CALL TO BOYCOTT THE DESIGN OF IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTERS

The Architecture Lobby and Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility (ADPSR) continue to condemn the current administration’s assault on immigrant rights. These violent and racist policies are designed to cause fear and chaos; target those seeking asylum and refuge; and weaponize the built environment against immigrants. Following up on our joint statement of April 2018, The Architecture Lobby and ADPSR call on all design professionals to refuse to participate in the design and construction of any immigration detention and deterrence infrastructure, including but not limited to walls, Border Patrol Stations, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) offices, detention facilities, or juvenile holding centers.

Sign our pledge here. Your name will be included on our website, unless indicated otherwise.

The AIA recently issued a statement denouncing the conditions at detention centers, objecting to the misuse of the buildings themselves. While we welcome AIA’s focus on human rights at the border, we need to recognize that our profession’s commitment to health, safety, and welfare is about more than the enforcement of building codes. A detention center where toddlers have been separated from their families is not a healthy building, regardless of fire safety, ventilation and code compliance. It is not the health of buildings that is at stake today, but the health of our society and democracy. The architectural profession must unequivocally denounce the racist policies that underlie the creation of immigration detention centers: there is no ‘good design’ for the infrastructures of inhumane and violent policies rooted in white supremacy.

In the summer of 2018, The Architecture Lobby & ADPSR called on architects, designers, planners, and allied professionals to refuse to participate in the design and construction of any immigration enforcement infrastructure. The relentless assault on immigrants’ rights since then is unacceptable: family separations, carried out intentionally under the “zero tolerance” policy prosecuting all unauthorized border crossings, have taken thousands of children from their parents with no plan for reunification; at least 6 children have died in US custody since September 2018; asylum seekers have been turned back at border crossings in defiance of U.S. and international law; humanitarian aid workers have been prosecuted; emboldened and heavily-armed militias patrol the southwest; ICE regularly threatens mass raids; detention centers are overcrowded and inhumane, while long-standing allegations of abuse and mismanagement at these facilities continue; the Border Patrol’s toxic, racist culture has been exposed; they have fired tear gas into Mexico; DHS has surveilled journalists and activists, targeted and demonized migrant caravans; the White House has cut aid to Central America, slashed refugee admissions, and is pressuring Guatemala into an improbable safe third country agreement; and the president has repeatedly asserted that four U.S. congresswomen of color should “go back” to the “crime infested” countries they “came from.”
Architects, as licensed professionals, are obliged to uphold the public’s health, safety, and welfare; and therefore must make their dissent against these violations known.

WE CALL ON DESIGN PROFESSIONALS TO:

- **SPEAK UP**: Condemn all policies that use the built environment as an instrument of torture and oppression.

- **BOYCOTT**: Refuse to participate in the design and construction of any immigration detention and deterrence infrastructure, including but not limited to border walls, Border Patrol Stations, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) offices, detention facilities, or juvenile holding centers. Reject any association with individuals or corporations linked to the immigration / security industrial complex and denounce the unethical, racist campaign that is ongoing in the US/Mexico border and throughout the country. Sign our pledge here.

- **ORGANIZE** your workplace or school
  If the firm / university / organization you are part of is implicated in the immigration / security industrial complex, you can make an important contribution to this struggle for human rights. The Architecture Lobby is ready to assist people looking for a way to build collective resistance to injustice, from workplace organizing to divestment campaigns. Contact us at info@architecture-lobby.org

Need tips to get you started on organizing? Click here.

Other actions to take in your community:
- Call your congressperson and ask them to stop funding DHS
- Support and check out the many resources from the NIJC, RAICES, and other organizations such as No Más Muertes who provide direct relief and legal assistance to immigrants
  Lists of more orgs. and actions to take here and here
- Know your rights and what to do if you encounter ICE in your community.
- Inform yourself on the immigration industrial complex and the ways in which institutions and corporations profit from it.
- Inform yourself on the history of US military and diplomacy in the Northern Triangle and throughout Latin America (you can also watch the documentary). Also, check out these great books on the history of the Border Patrol and the standing policy of “prevention through deterrence”.
- Talk with your friends, coworkers, and family about these crucial issues. Read more about potential questions that might come up in such a conversation here. (link to organizing attachment)
ORGANIZE:

Workplace resistance to injustice is possible! Be inspired by the workers at Wayfair who walked out in response to their employer’s work at these horrific detention centers.

