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## AIA New York's 2030 Fund Awards \$10,000 Toward Student Loan Forgiveness to Six Young BIPOC Professionals

*The 2030 Fund was created to support NOMA's 2030 Challenge, which aims to double the number of licensed Black architects by the end of the decade.*

**May 23, 2024, New York, NY** – AIA New York is excited to announce that the chapter has awarded a total of \$10,000 to help six aspiring BIPOC architects pay down their student loans through the **2030 Fund**, which seeks to help build a more diverse and representative profession.



The 2030 Fund was created by AIANY 2021 President **Kenneth A. Lewis, AIA**, in collaboration with the **New York Chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects (nycoba|NOMA)** in recognition of the profession’s diversity problem and the unique challenges faced by young BIPOC professionals pursuing licensure. According to **NCARB by the Numbers 2023**, people of color remain critically underrepresented in the field, with BIPOC only accounting for 17 percent of architects nationwide. The fund also seeks to support NOMA’s 2030 Challenge, which aims to double the number of licensed Black architects by the end of the decade.

The 2030 Fund’s six awardees were selected from 40 applicants from across the United States. Beyond student loan support, the recipients will also receive free access to **ARE prep courses** organized by AIANY and an opportunity to meet quarterly with an architect mentor who will provide early career and licensure guidance.

“Now in its third year, the 2030 Fund aims to remove barriers and directly address the urgent need for greater diversity in architecture,” said **Jesse Lazar, Assoc. AIA**, Executive Director, AIANY and Center for Architecture. “By providing concrete support to young professionals pursuing licensure, this initiative exemplifies AIA New York’s proactive commitment to nurturing a more inclusive, equitable profession.”

## **2024 RECIPIENTS**

### **Ayesha Agha**

Ayesha Agha is an intersectional feminist designer with a passion for community design and restorative social and climate justice. Originally from Pakistan, she graduated cum laude from Mount Holyoke College in 2014 and earned a Master of Architecture with distinction from Pratt GAUD in 2022. Currently a designer at Studio For in New York,

Agha has worked on a diverse range of projects from community and residential to workplace design. With a meticulous approach, she aims to promote environmental justice while creating inclusive spaces that contribute to the well-being of our communities.

Agha identifies as a South Asian woman born and raised in Pakistan.

### **Brandon Kelvin Brooks**

Brandon Brooks was born and raised in the Queen City of Charlotte, North Carolina. He received his Bachelor of Fine Art (BFA) in Architectural Studies from Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, Maryland in 2018. While in Baltimore he worked at the world-class firm Ziger/ Snead Architects, and after graduation, Brooks moved to Copenhagen, Denmark, the same city where he studied abroad during his Junior year



at MICA. While living in Denmark he worked for the Architecture School at the Danish Institute of Scandinavia (DIS). That year in Copenhagen also allowed Brooks to explore over 12 countries, significantly expanding and deepening his investment in the arts, architecture, and conservation.

After leaving Copenhagen, he attended the Yale School of Architecture, where he found a home in New Haven, Connecticut. During his time at Yale Brooks took a one-year leave from graduate school to work at the studio of Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects in New York City where he learned "to only leave good marks upon the earth, good work comes from many voices, and to make buildings that will last and be loved." After working at TWBTA, Brooks returned to Yale School of Architecture to complete his Master of Architecture in 2023.

Brooks identifies as a Queer, African-American man.

### **Pedro Cruz Cruz**

Pedro Cruz Cruz is a Caribbean-born Puerto Rican, spatial designer, visual artist, activist, and educator based in Washington Heights, NYC. Cruz is an Adjunct Lecturer of architecture at City College's Spitzer School of Architecture where he is also a Communications and Engagement Associate of the new Place, Memory, and Culture Incubator for Harlem.

Cruz's practice critically engages both digital and built environment projects in urban and rural contexts, often looking to BIPOC, and other marginalized histories to unlock and visualize new spatial imaginaries through politically and culturally informed design, community-led initiatives, interdisciplinary collaboration, and multimedia methodologies such as graphic anthropology, activist art, film documentation, and cultural organizing. His work on complex sites includes collaborations with the Iniciativa de Ecodesarrollo de Bahía de Jobs collective (IDEBAJO), Punto Educativo in Las Mareas, the Caribbean Cultural Center through the PMCI, The Street Vendor Project (SVP), New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE), and the Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy (JBRPC).

