# Daniels Radio EP 2

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0:00:08.8 Speaker 1: Hello and welcome to the second episode of the Daniels Radio podcast. This episode's theme is Women in Design. Highlighting narratives of the intersectional female experience at Daniels and more broadly in the field of design. For me, one of the first things that came to mind when I decided to be part of this podcast was addressing the simplistic view of gender inherent in the name Women in Design. This name neglects to address a wide range of gender-based issues such as the experience of trans and gender queer folk. I believe that feminism must always strive to be intersectional in nature and must include a wide variety of gender identities as well as address the intersection of gender with other equity issues such as race and class.

0:00:54.8 Speaker 1: Our podcast today will include four segments by four student groups from within the Daniels Faculty. We will start off with a mini-segment from Project Get Home Safe. A student design group that I'm a part of, whose working on addressing the gendered issues of night safety through community informed practices. Next, we will hear from Making a Difference, a Daniels-based student club that is working to create a community and provide a safe space for women and non-binary folk to have conversations about how gender affects their experience in the architecture and arts fields. The next segment was created by two Masters of Landscape students, Louisa Kennett and Allison Smith, which features an interview with a recent graduate from the Master's program in which they discuss their experience at Daniels, female designers who inspire them, and their experience working in the field. The final segment is a round table discussion between four former and current students of the Master's program structured around five critical questions about their intersectional experiences with the academic and professional environment. I'm really excited about the variety of voices we have on this episode today and can't wait to get this conversation started.

[music]

0:02:12.5 Speaker 2: Hey, my name is Aisling Beers, and I use she/her pronouns.

0:02:17.9 Speaker 3: Hi, I'm Xavier Fox and I go by he/him.

0:02:20.7 Speaker 4: Hi, I'm Maya. I use she/her pronouns. We are all undergraduate students studying architecture at the Daniels Faculty, specializing in design, and together we make up Project Get Home Safe.

0:02:32.6 S1: We're working in collaboration on a project for Reza Nik in his class Guided Distractions III to explore through experimentation, safety of women, trans and gender non-binary folk in the context of the urban night.

0:02:45.7 Speaker 2: Particularly, we are focused on the act of walking. I'm also using these experiments to field my research for my undergraduate thesis on the same topic.

0:02:55.3 Speaker 4: Our research was in part inspired by the incidents of gender-based violence that occurred this summer in Toronto, predominantly in the West End. We acknowledge that these issues of night safety are acts of femicide, and our response has been focused on centering the voices of feminized people in order to accurately inform our design solutions.

0:03:15.2 Speaker 3: Our response has been inspired as well by another outcome of this summer being the informal typologies of street-side patios that have emerged as a dining solution for the COVID-19 pandemic. Our main objective is to increase feelings of safety in the urban residential environment, allowing marginalized individuals a greater right to the city. If you wanna take a look into the incidents this summer, I'd recommend the TO West End Community Forum on Instagram. We've concentrated much of our efforts exploring the residential neighborhoods, which as a result of zoning by-laws lack much commercial opportunity. Because of this, these neighborhoods become isolating at night and effectively materializes dead zones with limited human activity, especially throughout the pandemic. Through the personal experience of my friends and peers and participant feedback, we found that this lack of human presence make these spaces most threatening.

0:04:03.3 S1: In my thesis, I have been focusing on creating safer networks in these residential fabrics and have explored the reintroduction of former corner commercial spaces as a way to bring passive surveillance and activity to these areas. In the experiments with Maya and Xavier, we have been exploring guerilla interventions to replicate what an influx of people may do for these spaces. Through these experiments, we have focused on using community-based research to address these issues in the experiences of women and gender queer folk. We believe that centering the voices of those who have first-hand experience is the best way to create community-based solutions. This is really what we see as the future of design practices. In any designed intervention, the primary concern should be listening to and accurately addressing and respecting the individuals, the space will serve. Design should to be focused on serving the needs of people, especially those who have been marginalized in our society, and not just for aesthetic purposes.

0:05:03.7 S2: The audio piece we are about to share with you came from an open call submission we put on our Instagrams asking for voice recordings from women, trans and non-binary folk to share their answer to the question we posed: What comes to mind when you think about walking alone at night? While we were thrilled by the numbers of responses we got from our community who were willing to share their thoughts and stories with us, it also reinforced the importance of having these conversations amongst each other, as it became so apparent how many of us have and continue to experience similar feelings when alone at night. We hope that through further sharing the sound piece, we will continue to expand this conversation within your homes and amongst your community.

0:05:43.3 S5: When I think of walking...

0:05:45.2 S6: When I think about walking alone at night...

0:05:45.9 S7: What comes to mind when you think about walking alone at night?

0:05:48.3 S8: Not do it. Avoid walking alone at night at all costs. It's not safe.

0:05:52.0 S9: Don't even consider it, really. If it's nighttime, Stay inside.

0:05:56.3 S10: I get scared, I guess, when it's in a quieter neighborhood.

0:05:58.0 S11: Smaller neighborhoods or non-main streets are quite poorly lit and so the darkness also tends to contribute...

0:06:05.3 S12: Normally, when I'm in residential areas, I walk in the middle of the roads 'cause I find the sidewalk space too scary.

0:06:09.9 S13: It was because there was no one on the street.

0:06:11.3 S14: But if I'm walking downtown and there's people around, then it feels a bit safer.

0:06:15.2 S15: I present more androgynously and I feel that...

0:06:19.5 S16: Scared, on edge, hyperaware.

0:06:23.0 S17: Hardly ever get to walk with a group or at least another person.

0:06:28.5 S18: If I feel uncomfortable, if someone feels too close or if they...

0:06:28.6 S19: On edge and scared, I usually walk with a knife...

0:06:32.4 S20: There's been someone behind me for a long time.

0:06:33.8 S21: Fear takes control of all rational thoughts.

0:06:35.1 S22: I often find that I will think about whether someone is behind me to see if someone is.

0:06:41.7 S23: Always looking behind my back, always making a mental note. Not making eye contact while people around you from the corner of your eye.

0:06:50.3 S24: Keys between your fingers, heavy, like a water bottle swing really hard.

0:06:55.9 S25: Take my headphones out and then looking all over the place.

0:07:00.4 S26: Walking with my huge over-the-ear headphones, and he mentioned how easy it would be to kidnap me while I'm wearing them and walking alone.

0:07:09.0 S27: Under the influence, and all there were, it seems were men on the streets were highly inappropriate with me.

0:07:19.1 S28: Basically at every corner.

0:07:22.5 S29: I've always thought that I was very, very paranoid. But I don't know if this is actually just how everyone who's a female acts at night.

[music]

0:07:49.0 S1: Hello everybody. Welcome to the Making Difference segment of this Podcast. My name is Dalia and I will be the moderator. I am a fourth year student at the University of Ottawa studying Anthropology.

0:08:01.0 S2: Hey guys, I am Tam Vee. I'm a fourth year student at Daniels in my undergrad, and I'm the treasurer of Making Difference.

0:08:11.1 S3: Hi everyone, I am Randa Omar, I am in my fourth year at Daniels in the Technology stream and Architecture, and I am one of the co-organizers and co-founders of Making Difference. So, I'll tell you a little bit about the Club. The Club Making Difference aims to create a safe space for all those who identify as women and non-binary folks to discuss their experiences in the design fields. We're also actively creating a community and mentorship between peers and between students and professionals.

