

# WIA PALM BEACH WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

## Foundations of Power

### SPEAKERS



**Joyce Owens, FAIA, RIBA | Architecture Joyce Owens LLC | Studio AJO**

***Keynote Speaker***

Joyce Owens is the first woman to receive the AIA Florida Gold Medal (2022), the highest award from AIA Florida. In 2020, she earned the AIA Florida Medal of Honor for Design, and in 2025, Forbes named her practice one of the Top 200 Residential Architects in America. After 15 years in London, Joyce returned to Florida in 2004. Both of her practices have garnered international recognition for numerous award-winning buildings that are environmentally and regionally sensitive. In South Florida, AJO has become “The Coastal Architect” and is a leader in Tropical Modern architecture and interiors, emphasizing climate-sensitive, resilient, and sustainable principles. In 2018, Joyce was elected to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects, the highest national honor for exceptional contributions to architecture and society.



**Diane Rutledge | Founder, Brand Transform, Inc.**

***The Business of You***

For over 30 years, Diane Rutledge has helped billion-dollar AEC brands and emerging consultants cut through competitive noise and claim their space. As founder of Brand Transform, she's on a mission to help professional services leaders understand a game-changing truth: your brand isn't your logo, it's your reputation, your voice, and what people feel when they work with you. Through her Strategy First Approach and Three C's framework (Collect, Create, Communicate), she helps those in the professional services roles in the AEC industry stop dimming their light and own their authentic story. Your path to growth isn't about creating something new, it's about uncovering what's already inside you.



**Yara Zbib, Associate AIA | Project Manager, Arcadis & Adjunct Professor at FAU**

***Balance in Action***

Yara Zbib is a Project Manager at Arcadis, focusing on large-scale industrial projects. She is also an Adjunct Professor at Florida Atlantic University, currently teaching Design Studio 4. She holds a Masters of Science in Design Research at the Bauhaus in Germany, where she focused on biomaterial applications. She received her Bachelor of Architecture from Florida Atlantic University, where she received the Alpha Rho Chi for leadership and service. She is active with AIA Palm Beach, currently serving on the board as an Associate Director and volunteering on the Women in Architecture committee. Yara advocates with AIA Florida on Legislative Day every year. She is passionate about sustainability and social design education.



**Mary Wissinger, AIA, RID | Project Architect, R.J. Heisenbottle Architects**

***Balance in Action, Microaggressions & Addressing Sexual Harassment in the Industry***

Mary Wissinger is a Project Architect for R.J. Heisenbottle Architects with over ten years experience in high-end residential, commercial, and historic preservation projects. She received her Bachelor's of Architecture from the University of Miami and holds a Certificate in Historic Preservation. She is an active participant in the American Institute of Architects Palm Beach chapter where she was awarded “Associate of the Year” in 2019. She served two terms on the AIA Palm Beach Board of Directors and currently chairs the Women in Architecture Committee. She also is an active member of the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art Florida Chapter and is the Co-Chair for their Young & Emerging Professionals group.

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**Kari Botek | Senior Project Manager at DLR Group**

***Balance in Action***

Kari Botek is a South Florida-based architect with more than 30 years of experience designing and managing projects that support her local communities. A South Florida native, Kari earned her Master of Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania and spent a few years living and working in Jamaica before returning to Florida; all formative experiences which shaped her approach to architecture. Kari focuses primarily on K-12 and higher education projects and enjoys collaborating with teams to create thoughtful, sustainable learning environments. At DLR Group, she is especially passionate about integrating sustainability into everyday practice in ways that are both practical and impactful.



**Amanda Barton | Vice President, HKS Architects**

***Balance in Action***

Amanda specializes in coastal hospitality design and works on projects from master planning through documentation. She volunteers in local AIA and NOMA chapters, as a former AIA Miami president and current SoFloNOMA Vice President. She is a strong advocate for sustainable design and promoting environmental resilience, through education and advocacy. She is one of the authors of Resilience Design Toolkits, co-published with AIA, helping to integrate resilience design into architectural practice. She has earned numerous awards, including the ENR Texas & Southeast 2025 Top Young Professionals and the AIA Florida Anthony "Tony" Pullara Individual AIA Service Award. Amanda is a graduate of the University of Miami, where she was awarded the prestigious Alpha Rho Chi Medal of Architecture in 2013.



