

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2013/04/15/opposing-the-architecture-of-isolation-architects-against-solitary-confinement/>

## Campaign and Advocacy

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by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#) | April 15, 2013

*Raphael Sperry is an architect, green building consultant, teacher, and outspoken advocate on the role of architecture in social justice issues. He founded and directs the Alternatives to Incarceration / Prison Design Boycott Campaign of the non-profit Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility (ADPSR) and has presented his research at numerous professional association conventions and architecture schools. He teaches the Green Architecture studio at Stanford University's Architectural Design program and has championed sustainability strategies for a wide variety of institutional and commercial projects. Sperry was named a [2012 Soros Justice Fellow](#) for the project he describes in the following essay, which originally appeared on the website of the Open Society Foundations.*

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When I say that I'm an architect researching criminal justice, many people think that I want to design better prisons. In fact, I want architects to stop designing supermax prisons altogether. As the incoming president of the small non-profit organization [Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility](#), I have just launched a [campaign](#) asking my mainstream professional organization, the [American Institute of Architects](#) (AIA), to amend its code of ethics to ban the design of spaces intended for execution and prolonged solitary confinement. At its root, this is a human rights campaign. The human rights community agrees that the death penalty should be ended and that prolonged solitary confinement is a form of torture. AIA's code of ethics already calls on architects to uphold human rights in all their professional endeavors, and so you might think that this would be a relatively simple amendment. But this ethics code is not currently enforceable; a new 500-bed solitary isolation prison is now out for design bids in Arizona and as recently as 2010, the State of California redesigned and rebuilt their death chamber. I am hopeful that AIA will do the right thing, but know that there is a fear of challenging government and general misconceptions about the public's view of the death penalty and harsh treatment of prisoners. Many architects will need to more fully understand the issues before things can change.

I have begun contacting chapters of the AIA and other architecture and design organizations, looking for opportunities to speak to their members and encourage their decision-makers to consider endorsing our campaign. AIA is a member-oriented organization, but architects hold public licenses and have public responsibilities. We care about public opinion.

Professional responsibility is a major theme of this campaign. Architects are responsible for, among other things, protecting public health, safety, and welfare in the buildings we design. It shouldn't be asking too much to ensure that our buildings aren't intended to hurt or kill members of the public. In this respect, I take inspiration from doctors and nurses. Their professional associations prohibit members from participating in executions or torture. Medical professionals understand that they cannot agree to government requests to hurt or kill their patients; it would violate their ethics. I expect that public respect for architects will increase as we expand our own commitment to human rights.

At the deepest level, this campaign challenges the culture of violence that infects our society. The easy acceptance of violence as a legitimate way to solve problems extends from the interpersonal level evidenced in the frequency of mass shootings in the U.S. to the international level where we see the U.S. engaged in a continual pattern of warfare, bombing, and military coercion. In U.S. domestic governance and community life, this culture has led to misguided tough on crime policies. State-led violence does not solve the problem of personal violence; it actually reinforces it. Violence won't end through the application of superior force by police or through building increasingly punitive prisons. Instead, we must build a culture of non-violence. As one man recently released after serving many years for a murder conviction put it (speaking at a panel organized by Soros Justice fellow Nancy Mullane), the state shouldn't be setting a bad example for our children about how to respond to someone who has caused harm.

Prisons are the concrete and steel forms of our culture of violence. Execution chambers and supermax prisons in particular are the harshest buildings we create. They are supposed to handle the worst of the worst, but the way I see it, these buildings themselves are the worst of a bad lot. These buildings, when operated as intended, violate human rights. They also make possible the system of mass incarceration that perpetuates violence, racism, poverty, and other social injustices.

Ending the culture of violence and building a society based on mutual respect, tolerance, and love is a tall order. But I believe that to move forward, everyone to find a way to do their part. I'm hoping that, with enough public support and private reflection, AIA's leaders

will see that the profession of architecture can take this step.

Accurate information and authentic storytelling can serve as powerful antidotes to ignorance and injustice. We have helped generate public awareness, mainstream media attention, and informed policymaking on what was once an invisible domestic human rights crisis.

Only with your support can we continue this groundbreaking work, shining light into the darkest corners of the U.S. criminal punishment system.

by [Juan Moreno Haines](#)

October 25, 2022

by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#)

September 29, 2022

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This is the most ridiculous thing I have heard of in a long time. I wonder if you would be where you are today if one of your family member were murdered. What in the heck do you think society should do with these criminals. I realize criminals were not born criminals. It is a result in most cases to parenting, I cant believe these parents that have children that have been in juvenile detention and the parents blame society. OK Im off track a little but criminals are criminals some you cant reform and they need to be out of society to protect the innocents of people. why is a criminal where he is? he made bad choices. I know of a friend that would send her child to his room for punishment and he got to watch T.V how is this a punishment. Again some of our parents shouldnt have been parents in the first place. Sorry I seem so harsh but it is what it is!!!!!!! Yes Im for capital punishment.