0:08:40.2 S4: Hi, I am Isabelle, I'm the other co-organizer and co-founder of Making Difference. So our club is really founded on principles of Intersectional Feminism and Equity, which is why we wanted to speak on this podcast today. So we have our exec team which consists of four of us and our NI general membership, but we really design the club to have a non-hierarchical structure. So as an exec team, our job is really to facilitate the discussions and also facilitate the work that gets done, not to act as these powerful figures, if that makes sense, and we also really were intentional with all of the language that we were using within our club to mirror these ideas of equity and intersectional feminism.

0:09:34.9 S1: With intersectional feminism being such a foundational element for the club, why don't we jump in there to start this conversation off and just how that plays a part in the club.

0:09:43.0 S4: Yeah, so intersectional feminism at the very basic level is understanding that there are multiple factors and identities that overlap when we're talking about feminism other than gender. So it's really taking into account racial experiences along with gendered experiences, class experiences, and all of the "isms" that we think of when we're thinking of equity. And so we really tried to instill that at every level of the club.

0:10:20.3 S1: Great. So having talked about intersectional feminism and experiences in space, specifically, what led you to create this space, why did you decide that this was something that you wanted to pursue?

0:10:33.4 S4: We found that although we had been experiencing these things and talking about them within friend groups, there wasn't really a way to kind of expose that this was a broader issue within Daniels and that other people were having the same experiences. So as we started to talk to more people, it became apparent that we needed somewhere to do this, especially now that we don't have that face-to-face interaction. So this is more to create a community of people that wouldn't necessarily have classes together or even bump into each other in the hallway in Daniels, but can come together and discuss these experiences to know that, [A], they're not alone, and [B], that we could change these things.

0:11:27.0 S1: Yeah, it was also a shock, the fact that this kind of space didn't already exist at Daniels. I mean we realized that going into fourth year, but we're like, "Wait a second, how come this space doesn't already exist?" And it does exist in other schools as well. It's also an interesting time to be creating such a space and talking about these issues because we're in 2020 and you'd think that gender equality is very present in this field and in other fields, and also being in Canada, I guess you would assume that it's all great and that there's not much to talk about. So I feel like while we sometimes talk about these things just with our friends and in regular conversations, there isn't that much conversation about it, because it's still a bit taboo to talk about it, and we almost feel like we shouldn't, I know that I feel like if I were to say something about my experience, it would sound like I'm just whining or I'm excusing my lack of merit by saying that this is a gender issue, so we end up kind of... I don't wanna use a big word like gaslighting, but I think we end up producing our own experiences because we'd rather have everything be okay, and it's easier to say that it's our own fault than say that we face discrimination, for example.

0:12:56.1 S1: It was very important to create such a space and just create discussion, and by concretising this club, we're saying, these conversations are important. So even just for us as members and organizers and such, it was a very empowering experience in itself, and it continues to be. And the more people join us, that's also very empowering because then you realize that you're not alone and you realize that this matters and that these conversations matter. So it's really about revealing the issues that have been there, but also, I guess revealing and putting on the spotlight, the work that is being done by amazing students, designers who are women and who are non-binary.

0:13:49.6 S2: It's just really important to take up space in an institutional setting just because, yes, we can discuss this with our friends, and that's a way to make us feel better and to know that we're not alone in these situations, but in order to make change, it needs to be on the university's radar.

0:14:12.5 S1: Yeah. And we talked a lot about experience at Daniels and as a student, and as a woman and as people of color for some of our members. So how have these experiences affected your outlook on what it means to be a woman in the architectural or art profession or field?

0:14:30.2 S4: Yeah, I guess these discussions for me have really illuminated the experiences that I'm having and why they're happening. I've worked for several summers now in a pretty male-dominated firm, and they're great guys, but there are... You're a young woman sitting in a kind of place of not really any power, no one wants to listen to your decision, so it's kind of a way of saying, "Oh, maybe this is why this is happening" and then trying to find ways around it. I know, Randa and I have discussions a lot about phrasing emails and taking out the "I was wondering," and the pleasantries that we have been socialized to use to soften the blow of our requests, so it's just kind of made me more aware of those things and to try to counter them in my own kind of actions.

0:15:29.1 S2: Yeah, and in the studio setting, it's pretty apparent that males or guys tend to get more time when it comes to critiques and even getting feedback weekly on your projects, and that really inadvertently affects how you view your own work and your abilities and it's important to acknowledge that it's not always on you, it could be a structural thing, and that's a great thing to remind people.

0:16:02.7 S3: When we go into university, as students, there's always... Or the second you go into any type of institution, there's always a type of hierarchy and a power dynamic. So as students and especially as young students we're quite vulnerable, and I don't think that many people realize that or acknowledge that. So especially when you're a first-year student, for example, at least in my experience, I was very... I really didn't know where I stood in the field, and I really didn't know if I was any good at it, and whether I should stay, and because it's such a new, what is it? Environment, I would take every little comment or lack of comment from professors or instructors, for example, as a direct implication, I guess, of my worth and who I am and where I stand in the field, so I think... Like Tam Vee was saying, when you get less time in a review or when you get interrupted and asked to... And they just move on to the next student without actually listening to your presentation, when they kind of dismiss you, you really... That really gets ingrained in you consciously or subconsciously, and it takes a hit at your self-esteem, unfortunately. It takes a lot to realize that just because one person doesn't see the value in you doesn't mean that you don't have a space in the field, and I really want that... I really want people to keep that in mind, especially maybe people who are listening right now who have had similar experiences.

0:17:56.6 S1: So how does gender affect your pursuits, whether academic, creative or professional?

0:18:03.7 S4: For me, it's really shaped by what kind of spaces I'm interested in designing, especially within the realm of architecture, because I'm so aware of how gender can impact how we move through space, I'm really interested in creating spaces that kind of break down the barriers we often face as women, just because of the structural, not physical structure, but structural violences that are built into our built environment, so right now I'm working on... I'm researching women shelters and how to best lay them out, due to COVID, while maintaining those kind of values that... Feminist values that many shelters have. So that's kind of shaped the direction that I'm heading towards in my career.

0:18:58.0 S3: I guess another way that gender and also just thinking about feminism and equity has affected my creative or academic pursuits is just noticing it now in work places and institutions that I look at. So when I'm researching graduate schools, for example, or when I'm researching places, I'd like to work at, I really look at what their faculty looks like, who is in the management, who is the CEO, what the ratios are, is it male-dominated and there's one female architect in the firm, or is it more equitable? 'Cause that says a lot about the environment. And also just the way that they do things.

0:19:50.4 S1: And what would you like people to know about your experience as a woman in design? Or what are some takeaways you'd like people to have after listening to this little segment of our podcast?

0:20:01.7 S3: We've only talked to two professionals so far, but they both had a similar experience in the way they did have to look within themselves and figure out how they viewed themselves as women and what that meant in terms of how they were portraying themselves in the spaces that they were taking up. So one guest lecturer said that she would always phrase her statements as questions, and that's something that I really...

0:20:36.3 S1: Relate to?

0:20:36.9 S3: Yeah, that's something that I really relate to. I do that very often. And for me, I just thought that I was being nice, I was being a friendly person, but I realized that it does demean or make less of what I'm trying to say. So the discussions that we have have led to a lot of introspection in terms of why I do the things that I do, and how they affect my academics, my career.

