I'd like to try to accomplish two things today. First, for those of you who aren’t so familiar with what’s been going on with the American Psychological Association, I want to recount this reprehensible story of psychologists’ involvement in torture. I also want to speak about a view of psychoanalysis as contributing to a kind of activism, because it’s not how people tend to think of psychoanalysis and psychoanalysts. Analysts have been at the forefront of the movement to get the APA to change its policies in regard to psychologists’ role in military interrogations. That’s a remarkable fact and a surprising one, given what people generally tend to think about psychoanalysts: that not only do they stay in their offices, but even in their offices, they are not supposed to be saying very much. So I would like to figure out what it is about psychoanalytic thinking and psychoanalytic preparation that allows for activism -- and I am talking about a very specific kind of activism.

The French philosopher Alain Badiou has said, “When all is said and done, all resistance is a rupture in thought through the declaration of what the situation is, and the foundation of a practical possibility opened up through this declaration.” That sums up everything that I want to say. For me, that ‘Suddenly, no, at last, at long last, I couldn’t anymore, I couldn’t go on’ frames how I wanted to approach this. Suddenly and at long last, I couldn’t go on not acting when it came to the issues being raised by psychologists and interrogations. And what I want to get at today is, when did I start to act? How did it happen that I was acting? And what does it mean to be an actor? I want to talk about the personal to see if that will help elaborate what I am thinking of as a kind of philosophy of psychoanalytic action.

I, along with many others who have lived through the Bush administration, saw pretty early on that we were faced with a major disruption in American politics, in freedom, in belief and in speech, in what it was possible to think. When the Bush administration came in, it became very clear to those of us who think politically, and progressively, that this administration was determined to change everything completely, quickly and across the board. They were changing civil liberties, they were changing the judgeships, they were changing the law, they were changing the power of the Presidency; there was a vast array of attempts to put in place an agenda that was so fast and so
I want to start my first president's column by expressing how honored I am to be able to assume the presidency of Section IX. I am proud to follow in the trail blazed by my predecessors, Neil Altman, Rachael Pelz, Nancy Hollander, and Lu Steinberg. A big thanks to all of them for establishing the section as a major voice for social justice within psychoanalysis, and I want to extend a special thank you to Lu Steinberg for her tireless work to get all the pieces in place in order to make this transition as seamless as possible.

In the throes of a concerted governmental effort to reverse decades of social progress while using the military and other illegal means to extend domination of corporate America over much of the world, the section has been a great solace and even inspiration for me over the last seven years. I have difficulty keeping my psychological equilibrium while the flames of injustice and destruction burn around me. As I have said before, such sanity as I still possess can be attributed in no small measure to my involvement with the humane and just souls who make up this section. With that as an introduction, I thought this would be an ideal time to share my vision for the section.

It strikes me that there are two ways of viewing psychoanalysts who take part in social activism. One view would hold that analysis is no different from any other profession in its relationship to the social world. According to this position, members of our section are analysts who happen to be left-leaning in their political views. I respect those who hold this position, and I certainly welcome their participation in our work, but I do not agree with their conceptualization of psychoanalytic activism. The alternative view sees an inherent relationship between social responsibility and psychoanalysis. In my view, the first generation of socially active analysts, such as Max Eitingon, Abraham Kardiner, Erich Fromm, Sandor Ferenczi, and many others, saw psychoanalysis as a way to relieve the suffering of both individuals and the broader society. In my understanding of their self-perception, these trailblazers saw their work in the consulting room and social activism as two different means to pursue a single goal.

While this relationship is too complicated to spell out in a brief column like this, I think it is important to at least describe the outline of this connection because it is the basis for my vision for the section. Each patient comes to analysis with certain historical patterns and assumptions erected to protect against early anxieties, these defensive adaptations limit their ways of being and relating, and these constricting forms of interaction result in the distress that brings them to analysis. Our job is to immerse ourselves in the analysand’s world in order to make transcendance of these historical patterns possible. Psychoanalysis, as I conceive it, is a special relationship the aim of which is to create new possibilities based, not on defenses, but authenticity of experience. It is this opening up, this transcendance of established and historical ways of being, that provides psychoanalysis with its unique contribution to understanding and expanding the human condition.

To maintain such a concept of psychoanalysis is to assume that the social structures provide opportunities for the patient’s authentic expression of affects, desires, values, and beliefs. This does not mean, of course, that the analysand has to be indulged in the expression of every feeling; it means that the society must allow enough authenticity for the patient to feel the life she lives belongs to her. The environment for a successful analysis includes the possibility that the patient’s authentic self-expression may not fit, and may even conflict with, established norms and practices. That is why it is inconceivable to me that there can be a successful analysis in a dictatorship. It is not by accident that dictatorships whether of the left or right attempt to crush psychoanalysis. Dictatorial regimes view psychoanalysis as a threat to their authority, and they are right.

