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# Society of Indian Psychologists

Response and Recommendations Upon Review of the  
*Report to the Special Committee of the Board of Directors of the American  
Psychological Association: Independent Review Relating to APA Ethics  
Guidelines, National Security Interrogations, and Torture*

Respectfully Submitted on behalf of the Society of Indian Psychologists  
on July 20, 2015 by  
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Brian McNeill, David Lincourt, Chadd Eaglin

It is with deep consternation and sadness that we read the report of the independent investigator (hereafter referred to as the Hoffman Report), which was released on July 10, 2015. We have also reviewed the related materials posted by the Board of Directors (BOD) on the American Psychological Association (APA) website (<http://www.apa.org/independent-review/index.aspx>) and the comments and recommendations made by Drs. Steven Reisner and Stephen Soldz to the APA BOD.

The **Society of Indian Psychologists** (SIP) has four general and specific concerns regarding the findings of the Hoffman Report and our relationship to APA. Our thinking is underscored by the principle of *Kasastensera kariwii skennen* (Mohawk). This means that when we work with a good mind towards peace, justice and unity to prevent the abuse of human beings, then we gain our strength. This is our understanding of the “Do no harm” principle in the APA Code of Ethics.

1. We do not support torture for any reason and believe that the manipulation of the APA ethical guidelines to allow torture to occur is without question unacceptable. There are no circumstances under which torture and loss of the basic rights of a human being are appropriate or tolerable. The disregard of the Geneva Convention and the U.N. Convention Against Torture and the acceptance of the Nuremberg Defense is completely antithetical to the practice of psychology and the espoused core value of “do no harm”.

This point is highly personal to us as psychologists and as Native peoples. Our ancestors were considered enemies by the US Government and experienced “enhanced interrogations” during the “Indian Wars”.

2. The Hoffman Report provides evidence of multiple violations of ethical responsibilities committed by individuals who had knowledge of these activities which reflect poorly on APA as an organization. The long-term deception and abuses of power were allowed and grew in an organizational culture that we have experienced to be characterized by a lack of transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness on many levels in many areas. When we work for the good of all human beings there is no need to hide our activities or the process by which we make decisions.
3. We support the recommendations of Drs. Reisner and Soldz with respect to the firing of those APA staff who knew or should have known about the efforts to allow DoD psychologists to participate in torture practices, those who ignored the available information regarding collusion with torture practices and those who actively avoided seeking information regarding that collusion. It does not seem plausible that only one person (Dr. Stephen Behnke, the only person fired to date) was able to do all this without the explicit cooperation of others in APA leadership positions.

We also support their recommendations that APA employees who participated in this dissembling and prevaricating be banned from governance, that ethics charges be brought where appropriate and that APA publicly recommend state ethics charges where appropriate.

4. We caution against a rush towards hasty and potentially short-sighted resolution, as this may impede thorough healing and restoration of integrity. In general we support the initial recommendations of the APA Board of Directors published on 07/10/15, but believe that repair of the broken organizational and ethical practices need to go much further. We also endorse the recommendations suggested by Drs. Reisner and Soldz:
  - **Accountability:** In addition to the above mentioned staff dismissals and governance participant bans, we believe that a full accounting of the organizational processes that may have allowed the secrecy, deception and wrongdoing to occur should be outlined and clarified in a public venue and an APA publication.
  - **Contribution:** We would like to see a thorough public acknowledgement of wrongdoing. This includes apologies to those hurt by the collusion of DoD psychologists with torture practices, by the lack of transparency and inclusiveness in APA, and by the systematic dismissal and ridicule of dissident voices within and outside of APA.
  - **Transparency:** The APA's Board of Directors should make available any documentation, meaning meeting minutes, emails, rationales for BOD decisions or other information that Council, membership, or the public request. This includes publishing the salaries and perks of all staff, reporting lobbying activities, and indicating who represents APA to the government and to the public. We agree with the recommendation that APA publish the Independent Review and all supporting documents.

- **Inclusiveness:** We believe that all groups should be seated at the APA table during this critical time of repair and reorganization as well as afterwards, to provide new eyes and the wisdom of different perspectives. We believe that APA's long standing disregard for reflecting the diverse composition of the U.S. contributed directly to the lack of cultural humility and the disregard for "do no harm" that fed this horrific event.
- **Genuine Change:** Establish procedures as well as an institutional culture that ensures that APA is an organization that respects the dignity, coherence, diversity and integrity of the field of psychology.

We ask that APA will make the amends and organizational changes that would prevent this type of inexcusable series of decisions to occur. Moving forward, we will be carefully considering any changes made and will support efforts that APA makes to use this time to learn new ways of working as an organization. We also reserve the right to continue to issue position statements during this process. It is our position that the goal of the APA changes is to develop the good mind for the benefit of all people. SIP may consider rescinding the Memorandum of Understanding created with the APA in December, 2012 as new information becomes available.