0:21:06.1 S1: Alright, so to wrap things up, why don't we talk a little bit about how to get involved in the club and what we're up to in the club right now?

0:21:15.0 S4: Yeah, so we are always taking members. There's a form in our Instagram bio link. It's a Google form, you can just fill out what you're interested in helping with, or if you just wanna be on our mailing list, and we'll send you an email with all of our updates. So our Instagram is @makingdifferenceto. So you can find all of our information there. We are also... We hold monthly public discussions with professionals, so we touched on those a bit, but it's basically us inviting professionals in either the architecture, or art, or design field and also academics to just talk to us about their experiences, getting to where they are, and how maybe gender has impacted, how they move through space or what the decisions they made, to get where they are, were.

0:22:15.2 S4: And anyone is welcome to join those. You don't have to be a student. You don't have to be a U of T student. Really, anyone is welcome to join. We're also selling posters soon for... To fundraise for our next semester. So right now Tam Vee actually designed our beautiful poster. They'll be on sale soon, so check out our Instagram for more information there. And we're also always taking... Are looking for commissioned work to create more posters. So we've set up $50 Gwartzman's gift cards for students who are interested in that, to create an Illustrator illustration for us. And then 10% of the proceeds of the poster sales will go back to you, as the artist. And then finally, we also accept, we call it the Artist spotlight, but any art that you have as a member of the Daniels community or outside of it, that you want to submit to us and we can put it on our platform. Once a week, we usually do a drop of all of the art, so we're always taking submissions for that just to uplift our local and global community artists. So everyone is welcome to join. Just anyone who wants to engage in these conversations, I would love to have you.

0:23:46.7 S1: Alright, that's all from Making Difference for today. Follow us on Instagram @makingdifferenceto. Thanks for hanging out with us and we hope to see you soon.

[music]

0:24:18.1 S1: Hi, I'm Luisa Kennet.

0:24:18.5 S2: And hi, I'm Allison Smith.

0:24:20.6 S1: And we're two Master of Landscape Architecture students in our third and final year of studies at the Daniels faculty.

0:24:26.9 S2: On this segment of Women in Design, we will be talking about our experience at Daniels and also catching up with a recent graduate from the program.

0:24:32.7 S3: Elizabeth Holland.

0:24:33.0 S1: One of the great things about our program is that it attracts people from diverse backgrounds. I personally came to the field with an undergrad in Biology, was focused on Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. And what intrigued me most about landscape architecture was the ability of this field to address issues at the intersection of social and environmental systems.

0:24:53.4 S2: While Louisa's background is in Biology, I come to the program as a mature student with a pretty layered background. I've a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art History and Sculpture, and after graduating from that, I went on to study Fine Woodworking at a trade college. I then spent several years living and working as an object maker abroad, before beginning my MLA at Daniels. My interest in Landscape Architecture stems from a fascination with materiality, and an understanding that outdoor space in our urban environment is essential for mental and physical well-being.

0:25:21.1 S1: So Allison and I first met in 2018, during the summer software Workshop for incoming grad students. I remember being really nervous coming into that workshop, 'cause I had no design background at all, but meeting people like Allison, and some other students, quickly made me feel at home in the MLA program. And since then, Allison and I have gone through all of the ups and downs at the program, side-by-side.

0:25:48.6 S2: And there have been a lot of ups and downs, as I'm sure all of you at Daniels are well aware of, and what's been super essential for me going through this degree has been the support network I've created with a group of peers. There's been some fantastic ladies in my close circle that have helped me get through all the turbulent times.

0:26:09.8 S1: Yeah, definitely...

0:26:11.7 S2: And good times.

[chuckle]

0:26:13.2 S1: Couldn't have gotten to this point in the program without these strong women by my side. [chuckle]

0:26:19.1 S2: In addition to the presence of many intelligent and capable women in the MLA program, we have also been fortunate to have strong female leadership through numerous professors, the director of the program, and additional support from other women in the field, who have all been influential in the shaping of our practice.

0:26:35.0 S1: Like many professions, landscape architecture has been historically dominated by men. And we are fortunate that in an academic institution such as the University of Toronto, we are seeing such clear female representation.

0:26:45.4 S2: Yes, absolutely. And we've also been introduced to many female landscape architects, designers and theorists in our coursework, such as, in second year in our landscape theory, as well as in our elective on climate resilient design, we were introduced to many female designers, including Christina Hill, who has become an inspiring figure for both of us.

0:27:05.7 S1: Hill is currently an associate professor at the Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning at Berkeley. Her research focuses on adaptive strategies for sea level rise in coastal areas with a focus on biodiversity and new development approaches in social justice.

0:27:19.1 S2: Her emphasis on climate resilience and social equity has been really inspiring for both of us, and has become a key resource in the development of our current but separate thesis projects.

0:27:29.5 S1: We don't do everything together.

0:27:32.4 S2: Her priority to work in low income and racialized communities, which are often disproportionately impacted by climate change has been a big influence on my thesis project, which is looking at resilience to extreme heat in Montreal North.

0:27:44.7 S1: Her work on dynamic landforms, such as alternative coastal infrastructure strategies that serve not only as flood protection but also have ecological and recreational benefits has helped influence my research on the Niagara Escarpment in Hamilton, Ontario, and how it can be a design inspiration for potential air pollution mitigation strategies.

0:28:00.8 S2: Mrs. Hill is very interested in context-specific design solutions that consider both local ecology and local communities.

0:28:07.2 S1: Hill has also been a strong advocate for women in landscape architecture whose work is often underrepresented in literature, despite their contributions, which have shaped the history and the present state of our discipline.

0:28:17.3 S2: More recently, we've also been introduced to the work of Jane Hutton in our Option Studio called Mediated Reconstructions. Jane Hutton is a Canadian landscape architect, who is currently an assistant professor at the University of Waterloo, School of Architecture. She has previously taught at Harvard's GSD, as well as at Daniels and she also received her MLA from U of T. And also she has an undergraduate degree in Biology and Environmental Science, so just like me.

0:28:44.7 S1: Her research examines relationship between common building materials and the landscapes they come from, focusing on material flow, labor and unequal ecological exchange. Her book reciprocal landscapes, stories of material movement, published just last year, traces five common landscape construction materials from New York City back to where they came from. It's the book that I cannot put down. Coming from a very hands-on background in sculpture, shoemaking and fine woodworking, I find her approach to materiality and material knowledge fascinating. Her work tells hidden stories within the realm of the profession, touching on the everyday materials of our practice, but looking at them from a very introspective lens. In reciprocal landscapes, she eloquently opens our eyes to the cause and effect of manipulating landscapes and the global implications of resource extraction.

0:29:28.1 S2: And this is something that is too often disregarded in the practice of landscape architecture. And in the light of our current climate crisis, it is something we all need to consider as we move forward from students into the professional world.

0:29:41.9 S1: And speaking of students who have moved into the professional world, we will now be speaking with Elizabeth, who is a recent graduate from the MLA program at Daniels.

0:29:50.7 S2: Yeah, so we just wanted to say, "Hey," and check in on you since we last saw you in January or February before the pandemic hit, like almost a year ago.

0:30:00.2 S3: Yeah.

0:30:00.3 S2: Probably, going through the studio or running to do thesis prep work.

0:30:04.6 S3: Yeah, I remember the day when we all were sanctioned to go home. We ran class, and then I saw a tweet from the University of Toronto, and I was just like, "Oh, there it is, bye everyone, bye forever."