The analytic posture presumes an inherent value in human subjectivity, and its aim is to promote the growth and enrichment of human experience. The assumption is that if the patient’s experience is understood and engaged, if the analyst immerses herself in the patient’s experience, that experience will not only expand and become enriched, but also it will offer the best guidance for the analysand’s life. Psychoanalysis assumes faith in the human spirit given the freedom to actualize itself, a point Loewald perspicaciously made 47 years ago.

The problem is that individual experience is compromised by the inevitable societal pressures that attempt to stifle the authenticity of experience. Needless to say, all societies contain a variety of complex and competing pressures, and it would be quixotic to expect that counterforces to self expression can be abolished from any culture. Nonetheless, the necessity of constraint can never be used to rationalize forces of oppression. It is incumbent on the analyst to judge whether any particular antagonistic force is a necessity that promotes a longer term goal, or an opposition to self expression to serve the narrow self-interest of a group. Analysts are constrained by the nature of what they do to do battle against the latter because oppressive structures and policies stifle the very spirit that analysis is designed to liberate. Therefore, the analyst cannot ignore oppression of freedom, wherever it occurs. Societal structures, policies, and movements that stifle self expression are anti-psychoanalytic and represent a greater threat to a successful analysis than any insurance company. That is why, in my view, analytic work is inextricably bound to freedom, justice, and human rights. To be an analyst while rationalizing oppression of any of these virtues is a contradiction. As the early socially active analysts saw, individual psychoanalysis and social movements for a humane society are two different forms of achieving the only goal that makes sense for psychoanalysis: the liberation of human possibility.

What about analysts who do good work but do not carry their efforts into the outside world? Such analysts disavow the societal conditions required by their work. Such a defense can operate as effectively as any disavowal; it reduces anxiety in the short term, but the price paid is full awareness of the context of their work and must include a failure to see the struggle their analysands undertake when the culture opposes the freedom they are striving to gain in analysis. So, my vision for the section is to bring to the self-understanding of psychoanalysis the connection because it is the basis for my vision for the section. Each patient comes to analysis with certain historical patterns and assumptions erected to protect against early anxieties, these defensive adaptations limit their ways of being and relating, and these constricting forms of interaction result in the distress that brings them to analysis. Our job is to immerse ourselves in the analysand’s world in order to make transcendance of these historical patterns possible. Psychoanalysis, as I conceive it, is a special relationship the aim of which is to create new possibilities based, not on defenses, but authenticity of experience. It is this opening up, this transcendance of established and historical ways of being, that provides psychoanalysis with its unique contribution to understanding and expanding the human condition.

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As we approach the end of 2007, I would like to share with you many of the accomplishments of Section 9. A highlight of last year’s Spring meeting in Toronto was Section 9’s reception honoring the creative work of a distinguished psychoanalyst, Donna Bassin (see article in this newsletter), who was awarded the Section’s Achievement Award. She showed a clip from her documentary The Mourning After (Leave No Soldier…). We honor the creative work of individuals like her and Ricardo Ainslie (a section 9 board member whose film, Exploring the Lives of Vietnam Vets: The Conjunction of Psychoanalysis and Documentary Film was also screened at the meeting) who seek to go beyond the spoken word and through their creative work capture the pain and promote the healing of traumatized individuals. Section 9 also co-sponsored a symposium with the Committee on Multicultural Concerns titled Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Prejudice and Conflict: A Model for Applied Psychoanalysis for the 21st Century, organized by Laurie Wagner and Marilyn Jacobs. Nancy Hollander (past president) and Steve Portuges (section board member), who have participated in an internationally organized psychoanalytic study group dealing with the Palestinian – Israeli conflict, were discussants. Even as the panels reflected the many sides of this difficult conflict, the feeling of mutual respect among the panelists was striking. The panels were chaired by Nadia Ramzy and included panelists from Israel, the West Bank and Egypt, including Carlo Strenger, George Awad (by video due to illness; we note with deep sadness that he has since passed away), Ira Brenner, Afaf Mahfouz and Hassan Azim.

Many of us converged on the West Coast this past August for the APA convention in San Francisco. Section 9’s panel on Psychology in a State of Moral Compromise consisted of papers by Nancy Hollander and myself on the moral compromises made by the profession during the historical periods of Argentina’s ‘Dirty War’ and during the Third Reich. Alice Shaw (section secretary) applied the historical observations of these papers to the present day involvement of psychologists in interrogation at military detention centers. Nina Thomas discussed these papers and moderated the question and answer period with APA Ethics Chair Steve Behnke.

