

TWENTY A DAY MEDIA EXTREMISM THROUGH FAR-RIGHT CAPTURE:

**THE COMMUNICATIVE ARCHITECTURE OF A DIGITAL
LYNCHING, THE MIGRATION OF DEI DISCOURSE INTO
THE BRITISH MAINSTREAM PRESS AND A LEGISLATIVE
FRAMEWORK FOR RADICAL DEMOCRATIC MEDIA REFORM**

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ABOUT CARE

The Center for Culture-Centred Approach to Research and Evaluation (CARE) at Massey University, Aotearoa New Zealand, is a global hub for communication research that uses participatory and culture-centred methodologies to develop community-driven communication solutions to health and wellbeing. Through experiments in methods of radical democracy anchored in community ownership and community voice, the Centre collaborates with communities, community organisers, community researchers, advocates and activists to imagine and develop sustainable practices for prevention, health care organising, food and agriculture, worker organising, migrant and refugee rights, indigenous rights, rights of the poor and economic transformation.

Prof Mohan J Dutta is the Director of CARE and author of books such as *Neoliberal Health Organizing*, *Communicating Health*, and *Voices of Resistance*.

This white paper may include images and texts around topics such as sexual violence, physical violence, identity-based discrimination and harassment, and genocide. I encourage you to care for your safety and wellbeing while reading this paper.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Jason Arday was found dead at his home in Battersea on 14 August 2026, aged 41, nine days after resigning from the University of Cambridge with a letter saying he had reached the limits of what any person should reasonably be expected to endure.^{1,2} He had been Cambridge's youngest Black professor. In the 22 days before his death the British national press published 249 articles about him, 188 of them in the nine days after that letter, at an average of nearly 21 a day.³ On the morning he died a national newspaper published a psychiatrist's diagnostic speculation about a man that column concedes he had never met. At 11 minutes past three that afternoon another national newspaper published a piece contesting his account of his own childhood. One minute later the London Ambulance Service called the police to his address.^{1,3}

This paper does not claim that the coverage killed him. That is a matter for the coroner. What the evidence establishes, with unusual precision, is the communicative environment he was living inside when he died, and the political project that built it.

As the volume of coverage tripled, the proportion doing evidentiary work fell from 74 per cent to 52 per cent. The proportion operating on the man rather than on any allegation returned to 43 per cent in his final week, so that more headlines attacked his person in those seven days than in the entire three weeks preceding them. The frame naming the racialised character of the scrutiny appeared in eight headlines out of 243.

Three formal analyses, new to this edition, establish the structure of that discourse.

Hierarchical cluster analysis of the 20 frames places the epithet frame, the deception frame and the contested-childhood frame on the same branch as the allegation frame, the verification frame and the institutional frame. Unsupervised clustering, given no instruction, groups the character attack together with the reporting. The two are not separable in this corpus.

Network analysis shows a dense, weakly modular discourse: 64 edges among 20 frames, density 0.34, Louvain modularity 0.10. A modularity that low means the discourse does not partition into distinct registers. It is one integrated formation. Within it the epithet frame is a structural hub, connected to 15 of the other 19 frames, with the second highest betweenness centrality in the network. The characterological label was not decoration at the edge of the coverage. It was load-bearing.

Sentiment analysis shows 73 per cent of headlines negatively valenced before the resignation and 70 per cent in the final week, with mean valence flat across the cycle. The tone did not escalate. It began at its ceiling and stayed there for 22 days, while the volume tripled and the composition shifted from allegation toward person.

* Evidence base: 249 items of British national press coverage across 15 outlets between 24 July and 15 August 2026, of which 243 headlines are frame-coded across 20 frames and seven clusters. Analyses reported here include hierarchical cluster analysis with silhouette validation, co-occurrence network analysis with Louvain community detection, and lexical sentiment analysis. Corpus, chronological register, codebook and frame analysis are available as companion documents.