Would have seemed like a good quote to attach to this article glad u did

I read this overlooked aspect of these mens lives. The absence of darkness. after the following article please read Silversteins take on the affect of such lighting.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2013/07/let-there-be-night/278070/>

Let There Be Night

People think they know darkness, and that they experience darkness every day, but they dont, really.

When people are rich enough to have anything they want, they choose to have darkness at night.

Meanwhile, kids who are growing up in cities whose families dont have the resources to travel are never going to experience that. I wonder if it will get to the point where none of us can get there, unless youre the one percent. Then you can afford to go someplace really dark.

Twilley: It already seems as though there are huge inequalities in our exposure to light at night. I was shocked by the statistic you quote about nearly 20 percent of African-Americans in the United States working the night shift.

Bogard: And then theres the fact that public housing is almost always over-lit in an effort to deter crime.

Theres another darkness-deprived population I hadnt considered either, before I wrote this book, which is prisoners. Theres this former convict, Ken Lamberton, who wrote about his time in prison and the way he was forced to be in the light he wasnt even allowed to cover his face with a blanket at night. Its as if being constantly illuminated was actually part of his punishment.

Tommy Silversteins description of his life at USP Atlanta:

The cell was so small that I could stand in one place and touch both walls simultaneously. The ceiling was so low that I could reach up and touch the hot light fixture.

My bed took up the length of the cell, and there was no other furniture at all. The walls were solid steel and painted all white.

I was permitted to wear underwear, but I was given no other clothing.

Shortly after I arrived, the prison staff began construction on the side pocket cell, adding more bars and other security measures to the cell while I was within it. In order not to be burned by sparks and embers while they welded more iron bars across the cell, I had to lie on my bed and cover myself with a sheet.

It is hard to describe the horror I experienced during this construction process. As they built new walls around me it felt like I was being buried alive. It was terrifying.

During my first year in the side pocket cell I was completely isolated from the outside world and had no way to occupy my time. I was not allowed to have any social visits, telephone privileges, or reading materials except a bible. I was not allowed to have a television, radio, or tape player. I could speak to no one and there was virtually nothing on which to focus my attention.

I was not only isolated, but also disoriented in the side pocket. This was exacerbated by the fact that I wasn't allowed to have a wristwatch or clock. In addition, the bright, artificial lights remained on in the cell constantly, increasing my disorientation and making it difficult to sleep. Not only were they constantly illuminated, but those lights buzzed incessantly. The buzzing noise was maddening, as there often were no other sounds at all. This may sound like a small thing, but it was my entire world.

Due to the unchanging bright artificial lights and not having a wristwatch or clock, I couldn't tell if it was day or night. Frequently, I would fall asleep and when I woke up I would not know if I had slept for five minutes or five hours, and would have no idea of what day or time of day it was.

I tried to measure the passing of days by counting food trays. Without being able to keep track of time, though, sometimes I thought the officers had left me and were never coming back. I thought they were gone for days, and I was going to starve. It's likely they were only gone for a few hours, but I had no way to know.

I was so disoriented in Atlanta that I felt like I was in an episode of the twilight zone. I now know that I was housed there for about four years, but I would have believed it was a decade if that is what I was told. It seemed eternal and endless and immeasurable.

There was no air conditioning or heating in the side pocket cells. During the summer, the heat was unbearable. I would pour water on the ground and lay naked on the floor in an attempt to cool myself.

The only time I was let out of my cell was for outdoor recreation. I was allowed one hour a week of outdoor recreation. I could not see any other inmates or any of the surrounding landscape during outdoor recreation. There was no exercise equipment and nothing to do.

My vision deteriorated in the side pocket, I think due to the constant bright lights, or possibly also because of other aspects of this harsh environment. Everything began to appear blurry and I became sensitive to light, which burned my eyes and gave me headaches.

Nearly all of the time, the officers refused to speak to me. Despite this, I heard people who I believed to be officers whispering into my vents, telling me they hated me and calling me names. To this day, I am not sure if the officers were doing this to me, or if I was starting to lose it and these were hallucinations.

In the side pocket cell, I lost some ability to distinguish what was real. I dreamt I was in prison. When I woke up, I was not sure which was reality and which was a dream.

For more on the 19th century philosophical arguments for juvenile reformatories and the results click on this link.

<http://solitarywatch.com/2012/12/30/voices-from-solitary-haunted-by-memorys-ghosts/#comment-11029>

Arguably, the greatest changes in prison and asylum design have been driven by philosophical arguments rather than advances in architectural design. In 1776, the Philadelphia Quakers introduced the idea of solitary confinement at the Walnut Street Jail, in the belief that prisoners needed the time alone to reflect upon and to repent for their crimes. In 1791 taking this idea a step further, philosopher Jeremy Bentham published his proposal for a Panopticon House, or a circular building so constructed that, every convict should pass his life in perpetual solitude, while remaining perpetually under the surveillance. At the center of the building, and out of view of the prisoners, a lone jailer could watch over 1,000 prisoners with invisible omniscience.

