

September 5, 2007

Dr. Sharon Stephens Brehm
President
American Psychological Association

Dear Dr. Brehm,

I am writing in response to a listserv post regarding APA's Task Force on Psychological Ethics and National Security (PENS) that is composed of writings by Amy Goodman, host of the program "Democracy Now," and Dr. Jean Maria Arrigo, who was a member of the PENS Task Force. While I have not spoken outside of APA venues in my role as chair of the PENS Task Force, the Goodman/Arrigo post presents such a gross distortion of the PENS process—a process that concluded over two years ago—that silence no longer seems reasonable or prudent. Please distribute this letter as you deem appropriate.

First, I want to be clear: I have never worked in any capacity for the CIA, the FBI, or the Department of Defense. I am a psychologist for a nursery through 9th grade private school. I also serve on the training faculty for a university-based, multicultural center. I have served as chair of the APA Ethics Committee and chair of my state's psychology licensing board. I am currently a member of the APA Board for the Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest (BAPPI). Like hundreds of other APA members, I have volunteered my time for APA activities. I have never received monies or compensation of any nature from APA for my time. While my employers have allowed flexibility in my work schedules to attend meetings, APA activities have never been counted toward my professional advancement. When I was asked to chair the PENS Task Force, I accepted. At no point was there any mention of compensation, reward, benefit, or other inducement for serving in this role or for coming to a particular position on the substantive issues. Any other suggestion is, quite frankly, an insult to my integrity.

Second, the Goodman/Arrigo post implies that virtually everyone in the room when the PENS Task Force met, other than Dr. Arrigo, was either covertly providing information to the military or had significant conflicts of interest that would predetermine a position. The APA staff present, many of whom are long-standing APA members, have been unspeakably poised and gracious in not publicly responding to the implication that their own integrity was compromised. A cursory review of APA activities reveals that APA has taken positions at significant odds with the United States government. The most recent example is the 2007 resolution on interrogations itself. The Washington Post calls APA's 2007 resolution "a rebuke of the Bush administration's anti-terrorism policies."

Third, the names and biographical statements of the Task Force members were provided to the APA Council of Representatives and posted on an APA division website weeks before the Task Force met with no restrictions whatsoever on how this information could be disseminated. This information was readily available through the Internet for interested members of the public. On the night the PENS Task Force began its work in Washington, a journalist contacted the director of the Ethics Office and asked for hotel information for specific members of the Task Force, by name. The notion that either the names of Task Force members or their biographical descriptions were not publicly available until a year after the Task Force met is completely false.

Fourth, as PENS Task Force Chair, I responded immediately when Dr. Arrigo raised allegations of “irregularities” in the PENS process. I believed strongly that the individuals directly involved should have the first opportunity to hear and respond to any such allegations. Nonetheless, despite numerous entreaties over several weeks, Dr. Arrigo refused to provide any substantive response to my requests that she explain what she viewed as Task Force irregularities. What are finally raised in the Goodman/Arrigo post as examples are, in fact, not irregularities at all. Other APA task forces have had multiple observers. In regard to the question of an investigation, the president-elect of APA pointed out to Dr. Arrigo that APA has neither subpoena power nor the necessary security clearances, so an “investigation” would be pointless—and would serve to demonstrate only that APA did not understand what a competent investigation would require. The Goodman/Arrigo post states “No task force member was permitted to speak about the PENS report.” In fact, Dr. Arrigo has spoken a great deal about the PENS report. At no point has APA taken any action to discourage Dr. Arrigo from doing so. Much to the contrary, Dr. Arrigo spoke most recently at an APA Convention program on ethics and interrogations, the planning for which was funded by the APA Board of Directors.