Section 9 members also presented to standing-room only audiences at the APA mini-convention on Ethics and Interrogation sponsored by the Divisions for Social Justice, including Neil Altman, Frank Summers (President-Elect), Steven Reisner, Stephen Soldz and Ghislaine Boulanger.

Section 9 also played a major role in the rally, which several hundred people attended, at Yerba Buena Park, outside the Moscone Convention Center, to garner support for the moratorium resolution. Frank Summers, coordinating a strong volunteer effort, passed out flyers and buttons in an effort to demand that APA Council of Representatives (COR) vote in favor of the moratorium resolution. The steering committee for the rally consisted of the following Section members: Ghislaine Boulanger, Diane Ehrensalt, Ruth Fellenaum, Rachael Peltz, Tom Rosbrowe, Alice Shaw, Frank Summers and Jeanne Wolff-Bernstein. Amy Goodman of Democracy Now as well as local and national news programs and newspapers covered the rally and the APA panels addressing this issue. The events increased support for the amended resolution that was ultimately passed by COR. This resolution listed specific techniques that were not permissible in interrogations, making clear that under no circumstances, including following orders, can psychologists participate. The Moratorium resolution, authored by Neil Altman, which would have completely prohibited their involvement, evolved into an amendment, which was ultimately rejected by COR. Unfortunately, the changes, while an improvement, continue to leave the door open to the continued involvement of psychologists in the interrogation process and to permit the continued use of coercive techniques during the period prior to the interrogation process, when the detainees are “softened up”. Disappointment with the results of the COR meeting has resulted in an increasing number of APA members withholding their dues (which can be done for up to two years while remaining an APA member in good standing) to voice protest over APA’s unwillingness to take an unequivocal stance against psychologists’ involvement in interrogations in centers that violate the basic human rights protected by the Geneva Conventions and other international agreements (For more information about Withholding Dues please see withholdapadues.com).

Several Section 9 members presented at a recent program in Chicago entitled Psychologists, Torture, and the American Psychological Association. Panelists included John Neafsey, Brad Olson and Frank Summers. In December, the Section co-sponsored with the NYU Post-doctoral Program in Psychoanalysis a conversation with Nina Thomas and Jean Maria Arrigo on Psychology, Interrogation and the APA PENS Task Force, moderated by Neil Altman.

Rachael Peltz and Nancy Hollander will be presenting on February 14th at UC Berkeley, sponsored by the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis as part of the Center’s Psychoanalysis and War seminar. Section 9 will also be featured at this year’s upcoming spring meeting in NY with our combined panel/reception early Friday evening. David Debatto, a retired counterterrorism expert, will share with us information about the complex relationship between APA and the military, which led to the present involvement of psychologists in interrogations. Frank Summers will discuss the history of this relationship, and then several individuals who have been at the forefront of this struggle with the APA, namely, Neil Altman, Steven Reisner, Stephen Soldz & Ghislaine Boulanger will share their observations and personal experiences. This forum will provide an opportunity to learn more and understand better the complex issues and ethical compromises made by our profession. We are hoping that both the formal panel and the more informal social hour will give us a chance to both learn more, and mingle with one another. We hope to see many of you there.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Lynne Layton for her scholarly and creative contributions to Section 9 as the Section’s first Education & Training Committee chair. She and the committee developed the Culture and Psychoanalysis syllabus, which is now being taught at institutes around the country. They oversaw its implementation on the list-serve, and also moderated other online discussions. She also developed and administered the continued on page 6
I didn't know at the time that the Justice at Guantánamo were making their diagnoses for condition” told me that the health professional staff were described as suffering from a “pre-existing mental – that prisoners at Guantánamo, including most of these prisoners came with “pre-existing conditions.”

And that was the beginning of a change in my approach to these issues as a psychoanalyst. But I still hadn’t really become an activist. I posted on line about the issue, and discussed it with colleagues, but that was about it. Now, what I didn’t really know at the time was just how much psychology, and psychoanalysis, had been implicated in the CIA torture program for decades. That in the 50s, there was an enormous amount of research conducted by psychologists and psychoanalysts, paid for by the CIA, on sensory deprivation, authority and influence, assessment of deception, vulnerability to brainwashing techniques, etc.

The CIA drew upon much of this research to develop their torture training manuals; manuals that were used during the cold war, then eventually in Vietnam and, in the 80s, in Latin America. Let me read you a section of the interrogation manual that was distributed to the torturers in Latin America and you will see why I as a psychoanalyst began to feel the need to respond and to act because of how much psychoanalytic theory is interwoven, how much psychoanalytic theory forms the basis of the techniques.