Then in 1815 James Bevans presented a Panopticon Plan, for a proposed London Asylum. Bevans design followed what has also been called the radial plan and it offered seven arms of three stories each connected to a central hub observation post. Physical restraints were to be replaced by visual observation of patients by attendants and the medical superintendent. John Haviland, the most famous and internationally influential prison architect of all time, happened to be studying architecture in London at the time, and he took notice. After immigrating to the US, Haviland proposed a design for Pennsylvania's Eastern State Penitentiary based on Bevans design. Haviland's ESP design gave much attention to the vexing problem of communication among the prisoners. After considerable experimentation with hot-air ducts and various arrangements of water pipes, the architect was satisfied before he had completed (ESP) at Cherry Hill that such contacts had been reduced to a minimum.

Some important innovations in design were also made to facilitate communication among the prison staff, as well as to improve their surveillance of prisoners. This was particularly true of his use of the central rotunda, probably for the first time, as a sort of communications hub and nerve centre of the prison.

Compared with the penitentiaries of their day, the prisons of Haviland were overwhelmingly superior, both technically and stylistically. Haviland's choice of the heavy and gloomy Gothic and Egyptoid styles used at Philadelphia (Cherry Hill, ESP) and at Trenton (The Tombs) accents security and the punitive nature of imprisonment.

This view was in line with Haviland's professor, James Elmes, who in lecturing on prison design said the external aspect should be made as gloomy and melancholy as possible. And the building commissioners of Cherry Hill went on record as saying that: the exterior of a solitary prison should exhibit as much as possible great strength and convey to the mind a cheerless blank indicative of the misery which awaits the unhappy being that enters within its walls. The prospect of solitary confinement plus the grim and forbidding appearance of the prison itself would serve as a powerful deterrent to the potential offender on the outside. Solitary confinement day and night became, then, the Quaker solution to the problem of rehabilitation as well as the deterrence of potential law-breakers.

But there were others who disagreed. In 1826, the Revolutionary War hero Marquis de Lafayette visited Eastern State, then under construction. He had spent three years in solitary confinement as a prisoner of war, and was aghast. Lafayette reportedly told a friend back in Paris, Of all the sufferings of my life, none have exceeded none have equaled that single oppression of being, for three whole years, asleep and awake, sitting and standing, exposed to the view of two eyes, watching my every motion, taking from my very thoughts every idea of privacy.

At the time ESP opened in 1829 it was the largest and most expensive public structure in the country. The elite opinion in the United States was firmly behind the idea of solitary confinement. The debates of the day focused largely on whether the system at Eastern State was cost effective.

The arrogance of the system can be heard in the annual report of 1869, which lists the arguments against the solitary system, refutes them, and concludes, We are justified in unequivocally asserting that the Pennsylvania system of penitentiary discipline understood and properly applied, is not injurious to the health, has no injurious influence on the mind, is neither inhuman nor cruel and that if properly administered, it is now the most philosophic and effective system for the treatment of crime as an actual condition of persons in all societies.

Despite this vehement defense of the solitary system, in the period after the Civil War, the regimen at Eastern State was slowly abandoned. Historians have theorized that the rise in foreign immigrants among the prison population decreased public sympathy for prisoners and made expensive penal reform less politically popular during the postwar period.

Today's system of punishment in supermax units resembles nothing so much as the system of punishment pioneered at Eastern State. The Pelican Bay Security Housing Unit, which cost California taxpayers a quarter of a billion dollars, is perhaps the most notorious supermax. From the air it looks like a high-tech version of the Philadelphia prison: Its hub-and-spokes design is clearly descended from John Haviland's 19th-century architectural plan. Inmates in the SHU (known as the shoe) are kept in their cells close to 24 hours a day.

As at Eastern State, inmates eat in their cells and exercise in isolated attached yards.

Those least likely to become mentally ill in solitary confinement are prisoners who can read, because reading prevents the boredom that can lead to insanity. (The human psyche appears not to have changed since the days of Eastern State, when an inmate told Alexis de Tocqueville that reading the Bible was his greatest consolation.) Because roughly 40 percent of U.S. prisoners are functionally illiterate, however, reading can provide solace and sanity to only a fraction of those behind bars.

As of Jan 2003 forty-one states have supermax units that resemble Pelican Bay containing over 20,000 inmates.

John Haviland also designed at least one asylum, Harrisburg State Hospital (HSH) known at the time as the Pennsylvania State Lunatic Hospital. Fellow Quaker Dr. Thomas S. Kirkbride, M. D. was one of the trustees appointed by the governor for the HSH project which opened in 1851. In 1840 Kirkbride had become the superintendent of the newly established Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane designed by Isaac Holden. When HSH became overcrowded young architect Samuel Sloan, Kirkbride's friend and collaborator, designed the Pennsylvania Hospitals Department for Males which was completed in 1859, this huge structure consisted of several wings extending from a main central building. It introduced many innovations in terms of spaciousness, airiness and light.