**Cathleen Scott | Managing Partner, Scott Law Team**

***Microaggressions & Addressing Sexual Harassment in the Industry***

Ms. Scott is the managing partner of Scott Law Team, LLC, a nine-attorney firm specializing in the representation of clients for employment law matters. She has been board certified in labor and employment law by The Florida Bar since 2006 and is a recent Fellow of the College of Labor and Employment Lawyers. In addition, she is a Licensed Certified Circuit Court Mediator and arbitrator. Ms. Scott earned her B.A. from Stetson University in 1993 and her J.D. from Southwestern University School of Law in Los Angeles, California, in 1997. She is an active member of The Florida Bar Employment Law Executive Council and currently serves as the co-chair of the Certification Committee.



**Natalia Castro | Chief Operations Officer & Shareholder, Saltz Michelson Architects**

***Microaggressions & Addressing Sexual Harassment in the Industry***

Natalia has over 12 years of experience in the AEC industry and 18 years in business operations. As the Chief Operations Officer and Shareholder of Saltz Michelson Architects (SMA), she plays a pivotal role in driving the firm's growth and operational excellence. Joining SMA during a critical ownership transition, Natalia spearheaded the development and execution of a refreshed strategic plan under the new leadership. A U.S. Navy Reserves veteran with a background in Criminal Analysis and Forensic Psychology, Natalia's analytical skills and operational expertise have been instrumental in her success as a business operator. Certified as a coach, she is passionate about helping businesses transform their vision into profitability while empowering leaders to achieve their full potential.

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**Caitlin Gardner, Assoc. AIA | Architectural Associate, RJ Heisenbottle Architects**  
***Negotiation Bootcamp: Get Paid What You're Worth***

Caitlin has a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture and a Master's in Business Administration from the University of Miami. Driven by a passion for blending creativity and functionality, Caitlin has cultivated strong skills in architectural design, project management, market analysis, and the application of business principles to architectural practice. During her internships at TAJA Collection and Khoury Vogt Architects, she gained hands-on experience in design development, competitor analysis, and the creation of architectural renderings for vacation homes. In addition to her technical expertise, Caitlin is recognized for her strong organizational skills, ability to work collaboratively in teams, independence, and effective communication.



**Tena Palomino | Co-Founder of JetSet Careers**  
***Negotiation Bootcamp: Get Paid What You're Worth***

Tena Palomino is known for helping early-stage companies, start-ups and nonprofits scale smartly through strong hiring practices, operational clarity, and culture-building. Currently the Co-Founder of JetSet Careers, Tena leads talent development and career readiness initiatives across South Florida, spanning nationally, helping both companies and job seekers navigate growth with clarity and intention. As such, she brings a process-driven approach to growth, empowering both businesses and individuals to show up at their best and thrive through change. With a passion for leveraging forward-thinking leadership principles in the workplace, Tena brings a unique perspective to talent management and organizational dynamics, driven by a commitment to excellence and a passion for empowering individuals to reach their full potential.



**Denise A. Bas, AIA | Founder, GreenPath FL, LLC**  
***Conference Chair***

Denise is a Puerto Rico native and Florida Registered Architect with over 28 years of experience in architectural design, management and construction, and is the founder of GreenPath FL, LLC. An active leader in the profession, Denise founded the Women in Architecture committee for AIA Palm Beach in 2013, served as President of the AIA Palm Beach Chapter in 2018, and she has contributed to multiple AIA Florida committees, including Communications, Resilience and Women in Architecture. Denise currently serves as President of the Palm Beach Foundation for Architecture and is a Board Member of the Florida Green Building Coalition where she actively contributes to Statewide Green Building Standards development. In 2022, she received the AIA Palm Beach Gold Medal, becoming the second woman in the Chapter's history to earn this honor.

#### **Special Thanks to our Conference Planning Committee:**

Denise A. Bas, AIA  
Caitlin Gardner, Assoc. AIA  
Laura Marcovich, Assoc. AIA  
Suyin Saballo  
Mary Wissinger, AIA, RID  
Yara Zbib, Assoc. AIA