Fifth, in discussing the composition of the PENS Task Force, the Goodman/Arrigo post fails to address how several of the Task Force members have been described in publicly available documents as taking central roles in fighting detainee abuse. Dr. Mike Gelles has been hailed for a successful protest of prisoner abuse in Guantanamo Bay. The work of Dr. Larry James in implementing procedures to prevent further abuses at Abu Ghraib has been described in a recent book by a former APA president. Dr. Robert Fein, chair of the Intelligence Science Board study on educating information, is demonstrating that research does not support the effectiveness of harsh interrogation techniques in eliciting accurate and reliable information; his work has been discussed in the *New York Times*. Dr. Morgan Banks has been described by Jane Mayer in the *New Yorker* magazine as taking an unequivocal position against “reverse-engineering” of SERE techniques; Dr. Banks has repeatedly stated that “reverse SERE engineering” is both unethical and ineffective. Dr. Scott Shumate is portrayed in a recent *Vanity Fair* article as “disgusted” in reaction to detainee abuse. The Goodman/Arrigo post states “Six of the ten members were highly placed in the Department of Defense” (an inaccurate statement), and then goes on to ignore entirely the publicly available information about what these individuals have done to fight the abuse of detainees. The post likewise ignores how Mike Gelles has since left government service and remains a strong and vocal supporter of the PENS Task Force conclusions. Neither Amy Goodman nor Dr. Arrigo saw fit in their post so much as even to acknowledge the position of these PENS Task Force members or their actions to fight against detainee abuse.

Sixth, immediately following the PENS Task Force meeting after Task Force members had left Washington, a final draft of the report was distributed for their approval. Dr. Arrigo’s response reads in its entirety:

The depth, scope, and wisdom of this document are indeed impressive, and I approve it as a Task Force member. Also, I appreciate its literary grace (owing to Steve). As mentioned previously, I have felt uneasy with some elements, primarily omissions. Fulfillment of the Task Force recommendations would relieve my concerns, and I hope for an opportunity for further participation. Thanks to the APA ethics committee, board, and staff members who have mobilized for swift review and dissemination of the PENS report. Jean Maria Arrigo

(Given that Dr. Arrigo has now provided this information to multiple individuals and entities, including an investigative journalist, I will assume that she has waived any expectation of her own privacy regarding these materials). The year following release of the PENS report, a majority of PENS Task Force members determined that the APA Ethics Committee was the appropriate body to write a casebook/commentary on the PENS report. Dr. Arrigo dissented vigorously and argued that the PENS Task Force should continue its involvement in PENS-related work.

Seventh and finally, I note with dismay that nowhere on the Democracy Now website was I able to find any material from the many voices at Convention and on APA Council who spoke strongly in support of APA's position and eloquently against a limitation of psychologists' roles in detention centers. In contrast, APA leadership ensured that all voices and perspectives would be heard at our annual meeting.

In response to continued member interest in this issue, the APA Board of Directors funded a group to plan an extensive program on ethics and interrogations at the 2007 Convention in San Francisco. The program consisted of nine, two-hour sessions. The majority of members on the program planning group were affiliated with the Divisions for Social Justice. Some of the harshest critics of APA's position (including Dr. Arrigo) spoke at the Convention program—with APA leadership's knowledge and full support. Democracy Now filmed at several of the sessions, including the Town Hall meeting, again with APA leadership's knowledge and support. The Board of Directors was entirely committed to ensuring that a proposal limiting the roles of APA members in detention facilities would be discussed and debated at the Council of Representatives meeting. The discussion took place on the final day of Council's meeting, as requested by the chair of the Divisions for Social Justice. The resolution adopted by Council was the result of an intense, open and inclusive collaboration between Council representatives from numerous and diverse APA groups.

I appreciate that our membership has passionate differences of opinion on this complex issue. APA's current position is the result of intelligent, informed, and thoughtful debate that has been ongoing for over two years. We have explored every aspect of this issue in challenging and sometimes painful discourse, and we have reached a considered position. For those truly interested in a democratic process, APA leadership provided an excellent example in San Francisco of democracy in action.

Sincerely,

Olivia Moorehead-Slaughter, PhD
Chair, PENS Task Force