

3PM

Session Four

Interviewee: Stephen Soldz

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Interviewer: Mary Marshall Clark

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Q: Okay, it is April 30, 2013. This is Mary Marshall Clark. I'm very grateful to be with Stephen Soldz. I'd like to start this mini interview with the same question I always ask. Tell me something about your growing up life—where you were born and your early influences.

Soldz: I was born in St. Louis. I say, Missouri is the “Show Me State,” so I'm known for telling people to show me the evidence. Actually, my family left when I was four. My brother and I went back for a few years in summers, but basically had almost nothing to do with St. Louis and Missouri since then.

I lived for four years in the Boston area, then eight years in Virginia, and then returned to Boston, where I've been ever since. I was in science and mathematics initially. When we were in Boston, there was a physicist next door who was very influential at the time. Then we were in Virginia; the influences were from reading. I discovered Henry Thoreau somewhere around when I was eleven or twelve—*Civil Disobedience* and others of the nonviolent protesters, Dave Dellinger, the Mississippi Summer folks. They were my heroes at that point.

Then I went off to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] when I was fifteen, and I had—there were two things I wanted to accomplish. One was to hear Noam Chomsky speak and the

other was to find a radical group to join. This was 1968. I did both in the first week, and unfortunately didn't attend many classes. Dropped out after a year.

Q: Were there things that went on in your childhood or times that you realized also that you were this kind of person, an activist?

Soldz: Well, I was always sensitive to things just not quite being right. I mean, I was against the Vietnam War before—I don't know if I knew anyone else—I certainly didn't personally know—. Turned out my parents were but they never said anything about it until a couple of years later. No, actually much younger, I mean in fifth grade, I created a brouhaha because I wouldn't say the prayer—school still had school prayer—being an atheist. I also refused to say the Pledge of Allegiance because not only do you have “one nation under God,” but it said “indivisible.” It seemed that since the Civil War, and “with liberty and justice for all”—and I'd heard of Sacco and Vanzetti.

Fortunately, my parents backed me up and threatened to go to the [American] Civil Liberties Union. They sort of said, as long as he stands and he holds his hand or something, he can keep his mouth shut. We compromised, but it was a fairly individualistic thing. Then in junior high school or somewhere in there, I fought in social studies to have a debate on Vietnam. At the end of the year, the teacher finally let us have that. We all each got our chance to go around and have like two minutes or something like that to say, “I support the war because I—” and me, “I oppose the war because—.” And someone yelled out, “Communist!” Somewhat oddly, this year on my birthday, I got a phone call and someone said, “Happy birthday.” They said, “This is Jack Lane.”

I said, "Who?"

He said, "You don't know who I am?"

I said, "No."

He said, "I was in your fifth and sixth grade class," and he started describing how he was a very religious guy.

I said, "Oh, you were the guy on the playground. You used to say, 'You killed our lord, you killed our lord!'"

He said, "Well, I don't remember it, but I probably was."

I said, "And you're the one who called me a communist."

Then he said he was from a very fundamentalist Christian family, and he said, "By the way, I've joined you as an atheist now, if you're still an atheist." Evidently we had long conversations about how could there be a god, though I don't remember them.

Q: That's so interesting. It's a kind of full circle, unexpected moment. So you're a person who does stand up for other people and that's part of why I wanted you to tell that story. I'd love to

know, you also had your own way of seeking your educational path, which I think is unique and I'd like to hear a little bit about that.

Soldz: Well, learning—I was this math prodigy so learning in school, I didn't do very much of that. Some teachers just left me alone and others kind of resented it. There were experiences—I think it was fifth grade where my teacher was taking what they called modern math at that point and she couldn't figure it out, so I would stay after school and do her homework for her, which was kind of amusing because you thought, is this cheating? After eighth grade, I started taking graduate math courses at Georgetown [University]. One of those classes, a modern algebra class, there are four students, two of whom were eighth grade math teachers who spent the whole class passing notes around and giggling, and I was like, “This is what my teachers are like when they're off duty?”

Q: That's great. After MIT, then you created, again, your own educational path and eventually ended up in psychology. Could you talk a little bit about that? Another choice was history, you said.

Soldz: Yes. Well, actually, when I was about nineteen, I taught social history. There was this Cambridge-Goddard Graduate School for Social Change, and even though I was actually technically a high school dropout and a college dropout, I was able to teach a master's—in fact, give a master's degree to a student studying labor history. Those were the days in the early seventies. [Laughter]

Q: They're gone.

