

CALIFORNIA PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD TO
PHILIP G. ZIMBARDO

SAN JOSE, CA

APRIL 5, 2003*

[Summary of key points in acceptance speech. *Note that the date is two weeks after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, when sentiment in favor of the "Shock and Awe" military assault on Baghdad was high and supportive. Dr. Jena Martin, President of CPA, made the award.]

Part One: What I Have Been Doing in the Past Year as APA President

1. APA Compendium: Psychology Makes a Significant Difference in Our Lives

APA president George Miller proposed back in 1969 that we give psychology away to the public; since then, too many psychologists have done just the opposite — take it back and keep it for themselves. Can we show that psychological research and therapy have made any difference in the lives of citizens and in improving the functioning of our society?

To that end, I have formed a blue ribbon task force that is developing a web-based compendium that will present those examples of basic and applied research, testing theory, utilizing methods and practice that have demonstrated effectiveness in changing laws, policies, and procedures in schools, clinics, businesses, government — to save money, make money, reduce suffering and pain, increase safety, enhance health outcomes and promote educational gains.

We have a working web site of about 70 items; we hope to go public at the end of the year with 100 or more such instances of how psychology makes a significant difference in our lives. Our audience is not only the general public, but also legislators, media, professionals in other fields and psychologists. It should be a source of pride for all of us. So stay tuned and also send me your candidates for www.PsychologyMatters.org.

2. APA Board Task Force on External Funding

I have been an advocate for prescriptive authority for qualified psychologists, and strongly supported our efforts in New Mexico. But as more states pass similar laws, we will be at risk for corruption by the billions of dollars available from big business to sell their products,

most obviously drugs from pharmaceutical companies. I have seen firsthand this corrupting influence operating on our sister organization, the American Psychiatric Association, and do not want APA, or individual psychologists, to lose their integrity and freedom to publish the data-based truth while prescribing treatments that are best for our clients and patients, not as pushed by sales reps.

To that end, the APA Board of Directors has given me the authority to form another high-level task force to explore the many complex issues involved in accepting external funding from all sources, including pharmaceutical companies. We hope to propose guidelines and principles for accepting and rejecting such influences in research, practice, conventions, publications, continuing education and more. Stay tuned, and if you have ideas or relevant information, also send them to me.

3. The National Center for Disaster Psychology and Terrorism

Several colleagues and I have recently formed the NCDPT in Palo Alto with the synergistic support of the Pacific Graduate School of Psychology, the VA services in Palo Alto and San Francisco, Stanford's Psychology and Psychiatry Departments, Temple Emmanuel and the Monterey Naval Post Graduate Center. Bruce Bonger, Larry Beutler, Jim Breckenridge, and I are the primary directors and we are complemented by a number of expert associates and consultants. Our mission is to: (1) Develop, evaluate, and deliver scientific, empirical treatment interventions for the victims of terrorism and their rescuers; (2) Train current and future mental healthcare professionals in the effective use of these treatments; (3) Conduct scientific research that will assist governmental and community agencies to prevent, prepare for, and recover from mass casualty assaults; (4) Organize and train "rapid response" teams of professional clinicians that will respond immediately and effectively to future national crises and emergencies, and (5) Convene biannual international conferences on disaster psychology and terrorism, the first held in October 2002 (and the proceedings published as the Oxford Psychology of Terrorism. 2006, www.oup-usa.com . [Addenda: our new center as of fall 2006 is named the Center for Interdisciplinary Policy, Education, and Research on Terrorism, CIPERT; I am its Director.]

Part Two: Coping With the Stress of War

Surgeon General Richard Carmona, who was an honored guest at this convention yesterday, made local TV news by indicating that psychologists had an important role to play in helping to

reduce the high levels of stress that many Americans were experiencing because its nation had gone to war. He said that psychologists might give parents the advice to expose their families to less television viewing of the coverage of the war.

Since it has become rare for anyone in the current administration to show any open respect for the contributions of psychologists, I applaud his focus on the good that we can do (and have been doing since September 11). However, with all due respect, I must in good conscience challenge his specific advise and recommend just the opposite.

There are two solutions to coping with the intense national stress created by our pre-emptive strike against the nation of Iraq: "emotion-focused coping" and "problem-directed coping." Emotion-focused coping attempts to change oneself through activities that make one feel better, but do not change the stressor. That is the coping strategy proposed by the Surgeon General. If watching the seemingly endless war news on most major TV channels is distressing, and especially so for children, then surely watching less or none at all will moderate stress levels.

