

Editor:

As authors of our recent article, "The whole truth versus the admissible truth,"<sup>1</sup> in agreement with the membership of the Program in Psychiatry and the Law, Massachusetts Mental Health Center, Harvard Medical School (hereafter, the Program), we would like to express our deep appreciation for the careful attention paid to our work by Ezra Griffith MD,<sup>2</sup> editor of the Journal, in his commentary. We also acknowledge with gratitude his kind comments about the body of work from the Program. We hope that even further opening of the subject may result from the synergy of the two presentations.

Since Dr. Griffith's now-classic address as President of the American Academy of Psychiatry and Law (AAPL)<sup>3</sup> we consider our profession put on notice that we ignore at our peril the cultural dimensions of our work. Our own forensic experience confirms that the legal system is, as Dr. Griffith implies, largely made up of dominant group membership: white, male, upper economic class individuals; and that nondominant group members often face institutionalized racism and classism to their detriment in that system. We and Dr. Griffith also agree in the above context that walking away from a case that constitutes bad faith is the appropriate response. Although we highlighted the pressures on experts while testifying, all members of the Program who discussed

the commentary agreed that the issues relevant to nondominant groups require far greater attention, not only for experts who are themselves nondominant group members but for all experts.

Forensic psychiatrists might appropriately weigh in on the prospect of attempting to affect the rituals of the legal system. (Roth B, personal communication, 2004) with the aim of increasing the level of justice in that system. The difficulty of so doing will challenge us all.

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#### References

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2. Griffith EEH: Truth in forensic psychiatry: a cultural response to Gutheil and colleagues. *J Am Acad Psychiatry Law* 31:428-31, 2003
3. Griffith EEH: Ethics in forensic psychiatry: a cultural response to Stone and Appelbaum. *J Am Acad Psychiatry Law* 26:171-84, 1998