Soldz: You couldn't pull that off these days.

Then I went back to school. University of Massachusetts at Amherst had this University Without Walls program so I didn't actually have to go to classes. I was only in Amherst twice during my entire education there. I could do independent study with people in Boston. Then I started going more straight and narrow. When I graduated from that, I didn't get into a clinical psychology doctoral program so I went into a counseling program at Lesley. Then I worked in a drug abuse clinic for adolescents in what's now my community, Roslindale, for three or four years. Then I went back into a clinical psychology program, the one that rejected me the first time—so sort of straightened out a bit.

Q: Could you describe then your own professional evolution before we get to the story of Guantánamo and the APA?

Soldz: What aspect of it do you—

Q: Well, what branch of psychology do you work in? What are your job responsibilities?

Soldz: Okay. Well, again, I'm a little odd because I'm a psychoanalyst. I trained at what's now the Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis, where I teach. I'm also a researcher, both qualitative and quantitative, so in addition to seeing patients, I've had a number of jobs as

research director of both private consulting companies and non-profits and worked with the Department of Public Health and our Bureau of Substance Abuse Services in Massachusetts as the research director of one of these non-profits. I've had this dual research and clinical practice where I practice psychoanalysis. These days I do a lot of teaching as well.

Q: Let's now move to the story that we're here to talk about today, which is the post-9/11 designation of Guantánamo as a detention center and the involvements of the American Psychological Association and research on human subjects. However you'd like to begin telling that story is fine, whether you want to begin when you first heard about it and the public knew about it or whether you want to start with what you know was happening there from 2002 on.

Soldz: Well, my path to involvement in this was—I've been an activist to some degree. Though I got married, had a kid, a career, activism had moved toward the back burner. Then in the lead up to the Iraq War, it just drove me crazy that we were going into this again. We saw the debacle of Vietnam. Millions dead, the tens of thousands of American troops killed, and that we were just going blindly into it again—so I became obsessed. I started an anti-war website that I spent hours a day updating for years.

At the time of Abu Ghraib, I wrote one of the first commentaries on it the first weekend it that came out because I had known something was going on there. Having followed the war, I'd read almost everything in English on the Iraq War and there was public indications that something was not right. What it was wasn't clear because the people released weren't talking. They were obviously too humiliated. But one woman who had come out said—about people who had died

inside—that they were the lucky ones, so you knew that something horrific was going on there. Then the scandal happens and everyone in the government, some denying it—“Oh, we never knew. Who would have guessed that such awful MPs [military police] would do such despicable things?” So I wrote a piece which concluded, it was something like if I, an ordinary citizen, could know, then surely our leaders knew. And this went viral.

Then came the issue of psychologists' and physicians' involvement in torture. I think I first heard about in either late 2004 or early 2005. Actually at first, I wasn't paying a lot of attention because in some ways I wasn't surprised. Then in June of 2006, Neil Lewis in the *New York Times* wrote a piece in which he said that the military was now preferring psychologists over psychiatrists for the so-called Behavioral Science Consultation Teams, the “Biscuit” teams [BSCT], because of the positions of their respective professional associations. This led colleagues of mine on a Psychoanalysts for Social Responsibility list to write the then-president of the APA. I joined in.

I had actually—when the issue had come up previously, I had sort of said, “Well, this is part of a long standing tradition of the APA's involvement with the military,” and people had kind of poo-pooed and weren't interested. I sort of shut up because I didn't want to be the gadfly who's always saying what no one wants to hear. But when the president of the APA wrote back this very nasty response, then my colleagues said something is wrong.

Q: And the then president was?

Soldz: Gerald Koocher. It was clear that they had something to hide because it was not acknowledging that there was any ambiguity in the issue. I remember the response I got said, "You are dead wrong!" Exclamation point. This was the very week that three of the detainees had died at Guantánamo, allegedly of suicide, though Scott Horton has since written that they were probably murdered. So it felt especially inappropriate that week to say, "You're dead wrong." My colleague said, "There's something not right here." Since I'd been writing for progressive websites, I figured, well, I can write an article on this because that's a skill I have. I've learned how to write popular articles on political themes and get them published and get attention for them.

