

# ***The APA PENS Debate Collection***

Human Rights Initiative  
Archives of the  
University of Colorado at Boulder

## **Call for Archival Materials 2010**

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### **Purpose of the *APA PENS Debate Collection***

Under the George W. Bush Administration (2000-2008), the American Psychological Association (APA) developed policy on psychologist participation in national security interrogations of terrorist suspects. *The APA Psychological Ethics and National Security (PENS) Debate Collection* will preserve a permanent record of the engagement of the APA and its critics concerning morally permissible roles of psychologists, with emphasis on the preservation of ephemeral paper and electronic sources. The *Collection* supports historical accuracy and institutional transparency in the relationship between American psychology and national security. It also establishes an archival precedent for members of other professional associations engaged with national security agencies.

### **Call for Donation of Materials**

All participants in the PENS debate are invited to contribute materials to the *Collection*. Truth in history, particularly the history of American psychology, depends on your donation of pertinent records in your possession and/or your testimony. Public use of donated materials may be restricted by the donor to protect individual privacy, institutional vulnerabilities, and copyright interests.

For details, contact psychologist and oral historian Jean Maria Arrigo (949.854.8841, [jmarrigo@cox.net](mailto:jmarrigo@cox.net)) or archivist Bruce Montgomery (303.492.7294, [bruce.montgomery@colorado.edu](mailto:bruce.montgomery@colorado.edu)).

### **The APA PENS Debate, 2004 - 2010**

In 2004 the media first mentioned the possible cooperation of psychologists in U.S. torture interrogation of terrorist suspects. Outraged APA members clamored for an official response from the APA. An APA Presidential Task Force on Psychological Ethics and National Security (PENS) declared that

- (a) "Psychologists have a valuable and ethical role to assist in protecting our nation, other nations, and innocent civilians from harm, which will at times entail gathering information that can be used in our nation's and other nations' defense," and
- (b) in irresolvable conflicts between psychological ethics and the law, "psychologists may adhere to the requirements of the law."

Immediately after the June 2005 *PENS Report*, dissident psychologists and their allies charged the APA with accommodating torture interrogation programs, in violation of human rights standards and psychological ethics. The APA PENS debate ensued.

Dissidents blogged, wrote open letters of protest, resigned their APA memberships, rallied human rights organizations, briefed journalists, alleged APA conflicts of interest, and collaborated with anti-torture military and intelligence personnel. *Ad hoc* opposition groups emerged, such as WithholdAPAdues, energized by psychologists with family members who had died in the Holocaust. Opposition groups filed Ethics Committee grievances against suspect psychologists, sent evidence to the Senate Armed Services Committee, unsuccessfully ran an anti-torture candidate for APA president, called for an investigation of APA, proposed multiple

anti-torture resolutions to the APA Council of Representatives (COR), and mounted a petition referendum against deployment of psychologists in abusive detention centers.

APA authorities issued anti-torture press releases, cultivated allies in state psychological associations and government offices, sent representatives to public and private forums on the PENS controversy, and agreed to an eight-session mini-conference at the 2007 APA Convention. They successfully ran candidates for APA president, tabled formal ethics complaints against specific military psychologists, dismissed dissidents as uninformed or malicious, and refined anti-torture statements.

Throughout the conflict, APA Division of Peace Psychology representatives to COR served as informal liaisons between APA authorities and dissidents, sometimes suffering charges of naiveté or collusion.

At the close of the Bush Administration, the APA inserted a vague human-rights-protection clause into the Ethics Code. The PENS debate meanwhile shifted to institutional accountability for psychologists' prior involvement in torture interrogation and to emerging reports of involvement in torture experimentation.

### **Archival Background of the APA PENS Debate Collection**

The twelve ethical principles of the *PENS Report* were followed by recommendations for action. Among these, task force member Jean Maria Arrigo initiated the ninth recommendation:

Consider supporting the creation of a repository to record psychologists' contributions to national security. Such information, divided into classified and unclassified sections, could serve as a historical record and a resource concerning how psychologists involved in national security-related activities have met the ethical challenges of their work.

Although approved by the APA Council of Representatives, this recommendation remains unfulfilled.

In August 2006, Arrigo deposited, in Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University, the PENS listserv (April 2005 – June 2006), all drafts of the PENS Report, PENS meeting notes and handouts, and other artifacts of the PENS process.

### **The APA PENS Debate Collection at CU Boulder**

The full *APA PENS Debate Collection* will be housed in the Archives of the University of Colorado (CU) at Boulder, under Faculty Director of Archives Bruce Montgomery. CU Boulder was selected because of the Faculty Director's experience with sensitive human rights collections. The archive's Human Rights Initiative will accept electronic records, process donated materials quickly, and, subject to donor restrictions on use, make research materials available electronically to researchers.

Donated materials may be designated for immediate public use, or materials may be conditionally or unconditionally restricted for a time period designated by the donor. As a special provision for managing human rights collections, the CU Boulder archive establishes a collection-specific review committee to assess researchers' applications for access to conditionally restricted materials. Psychologists active in the PENS Debate are excluded from the review committee. The first members of the *APA PENS Debate Collection* Review Committee are archivist Bruce Montgomery, former U.S. Army counterintelligence officer Lawrence Rockwood, and journalist Mark Benjamin. A historian of psychology will be added.

### **Suggested sources and types of records**

- the APA Board, APA Council of Representatives, APA Ethics Committee, APA PENS Task Force, and other APA committees;
- APA Divisions with a stake in the debate (e.g., the Divisions of Military Psychology and Peace Psychology);
- longstanding groups involved in the PENS debate (e.g., Psychologists for Social Responsibility);
- *ad hoc* groups that emerged during the PENS debate (e.g., WithholdAPAdues);
- national security agencies;
- APA and government contractors;
- journalists and public media.

- public and private correspondence between APA authorities and dissidents, including letters of principled resignation by APA members;
- academic papers;
- newsletter, newspaper, professional association, and journal articles about the PENS debate, especially from international and foreign-language periodicals and from domestic periodicals with low circulation;
- blogs, interviews, editorials, and letters to the editor;
- listservs;
- programs, flyers, photographs, and web announcements for academic, community, NGO, and church events;
- personal testimony of participants in the PENS debate; and
- completed and uncompleted video productions, together with original recordings.

Contributions of both hard copies and electronic files are welcome. A *curriculum vitae* and photograph of the donor are desirable but not necessary.

### **Contact us**

For details contact psychologist Jean Maria Arrigo ([jmarrigo@cox.net](mailto:jmarrigo@cox.net); 949.854.8841 PST) or archivist Bruce Montgomery ([bruce.montgomery@colorado.edu](mailto:bruce.montgomery@colorado.edu); 303.492.7294 MST).

Donated items may be sent electronically to [bruce.montgomery@colorado.edu](mailto:bruce.montgomery@colorado.edu) or shipped to:

*APA PENS Debate Collection*

Bruce P. Montgomery

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