Race and Diversity

African Americans in Architecture Education

architecture. It is these challenges, and their determiedge to attempt, much less succeed in, the practice of long faced major challenges in securing enough knowldominant white American culture," people of color have cultural expression representing mainly that of the presional education, is based upon a kind of universality of that "[a]rchitectural education, like most other profescampuses of Duke and Howard universities. Yet given Airport; from Atlanta's Martin Luther King Center for and the Theme Building at the Los Angeles International Lewaro to the iconic addition to the Beverly Hills Hotel Library; from Madam C. J. Walker's New York Villa of Philadelphia's Museum of Art and Harvard's Widener lishes the French Quarter in New Orleans to the design House; from the intricate wrought ironwork that embel to the construction of the nation's Capitol and White iconic sea island huts of Georgia and South Carolina their mark on a very wide range of buildings, from the tice of architecture in the United States. They have left derstanding of the architect's journey in North America American architects essential to a comprehensive unnation to meet them, that makes the story of African History, and Baltimore's Reginald Lewis Museum to the Non-Violence, Detroit's Museum of African American African Americans have contributed richly to the prac-

students at Massachusetts Institute of Technology Robert Robinson Taylor with fellow architecture

> keep their dreams alive in the face of great odds. architectural knowledge and the ways they managed to jor places that African Americans have obtained their experience in general. This article briefly traces the ma-African Americans themselves. It is that of the American The experience of architects of color is not only that of

Pioneers in the field

1873. Washington, D.C., office of Thomas Plowman as early as University in Germany. Just as rare was it for an African École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and Roberson at Karlsruhe Roberson, also went on to study abroad: Abele at the and another young African American student, Francis Cooper Union. Figures 218, 219 Remarkably, Abele Pennsylvania; and George Washington Foster, Jr., at at Cornell; Julian Francis Abele at the University of go on to become educators; Vertner Woodson Tandy William Sydney Pittman at Drexel, both of whom would Taylor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and an American architecture school were Robert Robinson higher learning. Among the earliest to graduate from ing granted the rights of citizenship, African Americans the latter. In the postbellum United States, despite befinancial means of most aspirants, the majority chose chitect's apprentice. As the former was well beyond the learning; the other involved informal education as an arinvolved formal education at an institution of higher to the title "architect" was a bifurcated one. One road In the profession's infancy in America, the typical route firm. Calvin Brent was an exception, working in the Nonetheless, a handful gained access to institutions of found both these established paths severely constrained American to secure an apprenticeship with a major

of the land in 1896, had long-ranging consequences. mark case of Plessy v. Ferguson, which became the law this volatile and formative period, including those afof optimism about the future, though, some aspirations of the nineteenth century. Despite a widespread sense States reached a certain level of maturity by the end fecting the education of African Americans, the landtural attitudes and social policies shifted rapidly during were clearly freer to flourish than others. Although cul The unique democratic experiment that was the United

provided people of color with accessible and consistent ing or construction trades programs. These programs Universities (HCBUs) established the often interchange the postsecondary level. It was here that what are now chitecture profession. This was particularly the case at its critical importance in the history of the American arbeyond the scope of this article, it is necessary to note untenable "Negro" or "Normal" schools emerged. While ably labeled mechanical or industrial arts and buildcommonly referred to as Historically Black Colleges and a full discussion of this system's merits and demerits is In response to this reality, the flawed and ultimately

an early long-distance learning institution based in in high demand throughout the South for over half a designs for everything from bridges to courthouses were in both Kentucky and Indiana, and Horace King, whose own. Samuel Plato, who established successful practices in the Sugar Hill section of Jacksonville, Florida, did so homes throughout the southern seaboard, most notably Blodgett, for example, who designed and built many of independent or augmented self-education. Joseph ing practitioners managed to make a way out of no way ones less traveled, and those who did succeed in becomized. For these aspirants, both roads were, indeed, the established architect was either deferred or went unreal tution of higher learning or working in the office of an however, the dream of attending an architectural instithe International Correspondence School of Scranton both received some supplemental instruction through century, were likewise primarily self-educated, although with no training other than that which he acquired on his The "third road" they created entailed some version For the overwhelming majority of African Americans