I wrote something—actually sent it to Steven Reisner for comment and he made some strong criticisms of the way it was organized. I kind of put it aside. Then I was a visiting professor in Australia that summer. I said, "Well, the APA convention's coming up. If I don't publish it beforehand, then it'll be irrelevant." I went back and revised it as he suggested and got it out a week or two before the convention. All of a sudden the phone in Australia started ringing. Reporters started calling and someone named Nathaniel Raymond, then of Physicians for Human Rights, started calling. Natty and I had about a three hour conversation and we're trying to understand, why is the APA doing this? I proposed a theory that I was wondering about at the time, which was that perhaps it was payback for help that the military had given the APA for what was then, and is still, their number one legislative priority—getting prescription drug privileges for psychologists.

That effort had been immeasurably helped by the military. In fact, it would have been dead in the water without them because they had created in the early 1990s a so-called psychopharmacology demonstration program, which trained ten military psychologists in prescribing medications, which the military would allow. No state would allow it, but military could do it within their system. Then the APA got to fund an evaluation that said that this was an effective program after two DOD evaluations said it was not effective. This was the evidence these people would then testify before all the state legislatures. That was the evidence that they would have that psychologists could be trained to prescribe.

The sense I had was, maybe the APA owed them. Natty and I talked. Initially, he said, "No, no, that's not it," but then he said, "You know, this is worth looking into. Let's see if we can get a reporter to look into it." That was the start of our investigative efforts, which largely through Natty's effort—but myself and colleagues played a role—led to one of the streams of investigation that led to identifying these psychologists, James Mitchell and Bruce Jessen, who were the psychologists that the CIA brought on board to create their so-called enhanced interrogation torture program. We were a part of the team that revealed that in Katherine Eban's *Vanity Fair* article in June of 2007. A few weeks later, Jane Mayer independently reported that. Mark Benjamin had reported a little bit of the story in *Salon*.

We started trying to investigate and figure out what was going on, an effort that's still ongoing. It's been very difficult. Most of the documents are classified. Gradually some have been declassified, which have shown that the broad outlines of what we originally thought was the case was indeed exactly the case. The military and CIA had taken the so-called SERE program,

the Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape program, which was for troops who are at danger of being captured by “a power” that does not respect the Geneva Conventions. In other words, a power that tortures. That was to train them.

The “resistance” part of that was to teach them how to resist being abused. Basically, how to resist breaking under torture through a brief period of being abused themselves. The idea was that this would help inoculate them. The belief of a number of us was that this had been reverse engineered by the CIA to develop their enhanced interrogation torture program. This was controversial at first. Steven Miles, bioethicist, who has written a lot about this, thought that the relation with SERE was more accidental—that people had gone through SERE and when they started interrogating people, they just adopted what they'd learned, rather than something more formal. It turned out that those of us who thought there was a more formal process were right, as revealed in official documents starting in 2007 and revealed in a number of years since then. That in fact, it had been very formal process, authorized, we learned, out of the White House. And so a small group—

Q: Can I just ask you what your reaction was when you learned that?

Soldz: At some level, it's so horrific that it's very hard to really come to terms with it, to really realize not—the U.S. has a long relationship with torture, unfortunately, but it's always been in the shadows, something to be denied, something to be embarrassed about, to pawn off on so-called rogue agents, though often they weren't rogue agents. The torture program that was developed in the top of the CIA and authorized at the White House, that actually had

demonstrations in the White House to top cabinet officials, including the vice president and the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, it's just—and that they can get away with it. It's just, it's hard to accept. It just kind of burns at you because it's such a danger to us, to everyone, I think, in the whole world, that the U.S. that professes to be this paragon of human rights can so blatantly ignore everything it preaches. Those who do it just get away with it and no one cares. This administration just gave them a blank check. “We're going to look forward, not back,” the president said. Well, every criminal—we have how many people, two million people in our criminal justice system? Every single one of which wishes the government would look forward, not look back. Only the people at the top get treatment like that, so any sort of pretense that this is a nation of laws is thrown out the door when you have that as official policy.

We also discovered—well, we suspected at the beginning that the APA was very intimately involved. In 2005, they had a task force on this issue, the so-called PENS task force. PENS—Psychological Ethics and National Security. It was a very odd task force because it only met over one weekend. The report had to be approved by the task force members within twenty-four hours of the end of the task force, during which time people were traveling home, sometimes across the country. Their time to review it was essentially not present and the membership of the task force was kept secret.

