



The Death of Jason Arday and Solving Racism

On 14 August 2026, Jason Arday, Cambridge's youngest-ever Black professor was found dead at his London home. He had resigned on 5th August, after accusations of plagiarising parts of his PhD thesis, and other accusations about inconsistencies in statements about his career and achievements.

The plagiarism accusations first surfaced publicly because of Nathan Cofnas, an American philosophy postdoctoral researcher. Cofnas said he had run Arday's PhD dissertation through plagiarism-detection software and found substantial unattributed overlap with earlier published work. In July 2026, he shared his findings in a post on his personal Substack newsletter.

This post triggered a media frenzy that Cambridge's chancellor, Chris Smith, publicly described as a "racist feeding frenzy," and journalism professor, Steven Barnett of the University of Westminster, said the volume and timing of coverage — 249 articles in 22 days, including 188 published after Arday's resignation and explicit request to be left alone, amounted to "persecution, not investigation." The vigil organized by 'Stand Up to Racism' on Monday, 17th August, in Trafalgar Square, London, also strongly identified racism as a motive for the mass attention Arday received from the media.

The accusations of racism have also been evidenced by comparisons with white professors, who have been found guilty of plagiarism but not have not received the media attention that Arday did. UK Fact Check Politics shared the example of Cambridge Professor Dr William O'Reilly who was found to have plagiarised and threatened his own student's work but only six articles were written about him by the British press.

Cofnas and others are claiming that the coverage was proportionate, by arguing that the stories are not just about Arday, but Cambridge's alleged institutional failures. Critics claim Arday was appointed to his position due to Cambridge' 'diversity drive', and due diligence was not conducted on his suitability for the post.

The death of Jason Arday, the truth about his appointment and qualifications, and the accusations of racism, have led to division and debate, as it highlights the different ideas and beliefs that exist in society about race/ethnicity in a pluralist society. In particular the focus has been placed on the policy of 'DEI' which stands for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. It is a framework and organisational practice used in workplaces and schools to ensure fair treatment, access, and representation for all people, especially those from historically underrepresented or marginalised groups.

DEI is a practice that has been attacked by Nathan Cofnas. He is currently a postdoc in the Department of Philosophy and Moral Sciences at Ghent University, Belgium. His research centers on philosophy of science (especially biology), moral psychology, values in science, ethics, and political theory. He has drawn controversy for arguing in favor of "race science."

In 2019 he published a 'Philosophical Psychology' article arguing for research into race and intelligence; nine academics publicly stated the paper failed academic standards and had "racist ideological undertones," and the journal's editor later resigned amid the fallout. Cofnas has described himself as a "race realist" and has written that in a genuine meritocracy the number of Black faculty at elite universities would approach zero! He has also written defending the legitimacy of Zionism.

Cofnas himself argues that his work is scientific inquiry into contested empirical questions that he says has been unfairly politically suppressed. However, it is these views that he holds that have led to the accusations of racism as a motivator behind his 'reveal' of Jason Arday.

His critics characterise his work as scientific racism with eugenic implications. Cambridge's UCU branch issued a statement in February 2024, saying Cofnas "promotes a discredited, 'scientific,' 'biological' understanding of 'race' and calling his work "not only a form of race pseudo-science, but also of eugenics."

What happened to Arday is an indication that Cofnas is just part of a larger problem. What we can see is that racism is an issue that has not been solved in Western society, through their ideas and policies of multiculturalism and diversity. Indeed, Western civilization, has spectacularly failed to unite different ethnic groups, rather we see a continuation of division and discord. This is because ideas such as eugenics, are not separate to western civilization, but an integral part of it, used to justify Western colonialism.

The idea that race is linked to intelligence developed alongside European attempts to classify human populations during the 18th and 19th centuries. Thinkers such as Carl Linnaeus and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach classified humans into racial groups, initially based largely on physical characteristics. These classifications were later transformed into hierarchical theories of human ability, particularly during European colonialism and the rise of scientific racism. In the 19th century, thinkers such as Francis Galton promoted eugenics—the belief that supposedly superior hereditary traits should be encouraged. By the early 20th century, some psychologists used intelligence tests to argue that racial differences in test performance represented inherited differences in intellectual ability.

However, this interpretation has been strongly challenged by subsequent research. Early intelligence testing was affected by language, education, socioeconomic conditions and cultural familiarity. Modern genetics provides an even stronger refutation of the idea that racial categories represent distinct biological populations with different intellectual capacities. The historical claim that race determines intelligence emerged from racial classification and scientific racism, but modern anthropology, genetics and psychology provide no basis for treating racial categories as innate measures of intellectual ability.

Despite there being no evidence, the existence of such ideas led to a systemic and blatant racism that still exists in societies today. Through colonialism it was even spread through the lands of colonised people impacting the local populations view of each other.

