



SOCIETY FOR MILITARY PSYCHOLOGY

Division 19 of the American Psychological Association



April 18, 2019

Dear Dr. Bingham, Dr. Shullman and Dr. Evans,

When sending the Division 19 Presidential Task Force (TF) Report to the American Psychological Association's (APA) Board of Directors (BOD) in November, 2015, then-President Tom Williams spoke of the BOD's fiduciary responsibility to the organization and its members, a duty that requires acting in good faith on factual information in making decisions and undertaking actions. Both that letter and the TF Report provided substantial evidence that the Hoffman Report contained multiple errors, misstatements and falsehoods. Mr. Hoffman, himself, acknowledged his lack of expertise and knowledge of psychology (Hoffman Report, p. 5) and it is notable that APA and Sidley Austin has now characterized Hoffman's conclusions as Hoffman's "own opinions" as opposed to facts. APA's failure to correct the record appears wholly inconsistent with its fiduciary responsibility as well as the standards of ethical conduct that it requires of its members.

It has been nearly three and a half years since the Board received the Division 19 TF Report detailing our serious concerns with the Hoffman Investigation and Report. Since January, 2016, in various representations, the BOD has promised our Division leadership that we would receive a substantive response to our detailed concerns. Now, over three years later, the BOD has yet to provide the response that was promised, often citing the litigation as the reason for its silence. As a point of fact, no litigation was filed until February, 2017. Furthermore, if, as the BOD has insisted, the litigation is without merit, the litigation should be no impediment to the BOD's fulfilling its promise by responding to the Division's concerns. The BOD, itself, has demonstrated its awareness that there are significant flaws in the Hoffman Report, as evidenced by the fact that they rehired Hoffman to review his own work in April, 2016. This supplemental review, due no later than June 8, 2016, has failed to materialize, with APA again citing the litigation as the causal factor.

As officers within the Division whose members have borne the brunt of the deleterious impact of the BOD's actions, based upon which are now asserted by APA and Sidley Austin as "the opinions" of Hoffman, we have continued to hold forth the hope that the BOD would exercise its fiduciary responsibility with objectivity and independence. Therefore, we were understandably heartened by the news, in November, 2018, that APA was seeking a resolution/settlement with the litigants, since the BOD has continually stated that a response to the Division's concerns and a reconciliation process would soon follow upon the end of litigation. However, recent actions have raised considerable doubt about the sincerity of those statements, and we continue to be very concerned about how these actions serve the interests of the very organization for which the BOD holds fiduciary responsibility.

While it has been nearly four years since the Hoffman Report was released, publications in numerous venues and through various media continue to perpetuate the misrepresentations and falsehoods made within the Hoffman Report to the detriment of the Division and APA. As one very significant example, in March, 2019, Dr. Steven Soldz, who identified himself as a member of APA's Council of Representatives (COR), wrote a prologue for the second edition of "The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump" – this book was previewed at the National Press Club. The focus of the prologue has little to do with the book's subject but, rather, serves as a platform for Dr. Soldz's opinions about APA and the disputed findings of the Hoffman Report. Dr. Soldz stated that APA willfully ignored the role of psychologists in torture, allowed the Department of Defense to vet Association interrogation policies, and that APA, by supporting torture, undermined the ethical basis of the psychology profession. In

addition to these false statements, Dr. Soldz continued the debunked narrative that the relationship between the CIA and APA played a role in Association interrogation policies.

As Division officers, we were dismayed, but not surprised, to learn that a member of APA's governance continues to perpetuate the false and damaging statements contained in the Hoffman Report, as this has been a continuing pattern with a small subset of individuals. This pattern has also served as a double standard. Dr. Soldz, publicly speaking as a member of Council, has presented conclusions that go beyond even Hoffman's findings. While APA has remained silent in that regard, APA has sanctioned two former Division Presidents for speaking the truth, and a former APA President threatened the Division for voicing support for its members.

It is no coincidence that the same author of this prologue has attacked a Division leader, Dr. Larry James, with racist remarks, perpetuating the stereotype of black men as lazy, incompetent and incapable of success on their own merits ("...James can't write an English sentence."; "...he's been an awful, awful dean. He doesn't show up for work. He basically doesn't do anything."; "They gave him the job partly because he is black."). Dr. James, at the time of those statements, was serving as the Division's Representative on Council. Although the BOD was fully aware of these statements, as they were posted on the COR listserv on January 25, 2016, they again chose to remain silent. Finally, we were stunned to read the latest motion filed by Dr. Soldz's lawyer with the DC Superior Court (a document that is publicly available on the Court's website) only to find that his defense includes information that was clearly provided by APA – there have also been numerous filings made by APA in support of Dr. Soldz. For APA to voluntarily provide material support to an individual who has engaged in racial stereotyping is inappropriate.

One of the original Divisions in APA, our Society is vibrant and growing, representative of the broad spectrum of psychology in all of its diversity. Recent initiatives have demonstrated our willingness to engage with APA in the early stages of a reconciliation process as evidenced by efforts to educate leaders and members of our deep contributions to psychology and our Nation, proposed engagement with the Ethics Committee Task Force regarding the unique challenges faced by our members, and plans to develop a Military Psychology Summit with the assistance of APA and the District of Columbia Psychological Association. However, true reconciliation cannot proceed without the resolution of the issues raised in this letter.

Over the past three and a half years, the BOD has refused to provide any substantive response to the legitimate facts and circumstances of significant concern raised by successive Division leaders. Even more egregiously, the Hoffman Report's false and damaging narrative has remained unchallenged and even perpetuated by APA, a situation that has tarnished members, our organization and the profession of psychology. Once again, we are looking for your leadership and courage in immediately addressing these issues with the Division leadership by taking the following actions: 1) Provide the Division leadership with substantive responses to the issues identified in the Division 19 TF Report and 2) Collaborate with our leadership team in developing an action plan regarding both Division's concerns and a reconciliation path forward.

Respectfully,

Stephen Bowles, President, Society for Military Psychology

Eric Surface, President-Elect, Society for Military Psychology

Mark Staal, Past-President, Society for Military Psychology