



6 August 2018

Members, APA Council or Representatives

Dear APA Council Members,

Thank you for the important work that you do for our profession. I am a professor and research psychologist whose work over the last several decades focused on the responses of victims, perpetrators, and organizations to abuses. I am writing you with this time because I believe that my work may shine some light on issues that you are likely to be asked to deal with at the August Council meeting.

Among the issues that my colleagues and I have investigated are issues of institutional betrayal and its effect on victims and the response of perpetrators to victim reports of abuse. Unfortunately, the APA's initial response to claims that its policies were potentially permitting psychologist involvement in abusive interrogations provides a large-scale illustration of the dynamics and costs of institutional betrayal. In the wake of the Hoffman report trust in APA leadership fell precipitously. Fortunately, after some time, APA responded with a series of major reforms including 1) policy changes regarding interrogations and involvement in detention sites like Guantánamo operating in violation of international law; 2) process changes in how APA functions to promote greater transparency; 3) an exploration of alternative ethics policies and practices. Many of these reforms moved APA from a position of institutional betrayal to one of institutional courage.

At present, however, it appears that these reforms are under threat from a concerted pushback, spearheaded in some case by those who promoted discredited policies and practices. This pushback illustrates the dynamic that I have identified and referred to as DARVO. DARVO stands for "Deny, Attack, and Reverse Victim and Oppressor." My collaborators and I have found that DARVO can be an effective perpetrator strategy leading to greater victim self-blame as well as greater doubt about victim credibility on the part of observers.

It appears that some who have been held accountable for collusion with torture have launched a concerted attack on Hoffman, the APA leaders who listen to Hoffman, and those whistleblowers who kept this issue on the agenda for so many years. The defense of some of those who have been held accountable and their apologists appears to deny the existence of abuses documented by Hoffman and by human rights investigators over many years, to attack those promoting change, and to portray themselves and their colleagues as the true victims oppressed by those who at great personal cost refused to keep silent.

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As members of APA's Council, it is important to understand that counterattacks like this are common when institutional corruption is exposed. Over the years independent investigations of all types of abuses, sexual, financial, or promotions of unethical policies have been met with DARVO opposition. Lawsuits are quite common. It is important to keep in mind that the existence of this opposition and of lawsuits does not mean that the abuses did not occur nor that the perpetrators of those abuses are indeed the real victims. Rather, in most cases, the existence of this pushback is an attempt to obscure the truth and induce a sense that "no one knows what really happened."

Dear members of APA's Council, as you approach these historic attempts to turn the clock back to pre-Hoffman days, I sincerely hope you take care not to be misled by DARVO tactics.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer J. Freyd". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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