

## Letters to the editor

### *A response to Adrienne Israel's comments*



LISA McLEOD

In the Jan. 19 issue of The Guilfordian, Vice President and Academic Dean Adrienne Israel posted a response to articles recently published in The Guilfordian. Her response contains misstatements that require clarification.

The dean took exception to my contention that I had reviewed "the tenure materials" in my own and Dr. Branch's cases, given that there are confidential materials in the Faculty Affairs Committee's (FAC) tenure files. I had meant to refer only to the documents Eleanor and I had submitted for our reviews; however, the FAC also releases a letter that explains, in detail, the reasons for the FAC decision. This letter refers clearly, if indirectly,

to the confidential documents contained in the tenure file. The confidentiality of the tenure process – for all of its benefits – also, inevitably, serves to conceal any unsavory aspects of a decision. As every lawyer knows, claims of racism in tenure cases are therefore awfully difficult to prove.

In response to my claim that the College has not meaningfully addressed institutional oppression in its tenure review process, Dr. Israel points out that the college hired a noted civil rights lawyer, Julius Chambers, to examine Dr. Branch's case, and that he found that "race was not a legal or deciding factor" therein. While the college administration is likely relieved to have been advised that it will probably not be found legally liable for racially discriminating against Dr. Branch, this is cold comfort at best. The interpretation of law by current U.S. courts has little to do with whether Guilford is acting consistently with its commitment to anti-racism as a core value, and Mr. Chambers apparently was not asked to assess whether Guilford has addressed institutional racism, or whether any form of racism prior to tenure review might

have affected Dr. Branch. If Mr. Chambers did comment more broadly on the tenure process, the college administration apparently holds the power to make his report public.

Dr. Israel also took me to task for "ignoring or dismissing" her own training and experience in the history and manifestations of racism. The dean's considerable expertise and experience of racism do not substitute for the institutionalization of policies and practices to confront institutional oppression. As I mentioned in my first Forum piece, Guilford does not require that members of the FAC complete anti-racism training, neither does it take systemic steps to account for nationally-known literature on the effects of (unconscious and conscious) student bias on the evaluations of instructors of color – especially women of color. This, it seems, would be the very least we could plausibly do to improve the tenure process in line with our stated

values. For a school whose faculty, board, long-range plan, and incipient capital campaign have touted anti-racism, the steps Dr. Israel describes are minimal.

Dr. Israel accuses me of racism for proposing a moratorium on terminating faculty of color without consulting the untenured faculty of color who would be affected by this proposal. I won't deny my own racism. On most accounts of anti-racism, white people cannot avoid being racist within a white power structure, whether they act or not. Those same accounts hold that every member of this community has an interest in whether the college is actively pursuing racial justice and hold that all of us are accountable for our progress. I have aimed to avoid putting untenured faculty on the spot in this discussion, hoping that tenured faculty representing several constituencies might discuss it openly and honestly. Tenured faculty have more se-

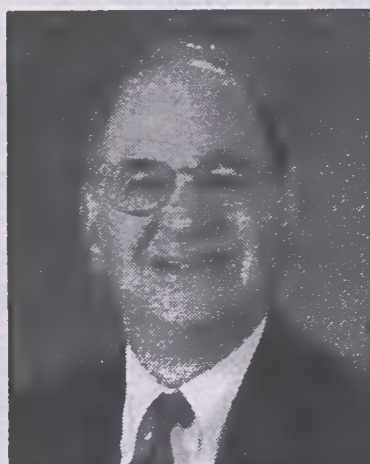
curity in such a fraught conversation, and it is disingenuous of the dean if she means to suggest otherwise, especially in light of the fact that all of the untenured faculty of color who have been active and visible members of the anti-racism team and/or the Cultural Pluralism Committee have not – for whatever reason – been awarded tenure.

Finally, the students who demonstrated outside the December faculty meeting have been dismayed by the college's treatment of Eleanor Branch and Shelini Harris, and as far as I could tell, were silently supporting these valued members of our faculty. Several of the students commented on how warmly most of the faculty greeted them, with nods and words of thanks, and several of these students have begun seeking ways to continue a community-wide conversation over the past and future of Guilford's faculty review process. I wish the whole community well in that process, and wish I could be on campus for this conversation.

Lisa J. McLeod  
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## An open letter

*Community asks that Chamber's findings be made public*



JONATHAN MALINO

In the Jan. 19 issue of The Guilfordian, Vice President and Academic Dean Adrienne Israel published a response to articles by Lisa McLeod and me that appeared in recent issues of The Guilfordian. Dean Israel's Guilfordian piece had already appeared in the Dec. 15 issue of The Beacon. In the Jan. 19 issue of The Beacon, Dr. McLeod and I posted a lengthy response to Dean Israel. That response concluded with the statement, "... no one has satisfactorily explained why the report by the civil rights expert

hired by the college regarding Dr. Branch's case is being kept confidential, given that Mr. Chambers (its author) has no objection to its release."

Dean Israel has now provided an explanation for keeping Mr. Chambers' report confidential, notwithstanding Chambers' written statement to Dr. Branch that "Dr. Chabotar may elect to disclose its contents." In her contribution to the Jan. 19 Beacon, Dr. Israel comments that "confidentiality was the basis" on which faculty and staff spoke to Julius Chambers. Dean Israel's explanation is helpful. Yet it fails to explain satisfactorily why only one sentence of Mr. Chambers' report has been released. It is hard to imagine that the substance of Mr. Chambers' report cannot be shared with the community without violating the confidentiality of those with whom he spoke. I strongly urge Dr. Chabotar to share the substance of Mr. Chambers' report.

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COMIC BY BRETT McDONOUGH