

June 18, 2007

Dr. Sharon Brehm  
President  
American Psychological Association

Dear Dr. Brehm,

I am writing to you in response to an open letter sent to you, as APA President. I have been a member of APA for nearly 20 years and I count many of my APA colleagues as dear friends. The authors of this letter—who do not know me, my values or my work—have seen fit to besmirch my reputation by associating me with the perpetration of torture.

Let me provide just a few facts for the authors' information. I have never been through "SERE" training. I do not teach "SERE" techniques. I do not use nor have I ever used "SERE" techniques in any aspect of my work related to interrogations. Dr. Morgan Banks has emphasized repeatedly that in addition to being unethical, using a "SERE" approach in an interrogation would be *counterproductive* to obtaining useful information. I strongly suspect that using a "SERE" approach to an interrogation would yield data worthless for investigative and destructive for adjudicatory purposes.

I will be as clear as I possibly can: I strongly object to, have never used, and will never use torture, cruel, or abusive treatment or punishment of any kind, for any reason, in any setting. They are antithetical to who I am as a person and as an officer in the United States military. Had any of the individuals who signed the open letter saw fit to ask me, I would have provided this information to them directly. Apparently none believed it worthwhile to give me that opportunity before using my name in a letter that they then distributed widely, including to the media.

Throughout my career, in all my work, I have done my best to adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct. For me, that has meant treating every individual whom I have encountered—from generals in the United States Army, to custodians at military bases around the globe, to detainees in United States custody—with dignity and with respect. Never has anyone in my chain of command ordered me to do anything inconsistent with this code of behavior.

Having custody and control over an individual is an awesome responsibility. When I was sent to Abu Ghraib, following the well-publicized abuses, I relied upon psychology and well-known psychologists to help me fulfill my mission—to develop training and implement systems designed to *prevent* further acts of abuse. The support of these colleagues, whose research and materials I took with me to Iraq, was invaluable—not only in terms of their expertise, but also because of the values that imbue their approach to psychology. I will be forever grateful to them for being with me in spirit on that difficult mission.

I will likewise be grateful to other colleagues, such as Dr. Mike Gelles, who took concrete action that has been made public, to *stop* detainee abuses. It is my understanding that a United States Senate committee will hold hearings on the issue of interrogation practices. I welcome this development.

Please let me be clear: Letters such as the one sent to you do harm. APA's continuing work has given psychologists an invaluable resource to fight against ill-informed and misguided promoters of harsh and abusive interrogation techniques. *We are making excellent progress in that fight.*

Letters that name and that associate individuals with torture through innuendo have no place in an informed and responsible discussion. They are deeply painful. They are also extremely discouraging to psychologists in the military seeking to do the right thing, many of whom are early in their careers and often in dangerous settings far from family and from loved ones.

In a few days I will be deployed and so will largely be out of contact with APA for the next year. I am proud to be a member of the American Psychological Association, proud for what APA has stood for in these troubling times, and deeply grateful to the Association for supporting me and my colleagues in our quest to ensure that all in our custody are treated with human decency and respect.

Respectfully Yours,

Larry C. James  
Colonel, United States Army