

## **A Resolution of the East Texas Historical Association Board of Directors:**

Freedom of speech and academic freedom are essential hallmarks of both our American system of representative democracy and the liberal tradition of this nation's higher education system. Without either of those crucial underpinnings the framework of both orders will crumble. Collin College, a public institution of higher learning, has appallingly violated these indispensable rights in its inexcusable dismissal of Dr. Michael Phillips. For such egregious actions, the Board of Directors of the East Texas Historical Association condemns the actions of the Collin College Board of Trustees, its academic administration, and President Neil Matkin.

A professional academic has multiple missions. He or she leads and teaches students in the classroom, provides advice and instruction outside the classroom, researches and publishes scholarly work in his/her field in order to share it with the discipline and the world, and often serves as a voice, commentator, and expert analyst on the development and course of society as a whole. Dr. Michael Phillips, in all aspects of that mission, has performed admirably. He is the author or editor of twelve scholarly works—many of which have won awards—and has presented his research in approximately forty different venues. He is an accomplished and sought-after speaker, one who has willingly shared his ideas with the public in any capacity he was asked to do so. Moreover, he is a first-rate educator. He has been awarded teaching awards from both his peers and the students he teaches. His student evaluations are excellent, filled with praiseworthy comments such as “I had always hated history before this semester, and now it's one of my favorite classes.” A college professor can ask for no higher acclaim.

Yet, how did Dr. Phillips' institution award his fulfillment of his duties? They fired him. The reasons for such a dismissal are shallow. Officially, Collin College has chosen to cowardly proclaim that they did not renew his contract, but the details tell a much different narrative. Dr. Phillips was issued discipline citations on occasions for the following “offenses:” writing a letter and taking part in campaigns to rid Dallas County of racist Confederate monuments and memorials; protesting and speaking out against Collin College's irresponsible response to a COVID epidemic that has now killed over 800,000 Americans; and encouraging his students to wear facial coverings in his classroom to protect both him (Dr. Phillips is a diabetic and thus immuno-compromised) and fellow students. What Dr. Phillips, in all instances, was doing is his job, and for that Collin College chose to end his career at an institution to which he has given his heart and soul for decades.

Collin College's offenses against Dr. Phillips are outrageous. For the above reasons, the Board of Directors of the East Texas Historical Association officially condemns the actions of Collin College in firing Dr. Michael Phillips and furthermore calls for his reinstatement at his current position as well as a formal, public apology from the Board of Trustees and President Matkin for taking such a course against an educator who was simply doing his job.

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