

3 friends, 2 dinners, 1 lovely city and conference – Rikerrious Geter, 3rd year BLA

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The American Society of Landscape Architects held its annual conference this year in Denver, Colorado and it will be a conference I'll never forget for many reasons.



The first reason was because I was a scholarship winner (one of three in the nation) and I was being awarded at the conference. Little did I know I was being awarded more than a scholarship – I was awarded lifelong friendships with other award recipients from the University of Arkansas, Louisiana State University, and Penn State.

The second reason were the two dinners: Council of Fellows and Presidents dinners. Both of these dinners were life changing for me.

At the C.O.F. dinner, not only did I get to rub elbows, network, and showcase my dining etiquette, but I got to meet landscape architects Kathryn Gustafson, Jennifer Guthrie and Shannon Nichol, the founders of Gustafson, Guthrie, Nichol, a Seattle based office, and so many more. I know this is hard to believe but that wasn't the best part of the night. The greatest part of the night was seeing landscape architect Peter Walker FASLA fight to hold back tears as he escorted his son to the stage to claim his fellowship into the profession (ASLA's highest award bestowed on members based upon contribution to the profession). Shannon Nichol, Jennifer Guthrie, and 28 others also claimed fellowship that night. What made that night so special was knowing that it all started with the passion that I share with all the new fellows. The passion to really make a difference in our profession is what drove them forward and earned them fellowship.





The next day, November 23rd, was the day I received my scholarship. Little did I know I had to give an impromptu speech about how this scholarship helped me and how I see myself contributing to landscape architecture in front of a full room of about 100 fellows. This was by far the scariest speech I have ever had to give. It wasn't planned at all; however, I received a standing ovation. Later in the day, Jennifer Guthrie stopped me and said she was extremely impressed with the speech and passion I have for the profession, after she walked away I rejoiced like a giddy school girl!



The Presidents Dinner was a unique experience. ASLA paid tribute to distinguished recipients and their work or service to the profession, and this was the night when I got asked millions of questions about how I chose Landscape Architecture. Just know I repeated the words “I watched a documentary called No Impact Man” about 30 times, seriously! I also got to witness the next round of ASLA members get sworn into office. It was bittersweet, because this dinner marked the end of a great conference where I was able to make lifelong friends, meet so many professionals, and learn that landscape isn’t a profession – it’s a way of life.