Dorothea Dix was an influential social reformer in the 19th century. While visiting a jail in 1841 to teach Sunday school, she witnessed the appalling treatment of the mentally ill who were forced to live in the company of common criminals.

Outraged, Dix convinced the legislatures of many states to construct public asylums. Dix and Kirkbride formed a friendship that resulted in a proliferation of asylums based on the Kirkbride Plan.

The grand scale of Dr. Thomas Story Kirkbride's asylums was likely influenced by Eastern State Penitentiary (ESP) which opened in 1829 during Kirkbride's second year at the University Of Pennsylvania's Medical School.

Prisons and asylums also have shared methodologies of confinement. Moreover, these institutions emerged in the US during the same period during the 19th century and were based on similar principles of reforming deviant behavior. Both were intended to be therapeutic, as opposed to simply custodial, institutions. Both served as laboratories for new techniques of behavioral management. Both attempted to use architecture as a force for moral development. Both were created with a burst of reformist optimism but neither was successful.

Abuse, neglect, and mismanagement soon replaced the reformers' high ideals.

However Kirkbride's proposed role of asylum architecture was the polar opposite of the one Haviland's professor, James Elmes, purported for prison design when he said the external aspect should be made as gloomy and melancholy as possible.

The Construction of Hospitals for the Insane (1854)

CHAPTER XXII

POSITION, AND GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS OF THE BUILDING

Excerpts:

The building should be in good taste, and impress favorably not only the patients, but their friends and others who may visit it. It should have a cheerful and comfortable appearance, everything repulsive and prison-like should be carefully avoided, and even the means of affecting the proper degree of security should be masked, as far as possible, by arrangements of a pleasant and attractive description. Nor is the influence of these things on the friends of patients unimportant, they are thus led to have a generous confidence in those to whose care their friends have been entrusted, and a readiness to give steady support to a liberal course of treatment.

CHAPTER XX

CHARACTER OF PROPOSED PLANS

State hospitals are not for the pauper portion of the community alone, but for every class of citizens, and all who pay taxes aid in their erection, and therefore have the right to participate in their advantages.

There are, indeed, several variations that might be suggested, where it is proposed to provide the most perfect arrangements, without regard to cost, or to furnish accommodations exclusively for the wealthy in a community; for there is no reason why an individual who has the misfortune to become insane, should, on that account, be deprived of any comfort or even luxury, that is not improper or injurious, to which he has been accustomed, or which his income will justify. An insane member of a family, wherever he may be, has really a claim for everything that will contribute to his comfort and gratification, far beyond those who are in health and who have so many other resources; and the justice or morality of a different course, as occasionally observed, cannot for a single moment bear examination.

Not for the pauper portion of the community alone? Does this imply he believed it was primarily for paupers? And a cynic reading this today might surmise that the serene design of Kirkbride's asylums was meant to be more of a lure for those with means to pay than a therapeutic tool when one looks at the system's results. A kind of Venus fly trap for the insane.

For, just as ESP mythology was later found to be inhuman, so too were the methods used in our nation's asylums.

In 1946 Life magazine did an expose titled Bedlam 1946 on the abusive conditions found inside this nation's asylums based on the findings of WWII conscientious objectors who had served as attendants at state mental institutions rather than in the war.

Read the 1946 Life article in its entirety, and see some of the pictures that horrified Americans.

Excerpts:

Abuse and the punitive use of restraints, overcrowding, underfeeding and dilapidation might all be condoned if only these hospitals achieved a reasonable standard of treatment and cure. But the fact is that the vast majority of them fall far below the achievements of the far better hospitals and far, far below what could be achieved if cure rather than mere custody were the primary objective.

Given the facts the people of any state will rally, to put an end to concentration camps that masquerade as hospitals and to make cure rather than incarceration the goal of their mental institutions.

Robert Merton called this goal displacement a common phenomenon within large bureaucracies as the original goal of the bureaucracy is displaced with the goal of continued funding.

As a result of Lifes expose The National Mental Health Foundation (NMHF) was founded and it became an impetus toward deinstitutionalization. The NMHF's push for deinstitutionalization resulted in new laws protecting the rights of the mentally ill. So effective were these laws that even as the number of incarcerated Americans has ballooned to over 2.3 million today the states hospital populations had declined by enough that the total number of institutionalized persons in the year 2000 had barely reached the peak level of 1955 when 640 persons per 100,000 adults over age 15 were held in asylums, mental hospitals, and state and federal prisons. (The total number of mental health patients institutionalized in state hospitals went from 559,000 in 1955, to less than 80,000 by 1999.)

Meanwhile in our nations prisons a game changer was about to take place.

The 1970s:

All during the latter half of the 1960s California had been the epicenter of a prison race war for the control the prison yard as well as what has been referred to as The New Lefts Bay Area Radical Prison Movement. Even so as the decade ended it had been almost twenty years since a guard had been killed in a California prison. Then beginning in January 1970 the war expanded to include prison guards and within a few months a dozen guards had been killed in San Quentin, Soledad, and Folsom. The rest of the country soon followed suit which forced the Bureau of Prisons officials to begin implementing countermeasures.

