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DIVERSITY

The Trailblazers: Six Profiles

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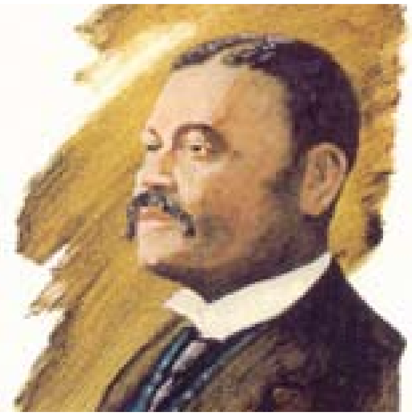
Contributing Editor

Following are profiles of six eminent trailblazers who thrived in this environment.

John A. Lankford (1876–1946)

Lankford arrived in Washington in 1902, followed three years later by William S. Pittman (see below). Born in 1874 in Potosi, Mo., Lankford came to town with the commissions to design the True Reformers Building and the John Wesley A.M.E. Church. He had started an office in Jacksonville, Fla. His training was typical of the handful of black architects of that era, combining design and practical construction knowledge. Lankford had spent six years at the Lincoln Institute in Potosi, Mo., where he studied "mechanical drawing, blacksmithing, carpentry, and engineering," according to the *Washington Bee,* Washington's principal black newspaper of the day. He then moved to Tuskegee, Ala., the college founded by Booker T. Washington, which emerged as the fountainhead of solid practical training for black professionals and crafts.


John A. Lankford

Lankford showed up in Washington to great fanfare. Ethridge writes that along with "a large front page picture of the architect, [the *Washington Bee's*] readers were told that he had made drawings for the new John Wesley A.M.E. Church, and that his drawings for the True Reformers Building had been 'submitted to the Engineers Department of the District Government and have been fully approved.'" The Bee ended up with the following panegyric:

> Lankford became in 1925 the first black registered architect in the District of Columbia after registration became a requirement in 1924

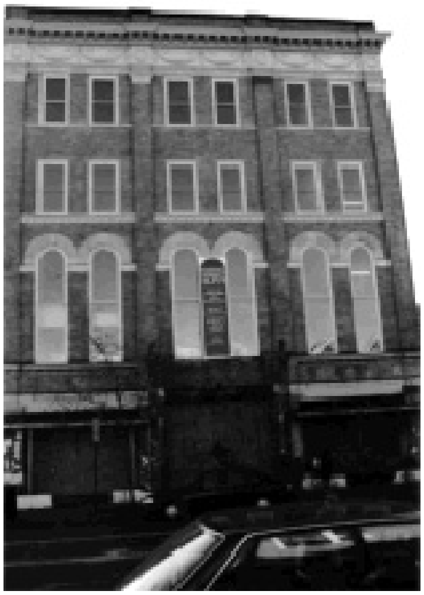
"The Nation's capital will see one of the finest structures ever designed by man, notwithstanding the charge that the Negro cannot grasp science … the scientific history of the world will never be complete if it fails to contain Professor John A. Lankford, M.S., to whom the nation's capital is introduced."

Lankford did well in Washington. He was the nation's first black practicing architect. Aside from churches and fraternal work, his practice included dwellings and small commercial jobs, and much remodeling. For a short span he also went into real estate in a small way, but eventually teamed up with his brother A. E. Lankford, a mechanical and electrical engineer and, for a period, with the redoubtable talented and abrasive William Pittman, who eventually founded his own office.

Meanwhile, Lankford thrived. By the 1920s he had won a national reputation, with commissions in 15 states and the District of Columbia.

His local reputation also bloomed. "He became in 1925 the first black registered architect in the District of Columbia after registration became a requirement in 1924." Like Pittman, he married well: his wife was the granddaughter of A.M.E Bishop Henry M. Turner.

In a self-confident, upbeat speech, Lankford told an audience:


True Reformers Building, Washington, D.C., by John Lankford.

