

Hello, my name is Morgan Arnett. Up until recently, I was working as the Program Coordinator for a local non-profit art education center, Locust Street Art. As I am no longer employed by Locust Street Art, I would like to attempt to clarify some possible misinformation regarding the recent events surrounding Locust Street Art and the Ohr Temimim school.

I worked for Locust Street Art for just over a year, teaching art classes both onsite and out in the community. In that capacity, I served a diverse population in several settings throughout the Buffalo area such as assisted living centers, family service centers, refugee centers, community centers, the Erie County Correctional Facility, and others. In my role as an art instructor, I was fully committed to honoring, respecting, and uplifting my students.

A few weeks ago, I was promoted to a Program Coordinator position in which I was responsible for coordinating off-site programming. To be clear, this position has nothing to do with determining who attends any type of classes, workshops, or art camps at Locust Street Art; Locust Street Art has always provided free and low-cost art classes for the community, and is open to all. My role was to maintain and cultivate professional relationships with other organizations in our community.

Recently, I was emailed by an employee of the Ohr Temimim school, and we began a conversation that extended over the next few weeks, about setting up programming. I felt like we got along well, and I was very excited to set up a new opportunity for both Locust St and Ohr Temimim.

It was not until after we had worked together in planning programming that (while reading more about the school on their website) I first saw the affiliation between Ohr Temimim and the Buffalo Jewish Federation, which has explicitly vocalized support for the state of Israel over the last several months.

Having seen the events in Palestine over the last few months, such as the attack on the Rafah refugee camp and the rising death toll of Palestinian civilians including thousands of children, I believed that the best thing for Locust Street Art would be to not enter into partnership with any organization connected to The Buffalo Jewish Federation while emotions are running so high amidst these events. At the same time, I knew that this was a very complicated situation, and wanted to make sure that this was the correct position to take before I sent anything, as I did not wish to overstep my bounds and speak for Locust Street Art. I, therefore, went to management to make sure this was an appropriate message to send and received clear approval of the email before I sent it.

In hindsight, I can see that I neglected to make my reasoning clear in the email, and I profusely apologize for the understandable misinterpretation of my words. Jewish people have faced centuries of violence and discrimination for nothing more than their ethnic and religious identities and I never meant to imply that Ohr Temimim had done anything wrong simply for being a Jewish school. Being Jewish has nothing to do with supporting the state of Israel, and my position was purely in response to the statements of the Buffalo Jewish Federation. I was trying to stand up for what I believe is right and acted with only the best intentions.

I only wish that I had expressed myself better in the email and had made it clear whose support I was referring to, and that just because we were ending a professional partnership with their organization, it in no way meant that their students or teachers would ever not be welcome at

Locust Street Art. I also wish the email had been scrutinized more internally before it went out to avoid misinterpretation.

I love, support, and stand by the Jewish community wholeheartedly just as much as the Palestinian people; the actions of the state of Israel in no way represent the Jewish community as a whole and that was never my suggestion. I hope anyone hurt by the aforementioned message can understand I never meant to cause any harm.

Thank you.