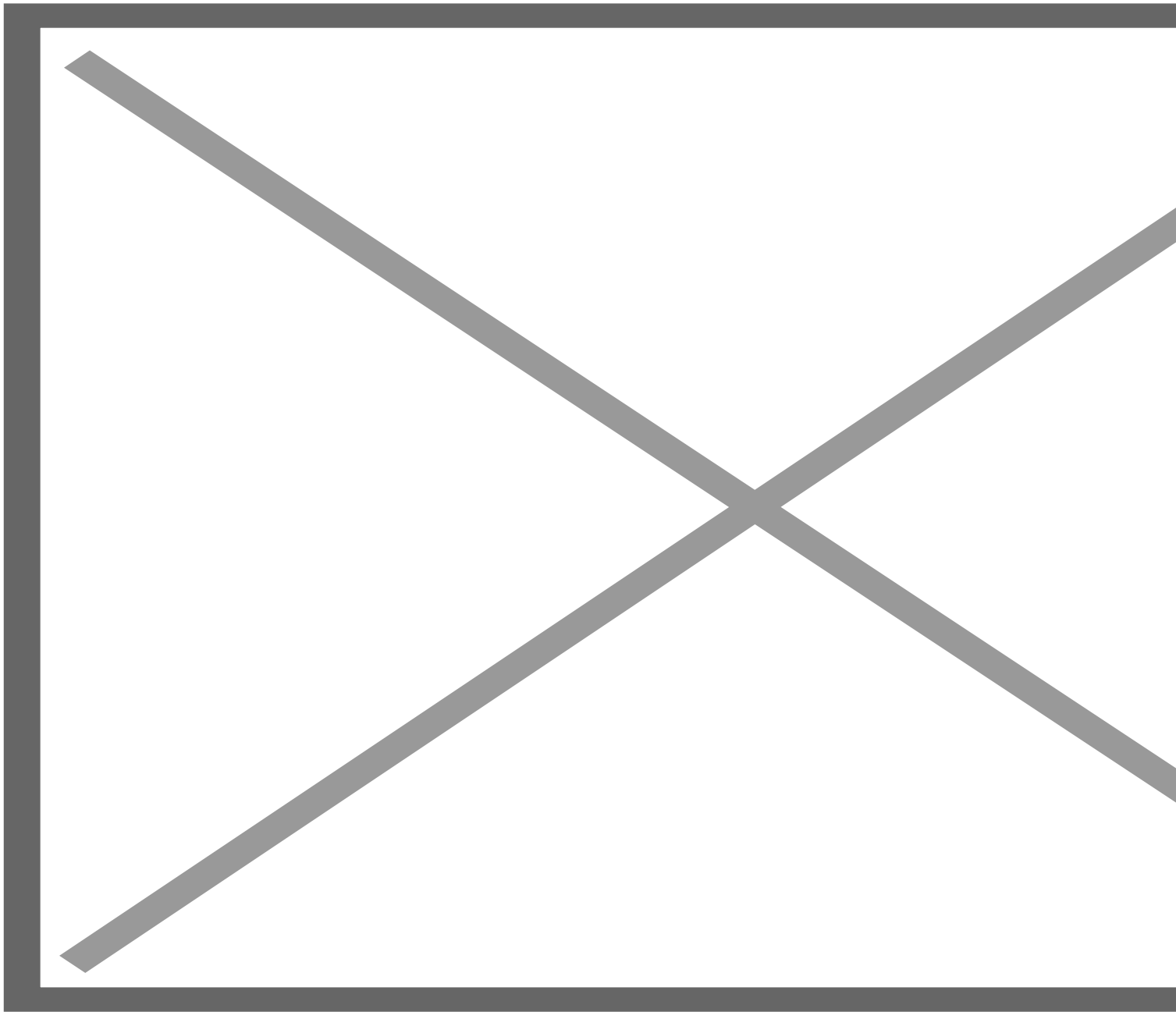


Jason Arday should be alive

A competition for clicks turned one man's exaggerations into a referendum on his life.

by [Brandon Ambrosino](#)

August 28, 2026



Century illustration

Jason Arday, the ex-Cambridge professor at the center of a plagiarism and hiring controversy, was found dead August 14. He was 41 years old.

Arday was accused of exaggerating aspects of his life and achievements, gaining a prominent professorship at a prestigious university. Instances of his alleged plagiarism were first made public by Nathan Cofnas, a self-identified race realist who was terminated after writing in a blog post that if society brought back meritocracy, “Blacks would disappear from almost all high-profile positions outside of sports and entertainment.” Arday was Black and, for a few moments, held one of the most prestigious academic positions in the world.