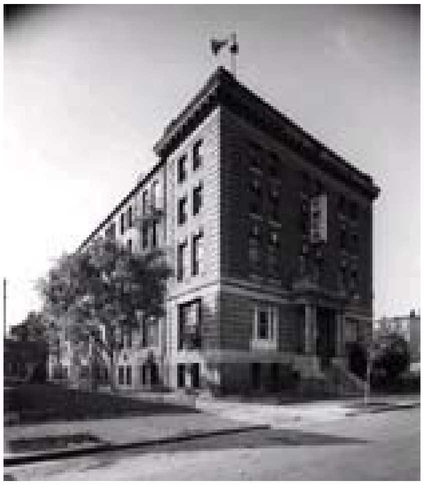
"The Negro architects and builders are doing well in Washington; in fact, it is said that there has never been so many Negroes at work for the city and the government as now, and we could today put 500 more to work and have places to spare. The field is so very great with very little discrimination, and we should grasp this great opportunity. In the past three years I have designed for Washington and 15 states of the Union nearly $6 million worth of buildings [a vast sum, in those days]. I have designed, overhauled, and built in Washington and vicinity over $700 thousand worth of property during the same time."

His practice declined with the Depression, and he ended up working for the Public Works Administration. He died in 1946. Wrote Ethridge:

"[His] significance was his ability to succeed as a black architect in a world that offered few encouragements. A man of great energy, he used racial solidarity advanced by Booker T. Washington's philosophy of self-help … Lankford's churches and fraternal buildings deserve recognition as monuments to the stamina, faith, and self-reliance of the black community in a particularly difficult era."

William S. Pittman (1875–1958)

Pittman left Lankford's office to hang out his shingle in 1906, at the age of 31. As a boy he had worked with his uncle, a seasoned carpenter, then followed what had become a traditional route for black architects, graduating from Tuskegee with a certificate in architecture in 1900, obtaining a degree in architecture from Drexel Institute in Philadelphia, returning to Tuskegee to teach, finally moving north to join Lankford's office in Washington, D.C.



YMCA Building, Washington, D.C., by William Pittman.

In Boyd's Directory of the District of Columbia, 1906, Pittman marketed himself as an architect who specialized in steel construction and later prided himself on his ability to do drafting , detailing, tracing, and blueprinting, further claiming he could render in monotone, water color, and pen and ink, according to the July 1910 Washington Bee.

A year after launching his own practice, Pittman married Portia, the daughter of Booker T. Washington, and his father-in-law's connections (he was also president of Tuskegee Institute), did him no harm. President Theodore Roosevelt, who knew Washington, gave the couple a set of silverware, and shortly afterwards Pittman got to design a home—a neat two-story house with a generous porch in Fairmount Heights, Md.

Pittman's best known building was the YMCA Building on 12th Street in Washington, D.C. President Roosevelt had laid the cornerstone. The dedication in May 1912 was a celebrated event

His best known building was the YMCA Building on 12th Street. Roosevelt had laid the cornerstone. The dedication in May 1912 was a celebrated event, and attracted as the main speaker Secretary for War Henry L. Stimson, who would occupy the same post under another Roosevelt. Stimson told those present, according to that day's *Washington Bee,* in remarks that by any standard are grossly patronizing:

"[I wish] to congratulate you first on what you have done towards the erection of this building—what has been done by the colored people of this city and this land. I want to congratulate you on the fact that this magnificent building, which I have just inspected, is the work of a colored architect, Mr. Pittman. I want to congratulate you on the fact that it has been substantially built by the labor of your own race and your own hands."

Black citizens put up about a quarter of the $100,000 cost. The rest came from John D. Rockefeller, Julius Rosenwald, and the Central Association of the District of Columbia.

Pittman also dabbled in real estate, including an ambitious venture to erect an eight-story mixed use bulking to contain a 2,500-seat theater, and aimed at a black customer base, but the venture failed amid charges that funds had been mishandled. Meanwhile, Pittman's Washington practice grew, but to what extent it was hard to tell because, after the notoriety of the 12th Street YMCA Building, the bulk of his Washington work was small scale—houses, stores, and schools.

But outside Washington, his work flourished, and none drew greater attention than his design for the Negro Exposition Building at the tercentenary celebration of the landing at Jamestown in 1607. Pittman won a competition, and was cited as the first black man to win an architectural commission from the federal government. The building, in traditional neo-Georgian style, was built by two black contractors, S. H. Bolling and A.J.Everett, and cost $30,000.

