

# PSYCHOLOGISTS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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## PsySR Calls for Changes to APA Interim CEO Search Process

To the American Psychological Association Board of Directors:

As representatives of Psychologists for Social Responsibility, we join other voices in writing to express our deep concerns over the [process](#) by which you intend to select an interim CEO.

As you certainly recognize, this search is an outgrowth of the independent [Hoffman Report](#), which concluded that, over a period of years, in an effort to curry favor APA leaders colluded with the Department of Defense to keep the APA's ethics policies from restricting the government's detention and interrogation operations. These findings have led to the early retirement of APA's current CEO Norman Anderson, and the need for an interim CEO and then a new CEO.

We are therefore both perplexed and troubled that, in addition to Past President Nadine Kaslow and President-Elect Susan McDaniel, the five-person Interim CEO Search Working Group includes three Board members who have been implicated in the Hoffman Report: Drs. Barry Anton, Sandra Shullman, and William Strickland.

Dr. Anton was a member of the 2005 Board of Directors that approved the thoroughly discredited PENS Report in an "emergency" vote, bypassing appropriate review by the Council of Representatives. He was also the Board liaison to the PENS Task Force that endorsed the involvement of psychologists in detention and interrogation operations. In this role, Dr. Anton recommended that then APA Practice Directorate head Russ Newman participate in the meeting – even though Dr. Newman's spouse, Dr. Debra Dunivin, was a military intelligence psychologist at Guantanamo Bay, where alleged detainee abuses had occurred.

Dr. Shullman was also a member of the 2005 Board of Directors that took unwarranted "emergency" action. The Hoffman Report also describes Dr. Shullman's role in scuttling the report from the APA Task Force on the Psychological Effects of Efforts to Prevent Terrorism, which was deemed too controversial by APA leadership.

Dr. Strickland is the president and CEO of HumRRO, a major defense contractor that engages in classified work for the national security/intelligence establishment. His role constitutes a clear conflict of interest in choosing an Interim CEO who will inevitably need to renegotiate the nature of APA-Department of Defense relations. On multiple occasions he has spoken to Congress on APA's behalf in soliciting increased funding for DoD-supported behavioral science research. According to the Hoffman Report, Dr. Strickland was also secretly involved in drafting statements that opposed both the 2007 call for a moratorium on psychologist involvement in detainee interrogations and the 2008 membership referendum prohibiting psychologists from working in settings like Guantanamo that violate international law.

Along with fellow Board members Drs. Linda Campbell and Bonnie Markham, Drs. Anton, Shullman, and Strickland were previously recused from matters bearing on the Hoffman Report. We believe that the logic of this recusal calls for the non-participation of these five individuals throughout the interim CEO and "permanent" CEO search process, and that the Interim CEO Search Working Group should immediately be reconfigured.

In keeping with the APA leadership's expressed desire to "reset our moral compass," we recommend that Drs. Anton, Shullman, and Strickland be replaced by APA members who have expressed clear and public outrage over the Association's decade-long complicity and the harm it has caused our profession and the direct victims of abusive interrogations. We also consider it vital that the search committee not be composed solely of long-term APA insiders, members of the networks that led the APA to its current dire circumstances.

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We are unsure whether three such individuals can be found on the APA Board. One strong candidate would be Emily Voelkel, the current graduate student representative to the Board. As you may recall, at the convention in Toronto she spoke forcefully about the Hoffman Report findings:

Emily Voelkel, here representing the student constituency as APAGS chair, also board of directors. Christine, my colleague, spoke yesterday to a survey that we had. I'm quoting here: "I chose to study psychology because I perceived it as a field that shared my values of social justice. After reading the report, I felt personally and professionally betrayed," end-quote. Next quote: "My reaction was one of concern, but I was not surprised." We should be ashamed that our students are not surprised by these actions.

Another impressive candidate would be former Board and current Council Leadership Team member Dr. Ali Mattu. At that same meeting of Council he also took a strong stand:

Ali Mattu, speaking for Division 53, clinical child/adolescent psychology. And I want you to take a very clear look, right here, right now. We know the Milgram research. We know if you push off the humanity of another person, it is easy to engage in torture. But this is the face of people who were tortured. It is people of my race, of my ethnicity, of my faith, that were silenced and tortured by psychologists in the name of APA policies. And this is a time to act and correct our course. And everyone out there in the galley, in the peanut gallery, as we so affectionately call it, thank you for coming here, and thank you for setting our moral compass right.

In addition, there are other members of Council who have taken leadership roles in confronting APA's history of collusion, including Jean Maria Arrigo, Steven Reisner and, more recently, Jeanne LeBlanc (all three are PsySR members). It might also be desirable to consider individuals who have exerted leadership in the profession but do not currently hold APA governance positions.

We do not know whether any of these specific individuals are available or interested in serving on the Interim CEO Search Working Group. But we mention them here as examples of the type of representation that we believe is essential for this search process to viably transition the APA from what it was pre-Hoffman Report to what it must become in the weeks and months ahead.

Finally, beyond the composition of the Working Group, we are distressed by the extremely short timeline for accepting nominations for an interim CEO. To avoid any perception that the Board has already chosen a preferred candidate, we strongly recommend that you extend this deadline by at least two weeks. In order for the APA to merit its status as a leader of organized psychology in the United States — a status that has been severely damaged — the Board must show in its actions that above all you serve your members and the broader public good. Such service requires you to set aside your own personal agendas for the health and reputation of the Association.

If, as Drs. Kaslow and McDaniel have forcefully stated, we must recommit the profession to its "do no harm" foundations, then the APA should likewise strive to do no harm in its processes for selecting new leaders. Otherwise, the APA will continue to be open to charges of corruption and business-as-usual machinations, criticisms that we would all like to put far behind us.

Sincerely,

The Steering Committee of Psychologists for Social Responsibility

September 27, 2015