And now we find it raising its ugly head again, as the Western societies are impacted by politicians and so-called academics and thinkers that seek to continue Western civilization's dominance.

Islam can actually solve the race issue. All Muslims must accept that all races/ethnic groups are a creation of Allah (swt) and these groups do not differ in status or intelligence. Allah (swt) said, **يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقْوَاهُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعْلَمُ خَيْرٍ ۖ ﴿١٣﴾** **"O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may 'get to' know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware."** [TMQ Surah Al-Hujurat 49:13].

The explanation is given in the Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Allah declared to mankind that He (swt) has created them us from a single person, Adam, and from that person He created his mate, Hawwa'. From their offspring He made nations, comprised of tribes, which include subtribes of all sizes, both Arab and non-Arab. The only difference between us is in the religion that we follow and our obedience to Allah (swt) and that we following His Messenger (saw).

Allah's statement, **"that you may know one another"** refers to our recognition of these differences.

However, what actually counts in distinguishing us, and gives us honor over others, is our Taqwa, fear of Allah, not our family lineage. There are many Hadiths from the Prophet that support this meaning. Al-Bukhari narrated that Abu Hurayrah said, "Some people asked the Prophet (saw), 'Who is the most honorable among people', He replied, **«أَكْرَمُهُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اتَّقَاهُمْ»** **"The most honorable among them with Allah is the one who has the most Taqwa."**

They said, 'We did not ask you about this.' He said, **«فَأَكْرَمُ النَّاسِ يُوسُفُ نَبِيُّ اللَّهِ، ابْنُ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ، ابْنُ خَلِيلِ اللَّهِ»** **“Then the most honorable person is Yusuf, Allah's Prophet, the son of Allah's Prophet (Yaqub), the grandson of Allah's Prophet (Ishaq), the great grandson of Khalilullah (Ibrahim).”** They said, 'We did not ask you about this.' He said, **«فَعَنْ مَعَادِنِ الْعَرَبِ»** **“Then you want to ask me about the Arab lineage”** They said, 'Yes.' He said, **«فَخَيْرُكُمْ فِي الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ خَيْرُكُمْ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ إِذَا فَهَمُوا»** **“Those among you who were best in Jahiliyyah, are the best among you in Islam, if they attain Shariah understanding.”** (Al-Bukhari)

So, it is made clear to us, that we cannot think of ourselves as better than each other based on our race and ethnicity. The Companions (ra) of the Prophet (saw) were from different backgrounds, the Muslims during the time of the Islamic Khilafah State came from diverse backgrounds and all united together as one Ummah. Tribalism was understood to be a jahil (pre-Islamic) idea, modern day nationalism is another manifestation of it, and both are clearly condemned in Islam.

Cofnas is trying to elevate the idea of intelligence linked to race. This can also be refuted by a study of Islamic texts. In Arabic, intelligence is synonymous with the term “al-‘aql” (reason), signifying the ability to think and understand. The Qur'an emphasises the importance of intelligence by referencing the term “aql” and its derivatives 49 times in verb form. The Quran uses active verbs like ta'qilun (do you not reason), yatafakkarun (they reflect), and yataadabbarun (they ponder) hundreds of times to challenge blind imitation. The People of Understanding is also used, Ulul Albab (the people of intellect), they are described as those who use their minds to observe the universe and remember Allah (swt).

The call to reason and use the mind to establish the existence of Allah (swt) and the proof of the miracle of the noble Qur'an, is not specified to a certain ethnic group, but to all of humankind.

Allah (swt) said, **«وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا»** **“Indeed, We have dignified the children of Adam, carried them on land and sea, granted them good and lawful provisions, and privileged them far above many of Our creatures”** [TMQ Surah Al-Isra 17:70].

Al-Qurtubi said: “The correct view in this regard is that Allah has favored and honored mankind by conferring the blessing of 'intellect' which is what makes them competent for religious obligations and by means of which one can know his Lord, understand His speech, recognize His blessings, and believe in His Messengers”

This refers to ALL the children of Adam (as) regardless of their colour, race, ethnic background, wealth, status and gender.

To create a society where racism does not exist, we must remove the corrupt ideas that have originated from the disbelievers and replace them with the truth revealed to us through Islam. We must remove the systems that have originated from the disbelievers, and replace them with the Islamic systems that treat human problems, solving them with justice. Every citizen is treated according to the law, not according to the colour of their skin or their ethnicity, or social standing of wealth. Throughout history the Islamic Khilafah (Caliphate) State was unique in its ability to unite people from different lands and different languages and races and to merge them into one ummah and one state. The solution to racism cannot come from the kuffar (disbelievers) who have created a system based on division, nationality, and racist ideas.

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