Pittman also designed churches and fraternal buildings in Alabama, Texas, North Carolina, and Georgia, where he allegedly out-promoted all other competitors, black and white, for the commission to design the Odd Fellows auditorium.

Pittman in due course moved his office to Dallas, where he died in 1958.

Ethridge thus sums up these two careers: "it was the two Washington architects' application of the theme of racial self-help that made their careers so representative of the era. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that the almost total dependence on commissions generated within the black community was a result of attitudes and limitations imposed by the dominant society." [A black architect was not admitted to the AIA until 1926, 69 years after its founding in New York City. His name was Paul Williams (see below).] "Racially generated commissions continued to be a salient characteristic of the careers of black architects until well after World War II."

Robert R. Taylor (1867–1949)

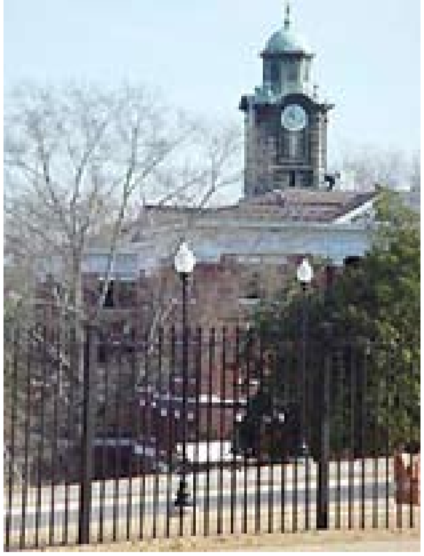
Taylor was the first African American to receive an architectural degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (class of 1892). The same year he joined the Tuskegee Institute. There he headed the mechanical industries department, which included architecture and construction. The main buildings at Tuskegee were built under his direction: "students learned every phase of architecture, from drafting to making bricks." (Taylor was also in private practice, with a clientele throughout the South. He eventually became the first licensed black architect in Alabama—in 1931, the first year that licensure was required by that state.)

Robert Taylor

Lankford, Pittman, and many other black designers and builders studied under Taylor at Tuskegee. The curriculum there, which came to be known as the "Tuskegee Machine," was rooted in the teachings of Booker T. Washington. The core of Washington's dream appears in his classical work *Up from Slavery,* above all in chapter X, entitled "A Harder Task Than Making Bricks Without Straw":

"From the very beginning, at Tuskegee, I was determined to have the students do not only the agricultural and domestic work, but to have them erect their own buildings … My plan was not to teach them to work in the old way but to show them how to make the forces of nature—air, water, steam, electricity, horse-power—assist them in their labour."

The main buildings at Tuskegee Institute were built under Robert Taylor's direction: "Students learned every phase of architecture, from drafting to making bricks."



White Hall, Tuskegee University, by Robert Taylor.

In the event, students built 36 out of 40 buildings, large and small, on the Tuskegee campus. Moreover, "hundreds of men are now scattered throughout the South who received their knowledge of mechanics while being taught how to erect these buildings." In short, it was through the Tuskegee Machine, buttressed by Washington, that "the first black architects obtained education, national experience, and the beginnings of practice. The Black churches, Prince Hall lodges and other Black institutions provided these architects with their primary contracts," wrote Dozier in his article, "Black Architects and Craftsmen" in the May 1974 Black World.

The Tuskegee precedent was in due course emulated at what is now Hampton University and Howard University, where an inspired leader of a later generation, Howard H. Mackey (1901-1987), across a 50-year span as dean of the school of architecture and planning, maintained a creative and hospitable milieu for generations of future black architects. He was succeeded by Harry G. Robinson III, who later became a top administrator at Howard.