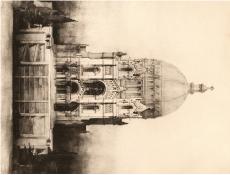


Establishing the principle of "separate but equal," it had from admitting even small numbers of people of color for the effect of dissuading majority institutions of learning In 1890 Caffin College of Agriculture and Mechanics in 1911, Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical in the McKinley Technical High Schools in Washington, D.C., secondary-school level, institutions like Armstrong and as "architectural," namely architectural drawing. At the Institute for Colored Students (now Caflin University) University in 1926, Southern Agricultural and Mechanica 1920s, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State 1892 (now Tuskegee University), Florida Agricultural and programs at Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in (now Hampton University) in 1871. It was followed by lished at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute enter otherwise. The first such program was estabtraining programs that would feed HBCU programs in founded in 1871, established industrial and manual was the earliest to offer a course specifically designated University in 1946, and Morgan State University in 1971 Mechanical (known as ғами) in 1910, Howard University formal training in a field that was all but impossible to

decades to come.

development of a black professional class was crucial of the twentieth century, the role of the $\ensuremath{\mathsf{HBCU}}$ in the Within the social and cultural milieu of the first half

375



Diversity Race and

Figure 220 Mechanical drawing class, Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, Hampton, Virginia, c.1899–1900

on a number of levels. As W. E. B. Du Bols wrote, "The [HBDU] founded itself, and rightly, upon the actual situation of American Negroes and said: "What can be done to change the situation?" Clearly there was an immediate need to develop professionals who could assist in shaping the new and maturing communities of color in a rapidly modernizing American society—what Du Bols described as a "training in technique and methods such as would incorporate the disadvantaged group into the industrial organization of the country." At the same time, it was imperative that such training enable people of color to dispel the widely held belief that African Americans were inherently deficient in the kind of intellectual ability required to become professionals, whether doctors, lawyers, or architects.

In this highly sorutinized context, HBCU programs came to be headed by strong, visionary, and purposeful practitioner-educators. These men saw the training of the black architect not just as a job but a calling. Among

ed.⁶ Even though not all practitioners or educators of of these men and their programs cannot be overstatto go from concept to construction.⁵ The importance pects of the profession; he had to be competent enough the black architect as someone fully grounded in all asmastery of fundamentals. Figure 220 They envisioned ing technically proficient practitioners and stressed As men of practice, they focused primarily on producnamely the architecture programs within their schools educated architects using the best avenue available, the country at the inception of the HBCU system,4 they ber of African American architects practicing across future black professoriate. Despite the minuscule numeducation of both the future black practitioner and the Wiltz at Prairie View. They set the standard for the at Southern; and Louis Fry, Marshall Brown, and Simon Moses and John Spencer at Hampton; Henry Thurman Walter Hazel, and Albert Cassell at Howard; William William Sydney Pittman at Tuskegee; Howard Mackey, Virginia Colored Institute; Robert Robinson Taylor and Wilson Cooke at Caffin; Albert Grant Brown at West were determined to build a professional class of formally the most notable were Robert Charles Bates and William



Injure 221

John Saunders Chase enrolling in the M.Arch. program at the University of Texas at Austin, June 1950.

He became the first African American to attend and graduate from the architecture school.

color were products of HBCUS during this period—Paul R. Williams, for example, a prolific and highly influential African American architect, attended the University of Southern California, while Clarence "Cap" Wigington, the first municipal architect of color in the United States (for the city of St. Paul, Minnesota), did an apprenticeship in the office of the Nebrasika architect Thomas R. Kimball—Ifor the overwhelming majority of aspirants, these programs were the doorway to the field for the vext hundred years."

