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## Foreword

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# FOREWORD

by David Hughes  
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I am truly honored to have been asked to write the Foreword for this special edition of ATL, featuring the extraordinary work of CPDI Africa and its founder Nmadili Okwumabua...

As I set out to pen the feelings I have for this endeavor, I found the very placement in this document as the key to my thoughts... forward. Whether forward thinking, fast forward or just advancing forward, the journal, the initiative, the research, the competition and certainly the body of design work takes African architecture forward.

Twenty two years ago, I authored *Afrocentric Architecture: A Design Primer*, to establish that Africa had a distinct architecture that would enhance modern expression in form, space and aesthetic, deriving from elements that have origins in Africa – cultural, historical or environmental. This effort was intended to plant a seed and bolster a dialogue that supported the efforts of a community of designers, students, scholars and academics who shared a concern that Africa was a very relevant participant in the world of contemporary architecture, design and construction.

I consider the work of CPDI Africa to be a stellar example and advanced manifestation of that seed coming to full blossom. Primarily, there are three distinct facets of CPDI Africa efforts that advance the consciousness and commitment to African architectural design: the format, the forum, and the focus.

The format used to put Afrocentric design on a level beyond the early concepts is the competition. This approach challenged the architectural community to acknowledge, regard, recognize and respect the premise that African design is exciting, substantive and sophisticated enough to warrant the attention, energy and sacrifice of accomplished designers, practitioners and professionals to produce intriguing designs as seen in the work that follows. Further, the effort to create exacting rules, criteria, and guidance for jury review was exhaustive. It called for a distinct approach, a specific building type, and a focused assessment of space, aesthetic and structure, which ensured a seriousness of quality in each submission.

The forum was even more ambitious: the international community of designers and thinkers. This forum allowed for a participatory reach far beyond borders or boundaries that define race, religion, cultures and geography. To garner interest across so many domains of creativity further established the merit of the concept and the work. However, the scope was wide for a relatively new body of thought and a very new organizing entity. Nonetheless, the results speak for the success of this aspect of the effort.

The focus was yet another level of brilliance, as it placed the work into an area that enhances a universal idea: quality living throughout humanity. This building type is certainly appreciated by all architects and designers, who will learn much from this concept about how to advance design in all realms. Thus, Afrocentric design can lead to a vibrant and essential aspect of creativity in the built environment.

Finally, I salute the jury that undertook the daunting task of review and selection from the many outstanding submissions. I am most impressed that the stellar assembly of critics could have been so patient in deliberation as to make their final decisions.

The work, the effort, the energy, the breadth, scope and the product that resulted in this competition, exhibition and publication take Afrocentric architecture forward, to a new height, appreciation and dynamic.

Let's continue the march forward....