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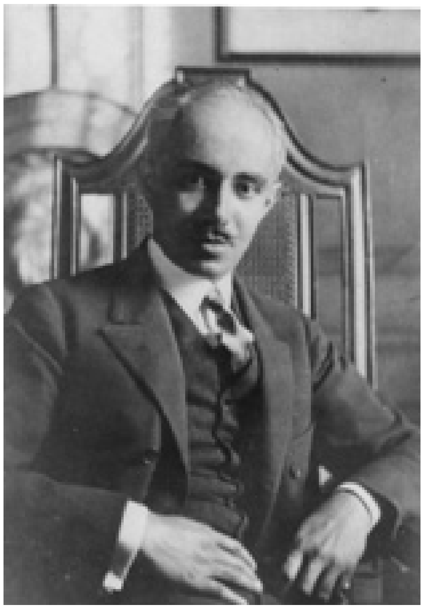
FACE OF THE AIA

Julian Abele (1881–1950)

Although more and more African Americans passed professional training in architecture and became licensed, credit and recognition failed to keep up. The leading example is Julian Abele, designer for the Duke University campus, Philadelphia's Museum of Art, and Harvard's Widener Library—a true trailblazer.



Julian Abele, photo courtesy Duke University Archives

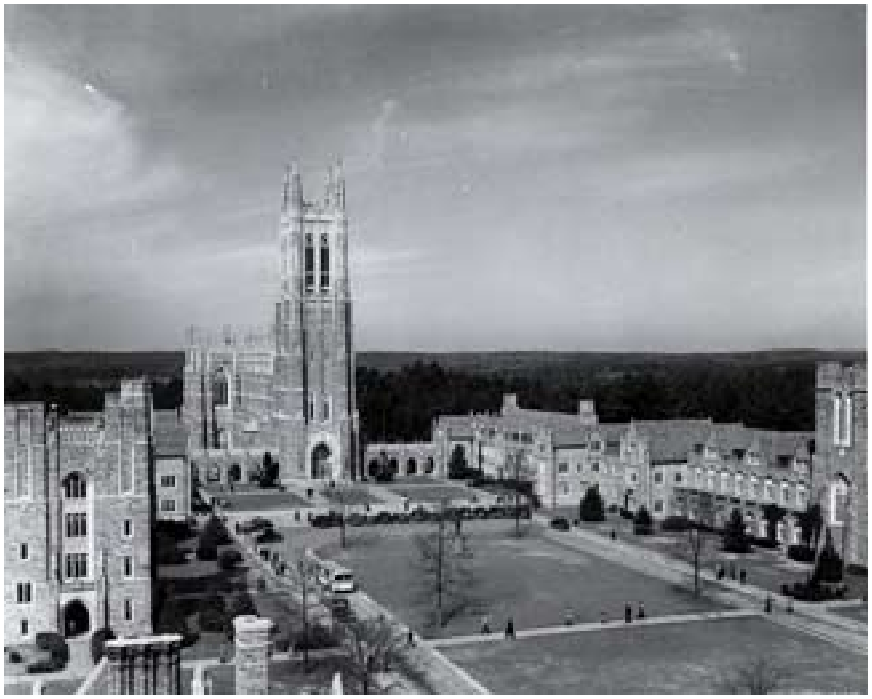
Abele was one of the most brilliant yet one of the least fêted of these early black practitioners. He was the first African American to graduate from the University of Pennsylvania school of architecture, and he later attended the Ecole des Beaux Arts. The man who underwrote his Paris trip was also the man who gave him the unique break to design some of the nation's best known architecture. Horace Trumbauer's practice was based in Philadelphia. Abele joined the firm in 1906, and in 1909, at the aged 28, Trumbauer appointed him chief designer.

> **Julian Abele, designer for the Duke University campus, Philadelphia's Museum of Art, and Harvard's Widener Library was one of the most brilliant yet one of the least fêted of these early black practitioners.**

Trumbauer had a solid practice of well-to-do clients for whom he designed mansions, museums, academic buildings, and libraries in neo-Classical or neo-Gothic. Abele took to those historic styles like a duck to water and was soon designing buildings of the highest profile. These included Widener Library in Harvard Yard, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, a New York mansion for James B. Duke, and the original master plan and buildings for Duke University.

But, although Abele was designer for these monuments, the credits went to Trumbauer, who of course had his name on the door. An excerpt from the Duke University archives kindly provided by William E. King, Duke University archivist from 1972 to 2002, quotes Abele: "The shadows are all mine." By that he allegedly meant, said King, that he accepted a central fact of his life—being black, he lived in the shadows because the social circumstances of the day denied him the fame due his talents.