African Americans in majority institutions

The civil disturbances of the 1950s and '60s—the frustrated responses to what the Kerner Commission famously described in 1968 as the nation's creep toward "(I)wo societies: one black, one white—separate and unequal"—left the country both shaken and chastened with respect to its treatment of people of color. National and international attention brought to light the lack of basic civil liberties possessed by African Americans, causing most people to acknowledge that the birthright of first-class citizenship promised to all citizens had been poorly and capriciously kept. This acknowledgment, embodied in the Great Society program under the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson, resulted in a nationwide effort to address systemic nequities in

programs, and federal funding for classrooms, libraries ary levels; many of them—like Head Start, school lunch new programs at the preschool, elementary, and second Secondary Education Act of 1965 established and funder institutions of higher education. Figure 221 with greater access, financial and otherwise, to majority around the country, but of providing students of color versities, community colleges, and the system of HBCUs times under threat of legal, political, or civil action. eventually coalesced, oftentimes peacefully, at other ary level, various local and national efforts emerged and and labs—are still in effect today. At the postsecond-Specifically in the area of education, the Elementary and employment, housing, and transportation to education basic life opportunities and services, from health care, Together they had the effect not just of bolstering uni-

The demand for greater access in the 1860s found especially sympathetic ears in the halls of lvy League and other selective schools of architecture. These institutions soon began to admit a sizable number—relatively speaking—of students of color, and many African Americans benefited from their concerted recruitment efforts. Doors at majority institutions also gradually opened for practitioners of color to teach. "Vet these initiatives caused considerable anxiety and controversy inside and outside architecture programs nationwide, and the vast majority of American programs did not alter their admissions or hiring in any significant way.

Van Purnell, Robinson, Grant, Johns, and Lonnie entered the ranks of top administrators: Dozier, Mitchel in continuing the legacy of the practitioner-educator: of the academy's efforts at inclusiveness, succeeded and Norma Sklarek at majority institutions. Some also HBCUs; Bond, Harry Simmons, Karl Thorne, Ray Huff, stitutions.11 Figure 222 Another group, taking advantage Milwaukee established academic careers at majority in-Obispo, and Josef Stagg at the University of Wisconsin Brad Grant at the University of California at San Luis of New York, Rodner Wright at Mississippi State, Bond and Gary McNeil at Columbia and City College Arizona State, Julian White at Louisiana State, J. Max Anthony Johns at Morgan State, and Harry Robinson at at Southern, Richard Dozier at Tuskegee and FAMU, them were E. Donald Van Purnell and John Delgado John Spencer, Hilyard Robinson, and Melvin Mitchell at and the University of Washington, Rushia Fellows at Michigan, Sharon Sutton at the University of Michigan Howard. Meanwhile James Chaffers at the University of tice. A few, though, chose to become educators. Among years, most ended up going into private or public prac-Of those African Americans who graduated in these

"Two Case Studies of African-American Architects' Careers in Los Angeles, 1890–1945: Paul Wi Ilams, FAIA, and James Garrott, AIA," Ph.D. diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 1992.

Michigan, c. 1970–71 James Chaffers in design studio at the University of

be enjoyed by the next generation. tions for the broader menu of career choices that would tional opportunities afforded to them, laying the foundations. These trailblazers seized the long-overdue institu-Wilkinson at HBC∪s; Bond and Wright at majority institu-

The situation today

first African American president in 2008. past yet optimistic enough about its future to elect its ence of a nation still deeply conflicted about its racial an architecture that legibly reflects the complex experiarchitect; and beyond this, into what it means to create be an American, an architect, and an African American rich and untraditional sensibilities to their schools. Their formerly narrow perceptions of faculty of color, bringing scope of this article. 13 Yet it is clear that they have been A comprehensive list of these educators is beyond the ment, and computer modeling and digital technology. cultural criticism, community and sustainable developand they are exploring emerging areas of visual media, ing careers as administrators, theorists, and historians, members of the present generation are variously pursutitioner associated with the early HBC∪ programs. The have broadened the heritage of the no-nonsense praccadre of African American educators is the way they moment particularly noteworthy with respect to the new cessors' pioneering legacy.12 What makes the current notions of race, rights, and ability and on their prededecades of hard-won efforts to overturn ill-informed ity architecture schools across the country, building on Americans slowly find their way onto faculties at major. work is providing unique insights into what it means to able to expand—and in many cases, obliterate—the The turn of the twenty-first century has seen African

