

My name is James Moses. I am a university professor, a historian, and I am Jewish. I am a former member of the Board of Trustees for both Congregation B'nai Israel in Little Rock, where I am a congregant, and the Jewish Federation of Arkansas. I am a scholar of the Jewish South, a member of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, and the author of *Just and Righteous Causes: Rabbi Ira Sanders and the Fight for Racial and Social Justice in Arkansas, 1926-1963*, published in 2018 by the University of Arkansas Press.

I am also in my twentieth year as a proud member of the history faculty at Arkansas Tech University, an institution now in the throes of a controversy surrounding a gift from the estate of a late ATU professor who has been charged with having taught anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial. His scholarship endowment (he died three years ago), the result of a provision in his will designed for the dual purpose of honoring his mother and assisting financially-needy students, provides nearly \$200,000 in funds for a scholarship in his and his mother's name for students who wish to attend ATU and major in history. His estate made the same scholarship bequest to both Henderson State University and Mississippi State University, his alma maters. The question surrounding the present controversy is: should Arkansas Tech University accept the gift, given the current accusations made about the former professor's alleged conduct? Should we change the name of the scholarship? What is to be done?

My part in the controversy is this: in 2005, as an associate professor in the department of history, I became aware through a student that the professor, in his Fall 2005 graduate readings seminar entitled Modern European Intellectual History, had listed among the readings (from which a student would select one book) three works which I knew to be both anti-Semitic in nature and examples of Holocaust denial (the other works listed represented a variety of sound and well-regarded histories). I was appalled. After discussing the matter with three concerned students from that course (nearly half the class), I advised them to drop it, and I took them on as independent study students so they could earn the three hours of credit for which they had signed up. I then immediately wrote a fiery and highly detailed letter to the university president explaining the utter and absolute unacceptability of these books as historical works, and urged him to take action, up to and including the professor's dismissal. The department confronted the professor as to his motives and intent. He denied any attempt to deny the Holocaust, but rather stated his intent was to offer the widest possible range of views on the event, not to deny its existence as an actual historical occurrence. We were not satisfied. The Holocaust as a topic was dropped from his class, as were the books. All of this occurred between the first and second meetings of this seminar, so neither the books nor the topic of the Holocaust were ever assigned, read, or discussed. Immediately, ATU took the following punitive measures as a result of that letter and that confrontation: the seminar, while it continued, did not make use of the three offensive books, nor did it even reference or address the Holocaust at all. The professor, though tenured, was removed from the graduate faculty. The professor was then barred from teaching courses at all the following semester, and became an object of close scrutiny by me and the administration from that point until his death ten years later. In other words, ATU took immediate, forceful, and effective action to disrupt whatever the intent was behind using those books. The professor was disciplined in as severe a means as was available short of his firing. I was satisfied that all appropriate action had been taken.

The present controversy regarding the question of whether or not to accept the bequest from his estate cites this incident as primary "proof" that the professor "repeatedly espoused Holocaust denial" for decades to unsuspecting students as a valid historical viewpoint. This is simply false. Could it have been his intent for this specific seminar? Quite possibly; indeed, (in my opinion) probably. I, and indeed no one, knows the answer to that. Here's what we do know with 100%

certainty. The 2005 seminar was effectively “blown up” by my letter after having met only one time, the Holocaust was never even discussed in that seminar, the offensive books were never read or even used, and the ATU administration and the department of history acted very forcefully and with purpose to stop even the possibility of it occurring. Of course the very fact he attempted this is alarming, and ATU acknowledged that by virtue of strong and immediate action. That’s why I wrote the letter, and it had the intended effect.

These are the undeniable facts.

As to the charges that the professor was anti-Semitic and regularly or even sporadically introduced anti-Semitism or Holocaust denial into his lectures, I have no first-hand knowledge, since I never sat in any of his classes; however, I can certainly attest to this: no student in my twenty years here has ever told me nor any of my departmental colleagues anything along those lines, and I suspect I would have heard something, sometime, from someone, especially after 2005. Former and current deans and department heads alike report that nothing outside of the 2005 incident ever crossed their desks.

As for me, I never heard even one complaint.

After 2005, I was hyper-vigilant in trying to “catch” the professor in espousing or manifesting any anti-Semitism or Holocaust denial, either in his classroom (outside of which I occasionally lingered near the doorway), in the hallway conversations which frequently occur, his office conversations, in any context whatsoever (my office and his were less than twenty feet apart). I never heard anything along those lines.

The argument is made that “some students” and “some people” have said that the professor was anti-Semitic, but no one is willing to say specifically who, when, where.

I spoke in favor of having the professor’s name removed from the scholarship, but the university cannot do that without the permission of the estate. We cannot act unilaterally. It is, therefore, all or nothing.

I do not defend the man. Far from it. I defend my university and my department against charges of inaction, ignorance, and dereliction of duty, and I protest the misuse of my 2005 letter and the misrepresentations based on it to prosecute a case through hyperbole, innuendo, and outright fabrication. I protest the wholly inaccurate portrayal of ATU as having harbored a known and habitual Holocaust denier for decades. This is simply untrue. I protest the trying of this matter in the court of public opinion absent any input of evidence from the university, and without regard to other relevant available facts.

ATU may well reject the scholarship endowment. If we do, let it be known that we do so based on a studied and deliberate investigation of the facts, and not on the basis of hearsay, suppositions, or falsehoods. Personally, I believe the scholarship money can be a force for good. It is, after all, ATU money paid to him as salary, now returned to us as a means to honor his late mother and assist students. With this endowment, financially-needy students will have the opportunity as history majors to explore *these very issues* in any number of courses in which they are addressed, including the Holocaust, its historic and contemporary context, historic and contemporary anti-Semitism, issues of social and racial justice, as well as have the opportunity to partake in any number of extracurricular programs involving these exact issues. I think that represents a good, a positive thing.

ATU is not Dr. Link, and Dr. Link is not us. We do not honor him. The values and beliefs ascribed to him are the very things we as an institution stand forthrightly against. Our tool of choice is, and always has been, the truth.

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