The origin of the cycle is documented. The allegations entered public circulation on 21 July 2026 through a Substack post by Nathan Cofnas, a self-described race realist who has argued that in a meritocracy the number of Black professors at Harvard would approach zero, and whose litigation against Emmanuel College is sponsored by the Free Speech Union.^{4,5,6} Three days later the Telegraph carried the story under a headline replacing Arday's name with the phrase diversity poster boy, a phrase reused in at least eight further Telegraph headlines.³

The far-right frames concentrate with precision. Eighty four per cent of Daily Mail headlines carry either the delegitimation cluster or the anti-DEI cluster. The Spectator sits at 61 per cent, the Express at 58, the Sun and Telegraph at 50, the Times at 42. The Independent sits at seven and the BBC at eight.

The institutional finding is the gravest. In July 2025, a full year before the press cycle began, Arday set out in an open letter to a government minister that he had been threatened with a knife, physically assaulted and spat on, that rape and death threats had been made against him and his family, that bananas and bullets had been posted to him through the university campus, and that corrosive substances and mutilated animals had been sent to his family home.⁷ Cambridge has since confirmed that it installed panic alarms and screened his racist correspondence.⁸ The university therefore held, in its own risk register and for at least a year, a complete documentary account of a sustained racist campaign against an employee. It did not place that account into the public record at any point during the 22 days in which he was destroyed in print.

This edition closes with 68 recommendations and a model legislative framework in five parts: a statutory duty to protect, mandatory threat and academic freedom logging, mandatory public reporting including the handling of vexatious and campaign-originated complaints, a statutory definition of the coordinated hate campaign, and enforceable accountability for both the originators of such campaigns and the media that carry them.

1. THREE MINUTES PAST THREE

The page metadata says 14:11 UTC. That is 11 minutes past three in the afternoon of Friday 14 August 2026, London time, and it is the moment the Telegraph published a piece headlined Jason Arday says he was an illiterate, mute child. His schoolmates remember it differently. It was the 22nd day of the cycle and the last article published about him while he was alive.³

At 12 minutes past three the London Ambulance Service called the Metropolitan Police to an address in Battersea.² At six minutes past six that evening, three hours after the ambulance call and before the news had broken, the Times published a comment column mocking him. When the death became public the Times deleted the page. It carries no correction and no editor's note. The URL returns HTTP 410, which means gone.³

I begin with the clock because the clock makes this case analytically legible. Most of what we study in critical media scholarship must be inferred from patterns across long periods. Here the entire apparatus is compressed into 22 days and timestamped to the minute, and the outlets themselves generated the record.

I want to say plainly what I think happened, and then spend the rest of this paper showing the evidence. A Black professor at Cambridge was made into an exemplar. He was selected for that role by a hereditarian intellectual project that has spent years arguing that Black academic achievement is presumptively fraudulent, and he was delivered to a British national press that recognised the story immediately because it had been running a version of it for years.

The allegations were serious and parts of the reporting were substantive. That must be said early, because a critique requiring his innocence is a weak critique and it is not the one I am making. Two of his articles were corrected for text overlap, in December 2023 and in 2024.⁹ Liverpool John Moores University, which awarded the doctorate, investigated and upheld its decision.¹⁰ Concerns had been raised with Cambridge in 2023 by two

professors at other universities, and Cambridge replied that work carried out before he joined would normally be for the awarding institution to consider.⁹ All of that is a legitimate matter of research integrity, and none of it explains what follows.

The question is not whether he should have been scrutinised. The question is why the scrutiny of one Black professor required 249 articles in 22 days, when an adjudicated finding of plagiarism against a white professor at the same university produced almost no national coverage at all.

That comparison is not rhetorical. In 2018 William O'Reilly, an associate professor in early modern history at Cambridge, published an article in the Journal of Austrian-American History containing large portions of two essays by one of his own undergraduates, complete with his own handwritten praise on the originals. The student discovered it in 2021 and complained. After a two-year investigation a university tribunal concluded in February 2023 that the plagiarism was the product of negligent acts but was not deliberate. The journal retracted the article. O'Reilly remained in post, and threatened the student newspaper with legal action for reporting it.^{11,12,13} The university's own misconduct policy states that plagiarism will normally merit dismissal.¹³

National coverage of that adjudicated finding amounted to a Financial Times report, an Irish Mail on Sunday piece, the student paper Varsity and a Times Higher Education opinion blog. No nicknames. No reader polls. No columns by former Prime Ministers. No interest in his childhood.

