

June 11, 2020

For Everyone at Snøhetta in the USA,

There are a great many systemic problems in our society that continue to increase segregation, injustice and brutality against people of color and marginalized communities. Black people and their communities are among the most directly challenged. We recognize that all of us, as private citizens, institutions, and businesses, must increase efforts to realign both internal work practices and our commitment to change in the civic realm.

We at Snøhetta will continue to focus on improvements within our studio, knowing that we can all continue to learn and do more. We will also place greater focus on civic vitality in working with the wider world around us where many of these inequities have been institutionalized. These two efforts must be sustained for generations and are not limited to the immediate concerns driving the conversation in these present weeks. With this in our minds, we hope that we can participate with all of you in putting out the fires of mass trauma for people of color and the oppressed in this country and around the world.

Mass trauma is an ill-understood phenomenon that affects us unequally. We'd like to acknowledge that many of you may be feeling more tired lately, more anxious or restless, or may be experiencing anger or a sense of loss that requires time and space to process. Whether that means turning to your families and friends for consolation or participating in protests which have sprung up around the world, we'd like to offer options to you, our employees. We know many of you are already stretched incredibly thin by the challenges posed by our global pandemic. Grief and trauma do not present in the same way in every person.

We encourage small group check-ins over the next few weeks to talk with your fellow Snøhetta colleagues. We also will provide a list of tele-therapy options for those who would like to speak with a professional. At the very least, we encourage you to take the time that you need to care for yourself, your families and your friends, whatever that means for you.

The national conversation and civic unrest that has sprung up after the death of George Floyd is not new to our society, though its urgency has been renewed. Though our firm has been seen as a leader in social issues, we recognize that this is an area where we have a lot to learn. We are part of an industry that not only directly impacts the built environment—spaces that contain all aspects of daily life including both police violence and protests—but that also has created many barriers for exclusion of many people marginalized by our society.

We are committed to prioritize equity, diversity, and inclusion within our office. Beginning in Fall 2019, we have taken these initial steps:

- Hired an external equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) consulting firm.
- Conducted an internal EDI assessment and shared our report broadly with our staff.
- Created a Community Support fund (the recipients of this support are currently being discussed and evaluated by a team of employees).
- We recognize the work of both the EDI Employee Group and the EDI TACT Group in advancing the urgency of these matters and challenging us to do better.

There are a great many more steps, in addition to these, that we must take to actively eliminate racism and bias in all that we do.

Moving forward:

- Based in our findings report, we developed a company-wide EDI strategy that we will implement over the course of the next two years, led by the 10-person EDI TACT Group and supported by two executive-level sponsors to drive the initiatives forward.
- We will continue to update our approach to our EDI efforts in response to on-going needs, including, most urgently, ensuring our remote working policies are fortified and equipping our team with on-going education about racial understanding and elimination of bias.
- We commit to transparency in sharing our journey both internally and externally.

By making this letter, we're holding ourselves accountable for action within our firm. We know many of you have been waiting to hear from us on this matter. The time it has taken for us to write this letter reflects our real-time learning, but silence as a company is not acceptable. We hope to continue our position of leadership and growth within the industry, but in order to do so, we must identify where we fall short in racial equity and address the issues head-on.

We also must engage with the wider context around us. We look forward to identifying opportunities for strategic civic vitality in which we can address systemic challenges which are institutionalized by government, legislation, and laws. Institutionalized oppression prohibits people from finding power and economy, and it inhibits all of us in being better human beings.

We will share further messages with you as we collaborate with each other and others to identify these initiatives.

Sincerely,

Craig, Elaine, Michelle, Alan, Oscar