1980s:

Between January 1980 and October 1983, there were more serious disturbances at the federal prison in Marion, Illinois than at any other prison, including fourteen escape attempts, ten group uprisings, fifty-eight serious inmate-on-inmate assaults, thirty-three attacks on staff, and nine murders.

Then after the killing of two Marion prison guards in two separate attacks on October 22, 1983, Marion, already a level six facility since 1979, instituted a 24 hour lock down of the entire prison population. The Supermax prison concept was thus established and resulted in specially designed prisons such as Pelican Bay State Prison in CA which opened in December 1989 and ADX Florence, Colorado which opened in November 1994. A building boom of such facilities soon followed.

But the violence did not stop. That is because much of the violence in our prisons, now as in the past, is perpetrated by uncontrolled gangs of guards. These abuses are not just slipups at such locations as Pelican Bays SHU. After all Pelican Bay was designed on a principle of grossly inhuman treatment.

The plan for Harrisburg State Hospital was furnished by John Haviland.

Fellow Quaker Thomas S. Kirkbride, M. D. was one of the trustees appointed by the governor for the project which opened in 1851.

The Harrisburg State Hospital was created as the Pennsylvania State Lunatic Hospital.

[http://www.asylumprojects.org/index.php?title=Harrisburg\\_State\\_Hospital](http://www.asylumprojects.org/index.php?title=Harrisburg_State_Hospital)

So the two Quaker men were practically partners.

Jeremy Bentham published his proposals for a Panopticon House in 1791.

Opened in 1925, Stateville Penitentiary's F-House near Joliet, Illinois was designed according to the panopticon concept which Aldous Huxley once termed a totalitarian housing project.

Stateville's F-House is commonly referred to as roundhouse due to its panopticon layout which features an armed tower in the center of an open area surrounded by several tiers of cells.

Bentham devoted about twenty five years of his long life to the elaboration in minutest detail of the plans for a perfectly efficient prison. The panopticon, as he called it, was to be a circular building, so constructed that every convict should pass his life in perpetual solitude, while remaining perpetually under the surveillance.

<http://deborando.wordpress.com/library/aldous-huxley-prisons-carceri-by-piranesi/>

Levi Tucker Scofield (originally Schofield) (1842-1917) was a prominent Cleveland, Ohio architect.

Scofield built at least two Kirkbride asylums.

Athens Lunatic Asylum, Athens, Ohio

Asylum for the Insane, Columbus, Ohio

But he built prisons using elements of both Haviland and Kirkbride designs.

North Carolinas massive, castellated Central Prison shortly after the Civil War.

Central Prison was the vision of several architects including W. O. Wolfe, father of author Thomas Wolfe.

The castellated architectural style also evoked a popularly understood sense of protective, militant architecture.

<http://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000138>

The Ohio State Reformatory (OSR), also known as the Mansfield Reformatory was built in 1896 and was the site of the movie Shawshank Redemption.

and the Cleveland House of Corrections

Architects Bell & Hackney Southern Illinois Penitentiary drew on both Haviland and Kirkbride in their design of Southern Illinois



Penitentiary now called Menard Correctional Center in Chester, IL.

Page 231-232.

<http://dig.lib.niu.edu/ISHS/ishs-2003autumn/ishs-2003autumn230.pdf>

Haviland also gave much attention to the vexing problem of communication among the prisoners. After considerable experimentation with hot-air ducts and various arrangements of water pipes, the architect was satisfied before he had completed Cherry Hill that such contacts had been reduced to a minimum.

Some important innovations in design were made also to facilitate communication among the prison staff, as well as to improve their surveillance of prisoners. This was particularly true of his use of the central rotunda, apparently for the first time, as a sort of communications hub and nerve centre of the prison.

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Havilands choice of the heavy and gloomy Gothic and Egyptoid styles used at Philadelphia and at Trenton accents security and the punitive nature of imprisonment.

Havilands teacher, James Elmes, in commenting on prison design said the external aspect should be made as gloomy and melancholy as possible. And the building commissioners of Cherry Hill went on record as saying that: the exterior of a solitary prison should exhibit as much as possible great strength and convey to the mind a cheerless blank indicative of the misery which awaits the unhappy being who enters within its walls. In the context of such a philosophy then, Havilands choice of the heavy and gloomy Gothic and Egyptoid styles used at Philadelphia and at Trenton seems to have been entirely appropriate.

The prospect of solitary confinement plus the grim and forbidding appearance of the prison itself would serve as a powerful deterrent to the potential offender on the outside. Solitary confinement day and night became, then, the Quaker solution to the problem of rehabilitation as well as the deterrence of potential law-breakers.

