

Panel #1:

**CATHARSIS FROM CRISIS TO TRANSFORMATION: SHIFTING GROUND**

**Thursday, July 23 (8:00am - 10:30am PST)**

moderated by Michael B. Lehrer, FAIA– Founding Partner & President, Lehrer Architects LA

**A STARTING PREMISE.**

**REGARDING HOME COMING AND COMPLETING COMMUNITIES, LA, IS A, IF NOT, *THE* CRITICAL **DESIGN** LABORATORY, TESTING AND CHALLENGING:**

**BOTTOM UP AND TOP DOWN LEADERSHIP in COMMUNITY, GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNANCE,**

**BUREAUCRACY: ITS LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES,**

**FINANCE: NEW AND OLD MODELS THAT WORK**

**POLITICS: WHO DOES WHAT TO WHOM TO MAKE GOOD THINGS HAPPEN**

**RADICAL EXPERIMENTATION AND MAKING IT SAFE(R) TO FAIL**

**I CAN'T BREATHE.  
SHELTER AT HOME.**

**Words today to live, die, wallow or thrive by...**

## **SHIFTING GROUND:**

LIKE OUR SISTERS AND BROTHERS ON THE STREET, THE GROUND BENEATH IS SHIFTING FOR ALL OF US. TO USE NASSIM NICHOLAS TALEB'S PHRASE, **TO THRIVE IN CHAOS REQUIRES ANTI-FRAGILITY.** AMIDST THIS SEEMING CHAOS, HOW CAN WE BE OUR MOST OPPORTUNISITIC AND AGILE SELVES NOW, AS INDIVIDUALS, AS DESIGNERS AND AS A COMMUNITY, IN EXPEDITING OUR DESIRED FUTURE? EVEN A MAGNIFICENT ONE.

IT IS, PERHAPS, A MOMENT UNPRECEDENTED IN OUR LIVES OF EMPATHY AND OPENNESS TO ACTION, TRANSFORMATION, AND EMBRACING TRUTHS THAT HAVE BEEN ILLUSIVE AND INVISIBLE FOR MANY.

**WE ARE TOSSED BY WAVES OF RECKONING--**ME TOO, BLM, COVID, THE FRAGILITY OF DEMOCRACY AND AMERICAN PROMISE--TRUTHS REVEALED.

HOMELESSNESS WAS A CRISIS OF IMMENSE SIZE BEFORE COVID

## **Background.**

**In the spring of 2019, the former Presidents of AIA Los Angeles got together and decided to welcome the country's architectural community at the AIA National Conference to be held in LA in May 2020 by having a symposium-within-a-conference to share our successes and failures as a city and society in housing our homeless sisters and brothers**

**The national conference did not happen.  
COVID intervened.**

## **Then**

**AIA Los Angeles rescheduled its annual Design With Dignity (zoom-wise) for July and assimilated the AIA symposium into it.**

**Subject adjusted, broadened, and different.**

## **Then**

**George Floyd, and so many others, were murdered before our very eyes and the world changed. Community, Health, and Home were all reframed, in almost every city and community across America and around the world. It has been a real-time national reckoning about true justice, and the collective ownership of our past and future.**

**Our conversation thus shifts.**

**What seemed daunting, if not impossible mere weeks and months ago, has happened. Attitudes, positions, implementations have changed in ways that are exhilarating, scary, disorienting, promising, and not. Tomorrow will tell, but being our best selves seems more possible now.**

AS A MATTER OF DESIGN, I AM ASKING THAT WE EMBRACE OUR FAILURES, LEARNING FROM THEM AND USING THEM TO BREAK OUT OF THE BOX, AND THAT WE CELEBRATE AND SHARE OUR SUCCESSES REMINDING ALL OF US THAT SUCCESS IS INDEED POSSIBLE...AND PROBABLE IF WE WILL IT SO BY OUR ACTIONS.

AS A DESIGN MATTER, WE MUST WEAPONIZE OUR OPTIMISTIC, RESULT-DRIVEN, and at its best SOCIALLY- POTENT PROFESSION TO EMBRACE AND OVERCOME **THIS CRISIS OF IMAGINATION, THIS TRIFECTA OF CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY**

### **1. HOMELESSNESS, UNAFFORDABLE HOUSING,**

The Continuum of Housing:

From ***the Untended People on the Street*** to the Tended to People on the Street To Shelter To Housing

### **2. COVID**

Pain, depredation, loneliness, economic collapse, permanent debilitation, death possible FOR EVERYONE...IN A HURRY.

Different then life on the street?

