

# POP UP

The temporary is here to stay

## KaBOOM!

A mighty advocacy for kids and play

## WOMEN WHO WALKED

Life after the big office

## GEORGES DESCOMBES

The beauty of doing less

LAM /

# LAND MATTERS

## WHY THEY WALK

I signed the Women's Landscape Equality (re)Solution, which appears in full on page 143, as soon as it came out last fall. In some way, it was a redress of the times much earlier in my career when I'd failed to observe the very first commitment the (re)Solution asks everyone to make: "We condemn inequality wherever we see it." I saw inequality right in front of me at a job I used to have, more than once, and did nothing.

The boss in this case went through staff the way some of us go through facial tissues, so we were frequently interviewing new candidates for jobs. After an interview, in private, the conversation would become discomfiting when the candidate, however qualified, had been a woman of childbearing age. "Did you see that ring on her finger?" the boss once asked me after an interview. "You know what comes next." The boss was a woman, though that is far from my point. The implication was that the candidate, if hired, would before long have a child, and of course that would disrupt the steady operation of the office. It happened more than once, with variations on the theme. In one of my earlier jobs, I had reported a lot on employment law, so I knew actionable deeds when I saw them, though that sort of background is not required to know right from wrong. But I didn't game out any sort of protest too far. I needed health insurance above all else, and, this being America, felt stapled to my job for that if for no other reason.

The boss's bosses, all men, were in a headquarters far away, and struck me as some of the sadder executive specimens in my industry. Only later did I learn that one of them was said to be the writer Alan Ball's real-world inspiration in the 1999 film *American Beauty* for the boss who spent \$50,000 on a sex worker by using a company MasterCard. As for my own boss, the comeuppance was a lawsuit by a staff member who was fired while pregnant, which resulted in a settlement. The staff member, as I recall, was said to have been fired for reasons of competence, so the justice may have been rough. The boss

was also eventually fired for reasons of competence. In any case, she pursued a gender-discrimination suit against the company. I got a call, by then at a new job, from an attorney who asked me to give a deposition in support of my former boss. I declined. Besides, the truth, as I saw it, was not going to do the boss much good anyway.

The authors of the Women's Landscape Equality (re)Solution—Gina Ford, FASLA; Jamie Maslyn Larson, ASLA; Rebecca Leonard, ASLA; and Cinda Gilliland, ASLA—committed to wide-ranging conversation, led by Steven Spears, FASLA, about their experiences as women who rose to top levels in landscape architecture offices and then left. That conversation begins on page 130. It expands on a panel discussion they held at the ASLA Annual Meeting in Philadelphia in October. Jennifer Reut, our senior editor, pushed and pulled the conversation together for print. Our women readers scarcely need telling that rising in the profession presents hazards to women that it does not present to men. Men have shown themselves to be oblivious or worse—the evidence for that can be seen in the stark gender disparities cited by the (re)Solution.

Those disparities tell the contours of where women stand in this profession. What one hears of time and again are the more direct and insidious challenges in real time, in office meetings, in studios, on faculties, on construction sites, that women encounter and that force them to decide whether to tax their energy to confront. Some women find new ways to parry the frustrations, as the four authors of the (re)Solution have done, and have the last word on the issue.



BRADFORD MCKEE  
EDITOR



PRESTIGE FIRMS. WORLD-CLASS PROJECTS. TOP OF THEIR FIELD.  
FOUR WOMEN PRINCIPALS HIT **THE BIG TIME.**

THEN THINGS CHANGED—FOR THEM, AROUND THEM.

THEY LEFT, TOOK THEMSELVES OUTSIDE TO FIND

**THE BIGGER TIME.**

HERE ARE THEIR STORIES.

WITH GINA FORD, FASLA; CINDA GILLILAND, ASLA; REBECCA LEONARD, ASLA; AND JAMIE MASLYN LARSON, ASLA

INTRODUCTION BY STEVEN SPEARS, FASLA

**REGARDLESS** of your political perspective, we can probably all agree that 2016 was an interesting year for the nation. Since then, we have seen women participating in civic action and protest in unprecedented numbers. The midterm election of 2018 resulted in a wave of firsts: a historic number of women, LGBTQ leaders, and women of color breaking onto the national scene in politics not just as candidates but as victors.

A similar shift is happening in the practice of landscape architecture. In 2016 and 2017, four women—Gina Ford, FASLA; Cinda Gilliland,

ASLA; Rebecca Leonard, ASLA; and Jamie Maslyn Larson, ASLA—all prominent, talented landscape architects and planners, broke away from their leading roles in award-winning firms to lead or start new practices. In October 2018, they held a panel discussion at the ASLA Annual Meeting on the challenges and opportunities of female leadership in the profession. At the same time, they jointly published a statement on *change.org* called the *Women's Landscape Equality (re)Solution*. The statement outlines actions for creating a completely equitable professional environment for women in landscape architecture.

