



Allies and Morrison

Us, in the world.

diversity and inclusion statement

November 2021

Each of us is different.

A WELCOMING PRACTICE

Each of us brings to work a unique life story.

At Allies and Morrison, we have always been welcoming and pluralistic, a union of many backgrounds, of individual biographies, each one essential and vital to the whole. Our understanding and appreciation of diversity and inclusion begins with this attitude.

As a practice, we participate in a wider circle of community, we interact with each other and with many more beyond our studios. In a given year, our people are involved in literally thousands of interactions with other organisations, clients, businesses and individuals. As a collective, we are neighbours, with adjacencies, with an opportunity for creating impact on and potential to be impacted by local issues. We also work in many different places, cultures and countries. All of these present opportunities to foster more inclusivity and to shape, to nudge towards, to nurture, more just outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGING WIDER INJUSTICES

We know racism is endemic in the wider world, that it is structural and has a corrosive impact on the fortunes of non-white people. We know that in that world, women are often not valued the same as men. We know that homophobia and heteronormativity continue to leave lasting scars on the mental health of many. We know that to emigrate is among the bravest decisions one could make in life, yet that world often undervalues the bravest amongst us. And we know that social background is often a barrier to entry to many career paths, especially design.

We are but a group of three hundred architects, planners and allied professionals. So, we cannot control the world. But we strive better to be citizens of it. In our own industry, we have long advocated for expanding access to architecture and planning, career paths that are far too often out of reach or distant from the horizons of many, especially Black and Brown communities. This remains at the heart of our engagement with the places in which we work.





There is more to do.

We must play our role in dismantling the discriminatory barriers that keep many away from the world of architecture and urbanism.

While we are proud of the diversity of our people, as our practice evolves, it can and should be more broadly representative of the communities in which we work.

FIVE COMMITMENTS

- 1** We have signed the [RIBA Inclusion Charter](#). This commits us to setting inclusion targets and an EDI action plan (this document). It commits us to embedding inclusive design in our project work. It will also formalise developing a workplace that supports inclusion, something we have long been doing.
- 2** We are measuring and setting targets. Our diversity team, comprising our Diversity Champions, the Partners and the HR team, will openly set, share and measure equality targets going forward. This diversity and inclusion statement is the first time we openly share data on the ethnic make-up of our practice. We hope the next one will reveal a practice that is more diverse, with more representation.
- 3** It is our ambition that we will be more gender-balanced at all levels.
- 4** We also commit to recording the number of candidates from minority ethnic communities, those selected for interview and those offered employment with us, and review retention levels.
- 5** Our aim is to provide equal opportunities for all, to make our hiring process a collective effort and to recruit great talent. This year, we will gather more focused EDI data from all our own people to inform future targeted improvements in the diversity of our workplace. In the long-term, we aspire to recruit not less than 50% of new graduates from underrepresented backgrounds.*

* We define underrepresented backgrounds as those who are from a minority ethnic background and/or anyone who may come from a disadvantaged socio-economic background.

INDU RAMASWAMY

A Director at Allies and Morrison, I am a chartered architect with a law degree. My role is to deal with all legal and contract aspects across projects and across the practice. I work on nearly all projects, but no longer in a design capacity.

For me, diversity and inclusion is about not feeling or being made to feel different, perhaps made easier, because London is a melting pot of culture and a place where one can be oneself and feel at home.

Though born in England, I have moved around a lot, both in the UK and internationally. I came to London to study architecture. I am designated as a British-born Indian and therefore I am fortunate to have the best of both cultures.



NICK KEEN

I joined Allies and Morrison in 2014 following the completion of my degree at the University of Nottingham. I'm currently Project Architect on a cut and carve, refurbishment project based in the City of London. I am also a tutor at the London School of Architecture (LSA) based in Hackney, set up to make architectural education accessible to all and seeking to tackle real issues that London faces. I help students understand the importance of the built environment whilst they provide me with innovation, further enriching my work.

I grew up on a farm in rural Somerset with everyone living around me sharing my surname! Although a beautiful place to spend my childhood, I wanted to start my adult life somewhere with more vibrance, life and diversity. This led me to move to London where I found the vibrance and diversity I was after and it was then when I joined the Allies and Morrison family.

For me, diversity and inclusion means feeling comfortable to say 'boyfriend' at work.

Expanding access to architecture and planning.