This collective epiphany shatters taboos, ignore downside, take risks (not worry so much about failure)

Explore radical possibility

### **3. BLACK LIVES MATTER**

NEW, WIDESPREAD OPENNESS, EMBRACE, UNDERSTANDINGS OF LONG SUPPRESSED OR UNDERVALUED TRUTHS, UNLEASHED AND TRIGGERED BY A RACIST REGIME—COME TOGETHER TO RADICALLY RE-INVENT AND HOPEFULLY TRANSFORM OUR SICK SOCIETY

***FINANCE, DESIGN, PRIVATE/PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERSHIP  
AND ACTION, GOVERNMENT, COMMUNITY***

***FINANCE, DESIGN***

[Tom De Simone](#) – President & CEO, Genesis LA

***DESIGN***

[Natasha Hicks](#) – Government Performance Lab — Detroit  
Innovation Fellow, Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of  
Government

***PRIVATE/PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERSHIP***

[Monique King-Viehland](#) – Director, State and Local Housing Policy,  
Urban Institute

***GOVERNMENT***

[Heidi Marston, MPA](#) – Executive Director, Los Angeles Homeless  
Services Authority (LAHSA)

***GOVERNMENT***

[Molly Rysman](#) – Housing and Homelessness Deputy, Office of  
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, County of Los Angeles & Stanton Fellow,  
The Durfee Foundation

***GOVERNMENT***

[Sean Spear](#) – Assistant General Manager, Housing Development,  
Los Angeles Housing + Community Investment Department

***COMMUNITY***

[Pete White](#) – Founder & Executive Director, Los Angeles  
Community Action Network (LA CAN)

## FOR THE PANEL:

- WHO ARE YOU?
- WHAT DO YOU DO? WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO HOME AND HOME LESS NESS? LIVED EXPERIENCE?
- ARE THERE WORDS THAT MATTER? GOOD ONES, BAD ONES, UNSPOKEN ONES? Can we articulate and go beyond CODED language to cut to the chase?
- YOUR TAKE ON THE ROLES TOGETHER AND/OR APART OF THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR IN THIS SOCIAL PROJECT.
- WHAT MUST WE DO TO MAKE IT SAFE TO SUCCEED?  
HARM REDUCTION. How do we make it safe to take risks and fail, and continue? How do we share and describe success? To the fullest extent you feel safe in doing so, share why/where you/we have failed and where you have succeeded and where you/we can thrive
- WHAT IS YOUR ACTION ITEM TO TAKE AWAY TODAY? Process, movement, law, intervention, --of whom by whom? convening—of whom? Etc. Include, Exclude?
- IDENTIFY AND REMOVE BLOCKAGES.

Please hold each other accountable. When a compelling idea or initiative or philosophy is expounded, please comment to point out what will prevent it from succeeding and what is needed for it to succeed.

*Dear All,*

*While I haven't spoken to all of you yet, you will not be surprised by the overwhelming enthusiasm and appreciation for our panel together. It was excellent, maybe even some epiphanies, and really engaging. Friday's session was, as conceived, very different, and was a real complement to ours. Tuesday should be terrific as well.*

*The panel was everything you could want in the this period of endless zoom panels and talks about homelessness. You all dug deep, spoke intimately and openly, and had many extraordinary, even game- changing insights. That is unusual, and for that I am grateful. BTW, the whole conference was video recorded. You are welcome to watch it and reabsorb all that good stuff. So sorry we missed you Monique, you were with us in spirit, and our conversation beforehand really helped me.*

*I am asking all of you for one last bit of work: please send me and Will(if you haven't already) your 1 or more ACTION ITEMS for us to act upon. And if you can, the WORDS—good, bad, unspoken—that we need to know regarding houselessness, justice, etc.*

*I would like to get them before late afternoon tomorrow Monday. With gratitude for your participation, and more importantly, for what you all do.*

*Michael*

**FINANCE AND DESIGN: ITS ROLE IN THE PURCHASE, CONSTRUCTION, RENOVATION, AND ONGOING HOUSING RENTAL. THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT, REGULATIONS, "FREE MARKET", BY-RIGHT HOUSING. WHAT CAN YOU DO THAT CONVENTIONAL BANKS AND LENDERS CAN'T. CAN THEY CHANGE? DESCRIBE YOUR IDEAL WORLD IN LA.**

Tom De Simone – President & CEO, Genesis LA

**TEAMING, CLEAN OUT OUR CLOSET. NUANCED REGULATION**

**My ACTION ITEM is to "Clean out the closet" or "Do our housekeeping". By this, I mean that we have too many outdated, duplicative and conflicting procedures that significantly slow down the permitting process and add time and cost. These usually are not laws, but rather procedures related to how we implement things.**

**You've experienced these directly in our RETHINK Projects. Just two simple ones to note are 1) the fact that we still need to get clearances from the CRA when they went away 7+ years ago, or 2) that ADA for HCID projects require ADA review by both LADBS and HCID, when one should defer to the other more stringent standard to eliminate two reviews. But there are many more of these to list, as any architect or developer could share.**

**As I see things (and as I think the panel diligently uplifted), we need two parallel paths toward change. One is LONG term and involves SYSTEMS change at all levels of society that will take TIME.**

**The second is SHORT term and involves PROCESS change that we should be able to do NOW. The latter is what I emphasize for the ACTION ITEM.**