Future prospects

is particularly clear when compared to the academy's who control it. of talent available but rather of the market and those architecture faculties today is indicative not of the pool disparities. The small number of African Americans on greater record of success in addressing gender and age centage of highly determined and gifted strivers. This aperture facilitating the passage of only a small perthat has opened is real, it is unfortunately just that—an continuing disgrace." ¹⁴ While the window of opportunity put it, "[t]he race record of architecture education is a most recent major survey of architecture education, in American society. As Lee Mitgang, coauthor of the sented in academia, despite substantive gains elsewhere true, African Americans are still woefully underrepre-African American people. While this remains generally American architect is in many ways the story of the We began by stating that the story of the African

continue to do what they have always done: make a way ulties. 77 In the meantime, faculty of color will no doubt academic institutions, deans, chairs, directors, and facmuch more concerted and active effort on the part of to label "apartheid" in architecture schools will take a lation. To put an end to what Mitgang did not hesitate ties than ever before, the total is still staggeringly low sheer numbers there are more people of color on facul-African Americans were teaching at over 110 majority bear this out: according to 2007 numbers, less than 100 ing, law, pharmacology and medicine." $^{\rm 15}$ The statistics inated fields as business, computer science, accountture's record on racial diversity, some fifty years "after for a people who make up thirteen percent of the popu architecture schools in the United States.16 Although in ranks—trailing, for example, such formerly male-domamong the less successful professions in diversifying its the dawn of the civil rights era, architecture remains In the words of another recent analyst of architec-

Craig L. Wilkins

out of no way.

Arthur Symes, "Architecture and the Black Community: Towards the Development of a Relevant Architectural Education," Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1976, 5.

W. E. B. Du Bois, excerpts from an address to the annual alumni reunion at Fisk University, June 1933, The Crisis, August 1933, 176.

A See Richard K. Dozier, "African American Architects in the Art Dozo Era", About...Time 25, no. 5 (May 1977); "The 1900 Centus reported 195 'block' architects, draftsman, designers and engineers in the control of the sec

An incomplete list of those at a majority institutions would include the following: Milton S. F. Carry (Cornel), Males IO, Wilson and Valends Dembis (Columba), David Brown (Illende-Choleago), Darnell Fields (Arkansas), Sahwa Rickenbade (Cribino), Charg Barton and Maurice Cox (Virgina), South Ref (Cribino), London Jordon Cotton (Gall Streta), Lisa Henry Berham (Utah), Wilsiam Williams and Michaele Price (Cricinnets), Cart is Stror (Judico) University), Cart is Stror (Judico) University), Cart is Stror (Judico) University), At sucus there are Audrew On (Hengian), At sucus there are Audrew (Price (Wilsiam Williams are Audrew (Price (Wilsiam Williams and Michaele Price (Cricinnets)).

And Barbaria Laires and Edward Dantton (Howest), Among those who continue to Valint the ride of practitioner-educator established by the activation propriems are barded (Passura).

I write "he" in this case since at the time "she" was not part of the equation. In fact, the role of women in general—and women of color in particular—has gradually improved over the generations

on Robert Robertson Taylor, see Clearnes G. Villeman, "From Trach" to Tukesgae: The Ure of Robert Robertson Taylor, 1888—1982," institute Archives and Special Collection, Meass-cheatts Institute of Technology. http://braise.inh.celu/archives/en/a 2009. According to Mann and Grant, six of the top of mon-visco universities granting degrees to African American students in their database were Ivy League or comparable institutions, among the former, the breakdown is at follows: M.I.T. 20, Cornelli, 27, Columba, 59, Howered, 45 among "public for Jeague". University of Michigan, 34. The remaining institutions in the top ten were Georgia Tech (39). University of Illinois at Urbanse Chemishing (42), 334 Codese of American (43). See Dennis Alan Mann and Bradford Grant, "African American Architects and Their Education: A Demographic Study," Working Paper no. 1, Center for the Study of Practice, College of Design Architecture, Art & Planning, University of Cincinneti, winter University of Cincinneti, winter nstitute (60).