2. WHAT THIS PAPER CLAIMS

I will not write the sentence that the coverage killed him. Nobody can honestly write it, the cause of death has not been established, and a file has been prepared for the coroner. Writing it would also be strategically foolish, because it converts a documented structural argument into a contested causal one and hands every outlet named here an easy denial.

The claim is narrower and harder to answer. The British national press constructed, over 22 days, a communicative environment of sustained delegitimation directed at a named individual, at a volume and in a register it has never applied to a comparable white subject, and it sustained and intensified that environment after he told the public in writing that he could not endure it. His family, in a statement issued through his publisher within hours of his death, described a campaign of misinformation and said it had been too much for him.^{2,14}

Whether that environment caused his death is for the coroner. That it existed, that it was racialised, that it was manufactured, and that it was politically useful to a specific project are matters of evidence.

3. A CULTURE-CENTRED FRAME

The culture-centered approach reads communication through the relationship between structure, culture and agency. Structures are the material and institutional arrangements organising access to voice and resources. Culture is the register of meanings through which communities make sense of their lives. Agency is the capacity of people at the margins to negotiate and remake those structures. The approach begins from the observation that the erasure of voice is the organising principle of communication systems rather than an accident within them, and that the communicative construction of the subaltern as absent is what makes structural violence sustainable.

Communicative inversion

A communicative inversion is the deployment of a symbol against the material reality it names. The language of freedom deployed to organise unfreedom. The language of merit deployed to defend inherited advantage. The language of academic integrity deployed by an intellectual project committed to the proposition that a whole population is intellectually inferior. Inversion works because it borrows the moral authority of the term it hollows out, and because the hollowing is invisible to audiences who encounter only the term.

Voice infrastructure

Voice is a function of infrastructure rather than a property of individuals. Whether a person can speak into a public in a way that registers depends on whether channels, institutions and forms exist through which their account can travel and be heard. Arday had one major interview across the entire cycle, in the Times on 31 July.³ Two hundred and forty eight other items were published about him. He raised a safeguarding concern with a national newspaper before it published a piece contesting his account of his own childhood, and the piece was published.³ When he organised statements from named classmates supporting his account, that paper introduced them as statements he had organised, a provenance qualification it did not apply to the witnesses who contradicted him.³

Whiteness as structure

Whiteness here is the organising logic of institutions that positions the white subject as the unmarked norm and the racialised subject as perpetually provisional, admitted on sufferance and revocable on suspicion. The numbers state the structure without commentary. Higher Education Statistics Agency data show that around 88 per cent of United Kingdom professors are white and Black professors account for under one per cent; Nature has reported the figure as 160 Black professors out of 22,855.^{15,16} Cambridge had five Black professors at the time of his appointment.¹⁶ Sara Ahmed's work on institutional diversity describes the mechanism exactly: the racialised body admitted to the institution becomes the evidence of the institution's virtue, and carries that evidentiary function alone.

The exemplar and the target are the same position. That is the argument of this paper in one sentence.

4. EVIDENCE BASE AND METHOD

The corpus is every distinct item substantively about Arday published by 15 British national outlets between 24 July 2026 and the evening of 15 August 2026. News, features, columns, leaders and letters pages each count once; passing mentions are excluded. The spine is the article census compiled by NewsCord from the outlets' own sitemaps, content APIs and search indexes, cross-checked against Press Gazette, Times Higher Education, Retraction Watch, Al Jazeera, the Guardian and Varsity.³

Two hundred and forty nine items fall in the 22 days to the evening of his death, and 43 more in the 24 hours after. Of these, 243 headlines are frame-coded, with two broadcast items and one unrecoverable headline excluded.

Twenty frames were derived inductively from a full reading of the headline set, operationalised as lexical and syntactic rules, applied across the corpus and reviewed item by item with hand correction. They resolve into seven clusters by function. Coding is single-coder and no reliability statistic is claimed. The headline is the unit of analysis, a deliberate narrowing with a defensible warrant: it is what most readers encounter, what survives aggregation and circulation, and what editors rather than reporters control.

