



To: UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees

From: Patricia S. Parker, Professor and Chair *Patricia S. Parker*
Faculty in The Department of Communication

Date: June 23, 2021

Re: Call for Action on the Nikole Hannah-Jones Tenure Case

The Department of Communication unequivocally supports The Hussman School of Journalism and Media faculty in their call to The University of North Carolina Board of Trustees to grant tenure to Nikole Hannah-Jones, winner of the Pulitzer Prize, Peabody Award, and MacArthur Foundation “genius grant.” Our colleagues followed the established tenure and promotion process in forwarding Hannah-Jones’s case for final review by the Board of Trustees, only to have the process stalled through inaction. Failure to act would be a dereliction of the Board’s duty.

We call on the Board of the Trustees to honor the objectives in the [Carolina Next Strategic Plan](#), which it endorsed. The denial of tenure to Nikole Hannah-Jones—a Black woman whose scholarship opens up intellectual debates about the complicated history of race in the United States—directly undermines two of the stated objectives of the Building Our Community Together Strategic Initiative:

- 1.1 Invest in policies, systems, and infrastructure that promote belonging, community and transparency throughout the University community.
- 1.3 Prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion in teaching, research and service, and in hiring, evaluation, retention and promotion of under-represented faculty and staff.

Whether intentional or not, the Board’s inaction is a form of violence that is antithetical to accountable and democratic communication. It creates harm. UNC-Chapel Hill is already experiencing a historical departure of some of the country’s most recognized BIPOC faculty leaders. They have been among those at the front lines of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts to strengthen this institution. The UNC-CH Black Caucus has reported that 70 percent of members in attendance at a recent meeting said they are considering joining this exodus. This is catastrophic and untenable.

The Board’s silence on Hannah-Jones’s tenure case speaks volumes to BIPOC faculty and to any faculty member whose scholarship engages with race and racism. It has far reaching consequences beyond any individual faculty member or department. We join the university community, as well as national and international communities, in calling on the Board of Trustees to act with integrity and transparency to correct this injustice.

cc: Chancellor Kevin Guskiewicz
Provost Bob Blouin
Dean Terry Rhodes
Dr. Mimi Chapman, Chair of the Faculty