetiously at the time - that there would soon be a handheld 29 dollar computer that would render all of the 500 year-old skills of the architect valueless in the marketplace.

Meanwhile, MIT scholar Mark Jarzombek has looked seriously at the notion that the legitimate demands of resources sustainability, environmental justice, and capitalism will transform the Studio - still the heart of the matter and sine qua non of architectural education. Studio will evolve into an intensely knowledge based building technology and environmental design research laboratory. Some schools will get there sooner than others will. As computing power is destroying the walls between the disciplines of architecture, landscape architecture, and city planning, so also are the walls crumbling between that set of disciplines and the entertainment sectors, the construction industries, the engineering and biological sciences, and finance capital.

Dean Fisher's concern that the profession has lost its way also has to be approached with caution. There is now that Miami based New Urbanist-Neo-Traditional Development movement. They are certainly in the right church if not always at the right pew. Their Jane Jacobsian notions about housing, holistic community development, and place-making being far more important than the signature and object buildings that still seems to pre-occupy much of the academy and the profession, are right on the money.

But I still have my differences with the New Urbanists - I am still trying to divine an appropriate Harlem based version of New Urbanism. For lack of a better term I will just call what I am looking for "New (Black) Urbanism" and trust that my audience understands that I am talking culture and economics here and not racial exclusion. Anyway, I am grateful that the New Urbanists have captured an entire architecture and planning school and transformed the curriculum into a neo-traditional community development enterprise. Select urban based architecture schools - Morgan being one

of them - simply must rediscover this Jane Jacobs fervor. The New Urbanists have made my job at Morgan that much easier since I have a similar agenda.

Here at Morgan, I am interested in the question of how do we give the one million African-American citizens of greater Baltimore and the state of Maryland the opportunity of seeing a serious black architectural practice presence in the coming years. That will not happen without a deliberate strategy of cultural and economic rapprochement between those citizens and black designers.

We go back to the basics of urban shelter as well as to Abraham Flexner. The graduate component of our school has to function as the medical school equivalent of a teaching hospital. And who are our patients/customers? Any entity in the city that is involved in housing and community development while also increasing small black construction and development company opportunities to participate. We have to position our graduate program as a serious consultant alternative for the city housing and community development agencies and the network of CDCs, foundations, and housing and community development lenders that are reviving and conserving Baltimore's neighborhoods.

Some of our students will be able to do some of their IDP time right in our own on-campus teaching hospital while others acquire IDP credits in local offices. This is facilitated by our all-evening classes and studios similar to our model at the Boston Architectural Center. At Morgan we call our teaching hospital CEBER - the Center for Built Environment Research. At our co-host school at College Park they call their arm CADRE. Most architecture schools today have such a clinical arm. But I have yet to figure out how these clinics differ from what Max Bond started doing at ARCH back in the late 1960s. At Morgan CEBER is under the very able leadership of Mahendra Parekh who is our senior faculty member, a long time city practitioner, and a gifted urban housing designer.

I also come back to our Neo-Traditional Development stars Andres Duany and his wife, Dean Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk down in Miami. They have already established that a school can keep its NAAB accreditation ticket with a tightened focus that leaves out the isolated object buildings, museums, office tower, convention centers, and so on that our star architects favor. Those things are specialties best left to the local offices. The focus is rightly on teaching and learning place-making and urban housing of every kind, block by block along with the related community facilities.

At Morgan we must make sure that this is overlaid with a thorough grounding in the holistic use of information technology and the techniques of creative real estate development finance. We can no longer afford to graduate people who only know how to *design* buildings. Our graduates have to know how to actually *produce* housing and neighborhoods - and pass the ARE. I believe that those skills and behavior are sure routes for the successful start-up of urban housing oriented practices by interdisciplinary develop-design-build entities. Opportunities to expand those entities into other areas such as health care, commercial facilities, and privatizing educational facilities will follow from acquired housing based competencies and relationships with community decision makers.

In closing, I come back to where I started. The HBCU schools cannot be culturally neutral miniature replicas of their larger sister school counterparts across the river, down at the other end of the interstate highway, or in the next town over. Understandably, each HBCU program has its own campus culture slant. But these programs, now enrolling nearly half of all black students, must take an aggressive leadership role of defining new canons, new heroes, new paradigms, and new allegiances. Some of the HBCU programs have already started down that road. But we must all redouble our efforts. We cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of the past eighty years since the start of the Harlem Renaissance. Back then we swore first allegiance – perhaps unwittingly and innocently – to the culture of architecture and “professionalism” rather than to the culture of Black America – a culture that is one of the engines of American culture.

Don’t misunderstand me. There is room and need for those who prefer the role of “architect who just happens to be black” and aspiring to design signature cultural buildings. That is their right.

I end with this thought; Duke Ellington was gifted in art and drawing as an adolescent. He received a scholarship to Pratt but declined in order to pursue his music. In his autobiography *Music is My Mistress*, he writes a page – you might say he blows a rift – that he titled “Walls.” It is as profound in its architectural thinking as anything else I have read by the 20th century modernist architectural icons. Ellington, one of America’s greatest 20th century cultural figures, was once asked for his thoughts on the source of his musical genius. His response was “*I don’t compose jazz. I compose Negro music.*”