Indeed, not watching can aid with denial that the United States is really destroying a nation, killing thousands of Iraqis, soldiers and civilians, and also putting our soldiers and those from Britain in harm's way — by enemy or "friendly" fire. Of course, not watching makes you less stressed but allows the war to continue without dissent or challenge from responsible citizens. Watching or not, the war wages on. Such coping deals with stress symptoms and not stress causes.

The second strategy for reducing stress is problem-solving coping, which attempts to identify and change the true cause of the stress in terms of the nature of the stressor. War is one of the intense stressors we are dealing with as a nation. The mature, tough solution is not to look away from the cause but to deal with the stressor at its origin. To me, that means to look longer and deeper at this war machine, this prime time and death-dealing video war game contrived by the current administration in the name of "national security."

Q: How best to reduce the stress?

A: Work to stop the war.

Q: How best to reduce recurrence of the stress?

A: Commit yourself to change the regime that started the war by getting citizens to vote against their continuation of abuse of political power by ousting these enemies of true democracy in the next democratic elections in 2004.

Part Three: On Being Against the War and Opposed to the Administration That Preemptively Created It

Q: How can we best understand the ways we have been cynically manipulated to support this immoral, unjust war?

A: First, consider that this administration has sustained the national anxiety and communal sense of vulnerability induced by the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon by issuing eight (8) terror alarms about impending terrorist attacks against the homeland or American territories. When the attacks failed to materialize, as predicted by their "credible sources," the public was never given any explanation, never debriefed, never consoled. How come? I have argued that the administration wanted to keep the nation fearful of terrorists in our midst as the basic justification for going to war in Iraq. The stress that many Americans were experiencing before the start of the war in Iraq was what I have termed, "Pre-Traumatic Stress Syndrome" — stress in anticipation of terror-to-come. Since terrorists by their operational nature are faceless and placeless, the administration's "war on terrorism" needed to reduce national anxiety by giving terror a face and a place, and to fight a traditional symmetrical war against enemies who are fighting an asymmetrical terror battle.

Saddam Hussein was the convenient evil face and Iraq the conveniently identifiable place in "the axis of evil." We were not able to capture Osama bin Laden because despite presidential assurances to the contrary, he did run and he did hide. And his elusive existence and media threats continue to frighten us. But we know exactly where Iraq is and assume that Saddam Hussein can eventually be found somewhere there. That reassurance enables us to use tactics we know how to employ, traditional "symmetrical war" against a military enemy. Especially against an inferior military enemy with a weak or non-functioning air force or navy and few mechanized vehicles to oppose U.S. incredible military might.

The case was made by the administration to the American people and to the U.N. by our formerly most credible communicator, Colin Powell, that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction (WMD) at his disposal, which he would deliver to any of the more than 1,000 al Qaeda terrorists alleged to be in cells throughout the U.S. Somehow the American public has come to believe that Saddam Hussein was directly responsible for 9-11, when there is no support for that fallacy, and that he has ties to Osama bin Laden, when there is no evidence of anything between them but animosity.

Q: How to reduce the stress created by 9-11 and sustained by the government's constant warnings of more 9-11 attacks against Americans in their homeland?

A: The Bush Administration's simple solution: Eliminate the (alleged) link between U.S. terrorists and their WMD-dealer, Saddam Hussein, by finding and destroying his cache of WMD and by finding and eliminating that vicious dictator. The American public bought that seemingly irrefutable deductive reasoning, and so did most of the Congress, along with the leaders of some of the so-called "coalition of the willing nations." The vast majority of Americans now support the war; nearly three-fourths have been persuaded that our national security will be secured by destroying Iraq and Saddam Hussein and his enormous arsenal of deliverable, weaponized WMD supplied to Islamic terrorist agents.

Please consider the following facts:

How many successful terrorist attacks have been made against homeland security in the 18 months since September 11 that were in any way related to the 8 (now 11 by November 2004) terror alarms?