0:30:17.7 S1: Yeah. Yeah. It was a very abrupt transition. So what have you been up to since graduation?

0:30:24.3 S3: Boy, I started working in July. Well, I graduated in April, started working in July. So I had a couple of weeks of just laying low. And yeah, I've been working since then and not doing a whole lot, I'll be honest with you... And I'm just, I'm feeling very grateful to be in a comfortable place, in a safe place.

0:30:40.5 S2: And you're working from a firm that's based in Toronto or New York, what did I hear?

0:30:46.7 S3: Yeah, so I'm working for a firm called Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, they're normally based in Brooklyn and Cambridge, Massachusetts. I'm in Toronto, in Mississauga.

0:30:56.4 S1: Allison and I were in... When we were talking earlier, we were just talking about how it's awesome how the MLA program at Daniels attracts people from so many different backgrounds, so we were wondering if you could tell us a little bit about your background and also why you decided to join the MLA program at Daniels.

0:31:14.7 S3: Prior to Daniels, I studied at the University of Waterloo. And I took a program called, Environment and Business. So it was all about greening businesses and how we can manage and operate businesses in a more sustainable way. It's just quite broad, obviously. But then I also took a fine art minor. So that time I was kind of dancing around a lot of different stuff. But I always had an interest in design, and what was really great about the program is that it enabled me to take four co-op placements. And so one of these co-op placements was at Waterfront, Toronto, they had the Toronto waterfront revitalization. And so I wasn't working on the design team at that point, but I got exposed to, these massive projects they had, including the lower Tomlin. And I'd heard of landscape architecture, and I'd known about it but I hadn't really witnessed or understood the scale at which... And the impact that these kind of works could have and just really excited me, and so I had it planted in my mind at that point. And then a couple of years later, and a bit of traveling in between, I applied and here I am.

0:32:16.5 S1: That's great, yeah. Well, it sounds like it's the perfect combination of background, like fine art and more like environmental side of things.

0:32:23.2 S3: Yeah, like you said, though, what's really cool about my class and people I've met is that they kind of find their way here from so many different avenues and that's really unique that way and how people use it also and how people use their knowledge from previous experiences.

0:32:38.7 S2: Another question we had for you is how your experience as a woman at Daniels compares to your experience as a woman in the field? If you've noticed... Because I know at Daniels, we've spoken about this, Louisa and I, earlier in the podcast as well, that there's just so much... There's so much female representation at Daniels and we're curious if that follows through into the field.

0:32:58.5 S3: I feel the exact same way. At Daniels you have so much exposure to female leadership and the director of the program, both current and past being females, all of the professors, and there was maybe seven out of 26 students in my class who were not female, so I guess theirs is similar. So in my experience, it was always a very comfortable place to... I never felt that I was being looked down upon because I was a woman or I wasn't fitting in, or... I feel like we're riding the coattails of people prior to us. The kind of leaders who paved the way for women to feel they have a place in an educational institution and in a design field, so I had a similar, very positive experience. Although I recognize that I am a white woman and my experience will not be the same to all women, and in particularly women of color.

0:33:54.7 S1: Absolutely.

0:33:55.0 S3: The second thing is that as a professional, I am a new graduate. I just entered this field, and I think I'm still kind of a student in many ways. And I can't speak for how women's experiences at upper management levels would differ, but personally, I do have female managers and female leadership at work. I also have several of my own personal mentors, who've been in my life for a long time, which has been really important for me just navigating life and in professional life. But I know also that it may potentially be more challenging, maybe further along the road or working in other areas of this field that I haven't had much experience in, I haven't spent much time on a construction site, let's just say I've heard or I've recognized that these are areas where it may be a little more challenging as a woman to enter that kind of environment and be taken seriously, but I'm very grateful to say that I have had a positive experience both at school and work, and I'm hopeful that the future will be similar.

0:35:01.5 S2: Yes, that's really great to hear and definitely encouraging for us as we prepare to graduate and try to look at what those kind of experiences in the field are gonna be like.

0:35:11.0 S1: And also just to make things as equal as possible throughout, and to make sure we fight for that always. And speaking of the future, [chuckle] where do you see yourself in five years? You say you're sort of more in the student... You still feel like a student right now?

0:35:28.4 S3: Very much so.

0:35:29.1 S1: Which I can totally understand, we learn a handful of stuff at Daniels, but it's all practice is needed, right?

0:35:34.1 S3: Again, it's so new, but I do very much feel like I'm just picking up everything I can and taking in as much as I can. It's hard to think about the future right now, admittedly, not to cop out of this question, but it's difficult.

[chuckle]

0:35:48.7 S2: I respect that answer. That's totally fine.

0:35:54.2 S3: So currently at work, I've been working on planting design, which I'm happy to have been given that opportunity, and given the chance to start developing my own styles and coordinating with people, but I do feel again like I have a lot to learn and I'm just hoping to have more opportunities over the next few years, the kinds of projects I can work on, the kinds of places that I can put my time. So maybe I'm more of the tenure plan. I do hope to stay involved with the university, I really enjoy talking to people from Daniels, and I can attest to how strong the program is. So certainly hopeful for that to continue and we'll see. Maybe I'll move to New York to be back in the office again.

0:36:37.7 S1: And I guess on that note, talking about staying in touch with students, I was wondering if you have any advice that you could give to us or other students as we prepare to graduate and start working in the field...

0:36:50.2 S3: Totally.

0:36:50.4 S1: For the next months and years.

0:36:53.3 S3: As I said, I can attest to how strong the program is and having graduated, you will have the skills necessary to start a job. Although there's a lot of technical knowledge that, I just skimmed the very surface on this planting stuff. I feel like the general approach to a project and the way of seeing design issues and working with people, these are all skills that you learn in school and they totally apply. And I can say with 100% confidence that I felt or I feel as prepared as other people I'm working with at similar levels who just started working. You're in very good hands and just taking your work seriously and coordinating with your peers and remaining humble to other people's ideas, not getting too discouraged when you receive criticism because you'll have to do it every day at work. You'll have to present your ideas every day at work, and this kind of repetition and gaining more confidence in yourself as you present your ideas and exploring different things, these are all such valuable things. Enjoy school and don't have fear, 'cause I really think that anyone graduating from this program is in pretty good shape.

0:37:58.8 S2: That's good to hear, yeah, definitely some advice that we could use right now, so it's great to see you and great to catch up and best of luck with everything.

0:38:09.0 S3: Okay.

0:38:09.5 S2: Thank you so much again, we really appreciate it.

0:38:11.4 S3: Okay, you're welcome. Thanks again.

[music]

0:38:25.0 S1: My name is Jess Misack, I'm an artist and architect in Toronto, a recent graduate of Daniels Master's Program. And I'm working right now and doing a bit of ceramics on the side and other various activities. And my pronouns are they/them.

0:38:43.4 S2: Hey, my name is Noor, I am in my thesis year of my Master's of Architecture at the University of Toronto. I did my undergrad in architectural conservation sustainability engineering. And I am looking forward to a long life journey in architecture.

0:39:02.6 S3: I'm Jen Tran. I am a not-yet-graduated and not-yet-certified landscape architect. My background is in Art History and Earth Science.