When APA members asked in the convention in August that year, “Who was on the task force?” They were told, “It's confidential.” What kind of a task force do you not know the membership of? A professional task force—its credibility all depends on who's on the task force. It wasn't until the next year, right before the APA convention, that Mark Benjamin published that the

members of the task force were in fact—a majority of them were from the military intelligence establishment. He said he got this from congressional sources. In fact, I believe we've discovered that five—I believe it's five of the six members in the intelligence establishment—there were ten total members—were from chains of command who had themselves been accused of detainee abuse, of prisoner abuse. Basically, you got the abusers to write the ethics policy or you've got those—let me be a little—we use that phrase, chains of command, because we can't prove what any individual did. But these people were there. They were present. They knew what happened. They may have participated. We can't know for sure. In any case, they knew the government had done horrific things, that the militaries had done horrific things, the CIA had done horrific things. Not a word of that was spoken to the task force, so this is simply not credible. It was like a put-up job.

Its prime finding was that it was ethical for psychologists to participate in national security interrogations. In fact they had “a vital role to play in keeping interrogations safe, legal, ethical, and effective.” It turns out that that very phrase—“safe, legal, ethical, and effective”—was taken from the instructions for these BSCT teams, the Behavioral Science Consultation Teams, which ultimately was taken from the torture memos written by the Department of Justice. They didn't use those exact words, but they used those exact concepts, that health professionals kept interrogations safe, legal, ethical, and effective. The memos kept them effective by figuring out the weaknesses of prisoners. They kept them safe, legal, and ethical because if a health profession was present and said the interrogation was safe, legal, and ethical, then it didn't matter what happened. You couldn't have intended to torture them, no matter how damaged they were,

because a health professional had said it was safe. One of their primary roles was to be a get out of jail free card, and the APA signed on to this.

You realize that something was really, really wrong. The APA started this process of denial and confusion, step after step. It would be, well, pseudo-scholars claim that there are abuses, but they haven't given us names and dates. If they give us names, then we'll bring them to justice within the APA. Well, when we gave them names, nothing happened. There's now a case which was first referred to them in August of 2006 that's now going on seven years later. It's still an open case. Other cases, they've refused to even open. They refuse to even investigate.

In fact, one of the people, Colonel Larry James, who was at Guantánamo in 2003—who brazenly lied in his book about it—they've given award after award to. He's proclaimed to be a hero, even though his book contradicts every official document, every independent source on what happened there. His book also includes many instances of unethical and even illegal behavior, and simply disturbing—like he talks there about how the prisoners at Guantánamo, they are terrorists that constitute a new sort of mental illness that is worse than anything I ever before seen. It's more horrific. He seems to have not missed that, as top CIA officials knew in the summer of 2002, that over half of them, if not the vast majority of them, were innocent or maybe foot soldiers. These were not the worst of the worst at all but Larry James seemed to have totally missed that. Instead they've got this new level of mental illness, completely missing that people who have been locked up unfairly may not love the United States for having kidnapped them, taken them thousands of miles under horrific conditions, abused them for years, and then kept them locked up. That, somehow, you may not like that too much. The APA thinks that this is

somebody they should be giving award after award to, and having him be speaker after speaker, honored speaker for division after division.

Q: It's very mysterious.

Soldz: Very mysterious, well, and very disturbing.

Q: I like your use of the word kidnapped, because it's very concrete. I'm thinking now of fifty years from now when this story's going to be read by and listened to by the American public. That's a very concrete way that people can understand what actually happened, aside from all the rhetoric.

Soldz: Yes. When you think about just the way everyone was taken to Guantánamo, that you had diapers put on you, a suppository put in you. You're put it in an orange jumpsuit. Black goggles are put over your eyes. Ear muffs are put over your ears so that you can't hear a word. You're then chained up, stretched out for up to thirty-six hours in very painful positions. This is levels of abuse that kidnappers rarely resort to. This is what our government was doing and psychologists were helping them do it.

Q: So you organized—I mean, one response was not to shy away from it, but to really work with Natty on the Physicians for Human Rights report to organize your coalition. Could you talk about some of those efforts?