[http://www.legalaffairs.org/issues/January-February-2003/review\\_brook\\_janfeb2003.msp](http://www.legalaffairs.org/issues/January-February-2003/review_brook_janfeb2003.msp)

In 1826, the Revolutionary War hero Marquis de Lafayette visited Eastern State, then under construction. He had spent three years in solitary confinement as a prisoner of war, and was aghast. Lafayette reportedly told a friend back in Paris, Of all the sufferings of my life, none have exceeded none have equaled that single oppression of being, for three whole years, asleep and awake, sitting and standing, exposed to the view of two eyes, watching my every motion, taking from my very thoughts every idea of privacy.

The elite opinion in the United States was firmly behind the idea of solitary confinement. The debates of the day focused largely on whether the system at Eastern State was cost effective.

The arrogance of the system can be heard in the annual report of 1869, which lists the arguments against the solitary system, refutes them, and concludes, We are justified in unequivocally asserting that the Pennsylvania system of penitentiary discipline understood and properly applied, is not injurious to the health, has no injurious influence on the mind, is neither inhuman nor cruel and that if properly administered, it is now the most philosophic and effective system for the treatment of crime as an actual condition of persons in all societies.

Despite this vehement defense of the solitary system, in the period after the Civil War, the regimen at Eastern State was slowly abandoned. Historians have theorized that the rise in foreign immigrants among the prison population decreased public sympathy for prisoners and made expensive penal reform less politically popular during the postwar period.

In 1983, violence swept the federal penitentiary at Marion, Ill. Two guards were stabbed to death, and guards murdered one inmate and attacked others. In response, Marion was locked down: Prisoners were forced to stay in their cells for 23 hours a day. The experiment in long-term solitary confinement at Marion worked. Violence stopped and disruptions were rare. By accident, the modern supermax prison had been invented.

Supermax prison high-tech, maximum-security facilities were the answer politicians and corrections departments were looking for to solve the problem of increasing violence in prisons. Following Marions lead, corrections departments around the country began building supermax prisons, or adding supermax wings to their existing prisons to handle the growing number of violent prisoners who could not be controlled in the traditional prison system. Today there are 20,000 supermax inmates in the United States, roughly 2 percent of the total prison population, though in some states the proportion is much higher: In Mississippi, 12 percent of prisoners live in supermax units.

The system of punishment in supermax units resembles nothing so much as the system of punishment pioneered at Eastern State. The Pelican Bay Security Housing Unit, which cost California taxpayers a quarter of a billion dollars, is perhaps the most notorious supermax. From the air it looks like a high-tech version of the Philadelphia prison: Its hub-and-spokes design is clearly descended from John Havilands 19th-century architectural plan. Inmates in the SHU (known as the shoe) are kept in their cells close to 24 hours a day. As at Eastern State, inmates eat in their cells and exercise in isolated attached yards.

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Forty-one states have supermax units that resemble Pelican Bay. But while experts agree that long-term solitary confinement drives prisoners insane, there are no international luminaries flocking to see American prisons today. Even if they did, its not clear what they

would be permitted to learn. On their visits to America, Dickens and Tocqueville were encouraged to interview Eastern State prisoners in their cells. Today, a number of states bar members of the media from interviewing prisoners. Among them are California and Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania's Eastern State Penitentiary was designed by architect John Haviland the most famous and internationally influential prison architect of all time.

He also designed the courthouse and detention center in NYC commonly called the Tombs today and the state penitentiaries in Trenton, Rhode Island, and Missouri. In addition he designed a county jail and courthouse in Newark, NJ and PA's Navy Asylum.

It is ironic that Haviland's designs were influenced by a Lunatic Asylum plan published in London in 1814 while he was in that city studying architecture.

<http://www.easternstate.org/learn/research-library/history/haviland>

Dr. Thomas Story Kirkbride's grand architectural designs of asylums were in turn influenced by Eastern State Penitentiary (ESP) which opened in 1829 during Kirkbride's second year at the University of Pennsylvania's Medical School.

At the time ESP opened it was the largest and most expensive public structure in the country.

So while the later Kirkbride asylums were influenced by Eastern State Prisons design the inspiration for ESP itself was the earlier Lunatic Asylum plan published in 1814 London.

That takes us full circle and the following is proof that the two fields are connected by their architecture.

One of the last Kirkbride structures built in the United States was the Fergus Falls Regional Treatment Center in Minnesota which opened its doors on July 29, 1890.

It was designed by Minneapolis architect Warren B. Dunnell who went on to build:

The Minnesota State Reform School at Red Wing which formally opened in 1891.

The main building at Red Wing continues to be regarded as a prime example of the neo-Romanesque style that was pioneered by Henry Hobson Richardson in the late 19th century.

In 1895 MSRS was renamed the Minnesota State Training School for Boys and Girls.

John Handy is the program director at Red Wing these days. At the front desk there is a sign that reads:

Never Grow a Wishbone Where Your Backbone Ought to Be.

My interpretation: You best grow a pair because you're on your own.

Preston School of Industry's original building first opened for business on July 1, 1894.