This edition adds three formal analyses. Frame-level co-occurrence was converted to a Jaccard similarity matrix and clustered by average linkage on one minus Jaccard, with silhouette widths computed across candidate

solutions. The same matrix was analysed as a weighted network, with degree, weighted degree, betweenness and eigenvector centrality, and Louvain community detection with modularity. Headline sentiment was scored with a valence-aware lexical model, extended with domain terms, and reported by phase and by salient term.

The corpus is incomplete for 11 to 13 August, where the source census truncates. Roughly 25 to 30 further items ran on those days, concentrated in the outlets with the highest delegitimation rates. Every final-week figure should be read as a floor.

5. THE TIMELINE

What follows is the sequence, with each entry sourced. It is set out at length because the argument of this paper is about accumulation, and accumulation cannot be seen from any single point within it.

2023 *Appointment and celebration*

Arday is appointed Professor of Sociology of Education at Cambridge at 37, the youngest Black person ever appointed to a Cambridge professorship. Around one per cent of United Kingdom professors are Black; Cambridge has five. The press runs his life story as an uplifting exclusive. He begins receiving racist emails as soon as he takes up the post, intensely enough that his email has to be screened.^{15,16,7}

May 2023 *First concerns raised privately*

An emeritus professor emails him about a 2018 article. Two professors at other universities write separately to Cambridge about possible plagiarism. Cambridge replies that work carried out before he joined would normally be for the awarding institution to consider.⁹

Dec 2023 to 2024 *Corrections issued*

Social Sciences publishes a correction adding citations; an article in Educational Philosophy and Theory is corrected the following year for text overlap.⁹

July 2025 *He tells a government minister*

In an open letter to the minister Jacqui Smith he sets out that he has been threatened with a knife, physically assaulted and spat on; that rape and death threats have been made against him and his family; that bananas and bullets have been posted to him through the university campus; and that corrosive substances and mutilated animals have been sent to his family home.⁷

Sept 2025 *The specialist outlet is stopped*

Times Higher Education has a 63 page dossier ready. Arday instructs Carter-Ruck and the story is spiked. He reports the reporter to the Metropolitan Police for harassment; the force investigates the journalist for four months.^{9,17,18}

April 2026 *He names the machinery in public*

At the British Sociological Association's 75th anniversary conference in Manchester he delivers the plenary, Wanted Dead or Alive: the Playbook. He tells his peers that conservative activists trawl the work of Black academics for citation errors and inconsistencies, that right-wing outlets and politicians then join the pile-on and press institutions to cut ties, that this brought down Claudine Gay at Harvard, and that the instruments designed to protect academic integrity are being weaponised. He asks his colleagues not to watch their fellows suffer. Some of the audience think it strange.^{7,19}

21 July 2026 *The originating text*

Nathan Cofnas publishes DEI Fraud and Cover-Up at Cambridge. Cofnas describes his position as race realism, advocates a hereditarian revolution, and has written that in a meritocracy the number of Black professors at Harvard would approach zero. Emmanuel College terminated his affiliation in 2024; he is suing, sponsored by the Free Speech Union.^{4,5,6}

24 July, 13:46 *The frame is installed*

The Telegraph publishes at 13:46 under the headline Cambridge's diversity poster boy in plagiarism row. The racialised framing and the research integrity allegation enter the mainstream in the same sentence, on the same day, in the first article. The Times follows six hours later; the Mail the same day.³

28 to 31 July *Escalation to the life*

The Telegraph reuses diversity poster boy on 28 and 29 July and turns to a charity run. The Spectator opens the ridicule register on 31 July by asking whether Arday is a Sacha Baron Cohen creation. The Times runs a column on fibbing.³

1 August *From the thesis to the life*

The Guardian publishes its investigation, opening on the BSA keynote. From this point the coverage concerns his childhood, autism, charity runs, memoir and family.⁷

3 to 4 August *The name is replaced; the childhood begins*

The Mail begins the epithet substitution that becomes Professor Plagiarism. The Telegraph publishes the first item contesting his medical history.³