Soldz: Gradually, with the help of Nathaniel Raymond—Natty from Physicians for Human Rights—a group of psychologists, a very small group—I think we were three initially, then four. We're now up to about six. I think we had seven at one point—one person who's decided to get married and retire from our efforts for the time being—of activists came together. We were one strand of what was a very interesting sort of decentralized movement because psychologists from different organizations or not necessarily even formal organizations came together.

We had our little group, which we eventually named the Coalition for an Ethical Psychology, which I would say in some sense spearheaded a lot of the movement. There were others who'd withhold APA dues—that had the idea of withholding dues from the APA and got several hundred members to do that publicly. There was the Psychoanalysts for Public Responsibility. This decentralized movement, it was a nice example of decentralizing yet informally coordinated movement because we sort of worked together. We'd keep in touch but different groups would also do their own thing. There was not any formal structure. It worked very well. It was also an example of what's possible with the Internet that wouldn't have been possible before Internet days. In 2013, that doesn't seem that surprising, but when we started out in 2007, it was much newer—or 2006—it was much newer then than it is today, to be so coordinated over the Internet and conference calls. I worked with several people for a year before I even met them in person, having only had emails and conference calls. It was very moving. We burst in tears when we first met.

Q: Where did you first meet?

Soldz: At the APA convention in San Francisco.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about that convention?

Soldz: Well, just about the meetings. Steven Reisner had been in Russia, vacationing with his family. He returned early for the convention. He was totally exhausted. I remember he and I went to his hotel room. I think he'd been up for thirty-six hours or something like that. I just remember we hugged and burst out in tears. Then we had a nice drink.

That convention, we organized a—we, not the coalition, but the broader movement, largely through the withhold APA dues folks—a demonstration which about many of us spoke. Probably not the first demonstration at a convention, but we got a fair amount of press. We were running around at 4:00 in the morning to *Democracy Now* studios to be interviewed and things.

The APA had—one of their early strategies to try and mute this issue was to say, “This is an issue on which reasonable people can disagree.” They organized at the convention what they called a mini-convention of something like fifteen, twenty hours of programming on the issue, which had panels with people from both sides. It turned out they had trouble getting enough psychologists to defend the policy because most of them didn't want to be seen in public.

We were in the context of this whirlwind of these daily three-hour panels or something like that on this issue, as well as the demonstration, and there was also a vote at the convention. Neil Altman, representing the division of psychoanalysis, had proposed the year before—it was called a moratorium—that would have basically said psychologists can't serve at Guantánamo until this issue was really thought about much more deeply—that there'd be a moratorium on it.

The APA board, a month before the convention, tried to use a parliamentary trick to avoid a vote on the moratorium. Evidently, if the board proposes a substitute motion that gets voted on before the original motion and if it passes, the original motion would never be voted on. So they proposed that the APA adopt a motion condemning use by psychologists of certain torture techniques—which we weren't opposed to, but we didn't see as at all serving the purpose of the moratorium.

There was a brouhaha. Eventually, they partially backed down and agreed to allow the moratorium to be proposed as an amendment to their resolution. At least it would get a vote. In typical fashion with everything that happens at the APA, there's frenzied negotiations late at night the night before the vote, which those of us who were the most active weren't involved. We weren't on council.

Those who were involved only understood—they were only really concerned about the moratorium, not about the resolution condemning the torture techniques. The next morning, after the meeting's actually started, I run into Neil Altman, who's no longer in council. He's upstairs and he has a copy of the revised resolution. I start reading it and I realize that they changed the wording in such a way that it would significantly weaken the resolution and thereby create loopholes that would allow the CIA to continue exactly what it was doing. Downstairs the debate's going on. We're furiously trying to mobilize, but we're not even allowed to speak. We're not even supposed to speak to the councilors, but we sneak in—Steven Reisner sneaks in and sort of whispers and gets one councilor willing to introduce an amendment that would remove

the language that was introduced at midnight the night before. It only got like three or four votes because naturally, this person didn't really understand the implications. No one who was allowed to speak who was on council could understand because of the way this business happened.

Then the moratorium went down to defeat with maybe twenty percent to thirty percent of the votes. The APA got to proclaim that the APA opposes torture. In typical fashion they lied about things. Mark Benjamin of *Salon* asked Stephen Behnke, the APA Ethics Director, "Where did you get this revised language?"

Behnke said, "Oh, I got it from Physicians for Human Rights and from Soldz's blog."