Robert T. Devlin, the President of the California State Board of Prison Directors, had visited 22 institutions in the East. Devlin was particularly impressed with the architectural plans for the Minnesota State Training School being built in Red Wing, MN designed by architect Warren B. Dunnell. So Devlin returned with tracings of MSTs architectural plans, and submitted them to Preston's architect, Henry A. Schulze, for the administration building and annex.

Both reform schools look very similar to the Arkansas Lunatic Asylum another of Kirkbride's designs.

In the 19th century, the U.S. actually presented an array of facilities where children considered different or difficult might be found. In addition to lunatic asylums, reports from institutions for the feeble-minded in the 1880s noted cases of moral idiocy. (The inability to understand moral principles and values and to act in accordance with them, apparently without impairment of the reasoning and intellectual faculties)

The mixed motives driving reformers led to a network of Houses of Refuge, a euphemism for reformatories.

Remedies: The philosophy of moral treatment that influenced early American, as well as European, was the ameliorative role of work, considered a key element of moral treatment was emphasized in 19th-century orphanages, asylums, almshouses, and reformatories.

There was growing eugenics movement in the U.S., associated with cognitive disability, criminality and to advocate increasingly punitive means of containing and preventing (e.g., through involuntary sterilization) all forms of physical and behavioral deviance.

Children and Disability (19th, 20th c.), in Children and Youth in History, Item #110,

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/case-studies/110>

<http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2011/09/inside-the-haunting-world-of-19th-century-mental-hospitals/244747/>

One of the 19th-century's most notorious socioarchitectural phenomena were the insane asylums that housed the era's mentally ill enormous and stunning buildings whose architecture stood in stark contrast with the ominous atmosphere of their inner workings.

What's most peculiar about those asylums is that they, like much of policy dysmorphia that begins with an idealistic vision and ends in a

social malady, began with the idea of moral treatment wherein the ill would be removed from the city and placed in these Utopian environments, many of which were fully self-sufficient and even generated their own electricity, and put to meaningful work.

A bit of history showing a link between asylums and prison designs.

Dr. Thomas Story Kirkbrides grand asylum architectural designs were likely influenced by Eastern State Penitentiary (ESP) which coincidentally had opened in 1829 during Kirkbrides second year at the University Of Pennsylvanias Medical School.

At the time ESP opened it was the largest and most expensive public structure in the country.

One of the last Kirkbride structures built in the United States was the Fergus Falls Regional Treatment Center in Minnesota which opened its doors on July 29, 1890.

<http://www.kirkbridebuildings.com/buildings/fergusfalls/>

It was designed by Minneapolis architect Warren B. Dunnell who went on to build:

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Both Eastern State Penitentiary and Preston Castle have since become tourist locations. The Preston Castle Foundation has held frequent paid photographic tours of this California historical landmark to generate funding to restore it to its original grandeur.

If the first butterfly you see in the photos above and below also have astonishingly convincing anthropomorphic flowers, although it does have a learning curve.

Hi Mark,

I have never met Mr Sperry either or in fact heard of him until I read this article so I am his unofficial apologist and may be completely misrepresenting his arguments.

I accept what you are saying about comparing the AMA and the AIA in this situation for the reasons you give although I dont think its a completely invalid comparison just an overstated one.

I still think the campaign is a legitimate one though. Mr Sperry tells us it is already written in the AIA Code of Ethics that architects must uphold human rights in all their professional endeavors. Therefore IF Capital Punishment and prolonged use of solitary are human rights violations (as quite a number of people think) then Mr Sperry would be correct that for architects to collude in this process by designing the buildings in which these things occur is a breach of the AIA Code of Ethics which already exists.

Secondly, you say you dont see how this campaign will have any positive impact on reducing crimes against society or heinous crimes against humanity and other human rights violations perpetrated on society by criminals. Well I would argue (although I am not expecting you to agree) that CP/prolonged use of solitary is a crime against humanity in its own right and a human rights violation perpetrated on society against criminals. Therefore having architects refuse to co-operate in the process by refusing to design buildings could potentially lead to a reduction in these serious crimes.

Thirdly your argument seems to be making the assumption that CP/prolonged use of solitary have a deterrent effect in reducing serious crime in the first place and I am not sure how much evidence there is for that. Certainly my understanding is that evidence for the deterrent effect of Capital Punishment is equivocal at best.

I am from the UK so it is nice for me to have a chat about these things with a Proper Texan :)

<http://www.texasmonthly.com/story/death-penalty-has-face-da%E2%80%99s-personal-story?src=longreads>

Good story in the Texas Monthly and a good question.

The Death Penalty Has a Face: A DAs Personal Story

DURING MY YEARS AS A DISTRICT ATTORNEY, I HAVE SOUGHT THE DEATH PENALTY. BUT DOES THE STATE NEED TO TAKE A LIFE TO MAKE A POINT?