An odd combination of bias and opposition links Trumbauer with Abele and a third member of the firm, William Frank, who headed the firm's technical/specifications department. In *If Gargoyles Could Talk, Sketches of Duke University,* William King writes: "Because of his talent and aloofness, Trumbauer gained accolades in New York before he did in his home town. His colleagues in Philadelphia did not elect him to membership in their chapter of the American Institute of Architects until 1931, an affront that reportedly greatly disturbed him. Added to this mix was the fact that he employed and befriended one of the very few African American architects



Duke University Campus and Tower, by Julian Abele, photo courtesy Duke University Archives.

in the country. [So] Trumbauer and Abele each faced discrimination and because of that Trumbauer empathized with the racial discrimination confronting Abele."

"Consequently," King goes on, "they forged a close relationship based on respect for talent and friendship, but each also trapped the other in a peculiar set of circumstances." Trumbauer was the salesman who brought in the work. Abele was the brilliant chef d'atelier and designer. Frank, who was Jewish, was the technical man, making sure the architecture went out and up safe and sound. Appointing two such men to top positions in his firm further underscores Trumbauer's enlightened, for that day, outlook.

Trumbauer, furthermore, had no formal education from the age of 16 on, had learned what he knew about architecture through the apprentice route, and admired formal training in others. Abele's education at the University of Pennsylvania and the Beaux Arts fit the bill exactly, King argues.

The partners who took over the Trumbauer firm after Abele's death in 1950 destroyed the firm's records, and with it any hope of an in-depth inventory of his contributions. We know that after Trumbauer's death in 1938, the firm continued until 1958 under Trumbauer's name. Drawings had been going out under the Trumbauer name through the 1930s, and Abele's name began to appear thereafter, King reports, calling it "an obvious change of policy." And when in 1940 the question of design of a tomb monument in the crypt of the Duke Chapel arose, the university turned to Abele because he "prepared the plans and knows the details better than anyone else."

Abele's profile rose after his death, especially after 1974, when a memoir by Alice Phillips entitled *Spire and Spirit* included a short chapter, "Le Noir," that describes a meeting with Abele's secretary and son when they came to see the chapel.

Abele applied for membership in the Philadelphia Chapter AIA in 1942, and the endorsement letter from Fiske Kimball, the eminent architectural historian and at that time director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, is evidence of the high esteem in which he was held. Abele was also an outstanding draftsman, renderer, and water colorist (see crayon rendering of Duke chapel).

The height of Abele's involvement as an architect covered 1906 to 1950, hyperactive years in the evolution of architectural styles, including Art Nouveau, International Modernism, Art Deco, Constructivism, and Wright's organic Prairie Style. These had tempted hitherto mainstream architects to stray from the beaten path of gargoyles and the Five Orders. How did Abele respond to these sirens? The answer: hardly at all. Trumbauer's clients, well-to-do and conservative in their tastes, were not ready for the most part to accept the revolutionary look of an architecture without ornament, machine made (or pretending to be machine made), and carrying a hidden agenda of egalitarianism.

Moreover, as an educated black man of that era, Abele no doubt wished to conform to the Euro-centric cultural and social norms then prevailing in America, which did not get around to wholeheartedly embracing new architectural trends until the start of the 1950s.

In the end, one is hard put to find any traces of Modernism in Abele's work, except, perhaps, in his "belief that the plan of a building determines how that building is experienced, a surprising view in one so wedded to the mantra of formal composition," as J. Max Bond Jr., a partner at Davis Brody Bond, wrote in the summer 1997 *Harvard Design Magazine.*

As for a sign of black origins, none appears. Wrote Bond: "Neither in form, reference, detail, nor decoration do his buildings betray that the man who designed them was black." But in that he is a precursor of many of today's black-owned mainstream firms, which despite the preponderance, in many of them, of black designers, managers, and technical people, the work follows the European-derived Modernist idiom, as amended from time to time by such passing blips as Postmodernism and Deconstructionism.

Ironically, Abele, who deeply resented segregation, never went to see the buildings he had designed for Duke.

