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Prison Design Boycott Gains Support

Campaign reaches 500 signers, \$5,000 grant, front cover of magazine

January 26, 2006— Raphael Sperry, President of Architects / Designers / Planners for Social Responsibility (ADPSR) and director of its Prison Design Boycott campaign was very excited today. “We just hit the 500 signers mark for people pledging not to design prisons, which is a major milestone,” he reported. “It is a tremendous statement of conscience for such a large number of people to undertake together, especially within the relatively small world of architecture, design and planning.” “Our next goal is 2,000 signers, which is one estimate we have of the number of people actually working in prison design and planning,” Sperry continued. “Think what that would mean: more people will have pledged not to design prisons than actually do prison design. We are having a real impact within our profession.

The Prison Design Boycott calls on signers to pledge that “in recognition of the deep injustice of the present prison system, I pledge not to do any work that furthers the construction of prisons or jails.” (to read the full pledge, please visit www.adpsr.org/prisons) In support of the pledge, ADPSR’s comprehensive web site analyzes the massive expansion of the prison system — the devastation caused by its pervasive violence, racism, and failure to curb crime— and proposes that investment in community development — including jobs, education, housing, healthcare, and public and community space improvements — would reduce crime more reliably and without the injustices of prisons. ADPSR notes that necessary funding for those social priorities is drained off by ever-expanding prison construction.

ADPSR’s campaign is showing other signs of strength as well. The project was recently awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Santa Cruz, CA based Fund for Nonviolence, a philanthropic foundation that cultivates and supports community-based efforts to bring about social change that moves humanity towards a more just and compassionate coexistence. “We are deeply grateful for FNV’s support, especially because we know they fund mostly grassroots-level activism, and what we’re doing is different, working with design professionals,” Sperry commented. “I take this as a sign that our ongoing outreach to community groups is working and our grasp of the issue resonates with community members. ADPSR members care deeply about incorporating community needs and

engagement into the design processes they manage; the boycott, in a way, is a collective version of that professional role.” Sperry also noted that the project receives supportive comments via email on a regular basis.

On the media front, Prison Legal News magazine is featuring an article by ADPSR describing the Prison Design Boycott on the front cover of its current issue. The detailed analysis and commentary in the article represents ADPSR’s latest research into the prison design business, and runs to seven full pages of the journal. It will be included in a forthcoming book from Prison Legal News as well. “I’m very excited that our message and the information we have to back it up will reach such a wide audience,” ADPSR volunteer Juan Calaf said of the publication. “PLN is read by people in prison, people who work in prisons, and lots of activists working on prison issues. I hope they can all find ADPSR’s work relevant, challenging, and inspiring.”

As for upcoming plans, ADPSR’s plans include an endorsement drive, asking related organizations –both in the design world and the criminal justice field—to support ADPSR’s position. Interested readers or potential endorsers are encouraged to contact ADPSR at president@adpsr.org.

More information about ADPSR

Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility is a national non-profit founded in 1983 dedicated to the involvement of architects, designers, and planners in issues of peace and social justice.

For more information see www.adpsr.org/prisons, or contact Raphael Sperry, Prison Campaign Director, at (415) 546-0450 or president@adpsr.org.