I served as the moderator of their panel discussion at the ASLA meeting. As a father of an extraordinary daughter, a supporting husband, a brother to two sisters, a son, and a friend and colleague to numerous women, I know that my active participation is required to help ensure equality, not just for today but for the future.

Although this topic is not unique to our profession, we can have this discussion and lead change throughout our nation. Landscape architects and planners know the advantages of diversity. Our research and work have proven that without diver-

sity, ecosystems likely become unstable. We also know that stabilizing an ecosystem doesn't just happen. It requires active intervention.

In the following conversation, these women share courageous points of view. Their experiences deserve to be heard with open minds and with empathy. Creating a diverse and equitable ecosystem of people in our profession requires the participation of us all. ●

STEVEN SPEARS, FASLA, IS AN INDEPENDENT DESIGN CONSULTANT AND A PRINCIPAL WITH GROUNDWORK DEVELOPMENT COMPANY.

Each of you left a significant position in the last three years and started your own firm or joined a new practice. Can you talk about how that decision was made?

**GINA FORD, FASLA:** I worked at Sasaki for nearly 21 years, as a principal for 10 and on its executive committee (its highest level of leadership) for three. I truly loved the team at Sasaki and felt incredibly proud of the work we did collectively. I was lucky to be part of a generational change that put new leadership at the helm of the firm, and I worked tirelessly to earn my place there. In addition to leading a number of national award-winning projects (and being a mom!), I championed initiatives, research projects, academic connections, diversity actions, the firm's rebrand, communications, thought leadership, and strategic hiring, all of which helped to energize the practice and solidify its place in the public market as innovative, collaborative, and endlessly curious.

In 2016, some unexpected changes in the firm and my role, in particular, caused me to start soul-searching about my next stage. I wanted to be productive, also, in the face of what I could see as the bigger, broader cultural challenges ahead with the new national political situation. It became clear that the practice I imagined for the next decades of my career and the leadership role I would ideally play in it were not available to me at Sasaki. The practice I imagined needed to be created as something new. Luckily for me,

my fellow Sasaki principal and decade-long collaborator, Brie Hensold, also wanted to shape that practice, together. In 2018, we formed Agency Landscape + Planning, a mission-driven practice dedicated to work in the public sector and focused on design and planning for equity, resilience, and cultural vitality.

**CINDA GILLILAND, ASLA:** SWA was more or less my first job out of graduate school at the University of Virginia. For most of the 23 years I was there and the nine years that I was a principal, SWA provided great opportunities for professional growth. Besides designing and building some great projects, I was engaged in various explorations of ways to enhance office culture, culminating in 2012 when I started and led SWA's Social Impact Design Initiative. I worked with the younger staff in all seven offices to establish and expand the initiative. It was rewarding and fed my inner disruptor. Along the way I also realized that I wanted to be part of shaping a future for the profession that was more creative, effective, and mission driven by being more inclusive. By early 2016, the accommodations I'd made to fit into the culture were becoming increasingly uncomfortable, confining, and, frankly, unproductive. So, in mid-2016, I made the leap and, along with my husband, Larry Reed, also a principal at SWA, formed Reed Gilliland. It was, in many ways, painful to leave a community in which I had invested so much time and energy, but definitely worth it. We are enjoying a more hands-on relationship



#### GINA FORD, FASLA

**FIRM:**  
PRINCIPAL AND COFOUNDER,  
AGENCY LANDSCAPE + PLANNING,  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

**YEARS IN THE PROFESSION:**  
22

**CORE STRENGTHS:**  
PUBLIC PARKS, PUBLIC SPACE, WATERFRONTS,  
RESILIENCY, PARK SYSTEM PLANNING, AND  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:**  
CHICAGO RIVERWALK, THE LAWN ON D,  
TOM HANAFAN RIVER'S EDGE PARK, ITHACA  
COMMONS, CEDAR RAPIDS FLOOD RECOVERY,  
REBUILD BY DESIGN, THE HIGH LINE CANAL,  
THE SARASOTA BAYFRONT MASTER PLAN,  
AND THE WHITE RIVER VISION PLAN (PLANNING).

with our projects and are working on evolving approaches to creating an equitable and empowering work environment.

**JAMIE MASLYN LARSON, ASLA:** In 2016, after the second phase of Governors Island opened and I'd logged almost 20 years in the profession, I realized that I had achieved this pinnacle of success that I worked so hard for—great projects, great firm, great title—I had it all! But during that same time there were some suggestions to change my role at West 8 that I didn't agree with. It was a gut-wrenching period for me. I had invested a lot into West 8 New York and had never envisioned



**FAR LEFT**  
Gina Ford, FASLA, and  
Brie Hensold during  
a design charrette for  
the High Line Canal  
Framework Plan  
in 2017.

