

DEMOCRACY NOW

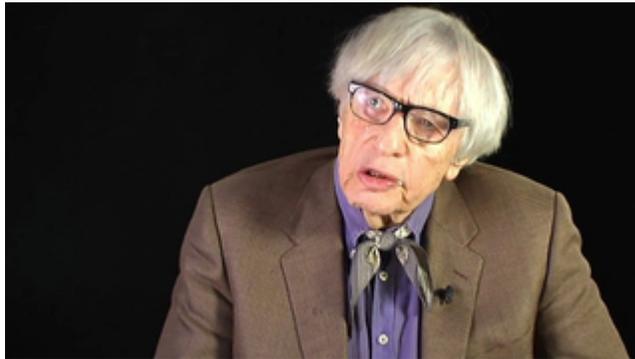
Robert Jay Lifton, Author of "The Nazi Doctors": Psychologists Who Aided Torture Should Be Charged

DOWNLOAD: [VIDEOAUDIOGET CD/DVDMORE FORMATS](#)

RELATED STORIES



Witness to an Extreme Century: Robert Jay Lifton Reflects on Decades of Work on Holocaust, Hiroshima



The Socialization of Evil: Robert Jay Lifton on the Death Penalty, the Holocaust & Armenian Genocide

TOPICS

[Psychology & Torture](#)

GUESTS

[Robert Jay Lifton](#), leading American psychiatrist and author of several books. He is distinguished professor emeritus of psychiatry and psychology at the City University of New York. He is the recipient of numerous national and international awards and honorary degrees. His books include *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima*, for which he received the National Book Award; *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*; and most recently, *Witness to an Extreme Century: A Memoir*. He is currently working on a book comparing the nuclear threat to the threat posed by climate change.

RELATED

[Robert Jay Lifton on How Climate Change Joins Nuclear War in Threatening Human Survival](#)

May 07, 2015 | STORY

[Emails Show American Psychological Association Secretly Worked with Bush Admin to Enable Torture](#)

May 05, 2015 | STORY

[WATCH: Amy Goodman on Moving from Assessment to Accountability for "The Bush Doctrine" on Terrorism](#)

Mar 26, 2015 | WEB EXCLUSIVE

DONATE →

This is viewer supported news

[PRINTER-FRIENDLY](#)

5,912

SHARED

Robert Jay Lifton, the prominent psychiatrist famous for his study of the doctors who aided Nazi war crimes, speaks out on the role of the American Psychological Association in aiding government-sanctioned torture under President George W. Bush. A new report alleges the APA, the world's largest group of psychologists, secretly coordinated with government officials to align its ethics policy with the operational needs of the CIA's torture program. "What the APA did was a scandal within a scandal," Lifton says. "[This] is something we have to confront as a nation."

TRANSCRIPT

This is a rush transcript. Copy may not be in its final form.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: New details have emerged on how the American Psychological Association, the world's largest group of psychologists, aided government-sanctioned torture under President George W. Bush. A group of dissident psychologists have just published a [60-page report](#) alleging the APA secretly coordinated with officials from

the CIA, White House and the Pentagon to change the APA ethics policy to align it with the operational needs of the CIA's torture program. The report also reveals a behavioral science researcher working for President Bush secretly drafted language that the APA inserted into its ethics policy on interrogations.

AMY GOODMAN: Much of the report is based on hundreds of newly released internal APA emails from 2003 to 2006 that show top officials were in direct communication with the CIA. In 2004, for example, the APA secretly took part in a meeting with officials from the CIA and other intelligence agencies to discuss ethics and national security.

Still with us, Dr. Robert Jay Lifton, leading American psychiatrist who has spoken out against the APA's practices. So, the American Psychological Association has about 150,000 members, the largest association in the world. That's the APA. The little APA is the American Psychiatric Association, which I assume you're a part of. Dr. Robert Jay Lifton, your thoughts on what the APA did?

ROBERT JAY LIFTON: What the APA did—and I read that report—is what I call a scandal within a scandal. That is, I have been much concerned with the behavior of professionals and their ethics, not just in terms of how they conduct their everyday profession—that's important enough—but their relationship to the world ethically. I became interested in this in working with veterans of the Vietnam War. And in that war, military psychiatrists would be in a position, when examining a soldier who was brought to them with anxiety and a sense of outrage at what was going on—would be in the position of helping that soldier to be strong enough to return to duty, which meant daily atrocities. And I asked myself, how did a psychiatrist find himself in that situation? And it had to do with a military structure of medicine and with the psychiatrist entering into what I called an atrocity-producing situation. In my work with Nazi doctors, it was even, of course, much more extreme, probably the most extreme example of any profession of any country engaging in extremely immoral behavior, engaging directly in killing, because Nazi physicians were in charge of the killing in Auschwitz. And that's what I studied in that research. But, you know—

AMY GOODMAN: What's interesting, both Nermeen and I saw you speak last night on a very different issue, on the Armenian genocide, and you talked about the significance of Dr. Josef Mengele dying without acknowledging what he did.