5 August *Investigation and resignation*

Cambridge announces an investigation. Hours later Arday resigns his chair and his Jesus College fellowship, writing that he has reached the limits of what any person should reasonably be expected to endure. Thirty three articles are published that day and the next across 15 outlets, the highest rate of the entire cycle.^{1,3}

6 August *The reader poll*

The day after the resignation letter, the Mail puts his claim that the criticism is racially motivated to a vote of its readers. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner concedes the harassment complaint against the journalist should not have been taken up.^{3,18}

7 August *The politicians arrive*

A former Prime Minister's column in the Mail declares the academics who appointed him the real racists. The Spectator publishes How Black Lives Matter created Jason Arday, its first DEI-framed headline, 14 days after the Telegraph's.³

8 August *The childhood on TikTok*

The Mail sources a challenge to a disabled man's account of his own childhood from a single TikTok video. Nigel Farage writes in the Sun that the case proves the ruling class is in thrall to DEI.³

9 to 11 August *Withdrawal*

He cancels his book tour. The US edition of the memoir is published. Four titles run pieces on his teaching, his students and his colleagues.³

12 August *The childhood in the broadsheets*

The Guardian and the Times both publish pieces contesting his account of being non-verbal as a child. On the Guardian's own evidence the schoolmate testimony divides two against two; the headline leads with the challenger. He had raised a safeguarding concern with the paper before publication.³

14 August, 01:01 *Diagnosis*

The Mail publishes a practising psychiatrist offering readers a condition that could explain everything, in a column conceding its author had never met him.³

14 August, 15:11 *The last article*

The Telegraph publishes Jason Arday says he was an illiterate, mute child. His schoolmates remember it differently.³

14 August, 15:12 *The ambulance call*

The London Ambulance Service calls the Metropolitan Police to an address in Battersea. He is pronounced dead at the scene, aged 41.^{1,2}

14 August, 18:12 *A joke*

The Times publishes a mocking comment column. He has been dead three hours; the news has not broken. The page is later deleted without correction or note and now returns HTTP 410.³

14 to 15 August *Forty three articles*

The family statement, issued through his publisher, describes a campaign of misinformation and says it was too much for him. In the 24 hours from the ambulance call the same 15 outlets publish 43 further articles. Not one carries an epithet in its headline.^{2,3,14}

16 to 18 August *The aftermath*

Cambridge states that it had installed panic alarms and screened racist emails and post. IPSO confirms it is reviewing a high volume of complaints. Black Leaders in Higher Education UK asks IPSO to examine the reporting of his private life. The TUC calls for investigation; UCU and Stand Up to Racism hold vigils.^{8,21,22}

Acceleration

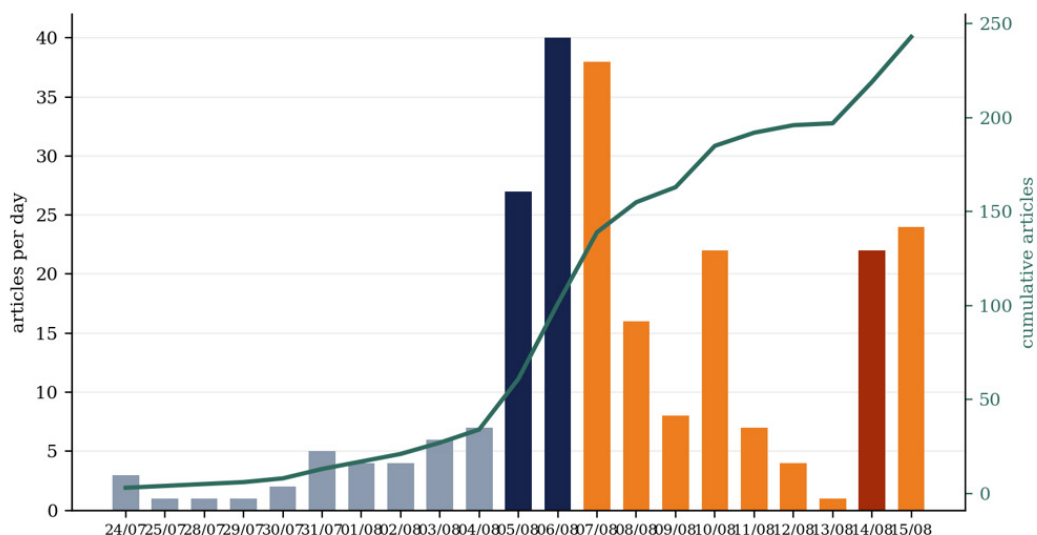


Figure 1: Daily volume across 15 national outlets with the cumulative curve.