This is a quotation from the manual:

“There are three major principles involved in the successful application of coercive techniques; debility, dependency, dread… sustained long enough, an intense fear of anything vague or unknown induces regression. On the other hand, materialization of the fear is likely to come as a relief.” (That concept comes right out of Freud’s, ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle.’)

“A word of caution; if the debility, dependency, dread state is unduly prolonged, the subject may sink into a defensive apathy from which it is hard to arouse him; it is advisable to have a psychologist available whenever regression is induced.”

That’s a direct quotation from the CIA manual for interrogation: “It is advisable to have a psychologist available.”

I didn’t know anything about that when I first became suspicious of the strategic psychological language coming out of Guantánamo, but then, in 2003 and in 2004, the New York Times did a series of exposés based on a report leaked from the International Committee of the Red Cross, and there was a mention of what were called “BSCT Teams,” Behavioral Science Consultation Teams. According to the Times, psychologists, psychiatrists and physicians were on these teams advising and guiding the interrogations at Guantánamo. The Red Cross and then afterwards, the UN condemned such activity as a violation of medical ethics. The American Psychological Association decided to put together a task force to investigate the issue. The Task Force was called PENS: psychological ethics in times of national security.

I really believed that the APA was an ethical organization, and that psychology would join the other major professional organizations in condemning this activity. Then the Task Force report came out, and it did no such thing. On the contrary, the Task Force report concluded that psychologists have an important role to play in the fight against terrorism and in national security. Psychologists must know the law and military regulations in the most up-to-date fashion, and if there is a conflict between ethics and law and military regulations, psychologists may follow the law or the military regulations.

Around the same time, the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the nurses, the anthropologists all came out against using their expertise for purposes of abuse.
Christopher Bollas (1995) argues that a state, like a family, must be founded on the presumption that its citizens are governed by leaders who have their best interests at heart. He points out that to know that our leaders are ill-intentioned undermines our most profound assumptions about human safety. I want to extend Bollas’ analogy to voluntary organizations where choosing to belong is surely predicated on the belief that the leaders represent the members’ best interests. Bollas continues, “The politics of evil trades off this need” (p. 214), for much of the time we are complicit in overlooking our leaders’ moral failures. This is the complicity of silence, the complicity of not speaking out when we can no longer believe in the good intentions of our leaders.

Over the last few years, many members of the American Psychological Association, and particularly members of Section IX, have had to acknowledge the fact that the elected and appointed leaders of the APA do not have the long term interests of American psychology at heart. It has become clear that our own vision of psychology as a profession and the one embraced by our professional association are starkly different. Many of us have reacted in anger, others have felt a profound sense of loss -- or both -- at the moral failure of this institution that is purported to represent not only our professional interests but also our professional identity.

By November 2006, the mounting evidence of the APAs bad faith had become overwhelming. For example, in June the APAs director of ethics had claimed to the NY Times that “psychologists helping military interrogators made a valuable contribution because it was part of the effort to combat terrorism” (Lewis, 2006). That a spokesman for our profession would publicly declare -- in the face of considerable research to the contrary -- that inducing terror, helplessness, and despair in anyone is a way of winning the war against terror left some of us incredulous. The corrupt process of the PENS Task Force was becoming increasingly apparent. The role psychologists continued to play in designing and implementing interrogations was being reported with increasing frequency in the media. A 2006 Resolution against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment that nonetheless allowed psychologists to violate ethical principles “if requested by a governing authority” was further proof of the APAs deference to the military and the administration. The fact that other professional associations were going on record as officially opposing their members’ involvement in Guantanamo Bay and other sites where detainees were being held in violation of international human rights law was particularly galling, and even more so when the APA enthusiastically endorsed the presence of psychologists in these illegal sites, where they were said to protect the detainees. We were appalled by reading then President Koocher’s disrespectful treatment of our colleagues’ protests and found bound by our ethics to report abuse or potential harm to others. It may not be an accident that many of the psychologists who made the decision to withhold their dues in 2006 were already familiar with outsider status. Many, at least 15 of the first 27 members, were immigrants, and a disproportionate number were living alternative sexual lifestyles.

A website www.withholdapadues.com was developed to inform people about the reasons for and consequences of withholding dues and to serve as a portal to the withholdapadues listserv. The listserv gave us a forum in which to discuss further courses of action among ourselves.

At that time, many of us wrote to the APA individually giving a variety of reasons for our decision. Our letters elicited different responses; some got calls from the director of ethics, others got letters from various officials. I got three identical letters claiming that the APA shared my concerns but had different ways of trying to accomplish “our” goals.