**LEFT**  
One of the selfies  
for which Ford is  
renowned, this one  
from a construction  
visit to the Chicago  
Riverwalk in 2016.

an alternate future. I just wanted to get my mojo back. So I resigned without a clear path, but with a firm belief that my portfolio, my experience, and my relationships would create the future. I worked at Wagner Hodgson in the Hudson Valley, which reignited the joys of drawing, design, and a “yes-and” studio culture. I reconceptualized this stage of my career as my “second act,” which opened my mind up to new relationships and ways to apply my talents. I'm now at BIG NYC, a firm with which I thoroughly enjoyed collaborating when I was at West 8. This position gets me back into a multidisciplinary environment again, which feeds my creativity and desire to be challenged. I'm less interested in pre-scripted plans these days. New opportunities and ideas come to you when you exploit your passion and follow your heart.

**REBECCA LEONARD, ASLA:** I was at Design Workshop for 12 years—a principal for nine years, partner for seven years, and president for the last three. Although my previous work had stretched from the private to the public sectors and across

COURTESY HIGH LINE CANAL CONSERVANCY, LEFT; COURTESY GINA FORD, FASLA, RIGHT

# “SO A DUAL TRACK IN PROFESSIONAL GROWTH EMERGES: MEN BECOME DESIGNERS, AND WOMEN BECOME ‘**DESIGN SUPPORT.**’”

—JAMIE MASLYN LARSON, ASLA

many project types, I was able to help the firm pivot during the recession from mostly private development to a balance of private and public work. We survived the lean years in part by retooling to be competitive on public parks, streets, and civic urban design. I worked tirelessly to demonstrate the firm's teachings of lifelong learning and servant leadership by seeking ever more training and certifications. I promoted the firm as a speaker at national conferences, an author of national publications, and a leader of national professional organizations. I did all of that while leading multiple offices, mentoring the firm's emerging leaders, leading state and national award-winning projects, supporting a husband who was also a leader in the profession, and mothering an amazing daughter.

I'm going to do something women don't do often: I'm going to pause here and say that I was proud of everything I had achieved. However, as I did more and more, and mentored other women doing more and more, I worried about a profession where women rarely made it to the top and, when they did, they found it difficult to stay there. This level of heart and soul should come with gender

parity and equal opportunity, equal pay, and plain old courtesy. In 2016, it became clear that if I were to continue to grow, I needed to find a place where I could focus on the things that mattered to my work. From that realization, Lionheart was born, a place where brave and curious people can create the places we love.

You all met in 2018 through various professional channels. What were some of the conversations like that led to the panel, “Positive Changes in the Landscape: A Discussion on Female Leadership and Courage,” and eventually, the Women's Landscape Equality (re)Solution?

**GILLILAND:** The amazing thing about the series of conversations that Gina, Jamie, Rebecca, Steven, and I shared leading up to our ASLA panel presentation was the realization that the ideas and aspirations for the evolution of the profession were not unique to me. Both the shared vision and the great relief in learning that the challenges and obstacles I encountered were, likewise, not mine alone, have been both reas-

suring and affirming. I think all of us, feeling similarly, realized not only were we strengthened by knowing each other and each of our stories, but that we wanted to “pay that forward” and put our hard-earned wisdom to the service of those who follow. I wish I had had the kind of female mentors who would have made our conversations less revelatory. Over the course of our preparations for ASLA we realized that we would like to help create a different reality for the next generations of landscape architects.

**MASLYN:** We had about five group phone calls, an hour or two, where Gina, Rebecca, Cinda, and I would share on specific topics, like “ways we have changed our design process” or “what does work-life balance mean now.” Steven would listen and take notes. Steven had a big task: to assimilate our hours-long dialogue into a broad narrative/introduction at the panel. He was always saying, “This is your venue; it needs to be from your voices.” He also tethered us back to the male representation in our profession. We all always felt men should be participating and indeed, leading in this effort, too.

Can you talk about some challenges women face in the practice of landscape architecture that directly led to the development of the (re)Solution?

**MASLYN:** Most of us got into this profession to be designers. In school, every student is the lead designer of their project. But once we are working at a firm, women (because women are often good collaborators and team players) can get boxed into the mundane rather than artistic tasks. So a dual track in professional growth emerges: Men become designers, and women become “design support.” As a result, we have to prove ourselves to get a designer role and work even harder to have our leadership recognized on par if we aren't the “lead designer.” I've heard firm leaders say “Our firm is more than 50 percent women. We've done a good job with equity.” But what percentage of those women are admin or so-called design support? Take a look at the teams leading nationally significant competitions or highly visible projects and ask yourself: Are women in the *lead* design role? Or worse—*where* are the women on those teams?





**RIGHT**  
Rebecca Leonard, ASLA, leads a design charrette for a new town center in August 2018.

**OPPOSITE**  
Leonard assesses the existing conditions of a mine land reclamation project in Austin, Texas.



#### REBECCA LEONARD, ASLA

##### FIRM:

FOUNDER AND CEO OF LIONHEART, AUSTIN, TEXAS

##### YEARS IN THE PROFESSION:

24

##### CORE STRENGTHS:

REDEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC SPACE, STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT, VISIONING, STRATEGIC PLANNING, AND FORM-BASED CODES.

##### CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

LAFITTE GREENWAY IN NEW ORLEANS (FOR IMPACT); HOUSTON ARBORETUM AND NATURE CENTER (FOR BEAUTY AND ELEGANCE); DESTINATION BELL BOULEVARD IN CEDAR PARK, TEXAS (FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION); AND AVON TOWN CENTER IN AVON, COLORADO (FOR LEARNING CURVE ACCOMPLISHED).

There is also this pervasive myth pushed in our schools, media, and awards programs that good design firms are associated with a strong, singular designer personality. A lot of projects rely on fund-raising as well, and donors like a recognizable “brand.” These days, that brand is typically a man, a white man, and people don’t realize the biases they have toward favoring men as designers and women as not-designers. Not many of these guys behave poorly toward women, but some get caught up in the adoration and world of power that surrounds them. Their egos are big but fragile, so they can be manipulative, have bad tempers, and exploit the good will of women and men on their team. Leaders within firms have to say “No, we won’t accept this bad behavior any longer.” You can’t expect young staff to defend themselves because they are vulnerable and need a job.

**LEONARD:** Women are more frequently in two-career households than men (nine in 10 women versus five in 10 men). Dual-career families require more flexibility, like working from home or during off hours. Men and women in dual-career families perform equal amounts of work, but it

may not happen in the office and most certainly doesn’t happen on a predictable schedule. There is a pervasive bias that when we are not at social events, we are not approachable, or if we are not in the office, we are not working. We become saddled with guilt, and also judged for being out of the office, not present at social outings, or too exhausted to serve others as they desire. In the profession of landscape architecture, clients don’t stay in an eight-to-five box. We are expected to be there when we are needed. Office socializing rarely happens in that box either. We are expected to be there or else we are “cold,” “hard to get to know,” or “hard to connect with.” Why not allow employees the flexibility to tend to their families or their own wellness needs during those core hours without guilt and without bias?

**FORD:** As female designers, I think we see the world of landscape architecture differently from our male counterparts. No one is right or wrong, just different. Women’s lived experience of the world might inspire ideas that lead them to question or challenge the way things have been done in the past, for instance, about what makes a space comfortable and inviting, what kinds of initiatives

a practice should invest in, or the ways design teams are formed or led. When this difference is embraced, new paths are forged. When it is not, women must choose: conform to the existing values and methods (that often don’t quite feel right) or do the extra work of educating, defending, or explaining new ideas.

**GILLILAND:** All of these experiences, and many other issues, add up to a sense that we are outsiders rather than insiders trying to fit into the preexisting culture of the practice, or encouraging the

firm to “lean in” to new ideas from new voices. As proverbial team players, we all have this lingering question: If we just worked harder or were more cooperative, could we have been understood, heard, and become an insider? Unfortunately, more often than not, our efforts to work through these issues ultimately branded us as more of a thorn in the side of our male colleagues than as valued contributors. We become disenfranchised, demotivated, and separate from the team. This takes a lot of energy away from what should be the main mission: creating inspiring design!

**FORD:** What Cinda is saying here is so critical. All talent, but particularly creative design talent, needs to have its ideas encouraged and ambition harnessed. I knew there was a new model of practice that could test more inclusive and relevant ways of working, one that celebrated being a woman as a strategic advantage, broke down traditional hierarchies and boundaries, and brought sharper focus to the challenge of public practice. For me, great ideas are energizing and urgent. They need everybody involved to be committed 100 percent. That sometimes just isn’t possible within the

“I WANT MEN TO KNOW THAT NOT JUST SUPPORTING WOMEN, BUT **ADVOCATING FOR WOMEN** MAKES EVERYONE’S LIVES BETTER.”

—REBECCA LEONARD, ASLA

structure of a large organization. Or, more important, it can take a lot of time and emotional labor to make a case for it. I wanted to channel my time and energy into making a new business model, not selling it. As companies try to retain top talent, and especially female talent who may want to break the mold in any number of ways, the willingness to remove barriers to experimental and provocative ideas is critical.

That’s an important point. Your focus is gender equity, but can you say more about the lack of diversity generally and how this effort can be more intersectional and inclusive?

**FORD:** We had a lot of discussion about this and received some pretty direct feedback that the (re)Solution should address diversity more broadly. We all feel strongly that embracing and nurturing diversity in all its forms will enable the profession to address more diverse constituents, give us a greater talent pool, create more relevant strategies, and ultimately lead to new forms of design excellence.