Tips for organizing your workplace:

- Talk to your coworkers, inside and outside of work
- Invite people to coffee, find out how they feel about working on projects related to the southern border immigration crisis. If they feel opposed or conflicted, let them know they’re not alone.
- Understand your rights as a worker. Check out the Lobby’s Labor Law Pamphlet and research labor laws in your state.
- Research your employer and confirm specific projects that are objectionable (Places to start: does your office do work for the GSA, including the Department of Homeland Security? Is there a "civic" branch of your company that designs sites of incarceration?)
- Find out what it would take for people to say no to working on these projects (for instance, would they approach a supervisor or boss with their concerns as part of a group? How big of a group would it need to be?)
- Join The Architecture Lobby’s and attend the next Organizer Training workshop to learn crucial skills.
- Need support? Contact The Architecture Lobby by sending us an email at info@architecture-lobby.org, or reach out to your nearest chapter.

FAQ:
Below are some questions you might encounter in a conversation with co-workers:

“What does it matter if I say “no” to working on detention centers or projects relating to ICE or CBP, how does that change anything?”

Beyond your individual ability to sleep at night, it doesn’t matter and is risky if you refuse alone. But, imagine if half of your office did? or half of the registered architects in your state did? Or if half of the AIA chapters said they would refuse? This is a call to not just refuse alone, but to organize others to do so. If we refuse together as a unit then we can change the power structures of the profession and work to end these inhumane practices.

“Someone is going to design the detention centers, so why not us?”

We imagine there are many things other people do that you don’t. And, in terms of your firm’s work, let someone else take it! We’re sure your office has passed up jobs for clients that are not
ORGANIZE (cont):

worth the hassle or have a bad reputation. Does your firm want to be associated with these unjust practices? Will it actually affect your ability to get other work or hire new employees? Also, if the only work left for architects in this country is that of jailing people then we’re really in trouble.

“Can I be fired for refusing to participate in this work?”

Likely Yes. Most states in the United States are “at-will” employment, generally meaning you can be fired without any cause excluding cases of discrimination. This is why TAL works to shift the power structures of workplaces through Unions and Cooperatives. The ability of your employer to terminate your employment at-will is why collective refusal and organizing the workplace is the only way forward. If you’re in trouble at work, the Lobby will have your back and activate our networks and the Solidarity Bloc to the best of our ability. Together we are stronger. Together we will win.

“I’m not political. Architecture isn’t political.” or “I don’t do politics”

A way we find helpful to think of politics is: The mechanisms of or how any group of people chooses to distribute resources and power amongst themselves. Everything is political in this way as it is affected by and is an expression of how power and resources are allocated, Architecture is especially so. In fact the pressures on your life that might make it difficult to worry about “politics” - such as long work hours, debt, and housing costs - are precisely politics and why taking a position is so critical.

“The AIA shouldn’t be biased or political”

Did you know the AIA spends over a million dollars in lobbying and political contributions almost every year? They lobby both democrats and republicans and many different departments on things such as Defense spending contracts, Department of Homeland Security grants, and supporting tax cuts for foreign real estate investors. It doesn’t get more “political” than that!

“These things are legal, the government itself is asking us to do them.”

What is legal is not always just. Additionally, courts are continuously blocking many of these new regulations as they conflict or are in opposition to existing laws. Throughout American history the people have needed to correct the ills of the government: From the abolition of slavery; to establishing worker’s rights such as child labor laws, the 8hr workday, and weekends; to women’s sufferage; to civil rights; to LGBTQ rights; and the Americans With Disabilities Act; People have risen up and continue the fight today to create a government that is constituted “of the people, by the people, and for the people”.