0:39:14.5 S4: I'm Miranda. [chuckle] I will be asking the questions for this segment. I am in my thesis year of my Master's of Architecture and my background is in Fine Arts and sculpture, and I've just been spending the last eight months in this basement. So I'm excited to see and talk to people, even virtually. As this was something I sort of mentioned to you all when I asking you to join the segment is sort of my discomfort with a category of "women in design," so what are your thoughts on this distinction? Is this something you identify with or do you not identify with, or think it's kind of a weird category, you put it?

0:39:55.7 S1: I actually do see it as a beneficial identifier in some respect. So when we're thinking of architecture and landscape architecture as art and practice, it of course, necessarily reflects the experience and understanding of the designers. In some ways, acknowledging the fact that I am a woman, a woman of color, that is relevant to my design practice and my philosophy and understanding, so I do see some use of it as that sort of framing device for understanding.

0:40:27.0 S2: To some extent, this term, it's weird because not just in architecture or in design, but any time they want to diversify, they always call it "women in engineering," or "women in design," or "women in whatever," and it's a pretty interesting identification I could say because you never see "men in design" or you never see "men in fashion" or "men in dancing." You don't see that type of identification, even when it's a feminine or, let's say, female-majority field of some sort. So let's say ballet or dance like that. A man dancer or a male of that like opposite identification. So I do find that identification a little bit, not misleading, but unfortunate, but at the same time, I do recognize the fact that it pushes towards equality and creating more diversity and giving opportunities for women out there in all the different various fields that are currently male-dominated. So I recognize its advantages, but I also I mean, that is something Zaha Hadid used to mention saying, "I'm not a woman architect, I'm an architect." And it's very important to understand that, the reason for that isn't to identify women in design or architecture, but it's just to open the doors for more to come in, but they're all going to be eventual architect doesn't identify them in the long-term.

0:41:49.4 S4: Firstly, I guess I would say that I have an immediate kind of visceral feeling to the phrase "women in architecture," to me, it doesn't really encompass even just the surface level of equity issues or gender issues. I agree. Often when we see these troves of forum on women in architecture or something, and design or women in design, it's used as a kind of band-aid, surface level discussion about equity and ignores the bulk and the kind of roots of many of these issues. For example, it doesn't always address racism or classism or transphobia especially. So for me, it feels like almost a bit of a dated way to talk about equality and equity and access for professional life in design.

0:42:30.9 S3: The issues of using the identifier "women in architecture" as like a form of tokenism is really prevalent. And you're right, it's not a monolithic experience of womanhood, and it's very clear that there is a huge amount of intersectionality that is ignored.

0:42:46.3 S1: That was something that I initially, was kind of brought about. My sister always says this as a lawyer, she said when she's in an interview, and she started asking about the diversity within their firm, and they start talking about how many women they employ, it's like, "Well, hiring white women isn't really diverse. Women make up a significant portion of our population, that's not really that diverse. It's just the other side of things." So when we have these discussions of women in design, especially when I am a white woman, I feel like so predominantly, it's like white women are the focus of these conversations, it really ignores larger issues and stifles other conversations that would be more beneficial to be had other than just celebrating white women, which I feel like when we talk about women in design. I've been to a lot of events, and that's where I'm excited to talk about these things. Then I'm let down by the lack of actual diversity that is happening within them.

[music]

0:43:47.4 S4: What barriers do you think affect your designing career, and do you think the design field is gendered in a certain way that is preventing people from easily accessing jobs, internships and the respect that they deserve within their field?

0:44:01.8 S1: To me, yes, it is a very gendered field, and I will offer a recent story of mine where a couple of months ago I went to sign up as an intern architect with OAA because I've been working and I had a mentor set and I was prepared to dish out the hundreds of dollars to sign up, which in and of itself is a barrier. I'd done all my graduate paperwork and I opened up the registration and I'm stumped at the scroll down options of male or female. And so legally, literally legally in Ontario you cannot register as a gender queer or gender non-conforming or a gender-neutral person, you must choose the male or female option, and it leaves me with a question as, "Do I register as female?" which Canada offers a gender-neutral option on your passport and your ID, which is something that I've been transitioning into, so do I contradict this and register as a female architect or do I just not register?

0:45:02.9 S1: And so I haven't registered, and I'm hoping that I can kind of convince some people to change those, but it's just one of the many moments where I've had a kind of aha moment, like no, this is something stopping me from being my true self, expressing my true identity in a profession and academic setting versus how I behave outside of this setting and the circles that I actually, communities I participate with.

0:45:26.4 S4: And the amount of actual labor you have to go into, do these things every day like, now you have to email somebody to let them know like, "Hey, can we do this? And then it's probably gonna be a few months going back and forth, a lot of stress just going into getting registered where it seems sort of so outdated, why did you even need to have that information, so many other governmental processes don't, what does it matter to a certain extent?"

0:45:49.6 S1: And another thing is it reflects, say you had a project that targeted the LGBTQ community, or you were transverse and seeking out an architect and might want some type of specific lens on spaces, that's a queer lens. You cannot look up in the OAA registry for a queer person. We get into semantics of our issues where maybe you shouldn't be able to just identify all queer people on a list, institutional list. But it makes it extremely difficult to connect as an architect or as a designer, if you can't hold your identity at the forefront of your existence in the field.

0:46:32.2 S3: It should never be that way, there should never be something that would stop someone from registering, doing the basics at the start of the journey of architecture. This is literally the starts that... This is the patch so it should never be hard or inaccessible or targeted and gendered and asked about, and you see all those questions that... They even go into more detail about what do you identify as in gender, but also your background, and whom you are attracted to and things like that, and I see why institutions like bigger ones ask for these questions, 'cause they are trying to diversify.

0:47:06.6 S3: It already puts a person in a bubble, the moment they ask these questions, 'cause you already feel like you're the different one going in. There's always that second thought of, "Okay, did they look at my work because I work well, or did they look at it because I was a woman?" Things like that, or because I was from a Middle Eastern background or something that 'cause my I'm apparent Muslim. There's all of those questions that I kept asking myself, even now when I was applying for jobs, it's like, what do they really see? And I understand they don't know at the beginning, but it's so easy to know, we have social media, one search will show them who we are, especially if you're someone on social media and it's sad to say, but our profession is very extremely gendered to the extent where you see a lot of female, at least right now, and not just females, like a mix of diversity in schools as a body of students, maybe not faculty, but students and then...

0:48:05.2 S3: Where are they after? Where is everyone? Why do they never continue and move forward? It's because of these things that people need to go through that makes it so much harder. And I remember talking to one of the profs that were female about this, and she said, you need to work really extremely hard to get to that directorship level, and it's just sad, that a woman or a minority needs to work 10,000 times. Where a man let's say, a white man can easily get to in quarter the effort. This is where the problem starts, it doesn't help when the wages are different, it doesn't help when there's no equity. When you go to construction sites and they're making fun of a female engineer or architect, and it just doesn't help when you're just identified by things that are all made by society, that they're not even true identification of anything, I can make the same work as whatever gender. It's not about the gender, it's about the effort and the work.

0:49:00.9 S2: A lot of the times, this focus on what a person's work is also doesn't give the right level of attention to the factors that result in the level of work that they put out, so things like the privilege that they are given with wealth, support, education, resources, all of these things, of course, affect someone's output and eventually their opportunities as well, so I guess that's something that should be more focused on. You were also speaking about women having to work harder in the field, and this idea of women in positions of power is something that is also completely lacking. There's so few visible minorities or women in positions of power within the majority of the big firms in architecture and landscape, and that's a systemic thing that needs to not only change with recruitment, but also the factors that lead to the production of work.