**MASLYN:** If we don’t adapt to be more inclusive, our profession will struggle to be relevant. Said another way, how can our profession really “get” the challenges of women and diverse communities? Empathy helps, but you need firsthand, authentic voices to participate in the design process. Design firms sometimes hire a liaison or input specialist to get ideas from constituents, but this is a *separate act* from design. Diversity and divergent thinking need to be absorbed in the firm philosophy, its design process, the makeup of the firm, and daily acts within a practice. This is where I’ve learned from younger people: They are anti-hierarchy and more diverse. I hope to see more collaborative processes emerge to solve problems or team up on projects. Less pyramidal/corporate and more like a solar system of firms and individuals with a range of talents, skills, genders, races, ages, ethnicities, and classes.

What do you want male colleagues to take away from this endeavor?

**FORD:** Practice leaders (still predominantly men) need to see and truly believe that the playing field

is uneven for women and people of color. I’ve always advocated for sponsorship for emerging leaders, both male and female. More than casual mentoring, sponsorship is the hands-on active cultivation and direct advocacy for the advancement of talent. Sponsorship seems to be the magic secret sauce for the rare women and people of color who make it to the top. Where it happens more “naturally” for white men, there are many unspoken and sensitive cultural barriers to it happening for “others” at all.

A former colleague told me once that a proposed sponsorship program for women would be giving them an “unfair advantage,” missing the point entirely that a program might be the only way to ensure women get the same sponsorship men get already. There were times the sponsorship I received, which was critical to my success, was called out as unusual, unfair, or somehow suspect while the same support for my male counterparts went unnoticed or was attributed to their hard work and talent. These experiences speak volumes about the invisible and pervasive power of bias and discrimination. All this despite so much

data and research supporting the many ways bias and lack of sponsorship hold women back from achieving their full potential.

**MASLYN:** I am very, very selective about investing in relationships now. That investment is based on actions, not just words. Listen, in my 21-year career, like many women, I’ve been manipulated, diminished, exploited, hit on, threatened, name called, ignored, and degraded in a professional context by probably a dozen or so male colleagues, clients, and collaborators. Those guys do not define my experience of men in the profession. Many more wonderful men have supported and mentored me without any expectations. But that bad behavior holds all of us, women *and* men, back from achieving our potential. The change we are asking for is not the emasculation of men, and men of strong character get that and support this effort. The problem is that some men are not willing to listen or grow or evolve. They have a safe haven and will do anything to protect their illusion of power. It will change, though. I’m confident of that. We will persist.



**LEONARD:** I want men to know that not just supporting women, but advocating for women makes everyone's lives better. You may not have had a dual-career household, but the landscape architects today do. You may be past the point that diversity can have great benefits to you personally, but your sons and daughters aren't.

**GILLILAND:** We are all privileged in some way, but the wielding of privilege can be an insidious thing, hurting both the victim and the perpetrator. I would want my male colleagues to build their awareness of the great, and daily, advantage that their privilege gives them and to understand the hopes, dreams, and talents of the "others" among them. I want each of us to become more conscious of the ways that we can put our privilege in the service of good.

I would want my male colleagues to think about if the "really good" reasons they tell themselves about why it's okay, even good, to discount a fellow professional, or anyone really, are truly well-grounded in fact, or could be the result of bias. I am, frankly, angry about the time that I have wasted "proving" myself.

Where did you look for models and inspiration when you were establishing your new practice?

**LEONARD:** Being a multidiscipline designer, my role models come from a variety of disciplines outside landscape architecture. And, because I am

in a dual-career family with another recognized landscape architect, I find myself drawn to designer couples that thrive under the accompanying challenges. Denise Scott Brown, Louise Blanchard Bethune, Marion Mahony Griffin, Ray Eames, Eileen Gray, and Jeanne-Claude Denat de Guillebon all created amazing works while blazing new trails and supporting strong design partners. The strength I gain from these legends makes me more resilient through the storms I've experienced in my career. I've also been blessed with many, many mentors, teachers, and advocates over the years. To name a couple, Joe Porter and Don Ensign, the founders of Design Workshop, were instrumental in developing my approach to work: (1) Do the right thing first instead of mitigating for it later; (2) Live and design with a sense of abundance, not scarcity; and (3) Work hard, but have fun!

**GILLILAND:** Through volunteer work on the board of our local arts center I have been lucky to get to know one of Ray and Charles Eames's granddaughters. Not only is she wonderfully creative, but I have also enjoyed learning from her about her grandparents. The practice they created seamlessly integrated life and work. Fun and serious work were inseparable. Their home was a maker space as well as a venue to prototype new ideas. Their grandchildren were welcomed into the process. While in many ways practice today is very different, there are current examples of practices where work is about life is about design. I am in awe, for example, of Kate Orff and



**ABOVE**  
Cinda Gilliland, ASLA, dips her feet at Grand Central Creative Campus in 2013.

**ABOVE RIGHT**  
Gilliland draws in an airport bar en route to China.



**CINDA GILLILAND, ASLA**

**FIRM:**  
PRINCIPAL AND PRESIDENT, REED GILLILAND, PETALUMA, CALIFORNIA

**YEARS IN THE PROFESSION:**  
26

**CORE STRENGTHS:**  
PUBLIC REALM, CAMPUSES, URBAN ECOSYSTEMS, WORKPLACE, AND RURAL RESIDENTIAL.

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:**  
GRAND CENTRAL CREATIVE CAMPUS, GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA; SANTA ROSA COURTHOUSE SQUARE DESIGN COMPETITION, SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA; AND SHEN CHANG CHENG, SHENZHEN, CHINA.

the mission-driven, inclusive, and collaborative model for a practice that she has developed in a seemingly very instinctual way.