Mark Benjamin said, "Well, that's very interesting because I have here a letter from Physicians for Human Rights addressed to you, sent to you yesterday, requesting that the language be removed." At which point Stephen Behnke ended the interview.

Mark Benjamin, who really understood the issues, before the convention had written a piece called "Psychologists Set to Condemn CIA Torture," or something like that ["Psychologists to CIA: We Condemn Torture"]. I don't know the exact title. Afterwards he wrote a piece something like, "Did the APA Condone CIA Torture?" ["Will psychologists still abet torture?"] There was a whirlwind afterwards, even though the APA council couldn't see through it.

The *Houston Chronicle* had an editorial that condemned the resolution. Mary Pipher, famous psychologist—author of *Reviving Ophelia*—returned a medal. She had been given a lifetime achievement medal by the APA a couple years earlier. She said, "I don't want a medal from an

organization that would condone CIA torture.” A lot of people saw through it, just not those on the APA council, unfortunately.

Q: Around the same time, the Supreme Court was hearing cases on habeas around—they'd got the information, or rather information came out via *Rasul v. Bush* [2004], via *Rasul*, via Gareth Peirce about what was actually happening there in 2004, 2005. In the lawyers' histories that we've taken, this was a time of great excitement in 2008—the election of the new president and so on and so forth. I'm wondering how you all felt about what you needed to address to the public at large, given what you were seeing, which was the APA was still—it was still going to happen. The public doesn't really understand. As an activist and as a writer, what were you thinking you needed to do at that time?

Soldz: Well, I would say my contribution was really—I was the one that really formulated the idea that this was not a battle in psychology. Most of my colleagues were fighting it as a battle within the profession in professional meetings. I figured we couldn't possibly win there.

I mean, I really believed the APA was in it for some serious reasons. They have had close ties to military and intelligence since World War I. They weren't going to give it up, basically. We weren't going to win it with votes on council.

My strategy was to make this a public issue—to make this a human rights issue around the world. My writing was all for public audiences—and trying to work with the press as much as we could to try and get the public to understand and exert, in some sense, indirect pressure.

Supposedly, I've heard that one of the APA presidents who was very supportive of their policy

on this and somewhat nastily—several of them are just kind of nasty people, but—was asked at a cocktail party when he said he was president of the APA. He said, “Oh, you're the people who torture people.” That was sort of the strategy—was to make this a public issue. It would be embarrassing. I figured that was the only way we stood a chance.

It was a public issue already in other ways. For example, soldiers in Iraq, we've heard, were refusing to go to psychologists because they had heard of what psychologists were doing and they didn't trust them. There was a real danger of that coming home—that if psychology couldn't set a bright line against this kind of behavior, then there is a chance that elements of the public would say, you know, I'm not sure I want to see a psychologist. Who knows what they might have been doing, or what their colleagues might have been doing? The health professions are relatively unique. Law is another one, and the clergy—they rely on trust. If people don't trust you with their secrets, you can't do your job. You can't afford to have people having questions. As the case of the perhaps apocryphal stories of the soldiers in Iraq—if they didn't trust, you couldn't do it.

We tried, and I think were moderately successful to make this a public issue. In the United States, the whole torture issue has been very difficult. At least among those concerned about human rights, we made sure that they understood that psychologists were part of this and that they had been part of the problem, not part of the solution. This wouldn't be let go. Also around the world.

In 2008, we had a vote on a referendum, the first ever member initiated referendum, in which fifty-nine percent of the members of the APA voted to ban psychologists participating in any prison or detention site in violation of international law or the Constitution, like Guantánamo or the CIA black sites. The APA then said, “Well, this is now our policy. However, who knows what's in violation of international law? Every psychologist will have to decide for themselves.” So it had no effect. However, on the other hand, we heard from people around the world. I mean, it was amazing that you'd hear from people in developing countries where they have profound human rights things. They'd say, “You've given us hope because if you people can take on the APA, maybe we can take—.” It was amazing. I mean, that people from countries—you think, people who are being killed saw this as their struggle and took hope from our efforts. That was very moving.

Q: You've also mentioned to me in the past that it's been incredibly rewarding to have worked with the people with whom you have worked. The lawyers have also said that to us.

