

**DRAFT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Press Contact:
Camila Schaulsohn
212.358.6114, cschaulsohn@aiany.org

AIA New York issues Statement Urging Architects to Refrain from Designing Criminal Justice Facilities

The statement calls on members to shift their efforts towards supporting the creation of new systems, processes, and typologies based on prison reform, alternatives to imprisonment, and restorative justice.

September 30, 2020, New York, NY – The AIA New York Board of Directors has issued a statement calling on architects to design no longer unjust spaces of incarceration within the US justice system, “until there is measurable reform in America to apply the law without racial bias.” The Chapter hopes that their leadership on this issue will invite architects to take on difficult conversations about the implications of their work and the practices their work can perpetuate. [The full statement is available here](#) and further [resources and FAQs](#) regarding the Chapter’s position and related policies.

Although architects have attempted to mitigate the harm these buildings cause by applying their professional skills, the Chapter believes that it is beyond the role of design professionals to alleviate an inherently unjust system whose primary effects are not beneficial; good design alone cannot overcome racism in the justice system. As such, the Chapter calls on architects to move away from the design of spaces including prisons, jails, detention centers, and police stations, and instead shift their efforts towards “supporting the creation of new systems, processes, and typologies based on prison reform, alternatives to imprisonment, and restorative justice.”

While AIANY is not banning the design of justice facilities, and members who do this type of work will still be able to fully participate in the professional organization, the Chapter will refrain from honoring work that it considers antithetical to the AIA Code of Ethics, which states that the works of architects should “enhance and facilitate human dignity and the health, safety, and welfare of the individual and the public.”

The Chapter will support this position by embarking on a series of initiatives:

- Programming and exhibitions, starting in late Fall 2020, that examine the role of architecture in the criminal justice system
- Government advocacy to limit the construction of new criminal justice facilities
- The repositioning of the AIANY Architecture for Justice Committee, to increase focus on large-scale justice issues and reduce emphasis on the design of facilities
- Changes to the criteria for the AIANY Design Awards to prioritize projects that demonstrate excellence in the support of change
- Engagement of fellow chapters to adopt similar positions

“Throughout the long, careful process of drafting this statement, the Board of Directors had constructive and challenging conversations with many members of the architecture community,” said **AIANY 2020 President Kim Yao, AIA**. “We heard from those who design criminal justice facilities, those who have spent years opposing that work, and others who sought to learn more about it. We hope that our final statement and associated programming will help architects engage in the conversations and work that will bring change to the American criminal justice system.”

AIA New York will continue to keep its members informed about upcoming programs and initiatives related to this new policy.

About AIA New York

Founded in 1857, AIA New York is the oldest and largest chapter of the American Institute of Architects. The Chapter’s members include 5,700 practicing architects, allied professionals, students, and public members interested in architecture and design. AIA New York is dedicated to three goals: design excellence, public outreach, and professional development.
www.aiany.org