The three letters stated that the APA would not “disengage as the American Psychiatric Association has done because disengagement sends an expressive message of disapproval and a refusal to be considered complicit.” That was indeed the point of withholding dues, we did not wish to be considered complicit. In conclusion the writer said, “The cost of disengagement is that one loses any ability to influence policy -- one no longer has a place at the table and hence no longer a voice in the debate.”

In their belief that they can exert a positive influence on much more powerful institutions, on the military, the CIA, and the Department of Defense, by working from within, and thus protect both the interests of their members and the prisoners held at Guantanamo, the APA has fallen into the classic collaborator’s trap. When Marshal Pétain set up his puppet government in Vichy in 1940, he too claimed that he was protecting the interests of the French, even when it came to complying with the Nazi orders to hunt down Jews, intellectuals and other foreigners. In a recent analysis of attitudes at that time, Mumtaz Iqbal (2004) found that initially most of the French viewed those who stayed to share the pain of occupation as steadfast and courageous.
"Suddenly, I Couldn’t Anymore:"
continued from page 4

Even the Society of Ethno-musicologists came out against the use of music as a torture mechanism and called for an investigation into the use of music as a means of torture. But the psychologists’ professional organization did not take such a stand.

And then, in June 2006, the Pentagon announced that because of the positions taken by the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Associations, the military would try to use psychologists exclusively for their BSCT Teams.

Okay. This is what brought me to the point of acting; I wrote a letter to the President of the APA, Gerald Koocher, wrote back a rather nasty response to me saying that psychologists have a very important role to play and that no abuses have gone on. And beyond that, my personal history is brought to bear here, which is that my parents are survivors of the Holocaust. They are very different in the way they survived the Holocaust; my mother was in Auschwitz -- I mean, that’s one extreme. My father was Polish, but left Poland. He was a communist; he went to Russia and joined the army to fight the Nazis. He lost his whole family in the Warsaw Ghetto, but he was in the Soviet army, which probably was as brutal as the German army in terms of what was demanded of them and what they did to people. And so, you could say to some extent that my father was a violator of human rights, and my mother was a victim of human rights violation, so I come from a history of very intense assessments, re-assessments, re-thinking, a legacy of these questions of what do we fight for, what do we try to prevent happening again, how do we fight, what do you do, what don’t you do, what does it mean to be active? So, in fact I had a lot of preparation for this moment. But the other thing I had, and this goes back to what Badiou talks about, “If you can actually see things the way they are…” - and this is what we as psychologists, especially as psychoanalysts are trained to do, to see things the way they are, through the stories that people tell. And our job as psychoanalysts is to distinguish between the stories that people tell and what is probably the way things are that the story aims to obscure. And what Badiou is saying, is that when you can be freed from the obscuring story, possibilities of action open up. That’s the step that psychoanalysts tend not to take; to seize the possibilities of action that open up. But I would say that psychoanalysis to be complete, possibilities of action have to open up, and steps have to be taken - and those are the last steps of psychoanalysis. In psychoanalysis we spend a lot of time taking apart the false stories and freeing the patient. As an activist psychoanalyst, I believe we need to take the additional step, and act in the world.

‘Suddenly,’ I became a spokesperson. Suddenly I was getting calls, and suddenly I was speaking to the press.

President’s Message
Frank Summers, Ph.D.
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connection between the aims of psychoanalytic work and a free and just society. All our projects emanate from this principle. When we oppose psychologists’ involvement in concentration camps, racism, sexism, homophobia, and the other many ills that permeate our world, we are not just professionals taking an ethical stance, as important as that is, but our social activism answers the call to duty of a profession that allies itself with the freeing of suppressed experience. Let us bring that awareness to the way analysis understands itself.

If we are able to bring this awareness to the consciousness of analysts in Division 39 and beyond, then we can link the concept of being “for social responsibility” with the analytic endeavor itself. I have always found it ironic that there is a subgroup of analysts defined by favoring “social responsibility.” There can be no psychoanalysis without social responsibility, and it says something strange about the field that we are only about 5% of the Division. It is our job, our shared responsibility, to show that social responsibility is not an afterthought, but the nature of what we do. I dream of the day when analysts would laugh at the idea of a separate group of analysts who are “for” social responsibility.

Past President’s Message
Lu Steinberg, Psy.D.
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co-sponsored online course with PsyBc entitled Ideology and the Clinic. We are excited that Adrienne Harris and Katie Gentile, taking over for Lynne, will be chairing the Education committee. While we will miss Lynne, we know that her wisdom will continue to influence the committee’s future direction. Ricardo Ainslie will be coordinating this spring’s PsyBc three-part course on the psychology of immigration, which will include several of his articles and book chapters, as well as his 30 - minute film Looking North: Mexican Images of Immigration.