The diversity of the design profession must be improved. This begins with encouraging young people from more varied backgrounds to join our ranks.

Often the teaching of creative skills is all too absent in schools. So, extracurricular programmes that nurture them are vital to broadening the reach of design, demonstrating it as a viable and inspiring career option to young people who may not otherwise know much about what we do.

INITIATIVES

45

general work experience
students hosted since 2018

24

university placements and
interns since 2018

1-2

work Experience students per
year from the
Barking & Dagenham School
Improvement Partnership

100

student participants since 2018
as part of LLDC's Class of Your
Own programme, from Hackney,
Waltham forest, Newham and
Tower Hamlets

200

students in the Drawing in
Schools initiative co-sponsored
by Allies and Morrison and
Dulwich Picture Gallery

10

architects at Allies and Morrison
have participated as instructors
in the Open City Schools
Programme since 2016

2020-21

academic year in which director
Angie Jim and architects Nick
Keen and Karman Wan have
been leading a Design Think Tank
at London School of Architecture

16-21

age group of participants
in the Bankside Skills
Academy, which has
been hosted at our
studios



▲ DRAWING IN SCHOOLS

Since 2015, Allies and Morrison has sponsored Dulwich Picture Gallery's Drawing in School's initiative. Each year, a group of students from schools in Southwark undergo an educational programme with one of the Gallery's thematic exhibitions. Working with an artist-instructor and members of the practice, the students learn about and interact with artworks, which serve as inspiration for creating their own artworks.

► LONDON SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

Founded in 2012, the LSA is the first independent institution of higher education in architecture to be founded in the UK since the AA in 1847. Its aim is to provide a more practice-based form of professional architectural education while expanding the pool of students who typically receive a design degree, using London as a laboratory. Allies and Morrison is a practice partner of the LSA, hosting students in our studios, and leading a design think tank.

▼ OPEN CITY SCHOOLS

Coaching primary and secondary school students, introducing them to architecture.



▲ WORK EXPERIENCE

For years 7-10, our general work experience begins with a half day Introduction to Architecture workshop presentations on the path to architecture, a case study of an Allies and Morrison project, followed by learning activities such as building a bridge in teams. For years 12-13, students come for one week where they are set a small in-house design project. In recent years, we have engaged with local Southwark schools.

IGNACIO DIAZ

I qualified as an architect in my hometown Madrid and worked in Rubio Alvarez-Sala, from competitions to one of the highest towers of the city. I moved to London in 2010, seeing the city as a powerful magnet of irresistible attraction, a city continually reinventing itself because it wants to and, because it can, has the necessary ingredients: talent, capital and creativity.

London is a provider of diversity, with its gigantic pool of unique individuals, and our studio is a positive, safe and nurturing environment that should facilitate equal access to opportunities.

Since at Allies and Morrison, I have been heavily involved in housing projects as West Hendon and Holland Green. Now an Associate, I am currently developing and delivering the facade design for the new home for the London College of Fashion.

As a Spaniard with Latin roots, family is core in our culture. It's about good home meals, wine, and of course, no silence.



LAURA KEANE

I love London for its polycentric nature, with each borough or neighbourhood having its own distinct identity – and I love how vibrant my neighbourhood is – Peckham is one of the most diverse areas in the country. I come from an Irish Catholic family, with lots of traditions, rituals, emblems and even superstitions. Both my brother and I live abroad, we try to get together as a family in Dublin each year at Christmas.

I have worked on a broad range of projects here, from technical design of Stratford Waterfront's public realm and the project delivery of the cladding package on site of our largest single building to date, 100 Bishopsgate, to early stage design on masterplans, such as Greenwich Peninsula.

I am proud to be one of the founding members of the practice's LGBT+Allies group, an officewide initiative borne out of a desire to support LGBTQ+ colleagues in the workplace and encourage everyone to be their whole selves at work.

Positive legacies and projects

Reflecting our own international diversity, the work of Allies and Morrison is global in scope. While diverse geographically, what many of our projects share is the need to foster inclusive growth.

Closer to home, we enjoy designing for many different communities – and in doing so, equally enjoy the process of learning about their traditions, histories and experiences.

