



Subscribe
Starting at 99 cents

Members
Sign In

Emory offers apology for past anti-Semitism

Dental program once flunked Jewish students



0

By Kate Brumback | ASSOCIATED PRESS | OCTOBER 12, 2012

ATLANTA — Emory University is apologizing for years of anti-Semitism at its dental school, when dozens of Jewish students were flunked out or forced to repeat courses, leaving many feeling inadequate and ashamed for decades despite successful careers.

The Atlanta school invited many of those former students to meet with president James Wagner on Wednesday and then attend a screening of a documentary about the discrimination, which heavily relies on video interviews collected by one of those students, Dr. Perry Brickman.

“We knew individually and collectively what the truth was,” Brickman said. “But the truth in a situation like this is never really validated until the perpetrator says sorry.”

In one interview, former student Ronald Goldstein recalls the dean asking him, “Why do you Jews want to go into dentistry? You don’t have it in the hands.” Another, George Marholin, recalls a professor coming into a room cursing at him and calling him a “damn Jew.”

Get Ground Game in your

inbox:

Daily updates and analysis on national politics
from James Pindell.

Sign Up

“I’m sorry. We are sorry,” Wagner said in a ballroom packed with several hundred people.

Under dental school dean John Buhler from 1948 to 1961, about 65 percent of Jewish students were flunked out or forced to repeat courses, while the rate of failure or repeats was dramatically lower before that period, according to statistics compiled by then-director of the Anti-Defamation League, Art Levin. Anti-Semitism at the dental school spread beyond Buhler to other members of the faculty as well, said university vice president Gary Hauk.

An admissions quota at the time allowed about four Jewish students a year, so there were probably about 48 Jewish students admitted during Buhler’s tenure, Hauk said. At a private meeting with Wagner on Wednesday 31 former students or their families were present.

Talk of discrimination in the South in the mid-20th century often focuses on blacks. In the 1950s, while Jews were being discriminated against at the dental school, there was a push at Emory to integrate black students, and the school in 1962 successfully sued the state of Georgia to overturn a state statute that would strip the tax-exempt status of any private college or university that admitted black students.

Some students didn’t realize the extent of the anti-Semitism until they got letters alleging poor academic performance.

Brickman, who is now 79, entered Emory in 1951. All four Jewish students in his dental school class were gone within two years. He did well his first year and was never

summoned to speak about his academic performance, so he was shocked to receive a letter from Buhler in the summer of 1952 saying he'd flunked out.

“Nobody believed us,” Brickman said. “Even our parents said, ‘Oh, you must not have studied enough. Emory’s a good school. They wouldn’t do anything like that.’”

Buhler resigned in 1961, but Emory denied that his leaving had anything to do with allegations of anti-Semitism. He became dean of the dental school at the University of South Carolina and died in 1976.

Ashamed and confused, Brickman and his fellow students clammed up.

Brickman graduated with honors from the University of Tennessee’s dental school and enjoyed a successful career in Atlanta.

0 COMMENTS

Most Popular In News →



A comeback fueled by (Celtic) pride

This is the way you want your team to rally from a massive deficit. [MORE...](#)

Young men falling to the bottom of the income ladder

Despite the fact that men aged 25 to 34 are better educated than they were four decades ago, their