The rates are these. Across the 12 days before the resignation the 15 outlets published at 2.8 articles a day. Across the two days of the investigation announcement and the resignation they published at 33.5 a day. Across the final week they published at 14.8 a day, and that figure is a floor because the corpus is incomplete for three of those days.

I want to be exact about what accelerated, because the honest account is more damning than the simple one. Raw volume peaked at the resignation and then settled at roughly five times its pre-resignation rate. It did not climb monotonically to the death. What continued to climb was the cumulative total, which is the quantity a person living inside the coverage actually experiences, and what shifted was the composition. The evidentiary share fell from 74 per cent to 52. The share operating on his person returned to 43. The DEI framing went from six headlines to 21. He resigned into a press environment that got no smaller and became substantially more personal.

6. THE ESCALATION LADDER

Eight registers operated across the cycle. Read in order of first appearance they describe a ladder, and the rungs are not interchangeable.

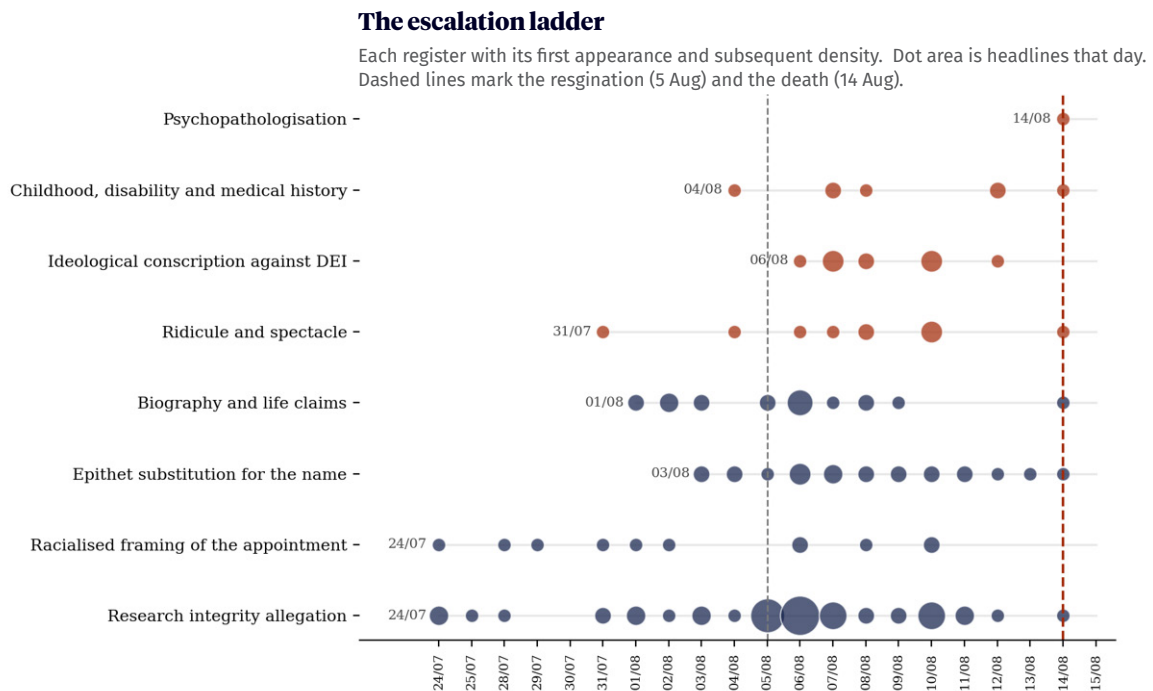


Figure 2: Each register with its first appearance and subsequent density.