INCLUSIVE DESIGN

GLOBAL

Allies and Morrison is an international advocate for the New Urban Agenda on several fronts. We regularly host overseas groups of planners to share our knowledge with programmes such as the FCO's Global Future Cities, and on a pro bono basis have supported the Commonwealth Associations of Architects and Planners and Prince's Foundation for Building Community in developing their Rapid Urbanisation Toolkit to support cities in the global south to sustainably manage their expansion. And since 2018, we have attended the biennial World Urban Forum organised by UN-Habitat.

LOCAL

London is one of the most culturally diverse cities, attracting migrants from around the world. Many of our projects have involved forms of long-term stewardship involving the evolution of some of the most culturally rich parts of our diverse city. Our involvement with the Olympic legacy embodies this – our many years of work there are about addressing longstanding divides not just in London's physical fabric, but its social one as well.



INCLUSIVE DESIGN

A CHURCH, A SYNAGOGUE, AN EID GROUND AND A MOSQUE

Recently completed buildings for three different religious communities: a prayer ground and neighbourhood mosque to cater to the multinational Islamic community of Doha; a new synagogue for the Jewish community in north London; and a new home for the Westbourne Park Baptist Church. Projects such as these broaden our horizons whilst providing tangible inspiration for their end-users.

The latter is a hybrid building that provides new accommodation for several multinational Christian denominations, a community hall, the Paddington Children's Library and 32 flats catered to key workers. Each of these projects involves a process of discovery, of learning about a new group of people, their culture, faith and perspectives.



◀ ENGAGEMENT AND CO-DESIGN

Planner Laura Dodds-Hebron at Fosters Estate in Hendon where a community co-design process aims to improve the condition of a large housing estate and add 75 extra care units and 142 mixed tenure homes.

▼ Community forum workshop as part of the Old Kent Road Placemaking study in Southwark, south London.



▲ Director Steve Walker leads a youth engagement event for Stratford Waterfront. Our work on community outreach on this key Olympic legacy project won a Planning Award.

▼ THE NEW URBAN AGENDA

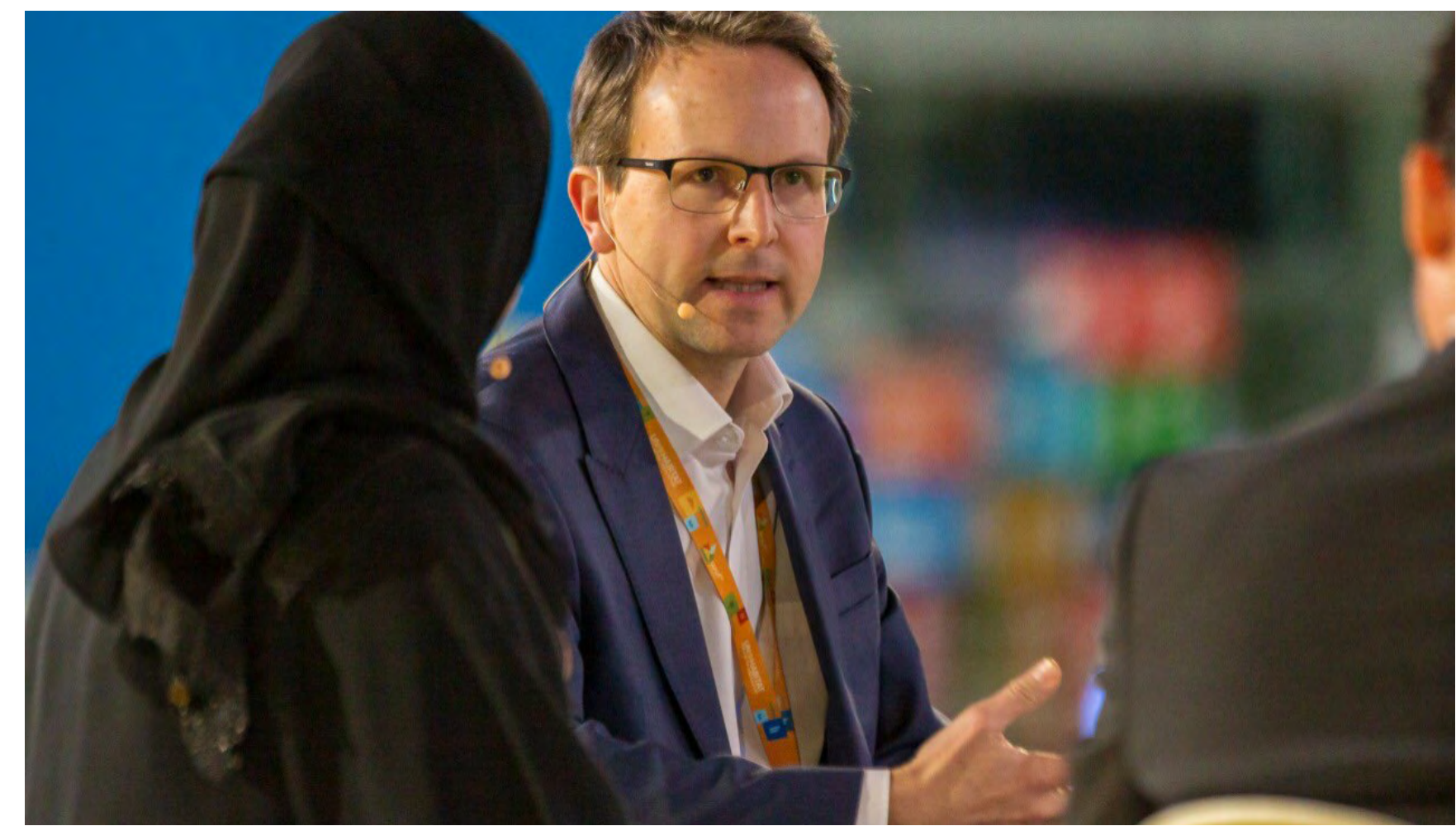
Partner Simon Gathercole speaking at the 2020 World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi organised by UN-Habitat.

