

G&T

ROUNDTABLE
RACE & ETHNICITY

October 2023





OPENING ADDRESS - YUEBI YANG, G&T ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

"Good evening, everyone. My name is Yuebi Yang, I am an Associate Director here at G&T.

Thank you for joining us tonight, for what I hope will be the first of many G&T Roundtable events, where we will gather with our clients, collaborators, and stakeholders for an evening of roundtable discussions on topics we believe to be important to the success of the industry. Tonight's event builds on the London Property Alliance Diversifying Real Estate guidebooks, which G&T was proud to support throughout their development and recent publication.

Discussions this evening will be centred around race and ethnicity. A topic which is rarely spoken about in our industry, despite the UK and London in particular, being such an incredible mixing pot of cultures. The aim is to discuss the many benefits of diverse

and inclusive working cultures, identify and raise awareness of the challenges people from minority ethnic backgrounds face, share our experiences, and I hope, come together to formulate opportunities for improvement for the industry.

I hope that by now, it is pretty obvious that diversity is a key quality for the success of any individual, team, organisation, or industry. And our industry, is one of the oldest in existence. But why are we still stuck in the past? Why is changing the demographic of our industry so slow?

Latest statistics from the Construction Industry Council (CIC) show that less than 6% of construction employees are from minority ethnic backgrounds. This is significantly less than the national demographic of 14% and 40% for London.

We are creating a product for our clients, but also for the people that will use them - residents, employees, patrons, visitors, customers, journey makers. And in as many ways as possible, our project teams should be mirrors of the communities we are designing for.

People from minority ethnic backgrounds face numerous challenges every day, both personally and professionally. I use the term background, rather than communities, intentionally. As being a minority can often be very isolating.

For a long time, I didn't want to discuss my own experience growing up in London as an ethnic minority and second-generation immigrant. It didn't feel important or valid.

I won't spend too much of all our time on it now, but I spent a lot of my life suppressing my ethnic identity. To try and fit in. Which expended a lot of energy that could have been better used elsewhere. And denied me access to the richness of my family history and cultural identity.

But I began to realise that this was a form of pulling the ladder up or closing the door behind me. I owe it to those that follow me, to recognise and use the privilege of my position, part inherited and part created, to share my experiences and be a role model. This is something I understand even more acutely now that I'm a father.

Thankfully, throughout my career I have never experienced any serious acts of racism. But I have experienced micro-aggressions, insensitive comments, jokes etc. Something I am sure many of those you here who identify as within a minority group, whether that is race or otherwise, may have experienced too.

In the past, I didn't always have the confidence, status, or support to challenge these acts or be fully comfortable with the many facets of my identity. And this is why allyship, particular from those who do hold power is so important.

We, as an industry, need to address these and the other challenges faced by those from minority ethnic backgrounds, many of which we will be discussing tonight.

It is no longer enough to just accept diversity when it is convenient. We need to actively celebrate and nurture it. And where necessary, carry out corrective measures. Some people use the phrase "positive discrimination", but I prefer to use "equity".

Which is important to distinguish from "equality", which means everyone is treated the same exact way, regardless of differences. "Equity" is much more powerful and means everyone is provided with what they need to succeed.

Consultancies and industry leaders like G&T have a unique opportunity to use their broad and deep platform to enact positive change across the industry. Not only in terms of how we generate an inclusive working culture for our employees, but even more importantly, how we generate an inclusive working culture for the wider project teams we're a part of as project managers, and ultimately how that can inform inclusive project outcomes – adding value for our clients and better serving the communities and stakeholders our projects affect.

And it is great to see so many members of G&T here tonight, in particular, our managing partner, Adam Glover and members of the ESG Board. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas.

A special thank you to our G&T hosts who will be chairing our breakout groups. And also, the G&T Marketing Team for helping to make this event a reality. Events like tonight's are important and significant steps

towards equity in the industry, and we at G&T are proud to be hosting an event of its kind, and look forward to hosting many more of them.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to welcome all of our external guests. You are also a part of this forward step. Thank you for joining us."

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GT GARDINER
& THEOBALD