Soldz: Yes. The colleagues I've known who got involved in this, I mean, I think it's different than some of other—because almost none of us were people who for whom the APA had been part of our lives. Really, we were a grassroots movement. People who devoted incredible amounts of time and energy worked—I mean, we have worked really hard to understand and to get things right. We've tried hard. We've made a few minor factual errors in maybe one hundred pieces that we've written because we really valued getting the story right. In the process, we have become incredible friends. Some of my best friends in the world are the people who I originally started working with over email and who I only see once or twice a year at one of these meetings.

It's been one of the highlights of my life, though it's also been one of the most difficult times as well. I mean, dealing with torture is not something you do lightly. A few of us used to say that we're never going to be quite the same people again. That you just—in 2001, right after 9/11, Vice President [Richard B. “Dick”] Cheney said, “We're going to have to work on the dark side.” That meant that we've had to glimpse the dark side, and perhaps more of it than you ever want to glimpse. To read the torture memos and read them in detail over and over again, to catch all the nuances, is not something that most people want to do. Many of my colleagues, even my psychoanalyst colleagues who fancy themselves as able to hear whatever darkness there is in their patients say, “I can't listen to this. It's too awful.”

It's taken a real toll on us as well. Plus, just keeping up the energy year after year because we've also felt this responsibility. In the end, a lot of the force was borne—a lot of the burden was borne by a small group of us. While we had this large, decentralized movement, a lot of people kind of faded away. They're in support, but it stopped being one of their priorities, in a way. This became a smaller group of us who still put in the day to day energy. Keeping that energy up has been really tough. Fortunately, we've got some newer people joining who have had new energy when some of us have been a little less energetic.

Q: I guess framing another question would be—because we're sort of going to the end—not to be too journalistic, and I don't mean it in any way that way—but we're now at a very important historic moment with the hunger strike. I'm grateful from having learned everything I've learned

from you and others about why we should have been fighting this all these years. Now is the moment I think that the world could know. I just wondered what your thoughts about that are.

Soldz: It's really hard to understand what's going on with the hunger strike because the information sources are so limited. Basically, the information we have comes from attorneys who get it from their clients—but they have no direct access. They only have their reports from their clients.

As usual, throughout the Guantánamo experience, one thing we do know is that the accounts that we get from the prisoners there are more accurate than those from our government. The government initially was poo-pooing that there was any major hunger strike. The prisoners were saying that there was. Well, the government now admits that well over one hundred of the 160-odd people who are participating, which is what the prisoners were saying a while ago. It's just yet another case where the prisoners are more accurate than the government, which systematically has deceived—among the things that's very hard to tell, we're hearing from the lawyers that a lot of the prisoners have lost substantial amounts of weight.

Yet we also know that the government does engage in mass forced feeding. To be honest, I can't quite figure out exactly how many people are being force fed. Is it everyone who gets to a certain point? Are there people who are really in danger of dying or not? It's just very hard to tell. This is one of the problems of having a secret site like this. No place on earth should be like Guantánamo, not subject to independent observation. No place run by a democratic government

should be like that. No prison, I don't care if it's a supermax prison, should there not be independent people allowed access to give independent information.

It would make sense that this would be a mass thing. And we have eighty-six—more than half of the people there—have now been cleared for release for years, and are still kept prisoner because the U.S. government can't agree on where they're going to go. And Congress has barred their being released into the U.S.—the spineless guys in Congress.

I can't imagine putting myself in their shoes. I can't imagine having been in this horrific prison for perhaps a decade or over a decade, cleared for release years ago and yet still imprisoned in this place in which, sometimes, you're allowed to play soccer. Sometimes you're locked in a cell twenty-four hours a day for months on end at the whims of some official you have no say over. I wouldn't be surprised if this really goes on and people are at risk of death, or at least very serious health consequences. It's a very scary moment. It's hard to know what our government's going to do. This is an issue that the president just doesn't want to put political capital into. The Democrats in Congress who were critics of the Bush administration have spinelessly signed on to some of the Republican attempts to get propaganda out of this.

Whether someone's going to blink and change course, I don't know. It's a very scary thing. That said, we have the problem of the military sending in squads, another forty or so health providers to monitor and probably engage in force feeding. Force feeding is against medical ethics of the World Medical Association, the American Medical Association, and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

In these situations, as throughout, it is vitally important that there be independent health professionals. We simply can't trust government health professionals, those in the military—some of whom are very honorable—but all of whom are under incredible pressure from their commands to support government policy. All of whom are in a position that their medical ethics can be overridden by the commanders on the ground there.