▲ UNDERSTANDING THE LOCAL

Pop up as part of the Barking & Dagenham Character Study which interrogates the social, demographic and physical evolution of a changing borough.

▶ PRO BONO PROJECTS

A microfinance charity, the MicroLoan Foundation operates centres across Malawi, making small business loans to women. We designed the Foundation's first purpose-built training centre.



HELEN LOGAN

I am an architect and have been so for over 30 years, but I have earned my crust in different ways over my lifetime. Now a Partner, I lead our bidding team. I work on hundreds of “projects” a year from small, rapid bids to large, complex submissions. Many sectors, many locations – it’s a rich mix.

I don’t have a hometown – I’m an army brat. I moved around a lot in my childhood and kept the habit into my adult years. I’m a Canadian-born Brit of Scottish descent yet if I have a cultural identity it is probably that of an ‘immigrant.’ The act of coming to a place deliberately to make a new life is deeply embedded in the identity of most Canadians. It gives us a sense of owning our own possibilities.

Or perhaps I’m a Londoner, because like so many of my fellow Londoners, I chose to be here, in this most diverse of cities.



TERENCE LIM

I have been working at Allies and Morrison since 2018 as an architectural assistant and I am currently studying towards completing my Part Three professional studies. My work mainly focuses on commercial, residential and creative industry type projects at all scales.

I was born and raised in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and moved to London at the age of 13 living here ever since. However, my family lives in Kuala Lumpur and I still very much consider it my home.

Being Malaysian, I am inherently versed in different cultures, traditions and backgrounds. Malaysia is widely regarded as the cultural and ethnic ‘melting pot’ of Asia represented by its festivals, lifestyles and (most importantly) food. I aim to bring along this celebration of diversity into the workplace by striving to promote a sense of belonging for everyone from all backgrounds.

A sense of belonging

Our practice values every individual and encourages each one of our people to be their whole selves at work. This not only makes our studio an engaging and inclusive place to work, but it also enriches what we can offer as architects and planners.

Ultimately, we hope to instil a sense of belonging where all feel this is a place for them.

DIVERSITY GROUPS

WAAM

Women at Allies and Morrison (WAAM) are committed to promoting gender inclusivity at Allies and Morrison. We have a 136-strong female workforce and we are members of several organisations that promote women in architecture. Allies and Morrison is committed to creating equal opportunities and progressing female careers in leadership and management.

waam@alliesandmorrison.com

EDG

In 2020 Allies and Morrison established EDG (Ethnic Diversity Group). The network aims to promote equality and inclusivity through education, talks and mentoring. The practice looks to improve its representation of minority groups through workplace initiatives and review of recruitment.

edg@alliesandmorrison.com

LGBT+ALLIES

We support our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals to be their whole selves at work. Allies and Morrison celebrates pride and, in 2019, we entered the Architecture LGBT float competition for London Pride. We're looking forward to hosting an annual studio lecture on Queer issues.

lgbt+allies@alliesandmorrison.com



▲ AN OPEN STUDIO

Drawing in Schools with Dulwich Picture Gallery culminates in annual exhibition hosted in our studios featuring and celebrating the work of students.