In addition to fisculties and administrations beauting more processing about thirty, students also contributed to addressing the death of though of color. The exemples of this after the act at 100 colors of the color of colors of the act of the colors of Woodson Timbry An Evaluation of the Photospoinal and Social Position of a Black Archined;"

M.A. thesis University of Verpinia 1982; Richard Doden," Boden T. Washington's Contribution to the Equation of Black Archinects, "AnD, das, University of Michigan, 1998; Harmon Mosays Etheragan, 1998; Harmon Mosays Eth Current Proctice (Princeton.
Princeton University Press, 1991);
Dreck Wilson and Weeley Hender,
son, etc., African American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary,
1865–1945 (London: Rauthedge,
2004); Carson Anderson. "The
Architectural Practice of Vertrer

Scapies Kiment noted in 2006 that "accus still graduate sp. proximately 45% of all African American students with professional architecture degrees." See Scapiera A. Kiment. "Diversity: What the Numbers 110 (architecture 110 (ar

degrees with greater frequency than those at predominantly white institutions. They also demonstrate greater satisfaction with their college experiences and have higher self-esteem, increased academic self-esteem, and atronger achievement orientation. Design Intelligence, December 18, 2007. According to Alabarras-Asser. "The importance of an accurate in its pride, credibly, and achievements reflecting the strength of the black community and its contributions to the built and natural environments. African Americans who attend secur Along with the nurturing social context that social provide, these institutions shape minds, impart skills, and prepare students to lead and make significant impact

The Kerner Report: The 1968
Report of the National Advisory
Commission on Civil Disorders
(New York: Pantheon Books,

(New York: 1988), 386.

12
On the ploneer figures, see, in addition to the works cited above: Name in the works in the Name in the Architect and the Architect and and the Name in the

16
NAJB, Statistical Data Report,
2007. This number does not
include HBCUS.

17 Mitgang, "Saving the Soul of Architectural Education," 125

Adac (Minnepolas University)

Adac (Minnepolas University)

Borti Biskin, "Community Design

Contras: An Alternative Practice,"

Time Sonve Standards for Urban

Design (New York Modraw-Hill,

2003), 411-4118; and Anthony

Schman's contribution to this

volume. While most student-based efforts were not as aggressive or autonomous as the BLW efforts,

E. Donald van Purnal, John Diagob, Hurry Robinson, Rodne Wight, David Lee, and J. Max Wight, David Lee, and J. Max Bord graduated from Neuveri, Josef Shaga graduated from behaved and the University of Michigan; Rehard Outer from Challengan; Rehard Outer from Michigan; James Chaffers from Michigan; James Chaffers from Michigan; James Statesi, Gary McNell, and Sharo Statesia, and Sharo Statesia, and Sharo Statesia, and Sharo Sharo

(although a D.Arch, would not be was-accredited until 2004).

Lee Mitgang, "Saving the Soul of Architectural Education: Four Critical Challenges Face Today's Architecture Schools," Architecture Schools," Architectural Record, May 1997, 125.

16 Kathyn H. Anthony, "Designing for Dwestly, Implications for Architectural Education in the Twenty-Frat Century," Journal of Architectural Education St. no. 4 (May 2003), 267. Anthony goes not note. "IT he late Ernest Boyer and Lee Mitgargo in their seminal work, Building Community, based on extensive research with architectural practicioners. students, faculty, and administra-tors, [raised] a deep concern: 'we worry about ... the paucity of women and minorities in both the professional and academic ranks."

378