**FORD:** In my career, consistent with the lack of female leaders at the highest level of most practices, most of my professional mentors and sponsors were men. By contrast, most of my academic mentors were women: Dorothée Imbert, Scheri Fultineer, Kim Wilson, Stephanie Rolley, Thaïsa Way, Kristina Hill, Beth Meyer, Roxi Thoren, Anita Berrizbeitia, Elizabeth Mossop, Elen Deming, Hope Hasbrouck, and many others. The impact these women are having on landscape architecture is the great unspoken revolution of this time in our profession. They are, in thousands of ways big and small, with every student they touch, every process they rethink, and every value they enact in the pedagogy, collectively disrupting the future of practice to make it both more inclusive and uncomfortable (in the best possible way). That thought inspires me every day.

**MASLYN:** My models have been generous in guiding me over the years, without expectation of any-

thing in return. Kim Mathews and Signe Nielsen (MNLA) have shown grit and grace in the New York City design world, Deborah Marton (New York Restoration Project) is politically and intellectually brilliant, and Annette Wilkus (SiteWorks) invented her firm to make designers' projects perform better and last longer. If these women alone were running the world, I'd sleep soundly every night! There is also a whole younger generation of women that I used to work with who are killing it: Claire Agre (Unknown Studio), Jennifer Birkeland (Cornell University), Lisa DuRussel (Penn State), Julie Gawendo (CMG), Lauren Micir (AECOM), and Rachel Laszlo Tait (University of British Columbia). These are just some of the future women leaders to pay attention to. I can't wait to see what they do!



# “WHERE A PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PROCESS ASKS FOR 25 PERCENT MINORITY OR WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PARTICIPATION, WE SHOOT FOR 75 PERCENT (OR 100 PERCENT!).”

—GINA FORD, FASLA

What are some of the most innovative, concrete actions you are trying to bring into your practice to ensure equality?

**GILLILAND:** Since starting Reed Gilliland I have (mostly) enjoyed the sometimes gradual, sometimes sudden shedding of assumptions and practices baked into a decades-old practice: assumptions like the idea that working long hours is proof of passion and dedication, or that design is a top-down kind of process. I so love the name that Gina and her partner, Brie, have chosen for their firm: Agency. I want to apply that term to the internal operations of our practice. We are currently hiring and are specifically looking for in-house collaborators, people who are interested in participating in decisions on both the long-term and short-term goals of our firm, about what projects to take on and why, and in having transparent discussions about fees, staffing, and schedules. We allow for flexible workdays and recently instituted a practice of paying everyone on an hourly basis, including paying overtime. I am appreciating the freedom to take on work that is aligned with my values.

**FORD:** At Agency Landscape + Planning, we are simultaneously embracing boundless design and leveraging our privilege. Letting go of traditional ideas about hierarchy and boundary allows us to form wildly diverse and creative project teams. Where a public procurement process asks for 25 percent minority or women-owned business enterprise participation, we shoot for 75 percent (or 100 percent!). We shine a light on the great work of women, people of color, and LGBTQ leaders in every way we can (project teaming, communications, social media sharing, honors and awards nominations, etc.). We prove in the work that community engagement and design excellence are mutually reinforcing ideas, not an either/or choice. Brie and I, along with our incredible team, commit to a practice fueled by our shared passion and values. This means we are working in cities, on public work, and with high-need communities. We also are helping others start their own practices by sharing business strategies and the lessons we've learned.

**LEONARD:** Lionheart may not have all the overhead and established systems in place that the

## The Women's Landscape Equality (re)Solution

October 21, 2018

Women are underrepresented as leaders in the profession of landscape architecture. They are:

**35.7%**

ASLA Members

**30.4%**

Principals in Landscape Architecture Firms

**20.2%**

Fellows of the ASLA<sup>1</sup>

Women landscape architects are paid less for the same work.

Women in architecture and engineering earn

**82%**

of men's median weekly earnings for full-time and salary workers.<sup>2</sup>

Women landscape architects are more frequently in two career households than men landscape architects. Double career families require more flexibility.

Of the two-parent households where the mother works full time, only

**11.5%**

of them have a dad that is unemployed or works part time.<sup>3</sup>

Businesses with women in leadership are more profitable than organizations with less diversity. Diverse organizations prove to be more effective.