0:49:54.8 S1: The way that the academic setting is set up and the pressures associated with it also transfer often to the kind of egotistical and social pressures within offices and firms. Notably and often sometimes shockingly to many people, architects and the landscape architects don't really get paid time off, they often do get benefits, there's a real lack of social support within the industry as long as you're doing intense over-time, and all of this also reflects back down on to academia. You're expected to pull all these late nights, you're expected to not work while studying or taking part in design, and it disenfranchises people from academia, from the profession who have other responsibilities who might have kids who might already have struggles of wealth or other institutional, socio-economic struggles. So it's all kind of interconnected within this.

0:50:55.5 S4: It definitely takes away a lot from our well-being and health. And that should also be tackled as one of the main points to identify why are some people... Why can't they move forward with it? Why aren't they using their education, their passion and building their dreams? Why are they running away into things they also regret? It's because of those points that Jess mentioned, that it's very important to recognize them and change all the way down from educational level upto institutional level, for sure.

0:51:28.2 S1: I saw a meme today about the richest architects in the world, and they're all men, of course, but not all of them are white necessarily, but predominantly white, and it reflects also onto another version of trickling down where you see this play out in non-star architect firms, you see it play out in academia, there is a wealth disparity within pay, but there just are so many barriers in architecture to becoming an actual architect that are based on financial and the ability to socially mobilize.

0:52:05.8 S1: And if you are someone who has been disenfranchised socially, possibly a woman, but attached also to many other equity issues, it just increases the barriers for you to be able to achieve a stamp, to be able to be in a position where you're actually making substantial decisions up at spaces in our city that will shape people's lives and that people will then experience. And this again relates to representation. When we study, architects, we often get repetitive series of architects in architectural history, we all have sat through 50 lectures about Le Corbusier and maybe once you may hear about Lina Bo Bardi or every once in a while they pepper in a female architect and usually male prof, it looks a little smug and feels good about their effort of diversity, and it needs to be a more disruptive action, it needs to be a more deliberate action within faculties and within the discipline, people need to be given or they need to be able to take opportunities without barriers, especially financial barriers.

0:53:24.6 S2: There's two sort of architecture positions where I've taken the jobs expecting to be paid as my fellow male colleagues were being paid, and I wasn't. They were actually not gonna pay me, which just seemed quite absurd, and I was talking about this, and I did end up getting paid in the end, I was like, "Hey, I'm doing the same work, blah blah blah. This is kind of the agreement that we set into, albeit they were both verbal agreements, they weren't set through in contracts or anything like that. But we did have an agreement put in place and it was to be paid." And I was talking about this with a male colleague of mine who's a white guy, and he's like, "What? I've never not been paid for a job," and I was like, "Really? You've never had the issue when somebody was like, No, I don't think you're worth as much as you think you are," and I feel like it really takes a toll on your self-esteem within the field, the constantly you have to really advocate for yourself to fight this wage gap, and it's exhausting at times to fight for this wage gap, but a lot of people don't think it doesn't exist.

0:54:35.8 S3: Yeah, and we're not even taught to know our rights, even from the beginning. When we go to school, they should tell us, "You're a Master's student at one of the top schools in the world, do not accept non-paid internship no matter the situation," because we have to be told those things right to our faces because when we don't, we start to second guess ourselves and we start to think, "Oh no, we need the internship, we need that experience." But listen, if we don't know our worth, that experience means pretty much nothing, it's just they're using you pretty much, and it's okay to be told that, it hurts to hear, but honestly if we don't hear it, we'll never know, and it's just so hard to know when you're starting your career, when you're starting something that is complex and hard, and there's just so much on your plate, you barely have enough sleep, and we live in Toronto, one of the most expensive cities too, so we should be appreciated for the work.

0:55:34.3 S3: We should be be paid at least the equal, that should not even be a question. So the fact that so many of my friends told me that almost a similar story of them working for someone and they didn't end up paying them eventually, and it makes me so angry like that. That just shows how unethical this profession can be or how they've normalized that unethical behavior, 'cause it's never normal, you're taking a very strong Master's students, you should be paid even more than what you think you need or what you are gonna take, but we don't recognize that because we're not told that. On the first day of school, they told us, "Listen, you guys need to be paid, need to make sure you're paid equally kind of thing, and need to speak up equally in a room for males and all genders and all of the cities." It's something that we all need to hear and we don't get that in education.

[music]

0:56:45.0 S1: Do you think that Daniels as a faculty understands these barriers and are working towards de-sampling them? This is at a moment where Daniels is having hopefully shifting perspectives on these types of topics and issues where hopefully we are being heard as students bringing up these concerns within our faculty.

0:57:06.0 S2: Often I find this as an extremely difficult question for me because there are many, many aspects with my eight years at U of T and at Daniels, that I really have adored. But it's difficult for me to sit with criticism and to un-low criticism on an institution that I also have kind of shortly, been complacent with for eight years I have worked within, and there has been a lot of reflection during this for myself on ways that I've also kind of contributed and perpetuated issues of equity within Daniels. So I will say that first off. But I have found it lacking in many aspects and I'll speak specifically, sometimes to queer aspects.

0:57:51.6 S2: But I recently, I completed my thesis on queer communal spaces and specifically on spaces where the queer body can relax in which of my cases were bath-houses, and there was always an overload or over-handed question of, first off, why, why queer? Why these bodies? Came up in every single one of my critiques. And it was something that at that same point my advisor was prepping me on, you need to have a 10-minute... The first path of your presentation needs to get people to not feel off-put by raising just the topic of queer people in queer bodies, and you have to get them to believe that it's not a... That homophobia and transphobia still exists. And that eventually it leads into where, despite having some supportive figures, there was no representation, there was nobody in the entire faculty I could turn to, except for one brand new member to talk about this without having to start with the preamble of "This is what queer means," or start with a preamble of, "I don't mean to offend you by not including you in this project, but it's not for your community. It's for my community."

0:59:20.6 S1: It's so ridiculous.

0:59:21.2 S2: Yeah, and there were moments where we would have members who were either faculty or invited guest critics on my panel and I would have to sit through things like a critic saying, "Oh, you know what, actually I think I do understand this project, gay men are much more social than regular men so this might work," or, I had so many guest critics literally stop and say, "Wait, can you say the word queer now?" And just absurd things like this, and it's not the... It's aggressions like these that just somehow elevated my project, which to me was supposed to be an academic, thoroughly-researched design project that other people have touched on, that I wanted to discuss for its merits of design, its social implications, its poetry, but instead I was having to deal with so much emotional armor and emotional conversations about the relevance of queerness in design.

1:00:30.5 S2: It was perpetuated by many people on the faculty. I adore my advisor, and she was very supportive for me, but she'd never stop any of these sentences. Once, another guest critic said, "Well, I don't think we can add to that one comment about the gays, I don't think we could just say that about all gay men," and it was truly frustrating to me. I never really came out officially as gender queer at Daniels when I was in it, there were people who knew, but I never really said it until my thesis review, and that was for a very, very apparent reason, and it wasn't intentional necessarily by everyone, but it was perpetuated and there was a protection amongst people who made these missteps that could have easily been avoided and could have been a case for a lot of reconciliation for myself and for other queer people.

