

DESIGN JUSTICE NETWORK

A complex and beautiful year in review



2020 MEMBERSHIP REPORT

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Note from the Steering Committee

Welcome to the first Membership Report of the Design Justice Network! 2020 was difficult for reasons we are all too aware of. Yet as the Steering Committee met to consider everything that our network accomplished last year, we realized that we feel good, we feel calm, and we feel nourished by all of the work and play of the Design Justice Network (DJN) in 2020.

In this report, we summarize some of the key activities and developments across the network over the past year, and highlight some new DJN member stories. Please feel free to skim the Table of Contents if you just want the headlines, or dive in for more detail!


We're listening to the design justice community, and learning how to be better stewards of the collective process of growing and nurturing an international network. We're more committed than ever to the multi-generational work of dismantling all of the interlocking forms of oppression that create the matrix of domination.¹ We're energized to continue to build and envision new worlds together, and as we enter 2021 we feel grateful to be in community with all of you.

Victoria, Denise Shanté, Una, Wes, & Sasha

¹"The matrix of domination is a term developed by Black feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins [...] to refer to race, class, and gender as interlocking systems of oppression." Source: Sasha Costanza-Chock, *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need*, <https://bit.ly/3cC31TD> 

Membership Benefits in 2020

One of our goals as a network is to create concrete membership benefits. We're just beginning to figure out what that looks and feels like. In 2020, membership benefits included:

- 
- **access to our Slack**, which became a vibrant space for conversation, resource sharing, opportunities and announcements, and local node and working group communication.
 - **a discount code** for the book *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need*.
 - **an invitation to the Design Justice Network Gathering** at the 2020 Allied Media Conference.
 - **invitations to DJN Member Story sharing sessions**, and the opportunity for members to lead one themselves.
 - **early access to the Oracle for Transfeminist Futures card deck** (the first print run sold out quickly, but another run is in the works!).
 - **support for local node events, including graphic design, promotion, and organizing #NodesConnect meetings**, where local node organizers gather to exchange experiences and support one another.

An Overview of 2020

An Overview of 2020

1 JANUARY Denise Shanté Brown joined the Steering Committee

Denise Shanté is a sober queer disabled entrepreneur, holistic design strategist, writer and creative healer. Her life's work brings forth abundant possibilities for wellbeing through collaborative creativity and community-led practices.

[Check out her favorite luminous moments with DJN so far.](#)

2 JANUARY–APRIL Membership engagement collaboration with DSI

Collaboration with the School of Visual Art's Design for Social Innovation (DSI) Communications Design class to support our membership engagement strategy. Alyson Fraser Diaz, Laura Ceron Melo, Leah Brown, and Dasha Zlochevsky provided us with [thoughtful concepts, interventions, and strategic recommendations.](#)

3 JANUARY–DECEMBER New Local Nodes and Working Groups

In 2020, the following local nodes became official in DJN: Los Angeles, Boston, Vancouver, and Dallas. These joined the existing Toronto, Philly, Mediterranean, San Francisco Bay area, Chicago, Singapore, and Scotland, UK nodes. New local nodes are still in the process of forming!

Additionally, Principles at Work also became a DJN working group!

[Read more](#)

4 MARCH Design Justice book published

DJN Steering Committee member Sasha Costanza-Chock's book *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need* was published by MIT Press. The book draws on the history of DJN, and explores how design might be led by marginalized communities, dismantle structural inequality, and advance collective liberation and ecological survival.

[Read more](#)

5 APRIL DJN Steering Committee Retreat

The Steering Committee met online to explore some of the challenges and opportunities of the rapid growth of DJN, and discussed ways to support possibilities of community and shared intentions for the network. They also shared stories of their own journeys through design and community organizing.

[Read more](#)

6 APRIL #NodesConnect meetings begun

#NodesConnect meetings take place monthly on the first Thursday of each month, where DJN local nodes meet, collaborate and share stories. Each node's work reflects their location/communities and the design justice principles.