As my term comes to a close, I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to so many of you, with whom I have worked and from whom I have learned. It is easier to not do anything and yet I have witnessed the courage as so many of you pursue the difficult path of trying to protect the profession from moral compromise. I specifically want to express my indebtedness to Nancy, Neil and Rachael for mentoring me, and to Steve Botticelli for putting together a wonderful newsletter. Frank Summers’ wisdom, scholarship, genuineness, and courage to speak the truth will serve as a firm anchor as Section 9 moves into 2008. While his psychoanalytic writings and wisdom continue to inspire, he is also willing to hit the pavement, giving out flyers and buttons in anticipation of a rally.

I wish all of you a happy new year, and a year filled with peace.
On “Leave No Soldier…,”
A FEATURE LENGTH DOCUMENTARY
by Donna Bassin

by Susan Gutwill, M.S.W.

Women’s Therapy Center Institute, Highland Park, NJ

Donna Bassin, an analyst in PSR, is also an artist and filmmaker. In all three capacities she is currently involved in the arduous task of creating a film entitled “Leave No Soldier…,” about two groups of veterans from Iraq and Viet Nam. Donna’s process of creating our own contemporary Greek chorus commenting on the impact of war on those who fight it in our name has led her to accompany two sets of veterans on two different group activities. Her effort supports the work of taking responsibility and mourning, not only for the veterans, but on behalf of us all, what group therapists call “a group as a whole.”

One group, Iraqi Veterans Against the War (IVAW), is directly against the current war. The other is less concerned with protest of the war itself than it is oriented toward the wish to reclaim their experience, their dead, their haunting “disremembered pasts,” as Toni Morrison might put it. According to Donna both groups “reject stone monuments, superficial flag-waving gestures, parades and yellow magnets, or revenge and retaliation, offered as honoring the fallen warriors but which in essence displace the difficult task of painful memory and support an unreflective manic response to loss.” In the place of these forms of false patriotism, both groups work to restore powerful bonds of brotherhood, sisterhood and the consciousness of our nation.

On the first journey of recovery documented by Donna, she accompanied the Memorial Day weekend motorcycle ride of Rolling Thunder, Gold Star mothers and others who make an annual Ride for Freedom. Last year over 500,000 participants rejected false memorials such as the one minute silence, the sales at the mall or the holiday picnics of commercial society, as they rode to the Viet Nam Memorial Wall. In this massive motorcycle procession, evoking the noise and thunder of planes and bombs, veterans and their families express their determination to “find themselves” in the midst of the historic and ongoing horror of PTSD, as people with rights and capable of responsibility.

The wall itself was purposely created as a horizontal structure, requiring the viewer to see the whole and to see each name, one after the other, to approach the truth of our shared pain and our shared relationship to the violence in which each soldier died, violence that still resonates in our social life. Donna’s film and the many fundraising events that have been held to support this “independent” effort are parallel processes. Through our participation in each we are given an opportunity to remember and touch our own wall of grief, an opportunity that I believe is made meaningful through the fact of its being experienced with others. Even alone we are connected both to those who have died or been hurt and permanently and personally traumatized, and also to our society, marked as it necessarily is, by that same violence.

The other event Donna memorialized and filmed is the march of the IVAW veterans who joined with survivors of Hurricane Katrina to march 225 miles along the devastated Gulf Coast to New Orleans. Arms locked, they brought together two experiences of disaster, the war in Iraq and the destruction of New Orleans. The terrible truth of both disasters is that they both might have been averted, they each caused endless amounts of loss and pain both human and material, and both are currently being exploited for the profit of war and disaster profiteers. (See Naomi Klein’s The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism.) These veterans have come, at considerable risk to themselves, to take a stand explicitly against the Iraq war. Like their comrades in Rolling Thunder, they too aim to memorialize the dead, the injured, the traumatized. Their social vision is radical, for beyond their work of memorializing, they want to invoke an image of all that our society could be were it to invest in people and culture, rather than in war and a culture of war.

Like a good democratic group leader, Donna holds the differences between these two subgroups of veterans. What they share in common is their commitment to collective mourning, public remembrance and the acknowledgement of guilt and grief so that, through mourning, they can turn to healing and social action.

Donna’s film demonstrates the profound importance of collective and public rituals of remembrance and the acknowledgement of guilt to turn to healing and social action.

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mourning. In an era in which previously publicly provided services are in the process of being privatized, and during a time of war in which we are all collectively affected and for which we all bear responsibility, such collective endeavors serve to remind us of the limitations of such individualistic solutions to social problems as psychotherapy. It is through these public rituals of mourning and rebuilding that, as she points out, several important tasks of mourning are performed, if never fully completed.

