

Compare and contrast federal and state prisons

[Law](#), [Criminology](#)



A penitentiary is an institution established and controlled by the government. The penitentiary system in the United States has as its primary goal of detaining, housing and punishing individuals who have been convicted of felony crimes. Up until the 19th century, prison systems were not common. The common jail dates back to ancient times, but was used to detain persons temporarily until he or she was found innocent, fined, or subjected to corporal punishment. Generally, corporal punishment was most often reserved for the lower classes, since those with means were able to most fines levied against them.

Those crimes that were not deemed capital crimes were punishable by means of public whippings, maiming, or being shamed. Historically, there have been two types of prisons or penitentiary systems in the United States. The Pennsylvania and the New York penitentiary systems form the basis are penitentiary systems in the United States. Although the two share some of the same principles, they differ in many respects and it is not surprising that supporters of each type believe strongly that his or her preferred system is the most desirable and best represents that which characterizes the penal system. Hattery, 2007) The Pennsylvania system was introduced into American society by the Quakers and is far and away the more conservative of the two penitentiary systems. The religious Quakers sought to replace the existing cruel methods of punishment that had been associated with corporal punishment with mandated yet productive labor intensive methods. Prior to the enlightened Quakers entry into the penal system, criminals were abused at the hands of both formal and informal governments.

Punishment included branding, mutilation, whipping and other harsh punishments. Under the Pennsylvania system, prisoners are housed in individual cells. Prisoners are required to engage in unpaid laborious service for as long as he or she is housed in the government run institution. Working hours are clearly defined and convicts are expected to comply with prison policy. While imprisoned, convicts are not allowable to interact with other prisoners and if they come into contact with others, they are not allowed to engage in conversation. Haslam, 2008) The New York system, which was implemented at Auburn, is similar to the Pennsylvania system but markedly differs in that prisoners are allowed to form bonds with other prisoners. Prisoners were afforded the opportunity to interact with each other while working and they were also allowed to eat meals together. Under this model, socialization and relationships were not seen as an enemy of punishment; instead, relationships and socialization were seen as that which was inevitable. Under the New York system, prisoners were assigned separate cells where they slept.

Generally, this was the only form of isolation allowed under the New York system. Although there seemed to be less rigidity than that of the Pennsylvania system, rules were strictly enforced. (Haslam, 2008) During World War II, the United States created prisoner of war camps at the request of the British allies who were unable to house large number of captives. During this period, numerous prisoners of war who happened to be of German and Italian nationality were housed on American military bases and were forced to provide prison labor.

The POWs were treated in much the same way as modern prisoners are treated. The Prisoners were required to work while being held on the military installation and were expected to adhere to all prison camp policies. Since World War II, the prison system in the United States has grown tremendously. A somewhat foreseeable result of this growth has been the evolution of prison labor. Prisoners throughout the country work in numerous manufacturing and service industries. The growth of prison labor in the United States has come under attack by both Americans and human rights advocates around the world.

Many people argue that the United States is hypocritical because it denounces China's use of prison labor while encouraging the privatization of prisons at home. (Hattery, 2007) Works Cited Haslam, J. (2008). Pits, Pendulums, and Penitentiaries: Reframing the Detained Subject. *Texas Studies In Literature and Language*, 268-284. Hattery, E. S. (2007). If We Build it They Will Come: Human Rights Violations and the Prison Industrial Complex 1 . *Societies Without Borders* 2, 273 -288.