

Life Before Guilford: Adrienne Israel

ACADEMIC DEAN SHARES LOVE OF EDUCATION, SOCIAL ACTIVISM

By Terah Kelleher
STAFF WRITER

She protested for student rights in the 1960's, worked as a reporter, and went to Ghana to interview Ghanaian World War II veterans. But Adrienne Israel, vice president for academic affairs and academic dean, began her life in her great aunt's house in the industrial steel town of Massillon, Ohio.

"We were deeply rooted with the whole mentality that people have in the Midwest," said Israel. "The people I grew up around had a strong sense of identity as workers. So I got the love of getting things done and building things."

Israel's passion for writing began in the fourth grade when a teacher asked her to read one of her essays. She also helped form recreational sport leagues for the women at her school.

"School became the place I was most comfortable — socially and any other way," said Israel. "And my softball team is one of my fondest memories of childhood. I learned a lot about how to cooperate and respect other people."

Israel was almost always at the top of her class. Israel said that she received pressure from the

African American community to stay on the honor roll, and her white teachers asked her questions like, "Why can't all the black students be like you?"

"I began to feel that I was kind of a mascot or the exception," said Israel. "And I was not really being respected, as my community wasn't being respected. So I decided I was going to go to a historically black college."

Israel said that whenever she

got frustrated or did not know what to do, she went back to school. She received her bachelor's and master's degrees at Howard University and her doctorate from The Johns Hopkins University.

In the 1960's, Israel became a protest leader at Howard University. Among the causes she fought for was a judicial system for students and the right for students to sit on the committees that

evaluated teachers.

"I know for today's students it seems incomprehensible — the world turned upside down," said Israel. "We just had very restrictive lives that it's hard to fathom."

Israel's stepfather, a World War II veteran, told her about Ghanaian soldiers who fought for the British. Looking into the lives of these soldiers became the subject of her dissertation. The British promised the soldiers better lives

after the war; however, after the war the Ghanaian government felt no obligation to pay the soldiers' pensions.

Working for The Washington Post, Baltimore Afro-American, and The Washington Afro-American newspapers soon became valuable experiences for Israel. Alone and with her tape recorder in hand, she interviewed at least 396 veterans in Ghana.

"My training as a reporter helped me persevere in order to get people to talk to me," said Israel. "And finally the flood gates opened. I got pictures from the men themselves, and many times I was driven to tears."

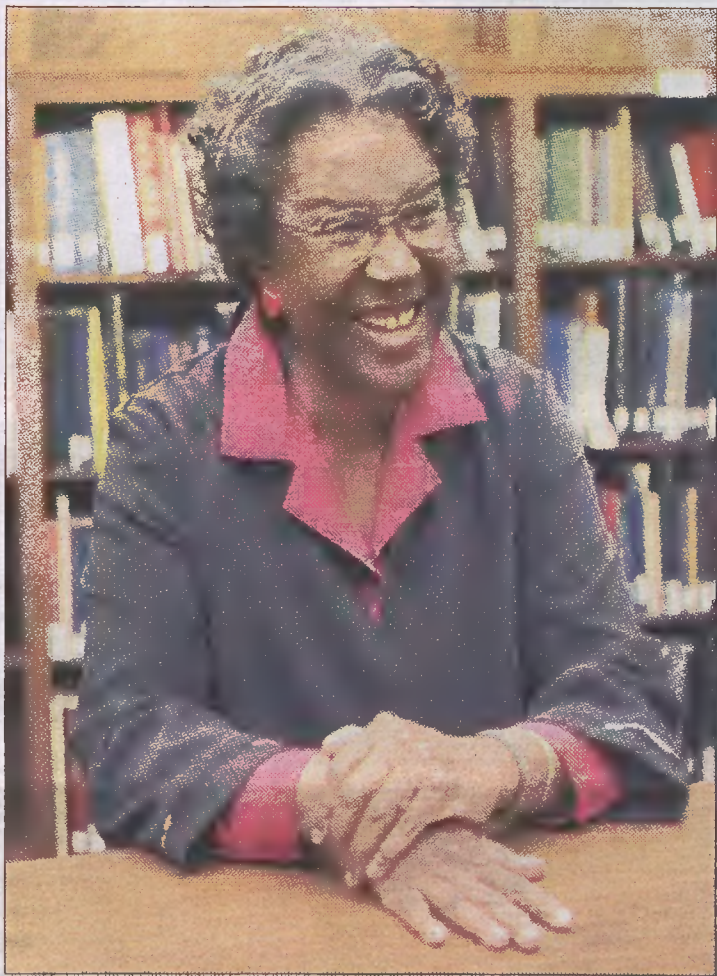
The Journal of Modern African Studies published some of her articles on the soldiers. These articles helped provoke the Ghanaian government into giving the soldiers their pensions.