Companies with at least

**30%**

female leaders are

**15%**

more profitable than companies that don't have that level of diversity in leadership.<sup>4</sup>

Bucking the trends of the time, women have been leaders in landscape architecture since the late 1800s. Beatrix Jones Farrand, Marian Cruger Coffin, and Ellen McGowan Shipman gave birth to the modern profession of landscape architecture. Since then, the profession has been dominated by men and has become a challenging environment for women to thrive as leaders. One hundred fifty years is too long to wait for gender parity in the profession.

The time is now!

Landscape architects—as observers, protectors, designers, and celebrants of diverse ecosystems—know better.

We know the advantages of diversity.

We know that without diversity, ecosystems become unstable.

We know that restoring diversity doesn't “just happen.” Active intervention is required.

We acknowledge that authentic diversity includes the voices of all underrepresented groups; however, this resolution focuses on the unique situation of women.

Therefore, let it be known that we make the following commitments:

As designers:

1. We condemn inequality wherever we see it.
2. We will not wait another moment for permission to claim equality for all landscape architects.
3. We believe in and champion social justice in all landscape architecture work.
4. We listen and learn from perspectives that are different from our own and make places that respond to those views.
5. We ensure the voices of women in our allied professions are heard.

As leaders of organizations:

6. We will do more than just mentor women landscape architects—we will champion their ascension to leadership in our firms.
7. We provide all employees equal compensation for equal work based on job content, not job titles.
8. We create flexible work environments needed by all landscape architects in the age of two-career households, long commutes, and changing gender roles.

As leaders in the profession:

9. We recognize the diverse and rich contributions of women landscape architects in works, leadership, management, knowledge, and service.
10. We seek out diversity to fill leadership positions in the profession and embrace all the ways it will lead to greater and new forms of design excellence.

Sources: (1) ASLA; (2) Bureau of Labor Statistics; (3) Pew Research Center; <http://www.glassdoor.com/Research/2013/11/14/How-diversity-promotes-innovation-and-profitability-when-both-work?ci=11>; (4) Diversity Solutions for International Economic Impact; <http://www.diversitysolutions.org/08-14.pdf>

TO SIGN AND SHARE THE (RE)SOLUTION, GO TO [HTTP://BIT.LY/LARESOLUTION](http://bit.ly/LARESOLUTION).





#### JAMIE MASLYN LARSON, ASLA

**FIRM:**  
DIRECTOR OF LANDSCAPE, BIG NYC

**YEARS IN THE PROFESSION:**  
22

**CORE STRENGTHS:**  
PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN,  
CULTURAL LANDSCAPES, MIXED USE  
DEVELOPMENT, AND MASTER PLANNING.

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:**  
GOVERNORS ISLAND, NEW YORK, AND A  
STRING OF PROJECTS IN MIAMI BEACH OVER  
THE YEARS: SOUNDSCAPE, SOUTH POINTE PARK,  
MIAMI BEACH CONVENTION CENTER, 87 PARK,  
AND NORTH SHORE PARK.

big firms do, but the asset we have in leaps and bounds is flexibility. Established firms have legacy, traditional benefits, and find it hard to respond to the needs of today's designers because it is something they would have to add to their already high cost of benefits. We have the opportunity to go right for the challenging benefits first: discretionary paid time off and paid parental leave. The team at Lionheart tells me that the flexibility these benefits support better addresses the changing workforce. Where established firms have legacy equipment and enterprise software, we can work from the cloud and jump straight to the state of the art. All our technology decisions are made by asking, "Does this support flexibility and remote working?" For now, we are enjoying the benefits of having a small pirate ship instead of a huge battleship.

**MASLYN:** We will never diversify the profession unless we make education affordable or allow entry levels to make a decent living. I didn't come from money, so if it weren't for a decent paycheck, I wouldn't be in this profession. Another concrete action I do is call everyone in my firm a "colleague," not "staff." Staff sounds like a module

or unit, not a human being with whom you collaborate. And I insist that my younger colleagues do not call me their "boss." If you think of yourself as a boss and not a colleague, then you're focused on the power dynamics, not on building upon unique strengths of your team.

People with power may not realize how important it is to be kind to each other. This is not innovative, but essential. I interviewed at a firm right after West 8, and one of the firm leaders walked into the room, with his colleagues present, and the first words out of his mouth were not "hello" or "nice to see you," but instead he made a snide comment about me reading *LAM*, as if it were uncool. In that instant, I knew I wouldn't work there, where someone would mock me in front of

**ABOVE LEFT**  
Jamie Maslyn Larson, ASLA, on the roof of the Salt Lake City Public Library during construction.

**INSET, RIGHT**  
Maslyn with a view of Governors Island in the background.

ED MASLYN, LEFT; DEE MASLYN, RIGHT

others. Imagine how he would behave in a stressful situation. Being kind may not be cool, but it leaves me happy and with a clear conscience.

At the panel you led at the last ASLA meeting, you launched the Women's Landscape Equality (re)Solution. Can you share some of the feedback from that session and why you felt this was the necessary next step?

