

WHY *DID* THE APA DO IT?

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The regressive effects of gaslighting have taken their toll on our national organization as well as our country. Many Division 39 members were shocked last year when APA twice refused to take an unequivocal stance against psychologists' participation in the Bush detention centers. The fact that other health care organizations, typically more conservative than APA on humanitarian issues, were very outspoken about the issue made it all the more puzzling.

In human rights groups and liberal organizations around the world the arguments APA spokespersons advanced in support of APA's position did not pass the red face test for credibility. Instead, their seemingly transparent disingenuousness only made us sound embarrassingly like the Bush Administration.

Banning psychologists' participation in reputed torture mills was clearly unnecessary, it was argued. To do so would be an insult to military psychologists everywhere. Psychologists would never engage in torture. Further, psychologists' participation in these detention centers was really an antidote to torture since psychologists' presence could protect the potential torture victims. We were both too good and too important to join our professional colleagues in taking an absolutist moral position against one of the most shameful eras in our country's history.

There are two questions that beg for answers. How did the APA form such an obviously close connection to the military? And why did the APA governance—the Board of Directors and the Council of Representatives—go along with the military interests? How could an organization of such bright people be rendered so incompetent to protect the profession from the horrible black eye they have given us?

I have had ample opportunity to observe both the inner workings of the APA and the personalities and organizational vicissitudes that have affected it over the last two decades. With one interruption, for most of the twenty year period from 1983 through 2003, I either worked inside the APA central office as the first Executive Director of the APA Practice Directorate or served in governance positions including Chair of the APA Board of Professional Affairs and member of the APA Council of Representatives.

When the torture issue broke last year, the answer to the first question about APA's military connection seemed obvious. Since the early 1980s, APA has had a unique relationship with Hawaii Senator Daniel Inouye's office. Inouye, for much of that time, has served as Chair of the Subcommittee on Defense for the Senate Appropriations Committee. The Subcommittee has responsibility for all U.S. defense spending. One of Inouye's administrative assistants, psychologist Patrick DeLeon, has long been active in the APA and served a term as APA president. For over twenty-

five years, relationships between APA and the Department of Defense (DOD) have been strongly encouraged and closely coordinated by DeLeon. It was DeLeon acting on behalf of Inouye who initiated the DOD psychologist prescription demonstration project in the late 1980s that began psychology's efforts to secure prescriptive privileges.

For many APA governance members, most of whom have little Washington political experience, Dr. DeLeon is perceived as a canny politician and political force on Capitol Hill. The two most visible APA presidents on the torture issue, Drs. Levant and Koocher, based on personal discussions I have had with them in recent years, clearly hold DeLeon's political savvy in high regard.

While I personally got along well with DeLeon and never doubted his commitment to psychology, his view of psychology and his sense of priorities were quite different from mine, and I did not share the assessments of Dr. DeLeon's political prowess. I felt his priorities had more to do with the status of psychology as reflected in comparatively minor issues that were often unconnected to issues that were of true importance to practitioners. Rightly or wrongly, I often felt that an accurate sense of context was missing from his political analysis and objectives. It's the same feeling I have now when I look aghast at what APA has done on the torture issue. Except this time, it is not something relatively innocuous.

Some people attempt to explain APA's recent seemingly inexplicable behavior by assuming that large sums of money changed hands on the torture issue. I could certainly be wrong, but I think the more likely (and more remarkable) explanation is that the judgment of those making the decisions was simply that bad and that insensitive to the realities of the human suffering they were endorsing.

Regardless, there is no question that APA had formed a strong relationship with military psychologists and the DOD through its connections with Inouye's office. But it is the second question that is probably more difficult to understand from afar. How could both the APA Board of Directors and the APA Council of Representatives support the military on this issue and subject the profession to such embarrassment by supporting a policy that is anathema to the vast majority of psychologists?

Here's how. The pluralistic and multifaceted governing process that I saw when I entered the APA in the early 1980s ended in the 1990s. Differences of opinion stopped and the APA suffered a terrible regression. Increasingly inbred, under the administration of Raymond Fowler, the association agenda was primarily financial, focusing on making money both through real estate and through what many of us felt was unwarranted, financially

harsh treatment of APA employees.