1:01:26.6 S2: I also wanna say that my cohort in particular, only a couple of people dropped out and, overwhelmingly, those people were queer or gender queer, and I'm not... Not to say that that was the whole encompass of things, but I also experienced a lot of situations with my peers who are extremely transphobic and extremely homophobic, I can list it off. There was one of my peers who kept a copy of Mein Kampf at his desk and a prof never said anything. Why do you need the Nazi Bible at your desk in architecture school? Why are people sharing Jordan Peterson videos around and trying to campaign each other within the cohort to start watching it and believing in it? Why are you sharing books of it and then picking fights with me because you know that I'm queer and I'm the person to pick a fight with until I cry to the thing? It's just... I did my undergrad very attached to the University College, which was the first college to introduce women at U of T, and it's by far the most kind of gender diverse college, it has the sexual diversity studies faculty within it, and it was just... I feel like when I left that world and entered Daniels officially as my Master's, I felt like I was bursting the bubble, I really hope that there's a feature for it to change, and some of this is starting with our conversations.

1:02:51.5 S1: Those things are always apparent and it's harder to speak up when you're going through it. The faculty kept asking, when I was going through my things, said "You need to write a report about it." Well, when you're being treated like someone who should never be treated like that, or if you're being treated differently because of what you're wearing or what you are attracted to or whatever, then you really don't feel like writing it on paper, 'cause it really makes it even more true. And I think... What I think the faculty did wrong is when I was voicing what I was going through, when my friends went to them to voice what I was going through, and Miranda you were there when some of those things happened or I was one of the... I came and talked to you about it.

1:03:37.7 S1: But they were thinking about the... There were profs that told me things during reviews that no one else in my group heard things like, "You don't belong here," and things like, "A Master's student should never do something like that," and I was a first year student coming from an engineering background, it really slowly felt like I was being targeted as an apparent Muslim, as an apparent minority, and it's hard not to think of it that way 'cause there was no other explanation, my work was very similar to my peers. And part of what the faculty is doing, it's trying, I'm not gonna say it's not, but it's not trying enough to make it a comfortable space.

1:04:18.6 S1: It's sad because even as Jess said, being the diversity and equity officer really gives you another sight, and for me it was very, very hard because I was fighting, just before the Black Lives Matter movement, all the points that came across during that movement, no one was listening to me, they were mocking me, I was talking to them about the woman, diversifying the studio and adding more women across but also black women, black males, black, everyone. I was fighting for the LGBTQ, I was trying so hard, and what I was getting back is more, "It's all in your head," or more "You're the only person that keeps coming to us, telling us you heard this, why isn't anybody else saying that?" And I'm like, "If one person came to you and told you something, it doesn't make it any less important or it doesn't make it any less true, it's just it was that one person that had the guts to say it at that time."

1:05:22.5 S1: And now that people were speaking up Black Lives Matter movement happened, and I'm thankful for that because it really needed to happen for the school to start acting, and it didn't before to be honest, I'm upset to say that it didn't work as hard, and now that it is, honestly, I don't think that there should be an extreme movement every time for someone to be heard, for someone to be treated the same, for someone to come out as who they want to be or who they are. So it's very important for the school to realize that if someone comes and tells you, "There's something wrong with that or I'm not feeling comfortable being myself because of a certain faculty member or a certain, like everyone," then the school should think it's enough for them to take action, it should not always be some report that you're another case or you're a thing.

1:06:14.6 S1: We're literally... We're humans, we have emotions, we have feelings, and those should be taken into consideration. I get the institution level, I get that people need to... Maybe someone else can, [chuckle] if the person is going through it can't at that time. And another point Jess mentioned was that, it would happen during crit and no one would say something back or no one would stand up for that wrong thing that happened. On my crit, when I had that situation happened, when the person was targeting me personally, the other profs were looking at me like, I'm sorry, but couldn't say it, none of them stopped the other person. One of them actually joined and started saying other things. The faculty should be asked to speak up about things like that and should always have the student's back, because if we're not comfortable there, then we'll never be a family, we'll never be comfortable as a whole school, as a society.

1:07:12.9 S2: Maybe looking for more diversity, that's almost the bare minimum of what the faculty can be doing, because that doesn't really address the systemic barriers that preclude people representation. So pursuing measures that can assist students, that can assist in recruiting students from varying backgrounds is something that should be also strengthened within the faculty.

1:07:40.2 S4: But the faculty itself has a kind of way of protecting and a way of discouraging people from speaking up about these issues, issues of equity, and inequality, and it's not always meant, do it often, it's kind of an internalized sexism or internalized racism, I haven't said internalized homophobia 'cause there haven't been a lot homophobe... Well, there's been a lot of homophobe, but anyways, there's not a lot of queers, but what I meant to say was, there were many things that I was called in the school, like a prof saw me putting up a poster about diversity and equity issue, or... It was a form or something like that, and she started calling me Ms. Politics, and for two years, I don't think she learned my name. She just said, "Oh Ms. Politics, you've always got something to say."

1:08:32.6 S4: Little things like that, or not speaking of not shutting down issues when they happen and they're perpetuating them. I will put the past Dean and the faculty on blast for this one, but when I was diversity and equity officer, I was invited to a two-hour long meeting about the new tenure hires that happened a couple of years ago. And it was a very interesting meeting I was among the entire diversity and equity faculty group, which is about offload four people or so, and there were other people in the room, but the Dean was facing me the entire time as the person who would criticize him. And there was a presentation that was made, an extremely detailed, extremely nicely presented.

1:09:19.3 S4: They had beautiful infographics, and the entire presentation was about how they chose the new tenure hires with the breakdown of people they interviewed were... Who made it through the stages, and it was all broken down by gender. Once in a while, there was a slight indication of whether a person was white or not white. These were the breakdowns and it took two hours to present. And at the end of it, after convincing me that they had gone to half way the whole process with equal representation of men and women, in the end, they had to choose these men, these three men, because they were just so much better than anyone else. They had interviewed and they just couldn't turn them out. And I sat there and I had to be polite and say, well, firstly, your breakdown only acknowledges women versus men. They kept saying the word women versus men, which is not what the issue is about at all. It's not women versus men, it's a lot more complicated nuance than that. I also said, you have to look at the breakdown of also who these people are that you're hiring and who you deem as qualified, and they all come from Harvard, they all come from Princeton, they're all ivy league graduates, extremely privileged people, which automatically disadvantages a huge number of people who would otherwise be fantastic candidates.

1:10:46.8 S4: The faculty needs to address their hiring process in a different way, and it's not about metrics and sitting down and saying, "Well, we interviewed exact equal amount of women and men," it's about interviewing absolutely diverse people, and that includes their background, that includes valuing things above accomplishments that are much, much easier for certain people to achieve.

1:11:12.7 S1: Yeah, that's absolutely a paradox, if the school doesn't use its power as a huge institution to foster these new conversations with a more diverse set of faculty, speakers and staff. How are they going to expect these same voices to eventually come back to them and present some level of diversity and progress for them?

1:11:36.9 S2: These issues and these conversations have been going on for a long time, and it's interesting to me that there are some being addressed right now, whether that becomes apparent in any real structure, I'm not entirely sure the podcast is the solution.

1:11:52.6 S3: It feels like it's like every 20 years or so that everybody gets their pitchfork out and they're like, "Okay, let's go," battles the injustices of the world, and then we all go to sleep on it and like it falls on deaf ears.