Paul R. Williams (1894–1980)
Williams was a contemporary of Abele's, but longer-lived, and certainly far more famous. He is best known for the large mansions he designed for film stars and other Hollywood celebrities such as Frank Sinatra, Tyrone Power, Lucille Ball, Cary Grant, and Lon Chaney.

Paul R. Williams

What is less well known is the steep ladder he had to climb to reach that fame. Much of it is told in *The Will and the Way,* a reminiscence by Williams' granddaughter Karen E. Hudson.

Just as Julian Abele designed the campus for a university in which he would not have been allowed to enroll, so Williams designed palatial houses for clients in places where he was not welcome. Born in Los Angeles (his parents were from Memphis and orphaned at age four), he was raised by foster parents (his foster father was a janitor) but went to an integrated high school. On learning, wrongly, that there was reportedly only one black architect in practice, William Pittman, Williams wrote in his diary, as edited by Karen Hudson: "I was sure this country could use at least one or two more black architects." On confiding this ambition to his high school counselor, he was told: "Who ever heard of a Negro being an architect?

Paul Williams is best known for the large mansions he designed for film stars and other Hollywood celebrities such as Frank Sinatra, Tyrone Power, Lucille Ball, Cary Grant, and Lon Chaney.

He made the commitment anyway, at the age of 18, and on graduating from Polytechnic High School he attended the Los Angeles Art School and the Los Angeles branch of the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design of New York. Five years later he won the coveted Beaux Arts Medal for excellence in design. Here's how he went about finding his first job:

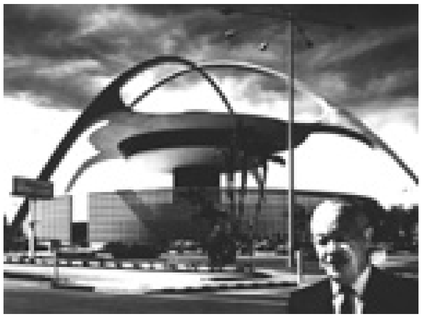
"I went through the yellow pages and copied the addresses of all the architects listed. I arranged them in geographical order, and called on each office. I asked if they were hiring or not. Next to each name I wrote down if the answer was 'no' or 'maybe next week,' and whether it was said with a smile or a frown. The following week I put my sketches in a smart portfolio, and went back to each office where someone had 'smiled.'"

Finally, he was offered three positions, his race notwithstanding. Two offered three dollars a week, the third one nothing. He took the last, because it was one of the most prestigious offices in Los Angeles, and he figured he would "pay" for learning (shortly thereafter, they began to pay him three dollars a week).

What at first propelled Williams forward was his remarkable draftsmanship—he discovered he could be faster and more efficient and accurate than others, and did so because, he wrote in his diary, he wanted to be "judged for my abilities rather than simply dismissed because of the color of my face."

But he soon discovered there was more to architecture then drafting. So he went back to school at the University of Southern California and studied engineering and business. He supported himself by making brass fittings for men's watch fobs and women's handbags. He made so much money at this that he considered going into business.

Eventually, he went to work for the then-prominent Los Angeles firm of Reginald Johnson and, as his first assignment, was given a $150,000 house to design (a $2,250,000 house by today's prices). A high school friend asked him to design his house, and, with the fee so earned, Williams opened his own office in 1922, aged 28. In 1923 he became the first black member of the Southern California AIA chapter.


L.A. Airport, by Paul Williams.

His practice grew as the newly rich film magnates and stars looked for ways to spend their money, and their first thought was usually a suitable house. Williams, with his engaging manner, eye for materials and form, and rapid production, caught the eye of Lon Chaney Sr. and a small handful of other celebrities, and, as the word got around, the work began to flow into the office.

Yet Williams' path to success was anything but trouble free. In an Ebony profile published in March 1994, a dozen years after his death, reporter Karima Haynes wrote: "Racism was pervasive in the business climate in which he worked. White clients loved his work, yet felt uncomfortable shaking his hand. His elaborate homes were built in some of Los Angeles' most exclusive neighborhoods, yet segregation barred him from living there. He never would eat lunch with a White woman alone, even if she happened to be a client." In a wistful entry in his diary, Williams remarked:

"As I sketched plans for large country homes in the most beautiful places in the world, sometimes I dreamed of living there. I could afford such a home, but each evening, I returned to my small home in a restricted area of Los Angeles where Negroes were allowed to live."