**Most of these fixes are within our control and cost little to no money. Once completed, they should actually save money, by eliminating redundancies and freeing up city staff time to process more project reviews, which generate fee income for the city. Too often, we look to "reform" through big committees and plans, but there are many reforms that we can do now by reflecting on how we conduct business now. It is not as sexy as the splashy blue ribbon committees, but I know it has the potential to really make change in the immediate.**

**Cheers,  
Tom**

**DESIGN: WHAT DOES DESIGN MEAN REGARDING THIS TRIFECTA OF CRISES? WHY IS IT ESSENTIAL? LESSONS OF DETROIT, GSD: Black in Design, THE PUBLIC SECTOR/THE PRIVATE SECTOR. THE DIGITAL DIVIDE. IS THERE AN EXPLICIT ROLE FOR DESIGNERS, IN ADDITION TO OUR CENTRAL ROLE AS PLACEMAKERS**

Natasha Hicks – Government Performance Lab — Detroit Innovation Fellow, Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government

**SYSTEM CHANGE: See presentation IMAGINATION AND LIBERATION; DESIGN FOR TRIAGE, REVOLUTIONARY DESIGN. DESIGN SUPERPOWER, UTILITARIAN PRAXIS, LIBERATED RELATIONSHIPS, JAZZ WORDS: GOOD: ACTION/ENGAGE, BAD: RESILIENCE/VULNERABILITY**

**PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERSHIP AND IMPERATIVES:** DESCRIBE YOUR UNDERSTANDINGS OF WHERE LA IS AT GIVEN YOUR RICHLY DIVERSE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EXPERIENCE; YOUR POINTS OF VIEW AS A LEADER AND AS A THINKER/ANALYST/ADVISER. ARE THERE NEW TRUTHS THAT YOU HAVE DISCOVERED UPON LEAVING LA? ARE THERE REASONS TO BE HOPEFUL? IF SO, WHY?

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON BLACK PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Monique King-Viehland – Director, State and Local Housing Policy, Urban Institute

**GOVERNMENT:** CAN CITY AGENCIES BE PROFOUND CHANGE AGENTS? HOW OUT-OF-THE-BOX CAN LAHSA BE? WHAT LIMITS LAHSA? WHO ARE YOUR NATURAL ALLIES? WHAT IS THE BEST LAHSA CAN BE? WHAT NECESSARY RISKS CAN YOU TAKE? WHAT CAN'T YOU TAKE.

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON BLACK PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Heidi Marston, MPA – Executive Director, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)

**HOMELESS IS HOUSELESS, A CONDITION NOT A PERSONAL TRAIT**

**GOVERNMENT:** PRIVATE, NON-PROFIT, AND PUBLIC SECTOR. WHAT DO YOU KNOW NOW, HAVING WORKED DEEP IN ALL THESE SECTORS THAT SURPRISES, EXCITES, DISCOURAGES YOU ABOUT DEEP SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS TO HOUSING.

Molly Rysman – Housing and Homelessness Deputy, Office of Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, County of Los Angeles & Stanton Fellow, The Durfee Foundation

**HOUSING JUSTICE IS A RIGHT...A DEATH PACT WITH WHITE SUPREMACY**

**GOVERNMENT:** AT THE EPICENTER OF THE CITY'S PROJECT OF HOUSING THOSE WITHOUT HOMES, YOU ARE HYPER-GROUNDED IN REALITY. DISCUSS SUCCESS, EXPLICITLY, DISCUSS THE CHALLENGES OF SHARING SUCCESS STORIES, AND WHERE YOUR HANDS ARE TIED...WHO CAN UNTIE THEM?

Sean Spear – Assistant General Manager, Housing Development, Los Angeles Housing + Community Investment Department

**AIA LA AS CONVENER, AS REPOSITORY IS KNOWLEDGE, CONTACTS, CATALYST. PARTNERSHIPS AND FOCUS ON SPEED. TELL THE STORY OF WHAT IS HAPPENING. GOOD NEWS MATTERS. TEMPORARY VERSUS PERMANENT. HOME.**

**A takeaway hope I had was that the AIA/LA continue to be a conduit for the design community and the public and advocate communities to dialogue about informing each other on how best to make physical environments respond to the needs of the formerly homeless households.**

**COMMUNITY:** DESCRIBE YOUR CONSTITUENCIES, DESCRIBE WHO YOUR KNOWING AND UNKNOWING ALLIES AND FOES ARE. DO YOU BELIEVE THIS MOMENT IS DIFFERENT THAN THOSE BEFORE? WHY? SET THE SCENE OF A TRANSFORMED (RADICAL OR OTHERWISE) POLICE DEPARTMENT AND A HOUSED, COMPLETE COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE, WHATEVER THEIR HOUSING PAST

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON BLACK PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Pete White – Founder & Executive Director, Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN)

**A STREET IS A ROOM OF AGREEMENT. BAD WORDS: PATIENCE, STUDY, PIPELINE  
GOOD WORD: REVOLUTION. 3 HOUSELESS PEOPLE DIE EVERY DAY**