She describes these tasks as:

1) Finding what has been lost through grief and remembrance. Not only the memory of lost loved ones, but a sense of a self that had control over thought, action, behavior and body, pride in character, all are attacked or lost in trauma.

2) Connecting to oneself in the face of all of these losses is profoundly aided by connecting with others who serve as guides often within safely delimited time and space, allowing for modulated reconnection to traumatic affects and realities.

3) These group connections form a body of attuned witnesses creating something akin to the parental body able to contain and validate overwhelming affect. The group, the wall, the march all become that metaphoric holding body which enables a reinstatement of a sense of self as a subject.

4) The story is told. The marches and all that goes into organizing them create a potentiating narrative frame supporting that sense of self, giving it mastery over the destructive impulses to repetition that are inevitably induced by the helplessness subsequent to trauma.

5) Together all these achievements create opportunities for assuaging persecutory anxiety and guilt. Instead of the typical retaliation (for example the official narrative of the US following 9/11) that so frequently follows violence and helplessness, these public rituals establish a public space for healing including purification, restitution and responsible reparation.

So many of us wished for rituals and public policy that could hold us in mourning after 9/11. We wished for grief, public reflection and social responsibility, not another war in our name, killing our young, diverting money from the social services that sustain all civilians including those who have been in the military, life supports such as public education, affordable health care, roads, a safe environment. In our millions we protested a war that would destroy Iraq, that “cradle of civilization” where half a million have died, where the land will remain devastated for years to come, where ethnic groupings have become increasingly dangerous and hostile to one another, where women’s rights and humanity, not to mention their bodies, have been trampled, and where hundreds of thousands of people just like ourselves have become homeless immigrants, lost, as it were, in the desert.

Unable to attend Donna Bassin’s presentation at the Division 39 meetings in Toronto in April 2007, I was eager to hear the recording that had been made of the event. Alone in my car, I cried listening to her presentation, then again when I met some of the vets with whom Donna works and again as recently as last week October 2007 at a conference at Rutgers University, unrelated to Donna’s film, at Rutgers University, where I listened to and spoke with many veterans of both wars in Iraq. Every time I read and listen to the testimonies of these veterans, I do not cry alone. I am grateful to Donna for her enormous efforts to facilitate this important process of grieving with her film and the talks and events associated with it. She has given all of us, soldiers and citizens alike, the chance to reflect, and to find ways to move from our great and shared grief to common action toward responsibility and healing.
Those who left were seen as disloyal, even cowardly. This perception took time to change. By implicitly questioning the loyalty and the efficacy of the American Psychiatric Association’s decision not to collaborate with the government in Guantanamo, the leaders of the APA apparently saw themselves as the steadfast and courageous Vichy government.

Initially our decision to withhold dues made a lot of colleagues uncomfortable. Some argued that psychoanalysts are already so marginalized within the APA that this course of action further marginalized us. In fact, the withholding dues initiative reaches far beyond psychoanalysts—social psychologists, ethologists, clinical psychologists of many different stripes (not just psychodynamic ones), and academics, are all members. In a move oddly reminiscent of the APA’s decision to work from the inside, some pointed out that by taking this step we would lose our influence over the APA. When I receive three identical letters, I know full well that individually I have no influence over the APA. But collective action has proved to be a different story.

This summer some members of Section IX together with members of the withholdAPADues list formed Psychologists for an Ethical APA to plan and carry out a protest at the APA Convention in San Francisco. The protest website was striking, our rally was endorsed by over 20 organizations from Physicians for Human Rights to the ACLU, and individuals like Stephen Miles and Robert Lifton. Within 2 weeks of the website appearing, and less than a month before the Convention, the APA hastily produced a new Resolution against Torture, and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Punishment that was intended to substitute for Neil Altman’s proposed moratorium on the use of psychologists in interrogations. This was a somewhat better resolution than the previous year’s in that it banned over 19 specific torture techniques; it was accepted unanimously by the APA’s Council of Representatives. Nonetheless, it left room for improvement. As the dissent continued, however, many of the loopholes left open in the final wording of the 2007 Resolution were closed in a letter from the Director of Ethics, Stephen Behnke, to Laurie Wagner, who had been active in drafting each of these resolutions. We believe that the continuing pressure from the withholdAPADues group and from other individuals working within the APA led to Behnke’s clarifications, and we are waiting to see these clarifications become a part of the formal resolution.