**LEONARD:** We were very interested in using our newfound friendship and openness to help others. We wanted to create change, not just rehash the past. I personally felt horrible that I had allowed the narrative of my departure from Design Workshop to gravitate so far from the truth. Many people defaulted to the old, "she wants better work-life balance" or "she wants to be with her daughter more." One friend/client called to express sympathy because he had heard about my divorce. (In fact, Steven and I are celebrating our 20th wedding anniversary this December.) Others said that it was because I couldn't keep up with all the travel. There was so much misinformation floating around, but all of it was about some perceived personal issue causing me to retreat. At the time, it was easier to allow people to jump to those kinds of conclusions, but I knew in my heart that it couldn't have been further from the truth, and it wasn't helping the next woman.

We thought about what could bring awareness to the issues and lay wide open a challenge to others

in our profession. The (re)Solution is just one of the tricks up our sleeves to make that happen. Once the idea came to us, it took very little time to write. We looked at the Declaration of Independence, the Landscape Architecture Foundation's New (and old) Landscape Declaration, and several other game-changing documents for inspiration. We wanted it to be short and direct and something that could be printed as a poster and hung up in the office, or printed small and kept in your journal to reflect on daily. Its message was simple: This profession's attempt at equality is underwhelming, but it will take all of us to make a change.

**FORD:** To prepare for our ASLA panel, we had a series of topical conference calls, e.g., "What are you doing in your new practice to nurture talent?" or "What would you tell the next generation?" There was an early (three-hour-long!) phone call, "What happened?" where we shared the intimate details of our stories: how we came to our former practices, how we grew and learned there, the (amazing!) work we led, and the events that led to our decisions to leave. That call was like an earthquake for me. You could almost just change the names. The stories were that similar. It was empowering to find this common experience.

This discovery also raised a profound question for us, especially as staunch advocates for women and the next generation of practitioners: If these four avid mountain climbers could make it to the summit and not be there long enough to truly



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—CINDA GILLILAND, ASLA

enjoy or, better yet, reframe the view, where is the prospect for gender equality? We wanted to offer something in response, something concrete and clear. Rebecca suggested a resolution and then wrote a brilliant first draft. It felt like a necessary step to take it out of the realm of conversation and into the world of action.

**MASLYN:** Gina’s right. We prepared so hard for the ASLA panel and became lifelong friends in the process. When I was going through my departure at West 8, I was ashamed and didn’t think anyone could really understand my pain. It was seriously liberating to find out this group of strong, high-achieving women shared common challenges and feelings. On one phone call we said, “If we had known each other when we were going through our firm breakups, what might be different today?” The (re)Solution was to create a

way for people to know that there is a support network out there. Anyone can contact us. Really. We want to be here for our fellow women, because together we make this profession even stronger.

This was all happening around the implosion of Harvey Weinstein and #MeToo. I realized how sexual discrimination is different than sexual harassment. It’s not easy to pin down and hard to identify sexual discrimination behaviors, let alone record for legal recourse. Even in the mid-1990s, I understood sexual harassment. It first occurred when I was an intern at a private firm. At my going-away party, a married colleague (who was an associate) said to me, “Wouldn’t it be great to fuck?” I laughed and said, “No.” The next day, he walked in and actually apologized, but I said, “That was unacceptable.” He still works in landscape architecture today. Sexual discrimina-



**LEFT**  
Gina Ford, Jamie Maslyn Larson, and Cinda Gilliland at the 2018 ASLA conference in Philadelphia.

tion is more psychological and subtle. One who experiences it may feel, *If I just work harder, I will prove that I am good enough.* Or they might be framed as “not a team player” if they don’t fall in line. Sometimes we as women do as much work and are just not recognized. The expectations can be higher for women. Of course, no one thinks they discriminate. We offer excuses to the firms we work for: Perhaps this is just a misalignment of vision and values? Maybe it is just a bad fit?

**GILLILAND:** No, as Jamie says, no one thinks they discriminate, but the subtle and pervasive ways that the voice of the “other” is discounted are rampant, and because of the subtlety this is so hard to counteract. I also don’t think most women really come up against the magnitude of the problem early in their career. It’s not until you are clearly “a force” that the effects of the biases

begin to really matter. And as Michelle Obama articulates in her book, *Becoming*, once you are put in the convenient “angry woman” box, the harder you try to find your way out of it, the more you reinforce the label, and the more you actually fulfill it: You become angry!

After the panel I had a former classmate tell me how much the honesty of what we had to say spoke to her, and to her experience. It was clear that she was having the kind of aha! moment that each of us had in the course of sharing our stories with each other, and that felt good! Having no one who sees those subtle and not-so-subtle slights can be disorienting, crazy making, and is certainly disempowering. Other female landscape architects have reached out to find out how they can help us make a difference, to build and expand on what we’ve started. ●

COURTESY GINA FORD, FASLA