[music]

1:12:13.1 S4: What do you think future of gender equity and diversity is in the design field?

1:12:16.5 S1: I feel really hopeful at this moment, but also it's bittersweet in a certain sense, is anything gonna actually happen? And I would agree. Will this podcast actually do anything? There's this effort of like, we just gotta keep trying and keep talking about it, 'cause even if it is falling on deaf ears, I don't know anything else that I can do, than just keep talking about it.

1:12:38.0 S2: The power of speech is huge. And that is what I struggled with as part of being diversity and equity officer, is, I was alone. They wanted so many voices. And so we're giving them the voices they want now, so it's like we're telling them, "Okay, what's your excuse now?" And part of it is that like when people hear other's experiences, and how it was, and hopefully how it's different in the future, in the better way, then it just motivates the whole society as a whole to change. And I can see how it's... Even within U of T, there're faculties where they're so good at diversity and equity and there're... Like they've tried so hard during the years that their faculty body, but also student body is very diverse.

1:13:33.6 S2: It's not like there's no hope, it's just that we're going at a really, really slow pace. It's 2021 almost, like, come on, people are capable of what they're doing, nothing should... We shouldn't discriminate upon a person like that, as students, what we can do is speak up about it always and try and show where these wrongs are, but also not take over the faculty in a way, because I felt like the mural that was put, for example, on the... Like the facade of our school, it was a great initiative out of the students, but it really feels... To someone who doesn't know the history behind it or who did it, it looks from the outside like, "Oh hey, good job, faculty, you guys really care." But really, it's the students who did it, it's important to recognize that, that there is a huge gap between where the students wanna be and where the faculty is, and that is where the communication needs to happen.

1:14:24.6 S2: Throughout the whole years we've seen how the student bodies have really found it hard to get in contact or into meetings where faculty is usually dominating the talk or Dean, specifically, so it really just... It needs to happen from there, and it's a lot hopeful 'cause we do see our student peers... I was really frustrated, to be honest, at some point last year because there were students that were against me talking about how some profs are treating them as male students better than they're treating me during a crit, for the sole reason of they're being liked more for some reason. And I was really shocked by how even sometimes our only colleagues and friends, who we share memories with and we're really close, are the ones sometimes who might still be taking those thoughts of not treating people equally from faculty, like from others, and applying it even to their lives.

1:15:29.7 S2: So if you see your friend, who's still very young, who's the next big architect, discriminating upon their own friends, then you see how much of a problem that becomes. The moment the students are in it too, then that's a problem. And that is what I was trying to really talk about, and I couldn't enough because it's really hard to criticize your own friends, but also criticize your own faculty, it becomes like you're criticizing your family, it's important to do, but it's harder. And this is why speaking up is really, really important, because if we don't speak up, then we might be swooped into something that... It's just a big mess.

1:16:07.0 S3: The creation of spaces for these conversations and the ability for the faculty to understand and act upon these new requests without looking at it as a slight on the authority of the institution is something that really needs to be championed because as long as students are forced to express their concerns and their desires within these systems that are historically meant to only bolster the kind of image of the faculty, nothing will be done.

1:16:40.2 S4: I'll be completely honest. I've been quite disillusioned with what progress means within institutions, and specifically within Daniels. I've been at it for a long time, and specifically, I can say that I've seen reports that Daniels has put out about, "Look, we've hired this percentage more women, we've done it, we're almost at equal women. If you'd count the Official Studies Program and the Forestry Program, we're almost there, we're finished." I will say this is what happens. This is not the future. There needs to be more heart and more care put into what the idea and what the concepts are that people are conveying to you and also try to actually imagine what that might feel like, what a bright vision of an equitable, of a diverse body of thought, and voices, and people might be? And where they feel comfortable.

1:17:38.4 S4: And for me, looking at the future, time has dissolved in COVID, so I can't really imagine our profession's future necessarily, like there's so much to be changed on so many levels, and potentially a lot of that is tied to architecture is a slave to capitalism, it's meant to make money and diverse opinions don't always do that, voice for voice and for the art of different voices doesn't always fulfill that need. And I could talk about what my feelings are right now, and what I feel determined about progress for me is like, and that's kind of a bullish desire to hold on to community, to trust in people and trust in each other, and create action and voice together.

1:18:25.9 S4: To me, it's not about the egotistical vision of an architect to create beautiful space. For me, it's about valuing humbleness, valuing personal, social growth through the vessel of space, through the vessel of design. About the work that the Encampment Support Network is doing, or Keep Your Rent Toronto, and many of the recent graduates have been compelled in COVID to do work with them. And these are gatherings of people in the community out there making real change to try to support equity within Toronto, within the city, and within Canada and worldwide. And that to me is the future. It's not about the metrics, it's not about the infographics, it's not about achieving half women, half men in the faculty. It's truly not. It has to be a more humble and heartfelt approach to equity.

1:19:16.1 S1: It's interesting 'cause a lot of our faculty would agree with the statement that you're saying. A lot of the architecture field would agree with what you're saying, but then they're going off and doing the complete opposite, especially when it comes to sensitive community, giving voice. All those ideas, inherently we're drawn to them, but it's like are we actually executing those on large scales? Do we actually have the means to execute those? Is where I feel like there's a big falling between those sort of ideologies and the actual practice itself that needs to be held accountable to. We can't just be talking about all these things and then just going and building some condos once we graduate and then be like, "Yeah, forget all that funny stuff you learned in school."

1:20:01.0 S2: Yeah, it's super easy to build a condo and enjoy the work of aestheticizing capitalism when you treat Architecture as something only aesthetic and separate from identity and political understanding. It's a privilege to be able to think of architecture as an art in vacuum.

1:20:20.6 S3: As someone who has recently entered the profession. I've been working at a firm for a while. I wanna remind people that even when you're, if you don't believe that the opportunity to enact social change exists within the firms that are out there or that are hiring, that it's not, that's not the end of the road for you. You know, you may have to accept something to continue and to get a bit of movement and power, but there's so much organizing to be done and there's so many things happening. There's a huge movement right now in Toronto, in Ontario, to create an architecture union. There's so many things happening, and sometimes you may need to stand up in your profession and say, "I'm not gonna take this opportunity because it doesn't align with my values," and sometimes you need to seek out actions for those values outside. And that's certainly something that I remind myself of all the time because I can always be doing better as well.

[music]

1:21:20.2 S1: Yeah, I was just gonna say thank you to everybody. I know this is one of the things that it's very difficult to talk about and it's exhausting to talk about. It is very vulnerable to talk about as well, but I just wanna thank you all for coming out and joining, and I appreciate all of your perspectives on this.

1:21:45.8 S2: Alright, well, that is all we have for you today. It was so wonderful to listen to these powerful voices within the Daniels community and share in solidarity our experiences as feminized designers. This podcast series is a great start in getting these much needed discussions of equity going within the faculty, and I am grateful to have a voice in it. The music in this podcast includes Circus by Bonobo, Aurius Escape and Transparent, AG's Passion Fruit and Waking Up Down, Like This by Park Hye Jin, Snowblind by Tanya Tagaq, and Grimes D'EON and Vanessa. Thank you to everyone who worked on a segment, as well as Erica Ulrich who helped to edit, and Mark Bennett who contributed to the musical selection. As well I would like to thank our faculty coordinators Jay Pooley and Peter Sealy for making this space possible. And thank you for tuning in today.

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