[Read more](#)

7 MAY DJN Mission & Vision Development

With support and insight from DJN membership, the Steering Committee brought Corina Fadel on to support the creation of our network's Mission and Vision. This process is ongoing, and we are hoping to release the fruits of our work in the summer of 2021.

[Read more](#)

8 JULY Network Gathering at the Allied Media Conference (AMC)

DJN AMC Coordinators, Rigoberto Lara Guzmán, Christina N. Harrington, Ph.D., LO5 / Carlos García, and Em Lane hosted the first online Design Justice Network Gathering at the 2020 Allied Media Conference! DJN members dreamed, participated and volunteered!

[Read more](#)


9 JULY Design Justice at AMC: Going Deeper

Steering Committee members Una Lee and Wesley Taylor facilitated this AMC session, where they asked DJN members to share their journeys into the design justice principles, and share stories about projects using the principles.

[Read more](#)


10 AUGUST
Design Justice in Visual & Material Design: Workshop

An informal workshop facilitated by Michelle Lin-Luse and Una Lee; DJN members shared reflections and theories on design justice in certain design circles and identified potential steps towards intentional organizing in visual/material design spaces.

[Read more](#) 


11 SEPTEMBER
Principles at Work: Workshop

This workshop run by various DJN members, explored the question of how to build power and accountability in our organizations using the design justice principles and by engaging with work scenarios drawn from real-life stories.

[Read more](#) 


12 NOVEMBER
DJN Member Features

These are monthly features in the DJN newsletter and social media spotlighting a DJN member; their work, life and anything about how they intersect with design justice and the design justice principles!

[Read more](#) 

13 DECEMBER
DJN Member Stories Sessions

Informal sessions featuring a DJN member who shares their work/story and how it intersects with design justice. The first session featured Leila Sidi, a woodworker and luthier!

[Read more](#) 

Member Highlights

Member Highlights

Thank you for being a DJN Member! Thank you for all that you bring, contribute, and do to make design justice practiced and celebrated in the world, and in our lives.

We are continuing to learn and grow together, and in that process, we are sharing and highlighting more of the amazing work of our members. We asked DJN members to submit stories focused on a more holistic view of design justice—how design justice shows up in everyday life: from community and work, to relationships with family, friends and partners, to dreams and hopes for the worlds we need. While we cannot feature everyone here, we are continuing to collect and share these stories within the network and our social channels. We're excited for you to find out more about our DJN members, and look forward to having you featured as well!

“Design justice means honoring our individual lived experience while moving towards our collective freedom.”

—NECHARI RILEY, DJN MEMBER

MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS



Nechari Riley

Researcher & Dot Connector

SHE/HER

MUNSEE LENAPE / WAPPINGER / BRONX, NY, USA

How does design justice show up in your life?

Within my work, design justice shows up in the way I challenge myself (and others) to think about how systems of oppression within human-centered design (and research) are used to worsen inequities amongst people who are minoritized by society. This leaves me with an insatiable curiosity for thinking about my place within the matrix of domination and how I can be more intentional in my work for advancing design justice principles (e.g. questioning assumptions, challenging "the way we do things"/normalcy). This passion bleeds over from my personal life, in that I try to create and nurture cultures of inclusivity, respect, and dignity.

What are you working on right now?

I'm working on weaving shared experiences into the fabric of research which supports human-centered design within public health. I'm also working on redesigning a UX research course to center design justice principles.

[Read Nechari's full highlight](#) 

“Design justice means reflection, listening, care, and collective action. It means the arduous but joyful process of liberation from oppressive and exploitative systems.”

Nushin Yazdani

Artist, Designer, Educator & Activist

SHE/HER BERLIN, GERMANY



How does design justice show up in your life?

Way too often our technologies reflect the capitalist, white supremacist, imperialist patriarchy we're living in. We need to work hard towards decolonizing the structures of our society to (re)create other ways of living and relating to each other. The way we interact and work with each other, as well as our technologies, must reflect the values we want for a more just society. For me, the Design Justice Principles are a blueprint for all steps in a design process.