Cruz is also an emerging academic leader in design and climate justice pedagogy, is a core member and visual designer for Dark Matter U (DMU), an international, interdisciplinary BIPOC network geared towards new models of anti-racist design pedagogy and practice, and is a lead initiator of the design collective "De Manera Isleña" a social practice collective of Caribbean thinkers and practitioners drawn from the worlds of visual arts, performance, architecture, community planning, anthropology, activism, and social practice.

Cruz identifies as a Caribbean-born Puerto Rican.



## **Quincy Drane**

Quincy Drane’s passion within design lies with awareness and outreach of the architecture profession (and related fields) to communities of color—and specifically youth of color. Drane exhibits this passion by participating in organizations such as the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA), Black Unity in Lighting Design (BUILD), and Obsidian: Black Designers Collective. Additionally, Drane explores entering/curating exhibits, multimedia focused projects, and various forms of activism.

Drane is currently on track to finish the M.Arch and MFA Lighting Design dual degree program at Parsons School of Design in May 2024. Utilizing the knowledge and resources gained through Drane’s graduate studies, Drane is excited to take those skills to assist advance the progressiveness of the profession in terms of D.E.I.R. (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Respect), the work focused on, and processes.

Drane’s design interests are currently led by the following question: “How can I take the technical skills gained from my studies and combine them with the cultural and social connections of life to assist in designing desirable spaces?”

Drane identifies as a Black man.

## **Courtney Elizabeth Ferguson**

Courtney Ferguson is an Assistant Transit Management Analyst 2 at the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) in the Construction & Development department. She has a total of 12 years architectural experience working on transit projects at the MTA. She worked for two years part-time while attending architecture school and 10 years full-time post-graduation. Ferguson’s current group is Stations Clearinghouse where she provides guidance to contractors on conduit routes and station equipment layouts; prior to working in this group, she worked in the architecture group working on station renewals, street stair projects, and component projects.

Born and raised in Brooklyn, Ferguson graduated from Pratt Institute in 2010 with her Bachelor of Architecture degree. In 2005 she graduated with her Associate of Arts degree from the University of Hartford. While attending Pratt Institute she worked part-time as an architectural librarian for Specter DeSouza Architects, volunteered on campus for the America Reads program reading to children from the local neighborhood, and worked in the infrastructure group at the MTA.

Ferguson is passionate about architectural projects that benefit the public and local community. Ferguson recently completed an architectural drawing set for the ADA Wide Aisle Fare Gate pilot project for the MTA which allows passengers to have a more accessible way to enter the station.



Ferguson identifies as an African-American woman.

### **Tiana Ashley Howell**

Tiana Howell is currently an Architectural Designer at Array Architects. Originally from Queens, New York, she received her Bachelor of Science in Architecture in 2017 from the University of Maryland in College Park, MD, and Master of Architecture from the Spitzer School of Architecture at the City College of New York in 2020. Her graduate thesis focused on architectural representations of landmarks and spaces associated with the Black diaspora throughout the United States, with a case study on historic freedmen towns.

Howell has previous experience in real estate development and space planning, and currently enjoys working in the healthcare and life science sectors. Her interests include digital fabrication, mentorship, networking, and diversity, equity and inclusion discussions. She serves on the Young Professionals Committee of the Association of Medical Facility Professionals (AMFP) New York City Chapter, is a member of nycoba|NOMA, a 2023 cohort member of the AIANY Civic Leadership Program, and currently pursuing licensure. As an Architectural Designer, Howell believes that at the core of producing a successful project is active collaboration, creative thinking, and communication. Her background in healthcare and life sciences has led to her holistic approach to design, analyzing the project at all scales, and considering the diverse needs of all who experience a space. Howell aims to utilize innovative methods and new technology, pushing the boundaries of possibilities in design. Driven by her compassion for others, she strives to create inclusive and safe spaces within the healthcare system.

Howell identifies as a Black/African-American cisgender female.

### **2030 FUND SELECTION COMMITTEE:**

Matthew Bremer, AIA

Mark Gardner, AIA, NOMA

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### **About AIA New York**

Founded in 1857, AIA New York is the oldest and largest chapter of the American Institute of Architects. The Chapter's members include 5,000 practicing architects, allied professionals, students, and public members interested in architecture and design. AIA



New York is dedicated to three goals: design excellence, public outreach, and professional development. [aiany.org](http://aiany.org)