Following the passage of the Resolution at the COR meeting in August, an amendment that would have limited the role of psychologists in settings in which detainees are deprived of adequate protection of their human rights to the provision of psychological treatment was soundly defeated. During the poisonous debate that preceded the vote on the amendment, Colonel Larry James, a psychologist who had command responsibility for the Behavioral Science Consultation Teams in Guantanamo, attempted emotional blackmail by arguing that if psychologists were not part of the interrogation process “people would die.” A long line of psychologists argued, in a self-interested and illogical fashion, that if the amendment were passed it would soon come to include a ban on psychologists working in prisons and limit the scope of practice in general. The cheer (admittedly not a very loud cheer) that went up when that amendment was voted down was chilling. With the defeat of this amendment the APA ensured their continued collaboration with the military and the CIA in operating and maintaining detention centers in which the conditions of detention have been called tantamount to torture by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Since that morning and since the APA’s repeated attempts to spin the outcome as a moral victory, the number of members of the withholdAPADues list has increased by more than 130% over pre-convention levels. On November 7, the Steering Committee of withholdAPADues sent the attached letter to the APA on behalf of 260 psychologists who had pledged to withhold their 2008 dues. Our numbers continued to increase through November. By the end of the year it is probable that over 300 psychologists will have formally joined us. I should also note that Frank Summers and Brad Olson are now members of our Steering Committee.

Curiously, the APA makes it possible for those of us who have pledged to withhold our dues to have it both ways; we can withhold our dues for up to two years without penalty. If we choose, we can resume paying dues without even paying back dues. During these two years, we can attend meetings as members and we can vote. We are neither collaborators nor defectors, or we are both. But we can make it clear to the organization what the actual costs in terms of lost members will be if their policy does not change. In their wisdom (or is it in a desperate bid to keep their numbers high?), the APA have created a transitional space for us in which to work out the terms of our relationship with them. We are neither within the organization nor entirely outside it, we are trying on our nonmember status. We may not have a seat at the table, but we do have checkbooks and credit cards, the Internet, two websites and an active listserv and voting privileges (which many of us exercised this year for the first time) with which to signal our displeasure and organize our protest. And, one more point about the actual consequences of withholding dues, you do not have to be a member of the APA in order to have malpractice insurance.

In the short run, withholding dues relieves some of the helplessness we feel as we see an organization to which we were once proud to belong come under attack in the press and from human rights organizations. In the long run, many of us are prepared to forfeit our membership, which will happen after two years of not paying dues. In the meantime, there are many initiatives taking place through the cooperation of our members on the listserv: a referendum once again calling for the end of psychologist involvement in sites where foreign detainees are held without due process being prepared. Students are reaching out to one another and scheduling teach-ins with local psychologists who are in the know; psychology departments (such as Earlham College) are sending resolutions to the APA condemning their ethics. A personal (not email) letter writing campaign to psychologists from members of the withholddues listserv is about to start in an attempt to educate rank and file psychologists, many of whom know nothing about this because the official APA publications mention nothing about the protests and continue to declare their opposition to torture. The withhold dues website answers frequently asked questions about ethics, about insurance, and about membership bylaws, in addition to providing links to many relevant documents. The ethicalapa.com website provides up-to-date information and media reports to the public and to psychologists who have not committed to withholding dues.

If, and as is looking increasingly likely, when we do leave the APA, remaining a member of Division 39 is a source of concern for all of us in

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Dear Dr. Anderson,

We, the undersigned current members of the American Psychological Association, wish to inform you that we shall withhold our 2008 membership dues. For some of us, 2008 marks the second year that we are withholding our dues; for many others, this is a new and wrenching step. Every week more psychologists join us.

We are taking this step because the APA continues to give institutional support to the U.S. military and other government agencies that operate detainee sites in which international standards of human rights are violated. At its 2007 convention in San Francisco, the APA again condemned the use of torture and called on psychologists to refuse to participate in torture, while at the same time vigorously supporting the involvement of psychologists in detainee interrogations and intelligence gathering in facilities where, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, torture takes place.

We are greatly encouraged by Dr. Behmke’s recent letter to Dr. Wagner removing some of the loopholes in the 2007 Resolution against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Punishment, and we look forward to seeing these thoughts implemented into firm policy actions. Nonetheless, the fact remains that the amendment banning the presence of psychologists in detainee interrogations was not passed in August. We reject the APA’s argument that the presence of psychologists in interrogations “ensures” ethical treatment. This policy compromises the moral standing of our profession, while it gives legal cover to military interrogators and professional support to practices that violate international law.

We call for an immediate halt to psychologists working in a non-therapeutic capacity in any facility in which human rights and the Geneva Conventions are violated.

Yours sincerely

Cc: Sharon Brehm, Ph.D. Alan Kazdin, Ph.D.