▼ Legacy Youth Voice conversation held at our studios as part of the Stratford Waterfront consultation.



▲ OUT AND PROUD

In 2021, Allies and Morrison's entry for the ArchitectureLGBT+ Pride Pop Up in St Anne's Churchyard Soho was shortlisted as a finalist in blind judging; and in 2019, we entered their competition for a float at London Pride.

◀ LISTEN AND LEARN

In November 2019, we held a special Friday drinks under the theme of new voices. Speakers were Director Vicky Thornton; Lisa Woo, Head of Placemaking at Meridian Water; and Thomas Aquilina and Ting Jui of NAW (New Architecture Writers).



DIVERSITY CHAMPIONS

Our Diversity Champions support a fair and comfortable environment for everyone and promote an inclusive studio culture that celebrates and encourages diversity at Allies and Morrison. They are a confidential point of contact for anyone who may wish to raise any issues, ideas or initiatives. They are advocates, mediators (with HR or other parts of the practice), or simply a sounding board.

They have undergone Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training, including instruction in the Equalities Act and other relevant legislation.

“From mentoring colleagues to arranging informal lectures by inspirational women, to giving talks about women and their place in the world of architecture, I have been an advocate for a more inclusive studio, especially for women. I hope that we will soon all see an industry that at last sheds its longstanding male-dominated presence.”

VICKY THORNTON
Director



“Diversity is about appreciating each individual’s complexity and seeing beyond binaries. Each of us is different and carries multiple identities and influences. For me, it is that I am a man, a gay man, barely a millennial, disabled, American, Argentine, British, a Californian, a Londoner, migrant, a traveller of this little planet of ours.”

DANIEL ELSEA
Director

“I first discovered Allies and Morrison’s work as a student on a visit to the Horniman Museum, then under construction. I’ve since had a varied and interesting job here, working on schemes from York to Toronto. Proud of my Indian heritage, I come from a very fortunate second generation, born in the UK, after my parents were forced to resettle here in the 1970s from Uganda.”

VIMAL MEHTA
Associate Director



From around the world



OUR PEOPLE

56%

male

44%

female

By comparison, the average breakdown of RIBA large practices is 63% male, 37% female; and the average across AJ100 practices is 65% male, 35% female.¹

15%

Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) background

59%

British nationality

By comparison, the average breakdown of RIBA large practices is 13% BAME; and the average across AJ100 practices reported in 2020 practices is 11% BAME.* Most recent demographic estimates suggest approximately 40% of London's population is BAME.

35

nationalities represented

40

languages spoken

* 2020 data sources

Measurement and progress

Currently there exists no universal standard or government requirement to measure diversity in an organisation. However, measurement is a vital component to monitoring change and progress - and it affords us insight into how we are evolving as a practice. Beginning with this diversity and inclusion statement, we will start to track, and disclose, so we can have a full picture of diversity and representation at Allies and Morrison going forward.

ETHNIC BACKGROUND

In terms of ethnic background and national origin, our figures are broadly similar to peer practices, as measured by data compiled by the RIBA large practice group and AJ100 survey: 15% of us report a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) background. This is marginally higher than the average of our peer practice group.

Taking our Partners and Directors collectively as a leadership group, 11% are BAME; as are 11% of qualified architects, and 12% of our Associates group; 29% of Part 1s and Part 2s and 40% of our Admin team.

GENDER

We have above average representation of women when compared to similar practices. 45% of our qualified architects are female, the highest ratio of the ten largest practices (as measured by the AJ100). Women make up the majority of our non-fee earning teams, a quarter of our leadership group, and 45% of our Associates group - a good barometer of the composition of future leadership.

NATIONAL ORIGIN

Allies and Morrison is exceptionally rich in terms of diversity of nationalities. We, like many creative businesses in London, reflect the makeup of our European and global city. 59% of us are British nationals, and a number of us are dual nationals, so, at least 41% of the practice is from a non-British background, with 34 nationalities ranging from Australian to Venezuelan. After British, the next four largest nationalities represented are Italian, Spanish, Irish and German.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

We do not currently gather statistics on sexual orientation. Approximately twenty of us are signed up as part of our LGBT+Allies group.