"It really was a comfort for me to understand a civilization not grounded on monuments and how many roads you built," said Israel. "It's really more about community and relationships."

After coming back from Ghana, Israel craved a stable job and life.

"I thought I had rambled a bit and I had rambled enough," said Israel.

In 1982, she began teaching at Guilford. This position gave Israel a chance to inhabit the space she fell in love with as a child — a place where she feels most comfortable in life: school, or as she called it, the "life of the mind."



TAYLOR SHIELDS/ GUILFORDIAN



COURTESY OF ADRIENNE ISRAEL

(Left) Adrienne Israel, vice president for academic affairs and academic dean, converses on campus. (Right) Eighteen-month-old Israel poses for a picture.

Alums ask residents to envision a healthy Greensboro, plan downtown mural

By Robert Bell
STAFF WRITER

Not every painting starts with a single brush stroke. Some find their beginnings on the blank pages of a clipboard.

Over the next few months, two Guilford College graduates, with clipboards at hand, will canvass the city hoping to find inspiration from residents for a downtown mural to promote a healthier Greensboro.

The findings of Alyzza Callahan '10 and Kat Siladi '10 will be transferred to their canvas: a 40-foot cement wall on Lindsay Street.

Fittingly, the mural will look down over the Greensboro Children's Museum's Edible Schoolyard, a teaching garden and kitchen where children and families learn how to grow healthy foods using local and organic ingredients.

Callahan said that the mural will be a longstanding reminder for city residents to choose a healthier lifestyle.

"This will be something that will last far beyond us," said Callahan. "People for generations to come are going to be able to use this mural as a map to eating and living better."

Callahan, who volunteers at the Edible Schoolyard along with Siladi, came up with the idea for the mural on an end-of-semester train ride from Greensboro to her home in Massachusetts. The trip took her through once-bleak tunnels in Philadelphia that were transformed into works of art by local street artists.

Callahan stared out her window in awe.

"I thought to myself, 'Dang, this is so beautiful,'" said

Callahan. "Some people think murals are ugly, nothing more than graffiti. Really it's just another form of art. And like any other art, it's a form of communication."

Painting the mural won't come cheap. After buying the paint and securing the artist, Siladi estimates the cost will exceed \$2,000. Siladi hopes they can raise the money through fundraisers, grants, and donations from the public.

"We want this to be a community effort from the ground up," Siladi said. "From the ideas for the mural, to helping fund it; this should be inspired by the community."

On a recent Friday night downtown, Guilford students asked residents to describe what a healthy Greensboro would look like to them. Responses were diverse. Some people envisioned a city litter-free. Others wanted healthier foods to eat. Still, others want to see wider public transportation options or better communication between generations and ethnicities.

"It's interesting to hear how people are defining a healthier Greensboro," Callahan said. "We hope the mural in some way reflects everyone's ideas."

Brian Doyle, an art major at UNCG, likes the idea of a mural with a message. "You can never have enough art in a city — especially outdoor art like a mural. Not everyone has the time or wants to go to a museum. This can be a nice piece of drive-by art that can educate, too."

After a few more weeks of surveys, Callahan and Siladi will pore over the results and have a better idea of what the mural will look like. They plan on painting the wall in August. Residents are even invited to pick up a brush and help. There will even be a block party to celebrate the

wall's unveiling.

Callahan said August can't come soon enough.

"Everyone we've talked to so far said this is a great idea," she said. "I think the more the word spreads about this, the more folks are going to get excited."

Want to share your thoughts on how Greensboro can be healthier? Send your thoughts to gsmural@gmail.com.



CLAUD GABRIEL/GUILFORDIAN

Alyzza Callahan '10 gains inspiration for a downtown mural from Greensboro resident Brittany Drakeford. The mural, set to be painted this summer on Lindsay Street, will be made to encourage healthy lifestyles.