More peculiarly, Fowler's "agenda" for APA was encapsulated in the phrase "working together" a noble idea that to the best of my knowledge was never attached to any actual substantive agenda. Instead, it served as a means of social control, a subtle injunction against raising any of the conflictual issues, challenges, or ideas that need to be addressed in any vital and accountable organization.

The result was that much Council intercourse turned into fawning over one another. Many members appeared to me to bathe in the good feeling that came from "working together." For some, the bath was a narcissistic one and organizational regression became more debilitating. In other instances during this period, dissent by rank and file members was stifled with heavy handed letters from the APA attorney threatening legal action or communications from prominent members of the governance threatening ethical action if policy protests were not discontinued.

As a result of the regression, the governance of APA was ill-prepared for thoughtful deliberation on a matter as important as the torture issue. As I have written in *State of Confusion*, when people are confused, they are eager to be told what is real. The governance was simply over its head in trying to effectively deliberate on such an issue when there was organized support on the other side coming from the military interests supported by Koocher and Levant and possibly DeLeon.

When the torture issue arose, the Council, despite the efforts of Division 39 members, fell victim to some of the very silly arguments described above. Council members were told that to oppose psychologists participation in the detention actions was to cruelly suggest that our colleagues might engage in torture. In a fashion chillingly characteristic of the gaslighter (described above), it was implied that those who raised concern about torture, were themselves torturing their colleagues who were working in the military. One prominent member of the APA governance gratuitously raised the ethnicity of one of the military psychologists, seemingly opening the possibility that the opponents to torture were racist.

These arguments were then followed with the grandiose closing argument that psychologists presence at the detention centers was critical to make sure torture did not recur. We psychologists had a moral duty to prevent immoral behavior. The piano player, once aroused to the possibility of what was going on upstairs, was now needed to prevent it. Yes, these were the arguments that carried the day in APA deliberations. In the more discerning eyes of the world, they have very little credibility.

But the gaslighting is not over, even now. There is one more step in the process. History will show this to be a despicable period of American history. The people who have

supported APA's position on this issue obviously do not want their legacy at APA to include that they supported a policy that failed to indict the detention centers. The recent history must be revised. In a seeming gesture of reconciliation, the APA has offered to continue negotiating the matter with the dissident groups. In this fashion the historical revision has already begun. It may well be that the final policy APA adopts will ultimately read the way it should have last summer and much, much earlier when it actually mattered. APA will "get it right" shortly before or shortly after George Bush leaves office. In leaving a final written policy that is like our sister organizations' original policies, APA's shocking failure at the critical time will appear to never have happened. Such is the work of a regressed and gaslighted organization. Despite being an organization of psychologists, APA has been subjected to very little analysis.

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emotionally charged psychological states: paranoia, sexual perplexity, and envy. These are the true "battleground states" in American politics today. Whoever carries the day in addressing and harnessing these psychological states will control and shape the American political landscape for the coming decades. Any political party or movement that fails to consider them in its campaign strategy handicaps itself significantly.

The genie cannot be put back in the bottle. The methods of gaslighting are now deeply and permanently ensconced in our political system and will not go away. The forces are there, the techniques operative. Unless we learn about these techniques and how to defend against them we will continue to suffer from them. But when we do understand how the mind works—how certain states of mind affect us in our political behavior—it provides us with a powerful and consistent explanation for America's behavior in today's political world.

American politics, now and for the future, will be the politics of reality. Any party that does not try to articulate a reality that appreciates the needs and complexities of the human mind will become increasingly obsolete. For a nation armed with nuclear weapons to suffer the psychologically regressive effects of gaslighting at the same time it is grappling with the post-9/11 loss of its island fortress security is a highly combustible combination that is terrifying in its potential consequences. *State of Confusion* is my attempt to sound an alarm to these dangers, describe the psychological dynamics behind them, and suggest potential remedies to prevent the potentially devastating consequences they could have. An understanding of the human mind is the key tool of the new political architect and psychologist-psychoanalysts more than any other professionals have the understanding to explain and make constructive use of those tools.