MarkInTexas: I dont understand why you think campaigning for the A.I.A to prevent architect involvement in the designing of facilities for execution is a joke when it would only parallel the American Medical Associations policy not to allow doctor participation in execution.

Sarah: Thanks for your reply and opinion. However, I believe your comparison to the AMA is invalid, as that governing body and its membership of medical practitioners (Doctors, P.A., EMTs, Nurses, etc.) have an oath and very specific intention to preserve life. On the other hand, the architects profession and function is to design and build safe structures, and, yes many of which are enjoyed by people, but its functional purpose is not to preserve life. IMHO, perhaps a more appropriate and valid comparison might be to other building or industry related trades, such as masons, iron workers, carpenters, electrician, plumbers, etc.

Now, I was drawn to this article by way of a friends Facebook link. I have never done business with, nor heard of Mr. Sperry prior to this, so I can not and will not comment on his competence as an architect. Im sure that he has worked hard to attain the high level of respect from his peers, to be an invited guest speaker and to have received prestigious industry related awards. He is entitled to his own thoughts and opinions on human rights, and is free (at least in America) to speak up on those thoughts and opinions.

I think this campaign is a joke because: a) hes trying to force his personal opinions (of capital punishment) on other members of an organization (e.g. the A.I.A.) through its governing body or code of ethics; b) he is either ignorant of or chooses to ignore the heinous crimes against humanity and other human rights violations perpetrated on society by criminals, specifically those who have taken lives, that have caused them to be incarcerated by society in the first place. c) it is ultimately unachievable; d) society will reject and eventually dismiss the industry and profession if implemented in practice.

The other major topic here is obviously Human Rights. How does society deal with those who violate the human rights of others ? At what point, meaning how many or bad does a violation have to be, before society says enough is enough ? I can say, and you must agree there is no simple, common or concrete answer to this question that applies to everyone on Earth. I think we can agree that it has proven elusive, if not impossible even here in America. We do not have a utopia, we do not have one culture, religion, government therefore it is impossible to make everyone live by the same rules, even if cut from the same cloth. My brother and I will never agree on everything 100% of the time, just like we will never agree on building or not building facilities to incarcerate or execute those criminals whom society has deemed guilty of inappropriate or unacceptable behavior. Again, I ask what would the incentive be to not commit a crime if there were no differences in the punishment for those crimes ?

This is not to say our justice system or the methods employed to incarcerate criminals is perfect. It is not, but it is something that our society has determined appropriate. It is something that our society can improve upon, but I do not see enforcing lighter punishments (e.g. refusing to design or removing execution or solitary confinement facilities) as the means to reduce crimes against humanity. The train of thought is patently absurd.

Again, just my \$0.02 worth (okay, maybe a little bit more .. : ) )

This has to be a joke right ? How can you (Raphael Sperry) seriously believe that your campaign to the A.I.A, and I quote: amend its code of ethics to ban the design of spaces intended for execution and prolonged solitary confinement, will:

- a) prevent architects from being involved in the process of designing of facilities intended for the execution of criminals, or,
- b) not result in removing the building code requirement that buildings be designed by architects, and
- c) have any positive impact on reducing crimes against society, and
- d) ever contribute to creating a society based on mutual respect, tolerance and love ?

You are delusional in thinking adopting such a ludicrous guideline will garner better socially acceptable actions, or any less heinous crimes to be committed on the part of criminals. There has never been a time in human history where such a utopian society existed, and very likely never will. Your thinking is dangerous, not only to yourself but to society as a whole. It is society that has determined, by centuries of being victimized by criminal acts, that incarceration and execution (in the most extreme cases) is an acceptable form of punishment for those whove committed crimes against society. It is society that will undoubtedly resort to other less costly methods of punishment and execution of its criminals, should your governing board of architects agree and adopt your campaign.

Which may not be such a bad thing, as our institutions of incarceration are becoming over populated, and with the benefits of free meals, healthcare, exercise, education, cable TV and phones all on societys dime. What would be the incentive to not commit a crime knowing you will have a free ride for the rest of your life What would be the incentive to not murder or rape or rob if the level of punishment were no different than that of a smuggler, liar or thief ? And, not only that, there would be no need for architects

Just my \$0.02 worth.

It all begins with a corner stone doesnt it?

Excellent piece which coincided with this poem being sent to me from my older brother who had suffered so much while incarcerated. Now homeless and near his end he sent me this message of his defiance.

Invictus:

Out of the night that covers me,

Black as the Pit from pole to pole,

I thank whatever gods may be

For my unconquerable soul.  
In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.  
Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.  
It is not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate;  
I am the captain of my soul.

William Ernest Henley

Interesting article.

I had never thought in terms of buildings upholding or violating human rights before.

This just made my day!

I truly believe that we are seeing a shift in the tide so much grassroots organizing taking place now like never before. Perhaps we are finally waking up. What we do in our prisons is everyone's business and concern. I am hopeful today..

P.O. Box 11374  
Washington, DC 20008

[info@solitarywatch.org](mailto:info@solitarywatch.org)

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