We should have had from the beginning—and we desperately need now—to have independent health professionals who are not beholden to commanders, who can make independent judgments about the health status of people, about the mental health status. I mean, I myself was a consultant on a couple of the cases. In one of those cases, I saw the medical records.

On that single case, the physical treatment seemed decent. The doctor and the medical staff seemed to be trying with a somewhat difficult patient. The mental health staff and the psychologist seemed pretty awful. I mean really, as one who's worked in in-patient units, I couldn't believe the poor quality. All they seemed to care about was, was this person suicidal? They did endless suicide assessments. It was a kid, someone who was like sixteen or so when he was taken there. He was in despair because someone who he called his father, who probably wasn't his biological father but was a father figure, maybe an uncle, we never knew exactly, had been moved from his camp to another camp. He didn't see him anymore. What he wanted was to be in the same camp with him.

He was smearing feces on the walls, banging his head. All they did was provide—every time there was trouble—they would do a suicide assessment. You could tell that it meant nothing

because they would get close and he would say, as soon as he saw them, "I am not suicidal. I am not homicidal. I am sleeping well. I have good appetite. Now leave me alone."

They all know the ritual. They get these suicide assessments every month. Occasionally—mostly this is done by mental health technicians who would then say, "I don't know." And then a few times, a psychologist would just do another suicide assessment. Not once in the several years of records I was allowed to see—the government fought very hard to keep me from seeing records from the earlier years when he was allegedly abused—not once did anyone sit down and try just talking with him.

I mean, when you're in an in-patient unit and you've got someone who's being or causing a lot of trouble—if it's a decent unit—the first thing you do is you just sit down and talk. What's going on? What shocked me was they would have made their own lives so much easier because there was a good chance they could have calmed him down.

Q: Yes.

Soldz: I just couldn't understand how any qualified professional wouldn't realize. It's like, even if you're not even concerned about providing decent care, having these crises once or twice a week isn't in your benefit either.

Q: This is what you're talking about. The normal work of psychologists is not being done there and has never been done there.

Soldz: Yes. These were the mental health psychologists, the clinicians, not the interrogation folks. I just don't get it. We do know that a lot of these clinicians have hewed the line. I'm not saying all of them—I don't know. Some of them have published articles that are simply not credible. In professional journals, they've reported that the prisoners there have very high rates of so-called personality disorders. Personality disorders are longstanding conditions, which means that they antedated their being imprisoned. And yet, they found zero evidence for PTSD, post-traumatic stress [disorder]. This is simply not credible. Every time there's been an independent assessment, we found very high rates of PTSD symptoms. Physicians for Human Rights interviewed a number of released detainees. Every one had high rates of PTSD symptoms. Yet the military psychologists are publishing articles in professional journals—published by the APA, on which military psychologists are on the editorial board—in which they're saying there is no PTSD at Guantánamo. This is another form of professional malpractice going on.

Q: So Gareth Peirce gave testimony to this. She took the Tipton Three into her home for six months after they were released. She knows what symptoms they had. She told us in the video that we did with her that they didn't sleep. Their backs were gone. They couldn't eat. And so she's fairly credible in the legal profession. Her observations were haunting her still.

Soldz: Physicians who've interviewed released detainees say that—who are specialists in treatment of torture victims—say that these are the least functional survivors of torture that they've ever interviewed, perhaps because it was more scientific forms of abuse used to break them down.

Q: I hate to end on such a sad note. It is a very sad story. Thank you. Do you have any thoughts you'd like to add?

Soldz: Just one other point on that case that I was involved in. Both cases I was involved in, they were ultimately released by courts who ruled that there was absolutely no evidence that they had ever done anything against the United States. You could see the health professionals working hand in glove to deny the prisoners' account—to basically say that they were just faking it.

I mean, having seen the medical records and seen this in black and white, seen affidavits from the health people there, that oh, this person's just faking it because they want to get our attention.

It just confirmed that at least many of the health professionals there are more concerned about doing their duty to the government position than they are about their patients, which is what their ethical responsibility and their legal responsibility in the military. Military health professionals are obligated to follow a professional ethic to serve their patients first. Yet they don't. Okay.

Q: Thank you.

Soldz: Thank you.

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