What are you working on right now?

With my collaborator Buse Çetin, I'm currently working on a digital think-tank and a collaborative platform on AI & society. It will be a space for critical and constructive knowledge, visionary fiction & speculative art and community-organizing. The platform aims to enable an understanding how AI technologies can exacerbate oppressing power structures in our society, as well as to question predominant AI narratives. [Read Nushin's full highlight](#)

William Nickley

Designer & Educator

HE/HIM

MYAAMIA, HOPEWELL, SHAWANDASSE TULA,
KASKASKIA / COLUMBUS, OH, USA

“Design justice is about acting on my responsibility to critically examine my participation in the world.”



How does design justice show up in your life?

Design Justice shows up in my life as I co-create with others in my work as a volunteer, neighbor, educator, and designer; I am inspired to facilitate moments of surprising understanding that push us to question what we know and include those we may overlook.

What are you working on right now?

Currently, I work with non-profit youth program providers to envision, facilitate, and assess novel classes, workshops and programs that center youths' lived experiences through design-based making.

[Read William's full highlight](#)

Kirsten George

Interior Designer
& Educator

SHE/HER

LENAPE / PHILADELPHIA, PA, USA



“Design justice means understanding that every person has valuable insight and knowledge.”

How does design justice show up in your life?

Learning about and engaging with design justice has helped me expand my understanding of design, especially in the context of the built environment. A particular space can be designed in a way that pays close attention to addressing important problems, but the industry as a whole still operates in extremely harmful ways. Design justice reminds me to keep my perspective wide for this reason.

What are you working on right now?

I have spent the past 4 years co-organizing a community garden in my neighborhood called Mercy Emily Edible Park. Food insecurity is a very serious problem in Philly. Each season, we meet with gardeners, neighbors, and local organizations to determine what we can do to better serve the neighborhood that season. Once it feels safe to do so, we are hoping to offer educational opportunities in the garden that range from culturally-relevant, seasonal recipe ideas to tips on growing fresh food in limited space or light. Within the context of DJN, I am collaborating on a project that aims to create a space for youth to learn about and interact with design justice.

[Read Kirsten's full highlight](#) 

Network Finances

*available to DJN Members only

Closing Message

The Design Justice Network grew out of a question at a session at the Allied Media Conference in 2015: if there were a design justice movement, what principles would guide it? We had no idea at the time that now, almost six years later, we would be a network with over 1700 signatories, 450 members, multiple years of Network Gatherings and Tracks at the AMC, and local nodes springing up around the world! So DJN has grown well beyond our wildest dreams, and people are also aligning in really exciting ways around the concept of design justice well beyond the network.

Thank you for being a part of the Design Justice Network. Thank you for your patience with the Steering Committee and staff. We are building capacity to support you with resources and care as you self-organize local nodes and working groups, and as we all continue to deepen our practices within and beyond the network.

Victoria, Denise Shanté, Una, Wes, & Sasha

“Design justice is both aspirational and practical. We are dreaming this and doing this on a daily basis. We imagine things that don’t yet exist, and then we conjure them into existence. There is magic and power in this making, and we’re working to become conscious of how we wield our magic. This is why our shared visions of a design justice future are critical to this work.”

—UNA LEE, AMC 2020 NETWORK GATHERING
CLOSING REFLECTION

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2020 Membership Report | Design Justice Network

Writing	Denise Shanté Brown, Victoria Barnett, Una Lee, Wesley Taylor, Sasha Costanza-Chock
Coordination	Victoria Barnett
Art direction	Denise Shanté Brown
Graphic design	Guadalupe Pérez Pita

Special thanks to our members Nechari, Nushin, William, & Kirsten, featured in this report.

We acknowledge that as an international network, we are currently standing on the ancestral lands of many Indigenous nations. Through this land acknowledgment, we also honor the thousands of enslaved Africans who physically and spiritually tended to these lands.



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