Answer: NONE. There have been no terrorist attacks on our soil, despite all the alarms of various colors. Despite months of careful investigations, hundreds of U.N. inspectors could find no WMD in Iraq. In the past weeks as American and British military forces have searched for WMD in Iraq, none have been uncovered so far. In a short time, all of Iraq will be under the dominating control of the United States military. Suppose we are still not able to find any WMD that could have conceivably been a threat to the American people. Then what? Some commentators have suggested it will be an "embarrassment" for the administration.

(It is now more than 4 months of intense searching every part of Iraq for those damned WMD and not a single one has been found — indeed one of Hussein's aides just announced that Saddam had destroyed his arsenal before the inspectors came to Iraq but played the ambiguity game to create divisions in the alliance against him and to pose a threat to any U.S. invasion with the possibility of his using the WMD against Israel or U.S. forces if attacked.)

If there are no WMD found, then the second greatest casualty of this unnecessary war, after the deaths and dismemberments of so many people, is Truth and Honesty. Embarrassment is the least negative emotion our leaders should experience — shame and guilt are more appropriate.

It will become more obvious that those in whom we put our trust at a time when we felt so vulnerable after September 11 have deceived the nation for political objectives.

Consider the hypothesis that our leaders manufactured a scenario that made us feel perpetually at risk of homeland insecurity and then proposed to make us all feel safer by creating a target for our collective fear-reduction — winning the war in Iraq, eliminating all their WMD and ridding the world of the menace of Saddam Hussein. How can they justify this aggressive war if there are no WMD and there are no terrorists found operating in the homeland of the United States?

I believe that all American citizens need to become more fully aware of the fundamental changes being pervasively insinuated into the fabric of America's foreign and domestic policies by the current administration. Those myriad changes in government policy, that primarily promote the agendas of big business, the religious far right, and the Pentagon will have disastrous consequences for world peace, the continued viability of the U.N., a sustainable environment, and for the financial support of our national health, education, welfare, and research programs.

We are at the same time witnessing the erosion of our basic individual freedoms — all under the scurrilous banner of "national security," and blind obedience to patriotism that suppresses all dissent of the administration's policies — even by Democratic Party leaders fearful of challenging the wartime Commander-in-Chief.

Doctor Samuel Johnson reminds us "patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels." He meant the leaders of nations who hide behind that rallying cry. But it also applies to the public who accept at face value the propaganda pushed on them by the administration's marketing experts and spin-doctors.

Mindless patriotism is as much a danger to American democracy as extreme religious fundamentalism is to tolerance and appreciation of diverse religious and humanitarian values. My personal solution for relieving our national stress is through adopting an energetic commitment to rid the nation of these Orwellian forces of arrogance, entitlement, greed, and disdain for individual rights that characterize the current administration. They are the true cause of our stress, anxiety, depression, and justifiable worry now and in the future wars in which they will continue to enmesh America as the Defense Department dominates the State Department and the Pentagon's voracious war machine is continually fed billions of taxpayer dollars to build bigger and more deadly weapons, including a new tactical nuclear arsenal.

I end with a discovery I made recently of the hiding place of the WMD — not anywhere in Iraq, but in our own homeland's backyard:

- U.S. TOBACCO COMPANIES EXPORTED 5.5 TRILLION CIGARETTES LAST YEAR, WITH GOVERNMENT APPROVAL, THAT WILL KILL AT LEAST A MILLION PEOPLE.
- THE U.S. ARMED ALMOST ALL NATIONS INVOLVED IN WARS LAST YEAR (39 OF 42), SELLING THEM WEAPONS OF DESTRUCTION TO THE TUNE OF \$19 BILLION — MORE THAN ALL OTHER NATIONS COMBINED.
- THE BUDGET FOR THE U.S. MILITARY FOR NEXT YEAR IS \$450 BILLION — GREATER THAN THAT OF ALL OTHER NATIONS COMBINED.
- WE ARE RESTARTING OUR NUCLEAR TESTS AND ARMS DEVELOPMENT WHILE INSISTING ON NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUKES FROM OTHER COUNTRIES, AND DESPITE HAVING ENOUGH OF A NUCLEAR ARSENAL TO DESTROY THE ENTIRE WORLD MANY TIMES OVER.

We have found the weapons of mass destruction, and they are not over there but over here, in diverse deadly forms that threaten world peace and the sanctity of human life.

Thank you for your attention and concern for these vital issues.

[Audience reaction was one of silence, followed by a smattering of polite applause.]