Since these allegations were made public, Arday has been the subject of features in *The Atlantic*, *The Guardian*, BBC, and *The New York Times*. Nearly all of them have raised questions about Arday’s qualifications, his trustworthiness, and the closed-door hiring processes of elite universities. But at the end of the day, well, I’ll let Arday finish my thought:

“We’re talking about academia here. I didn’t murder somebody. I think the cruelty that I’ve experienced and the positioning of me as this kind of liar and fantasist is totally unacceptable.”

Perhaps we might choose to disbelieve Arday here. He exaggerated some things. Was he really experiencing cruelty? But a quick search on X and Reddit and even a cursory read of the articles about him confirm that he was telling the truth.

Besides, we know how we are. We know *who* we are. We know that when we join forces on the internet against a common enemy, we are out for blood. And blood is what we got.

I have to admit that when news of Arday’s alleged plagiarism and lying broke, I followed the story. I speculated. I questioned the integrity of the academy, of the publisher. With each new article I clicked on, my sense of injustice grew. My rage grew. How dare this happen in *my* world. I don’t give anything a pass. *I* am a beacon of morality in a dark world of sin, which you, person I’ve never met, can be sure of based on the articles I share.

But we’re talking about academia here.

I can’t shake the feeling that the last days and hours of Arday’s life were spent ignoring calls and messages and emails from reporters out for a new angle, a new comment, a new whatever, something shiny to lure readers on the hunt for injustice.

Arday’s cause of death has not been confirmed. But he is dead. Those of us who read the stories may feel sorrow. Those of us who wrote the stories may feel guilt. Some, perhaps, feel justification. *This only proves my reporting. If he hadn’t lied in the first place. . . .*

If the internet has ruined anything, it’s our sense of justice. There was a time when humans yearned to speak truth to power. Now, the powerful speak headlines to anyone who will listen. Anyone whose eyeballs can be converted into a monetizable data point. The competition for eyeballs is fierce: there’s porn, social media, shopping, Reddit arguments. To win eyeballs, the stakes must be shown to be incalculably high, life or death. Every political story becomes a story about the soul of democracy, every story about AI becomes a story about extinction, every story about an academic lying becomes a story about the future of knowledge. When the stakes are always life and death, don’t be surprised when death finally wins.

In this media landscape, where eyeballs are gold, the most important thing the powerful can convince us of is that they aren’t just making a buck off us; they’re pursuing the truth. They convince us this is more than clickbait

by using words like “accountability” and “justice,” words we then use when we discuss the story over coffee. But the dead body of a 41 year-old who tried to remind us that *we are talking about academia here* shines light on the entire scheme. Cat’s out of the bag. Body’s still warm.

To our shame, Christians have eagerly gone along with these rituals, probably because our inherited traditions speak so eloquently about justice and accountability, admonishing us to practice such things. But the same traditions teach us that we should forgive people eagerly and often, that we shouldn’t be afraid of taking responsibility for our wrongs because our God and his people are longing to restore fellowship with us. The same traditions, too, woefully warn us against calling darkness light, and against letting our yes really be no. So when a collective call for justice ends with the dead body of a neurodivergent Black man, we need to honestly reflect on what it is we thought we were doing with our clicking and our sharing and our raging. And most important of all, we need to consider whether God was really with us. This is a God who desires mercy over sacrifice, who stands in solidarity with society’s reviled, plenty of whom end up in headlines.

Arday might have lied and plagiarized and been sloppy with some of his research. But *we are talking about academia here*. He should be alive. He should have admitted his errors, and we all should have moved on. Most people have forgotten how to move on. But we Christians can show them how it is done. If atonement theology means anything, it means that God does not believe that our sins should lead to our death. When we look to the cross of Jesus, we hear God tell us, *Yes, you have messed up. Yes, you have harmed yourself and other people. But no, you do not deserve to die. And if you insist on someone’s death, then it will be my own.*

Christians can show the world what it looks like to pursue justice while rigorously safeguarding life, even the lives of those who have practiced injustice. We can show our neighbors what it looks like to hold people accountable while simultaneously holding ourselves accountable to them. At the end of the day, God has spoken an irrevocable yes to every single one of us. Any practice of justice that does not respect that yes is not a Christian practice.

May God comfort Jason Arday, and may he forgive us for failing to imitate Jesus, who is quick to forgive, ready to embrace, and eager to move on.