



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

July 13, 2017

Nadia Ramzy and Stuart Twemlow, Editors
Ghislaine Boulanger, Special Edition Editor
International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies

Dear Editors:

We are writing in response to the articles in your special issue “The American Psychological Association and the War on Terror” (Vol. 14, Issue 2) in an effort to address some misconceptions and to update your readers on APA’s actions since the release of the independent review conducted by attorney David Hoffman of Sidley Austin.

Since the release of the independent review in July 2015, APA has acknowledged organizational failures and undertaken – at the behest of our Board of Directors and Council of Representatives – a series of 19 actions aimed at rebuilding members’ and the public’s trust in our association.

These actions include:

- Appointing a Commission on Ethics Processes to evaluate and make recommendations regarding the association’s ethics policies and practices. The commission will deliver its final report to the Council of Representatives in August.
- Adopting a new 2015 Council resolution to amend the 2006 and 2013 Council resolutions by redefining “cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment” to be consistent with the U.N. Convention Against Torture – as is the association’s longstanding definition of torture – and to prohibit psychologist participation in national security interrogations, among other key provisions.
- Amending the APA *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* to underscore via explicit language that psychologists are prohibited from being involved directly or indirectly in torture or in other cruel, inhuman or degrading behavior.
- Appointing a Conflict of Interest Work Group to propose processes to ensure that all members of APA governance, including boards and committees, understand what constitutes a conflict of interest (both financial and non-financial) and when and how to reveal any such conflicts and recuse themselves from APA activities.
- Appointing an Advisory Committee on Human Rights to provide strategic advice to the association in its promotion and protection of human rights.

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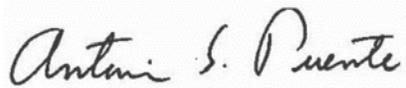
- Sponsoring a continuing education workshop series at APA's 2016 convention and developing a curriculum on human rights.
- Establishing a work group to review APA's organizational policies and procedures and make recommendations aimed at implementing best practices. The work group's report will be presented to the Council in August.

As evidenced by some of the assertions in the articles in your special issue, there continue to be some misrepresentations of Mr. Hoffman's findings, particularly with respect to criticisms reported in national media that were not supported by the independent review. For example, Mr. Hoffman wrote, "With regard to the revisions of the Ethics Code ... we found that the meaningful changes occurred prior to 9/11 and were not influenced by an effort to help the government's interrogation efforts" (p.10).

Contrary to Dr. Ghislaine Boulanger's assertion, APA did indeed take [many steps](#) to implement the petition resolution passed by a vote of the membership in 2008, in keeping with the detailed plan proposed to the Council by then-APA President Alan Kazdin's [Presidential Advisory Group on the Implementation of the Petition Resolution](#), which included the three petitioners. This [resolution](#) states that psychologists are not permitted to work in settings where "persons are held outside of, or in violation of, either International Law (e.g., the UN Convention Against Torture and the Geneva Conventions) or the US Constitution (where appropriate), unless they are working directly for the persons being detained or for an independent third party working to protect human rights." APA has sent more than 50 letters to federal officials, beginning with the George W. Bush administration, informing them of the petition resolution and subsequent changes to APA policy related to the role of psychologists in national security; all are posted on APA's website, along with decades of other key documents, at <http://www.apa.org/news/press/statements/interrogations.aspx>.

As the association marks its 125th anniversary this year with many achievements to celebrate, the independent review documents a painful time in our association's history. Given that its findings continue to be the subject of debate by various individuals, it is critical that they be presented fully and accurately. APA is committed to continue to address the underlying issues and concerns raised by the independent review to ensure that this history will not be repeated.

Sincerely,



Antonio E. Puente, PhD
President



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CEO