While Abele was committed to a classical idiom, Williams embraced the freer milieu of Hollywood. He too, be it said, conformed to whatever the client wanted—Art Deco, neo-Gothic etc. One finds in Williams' work what Max Bond calls "less about stylistic consistency than about direct response to the aspirations of his clients, to socioeconomic developments in Southern California in the first half of the century, and to Southern Californians' self-conscious understandings of style and urbanity." Indeed, Bond likens Williams to Morris Lapidus in his ability to "concoct stylish pastiches," but argues that Williams' houses were much like the man himself—"affable, well-mannered, gracious and graceful." Bond should know, because he and another Eastern architect, Jeh Johnson, had driven from New York to Los Angeles in 1957 to take up a summer job in Williams' office—a job they had obtained, as Bond put it, "on the strength of letters from school." They were put to work on the Sinatra house—Bond to detail the kitchen floor tile, Johnson the stair railings.

His house for Sinatra was ahead of its time from a technical viewpoint, incorporating all kinds of electronic devices for controlling blinds, music, and security.

But Williams never lost the common touch. In 1945, members of the armed forces returned from the war, married, and began to look for affordable homes. Williams wrote two books on small homes, *The Small Home of Tomorrow and New Homes for Today.* These two works were on the lines of the old pattern books—they carried enough information to give young couples an image of their dream house, and a rough idea to the builder of plan, elevation, materials, and dimensions.

Otherwise, Williams is best known for the theme building at Los Angeles International Airport (in association with Pereira & Luckman and Welton Becket & Associates), a new wing for the Beverly Hills Hotel, and numerous churches. By 1950 the Williams office had a staff of over 50.

That said, there is little evidence, certainly not in his diary, that Williams' race played any major role in securing him commissions, no matter what impact it had on his social life and his social contacts with clients and their entourage. His concern for the well-being of fellow blacks is manifest in the designs he did for Los Angeles' black community, including low-cost houses, a church, an elementary school, several YMCAs, and a children's hospital in Memphis, for which he waived his fee.

John Moutoussamy (1922–1995)

The most contemporary of the latter-day pioneers is Chicago-born architect John Moutoussamy. He is known above all as the black architect who designed a high-profile downtown Chicago headquarters office building, with an African American as client. This was a feat unprecedented even as late as 1971, when his client, Johnson Publishing Company chief executive John Johnson, moved into his new building on South Michigan Avenue.

Earlier, Moutoussamy had designed the 744-unit Theodore K. Lawless Gardens, named after a prosperous black dermatologist and philanthropist, a model project that won several design awards.

Moutoussamy's work was a lot broader than these examples would indicate. He was principal partner on such complex commissions as the Southwest Transit Project, which comprised eight rapid transit stations, a maintenance facility, and seven traction power substations. He designed health-care facilities and many schools, including the modernization of 18 school buildings for the Chicago Board of Education.

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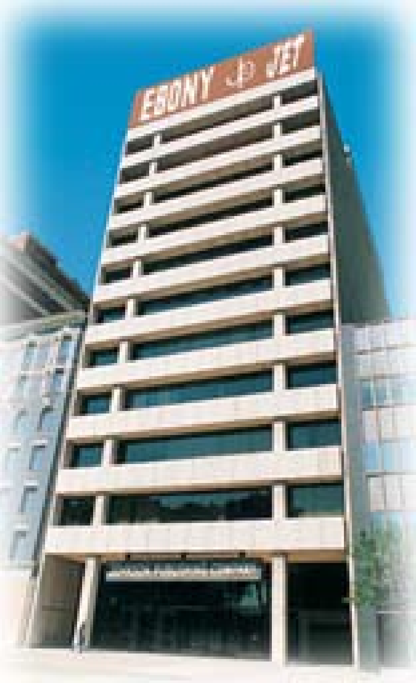
Born in Chicago in 1922 of parents born in Guadeloupe—his mother was Creole and spoke next to no English. How Motoussamy, with these roots, ended up as a prominent architect is a tale of timing and perseverance. His mother had worked for an architect as a maid and regaled her son with glowing reports about the architect's personality and lifestyle. Then, faced with the all too common admonition to black youths that architecture was not the career for them, it only hardened his resolve. An admirer of Mies van der Rohe, Moutoussamy elected to study at the Illinois Institute of Technology, whose architecture department was then headed by Mies. John's daughter Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, widow of Arthur Ashe, told me that John White, later president of Cooper Union, had been responsible in 1948 for getting her father into IIT under the GI Bill.

