Watch the World Burn
Keny Okigbo, ASLA - Past Assoc. Advisory Committee Chair

According to Greek lore, Prometheus stole fire from the gods and shared it with man. According to Greek lore, Prometheus stole fire from the gods and shared it with man. Over the years fire has been interpreted often as a metaphor for knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Prometheus was under no obligation, but shared the flame because he saw the good it would bring to humanity. His decision was not made with foresight, and he paid the price for it. He was chained to a rock for 9 years and, as the story goes, an eagle every day came to peck at his eyes. It seems evident that time after time black art, space, and people have been systematically removed from the shared narrative. But I haven’t completely sunk into pessimism just yet. I have a feeling that things are going to change. As landscape architects we design the public realm - which we are seeing being commandeered and misused for the murder of our common man. I keep thinking about these articles I’ve read, these articles I’ve read, these articles I’ve read, these articles I’ve read. These same writings ignite a slight spark in me because they are more complete continuations of our shared narrative. Professor Kofi Boone continues adding to the story in his Ground Up Journal article, “Un-Making Architecture.” He lays out 8 propositions which we should each take to heart. I encourage you to read these and read. If I could make a request of emerging professionals, it would be to be like Prometheus. Dive into the subject areas you are passionate about and share them with people around you. Advocate on behalf of the silenced voice. Venture to take the road less travelled by learning the fuller version of the story.

If our role is to design the public realm and to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our fellow humans, then it is also our responsibility to be cognizant of the systemic influences which direct our decision making. Implicit bias, sexism, racism, and machismo can and do permeate our designs. We have to go beyond writing “this space was designed for all people to come together” in our design briefs. We have to go beyond writing “this space was designed for all people to come together” in our design briefs. In the think tank states, “Buildings are not just buildings. Buildings respond to the political foundations of the institutions that fund, envision, and desire them. Buildings are physical manifestations of the ideologies they serve.” Reading this, I have to draw the conclusion that landscapes and urban environments are often under the same misgivings. The Human Rights Defender and Environmentalist Bob Moses (1926–2020), by Vijay Davis and after internalizing the history of Tulsa’s Black Wall Street, shared this sentiment. He said, “We have never been able to build great cities, invent new technologies, and discover lifesaving medicine. Heracles. The second, I would argue, is more important. Because they had fire, humans were able to build great cities, invent new technologies, and discover lifesaving medicine. Few of us think about the extreme misuse of the spaces we design, but if you subscribe to the manifestos of the Young Turk Think Tank then our designs are usually ends, but there are two more parts to it. The first: He is eventually saved by the hero Zeus discovered the treachery and made an example of him. Prometheus was bound by Zeus and left to die on Mount Caucasus. But his life was not maters. It seemed evident that time after time black art, space, and people have been systematically removed from the shared narrative. But I haven’t completely sunk into pessimism just yet. I have a feeling that things are going to change.

Design for the New Emerging Professionals Honor
Earlier this year, ASLA announced the Emerging Professional Medal, a new honor that recognizes the outstanding and innovative contributions of emerging leaders in the field. In support of this new honor, we are launching a medal design contest! The purpose of this contest is to design a medal for the inaugural ASLA Emerging Professionals Honor. The winning design of this medal will have a long-lasting impact on the field, and engaging in these conversations, I have never been more interested in learning where funding dollars for projects come from. It would be disingenuous of me to not talk about the second half of the tale of Prometheus. Zeuss discovered the treachery and made an example of him. Prometheus was bound by Zeus and left to die on Mount Caucasus. But his life was not maters. It seemed evident that time after time black art, space, and people have been systematically removed from the shared narrative. But I haven’t completely sunk into pessimism just yet. I have a feeling that things are going to change.

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