Guest Editor:

Meghan Preiss
Board Member; World Design Organization
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Meghan is currently a Manager of CX Design Integration at Delta Air Lines where she creates design strategies to prioritize the customer experience and develop enterprise design thinking strategies. She is an instinctive translator traversing between complex details and big picture ideas. Meghan's passion to provide new paths for future generations to impact the world around them is becoming more of a reality with each new role she takes on. It was this passion that led her to become the youngest board member of the World Design Organization (WDO) in their 60-year history. Previously the United States female representative in WDO's inaugural Young Designers Circle, Meghan has worked with global communities to elevate design education and gender equality design initiatives. In the United Kingdom, she taught 12- to 18-year-olds how to merge design, engineering, user research, and business, while also mentoring them through different phases of life. Meghan's devotion to giving back has led her to volunteer and/or guest lecture within

her favorite communities: Industrial Designers Society of America, SHiFT Design, Auburn University, Columbus College of Art and Design, Lehman College, Western Michigan University, and more. After graduating Savannah College of Art and Design with degrees in Service Design and Industrial Design, she gained experience in both consulting and corporate design roles. She spent a few years working as a Lead Design Research and Strategist at a design consultancy in Los Angeles where she had the opportunity to work through a variety of challenges with companies like LEGO, Boston Scientific, Hamilton Medical, BMW, Honda, and more. Working on large strategy problems from the outside, Meghan soon became interested in how she could potentially make a larger impact by working in-house, moving her career to work for Ford Motor Company and IBM.

Accessibility Through Design

Meghan Preiss
Board Member; World Design Organization

When I entered the design world, I did not know that the world segregated humans who have complete control of their bodies from those who might need tools to help live their everyday lives. I knew that the human body changes with age, disease, accidents, and just because, but I remember the exact moment when I realized that the field in which I was pursuing my degree was contributing to segregation rather than alleviating it.I was interning for the International Design Excellence Awards, and my mentor introduced me to Dr. Patricia Moore, known as the mother of universal design or accessible design. I sat with Dr. Moore for the first time in the year of 2015 and learned about her time with Raymond Loewy and her advocacy for inclusive design/ Design for All.

It's been a few years since, and I am now lucky to call Dr. Moore my mentor and Auntie of Design. Throughout the years, I learned how it truly takes intention and advocacy to design for all, because the majority of the designs that people promote, that you find in magazines, that win awards, or that get published are not designed for all. In fact, the majority of digital, physical, service, and business designs do not include "all" until revisions 2, 3, and sometimes 4 or 5. Let's look at some very well-known examples from industries in which I have personally worked or still work.

Let's start industry agnostic: there is a tik-tok trend where people explain corporate jargon in simple terms but in an entertaining, joking manner. As a corporate girlie who writes executive communication and company-wide communication, there are often two goals. One more vocally stated is "we need to make this concise so people actually read it." The second reason we use corporate jargon in business is because we went to get masters in business, and that requires you to learn corporate jargon. It's almost a badge of honor: "Let's double click on that," "We need to codify this." (I'm summarizing and clearly adding my own color.) But as someone who has changed corporations three times, and with every move comes a new language to learn, I set out to change this notion that corporate communication's main goal is readability and comprehension before conciseness. An interesting study I read a long time ago found that the average reading level in the US is an 8th grade reading level. In 2016, my perspective completely changed when I read an article by Forbes, where I learned that the business leaders who I looked up to at the time, Steve Jobs and Elon Musk, use a 2nd grade reading level when they speak publicly or to their internal company. While they can read and understand the technical manuals, they are leaders who understand the power of readability and comprehension. Consider how many words you learned in third grade; I'm almost certain you didn't know the words codify, streamline, synergy, and so on.

Let's try another example: vehicles are continuously getting more high-tech; this is something we can all observe and say, "Let's add more technology! Let's add voice commands! Touch Screens! Heads Up Displays!" While many of these innovations are already present in vehicles, as fully capable native language speakers, we can all

recall instances when we tried to "call mom" and it responded, "Do you want to call cousin Huda?" Now imagine, [in an American context] if a person whose English is their second language, or someone who lives with a stutter went through the same experience? Even when we think about Siri on our Apple devices, Alexa on our Amazon devices, etc, think about how fast their response time is when they hear a pause. How quickly they say, "I'm sorry, I didn't quite get that. Can you repeat?"

 When we think about airplanes, the average human body they build the seats for has measurements from 50 years ago. We all know the average human body is larger now, yet seats have not changed their scale. Did you know that some people physically can't fly on some airplanes because their wheelchair does not fit? When I worked at IBM, there was a case study we would always share as an example of why design research was important, and the gist of it was how an airline was going to spend thousands of dollars creating new signage in the airport because they could not understand why elderly people kept asking where the bathroom was. But when this company hired IBM and they conducted a research study, the problem was actually that the elderly people were asking for the bathroom because the speakers were louder and they did not want to miss the announcements. Just by writing those few sentences, I get chills thinking about the bias.

To be honest, this does not even scratch the surface of accessibility. This just covers some physical abilities. Let me be blunt: the world was and is not designed for all, and it's a shame because we as humans did this. As designers, we are setting out to design a better world, to save the world with design. But to design a better world,

we need to design better humans. When you talk to people with health conditions or impairments, they often hate the phrase or notion that fully able-bodied humans need to spend a day in their shoes or experience what they go through. It's not that we need to experience these different abilities; it's that we need to acknowledge their abilities and their challenges. And as designers, we need to be and do better. If we want to call ourselves empathetic and user or human centric, ask yourself: What humans are you designing for?

Throughout my career, I have surrounded myself with designers, mentors, and friends who are advocating and pushing this conversation that Dr. Moore started. As a board member of the World Design Organization, I wrote three principles that I hold myself accountable to for every platform I am provided. I will use every opportunity to advocate for 1. design for all, 2. women in design, and 3. lifting the next generation as I continue to rise.

I'm honored to be guest editing this publication. Within the next pages, you will read provocative opinions, leadership best practices, and lessons learned from five American women under the age of 35, who are leading the discussions within Bank of America, IBM, Delta, United Healthcare, design consultancies, and their local and international communities. Designers who are ensuring language accessibilities in big tech, business consultants who are ensuring public health accessibility for all, and women who are raising the voice of unrepresented cultures, ethnicities, and genders. These women inspire me, they are my sound board, and I'm honored to share them with you. Not all of these women are designers, but they all influence design with their work. And what you will find is, most of these women do not boast about their work; you might read this

magazine and never have heard of these women, and you might look them up on social media and find they are not famous, but their work is felt by millions of people every single day. Their impact is bringing "for all" to life in so many ways.

Danielle Chen

Danielle is a full-stack and mission-driven product designer passionate about creating products that are inclusive and accessible for all. She's currently a Staff Product Designer at Ro, creating patient-centric experience that's equitable, affordable and trusted by the users.

As a recognized thought leader, Danielle has spoken at a number of distinguished conferences including SXSW, Interaction Design Conference and International Design Conference, covering topics from design, cultures, technology and anything in between.

She writes a newsletter called "Designing Culture" on substack dissecting how technology has changed our human cultures.