At IIT, Moutoussamy was close to Mies, who even gave him a drafting set. His work, then and later, reflected Mies' spare design, flat surfaces, and absence of ornament. He graduated in 1948 with a BS degree in architecture and was licensed after an unusually short internship two years later.

He soon joined Dubin Dubin and Black, a prominent Chicago office. The partners, who had never known Moutoussamy as anything more than a name, came to recognize him as an extraordinary employee who was now also billing as much as 25 percent of the firm's total revenues. They explored the idea of a full and equal partnership in the firm. They also reviewed the idea with their clients, who welcomed it. So, in 1966, Moutoussamy became a partner in the firm, which changed its name to Dubin Dubin Black and Moutoussamy (DDBM).



Johnson Publishing Headquarters, by John Moutoussamy

DDBM had long embraced minorities in its hiring and promotion practices. Henry Dubin, Arthur's father, and George, his uncle, who together founded the firm in 1914, had employed minority staff long before this became commonplace. Several of the firm's junior partners in recent years came from racial and religious minorities, and the firm went out of its way to hire minorities out of school (the Dubins were Jewish, Black was Anglo Saxon Protestant).

As a disciple of Mies, Moutoussamy felt that Mies' spare impersonal design vocabulary worked anywhere. He also thought it presumptuous to expect successful black entrepreneurs or other well-to-do blacks to hire black architects merely because of their race. "You can't put that burden on a Black guy who happens to be successful," he told *Ebony Magazine* in a July 1983 article. "I think he ought to use the architect that serves his needs best." [Black and majority patronage will be discussed as a key issue in this column in mid-2007.] Moutoussamy's partner Peter Dubin once said: "[John] was always amused with the question [about his role in shaping an African American influence in architecture] … He believed in the theory of one architecture for all people, rich and poor," according to a Chicago newspaper obituary in May 1995.

By the time Moutoussamy had died, DDBM had become broadly diversified racially, to the extent that it was rated as a 51 percent minority firm for government set-aside purposes. The firm did not survive his death, despite efforts by partner Arthur Dubin, who, with three other architects, ended up forming a new firm.

Moutoussamy shared many of the personal qualities of another pioneer, Paul Williams. He was gracious and courteous. The order of worship of the funeral mass in 1995 describes him as a "kind, compassionate, gentle and loving man … quiet spoken, always eager to listen, and had a humor all his own."

He got his start under urban renewal. His first jobs as head of his own firm consisted of working on the redevelopment of an area on Chicago's South Side that had been settled by black families during World War I. His role was to design high-rise and low-rise housing. One project was later designated as the Dr Theodore K. Lawless Gardens.

But the critical event in his life was design of the Johnson Publishing headquarters. Arthur Dubin relates the tricky circumstances of getting a loan and approval for the building. The mortgage company had suggested that Moutoussamy ally himself with an experienced architecture firm. He was given a list of four all-white firms. Three of them would have placed John in a routine position with little impact. The fourth firm, Dubin Dubin and Black, offered him his own space in the office, drafting and other support he would need to get the work out, and a separate checking account. The lion's share in breaking down the financial and racial barriers go to publisher John Johnson, who used persistence, contacts, guile, and sheer pluck to obtain the necessary permits and loans to proceed with the job. But Moutoussamy was an essential weapon in Johnson's arsenal.

Appraisal

Did Abele, Williams, and the other trailblazer architects inspire later generations of black architects? The circumstances of founding and developing a practice are different today, in many ways, though uncomfortably similar in others. The numbers of black architects employed in or owning a practice have multiplied manifold since the gallant days of the trailblazers, who showed that even under the most severe restrictions, black architects had the skills, initiative, and perseverance to produce work of professional quality.