The first rung and the second are the same rung. The research integrity allegation and the racialised framing of the appointment both enter the mainstream on 24 July, in the same Telegraph headline, at 13:46. There was never a phase in which this was a story about a doctoral thesis and not a story about a Black man's appointment. The racialisation is not an escalation from the allegation. It is the form in which the allegation arrived.

From there the ladder climbs in a sequence that anyone who studies racialised media campaigns will recognise. Ridicule opens on 31 July. The biography opens on 1 August. The name is replaced by the offence from 3 August. The medical history opens on 4 August. The ideological conscription opens on 6 August, and after the resignation it runs at 15 to 16 per cent of all headlines. The childhood and the disability are contested through the final week by four separate national titles. On the morning of the last day, a psychiatric label.

Each rung takes something further in. The thesis, then the career, then the charity work, then the body, then the childhood, then the mind. By the end there was nothing left of him that had not been made available for public adjudication.

This is the structure that the word lynching points at, and I use the word with care and with attribution. A scholar at Brunel University said in the immediate aftermath that Arday had been hounded to his grave and that it would hardly be hyperbole to call it a lynching. Stand Up to Racism called it a racist witch-hunt. The family called it a campaign of misinformation that was too much for him. I am not reaching for the term to shock. I am using it because it names a specific historical form: a crowd action against a racialised individual, conducted in public as spectacle, in which the guilt of the target is asserted rather than adjudicated and the participation of respectable people is what makes it possible.

The digital dimension is what distinguishes this from its historical antecedents and what makes it faster. The originating text was a Substack post. The amplification ran through platform threads, a membership organisation's newsletter, and podcast episodes. The evidence for the childhood rung came from TikTok and from a YouTuber. The coverage was produced continuously and consumed continuously, and the subject could read all of it, at any hour, on the device in his hand. Whitney Phillips's work on amplification describes the mechanism by which mainstream reporting of fringe material becomes the delivery system for that material; Jessie Daniels on cyber racism and Bharath Ganesh on digital hate culture describe the infrastructure through which it circulates.^{23,24,25} The corpus here is the mainstream end of that infrastructure.

7. MEDIA EXTREMISM THROUGH FAR-RIGHT CAPTURE

I want to propose a term for what this corpus documents, and to define it tightly enough to be usable and falsifiable.

Media extremism through far-right capture: the condition in which mainstream news organisations, without adopting far-right organisational identity, reproduce far-right analytic frames as the routine grammar of their reporting, so that the ideological content travels with the institutional credibility of the mainstream.

Four features distinguish it from ordinary partisan slant.

The first is frame adoption without organisational affiliation. No outlet in this corpus is a far-right organisation, and I make no such claim about any of them. What the data show is that the analytic frame originating in a hereditarian project, that Black academic achievement in elite institutions is presumptively an artefact of lowered standards, was carried by mainstream titles as the organising premise of their coverage.

The second is the laundering of provenance. Once a frame is carried by a mainstream title it loses its origin. Readers of the Telegraph on 24 July were not told what they were reading. The frame acquired the authority of the masthead and shed the authority of its source, which is precisely the transaction the originating project requires.

The third is fusion with the reporting function. The network analysis in section eleven establishes that this discourse has a modularity of 0.10, meaning it does not divide into a reporting community and a comment community. Capture in this sense is not a matter of an opinion page. It is a matter of what the news desk treats as the obvious way to describe a person.

The fourth is the disappearance of the counter-frame. Five point three per cent of headlines named the racialised character of the scrutiny, and the two frames a defence would need never once appeared together.

7.1 On accelerationism

The term accelerationism in far-right studies usually denotes the militant strategy of hastening societal collapse, and I am not using it in that sense.^{26,27} I mean something narrower and measurable, which I will call discursive accelerationism: the compression of the time between a fringe articulation and its mainstream adoption, to the point where the two become simultaneous.

The measure is in the data. In the classical account of mainstreaming, a frame originates at the political margin, circulates in movement media, and is adopted by the mainstream after a lag during which it is normalised. Aurelien Mondon and Aaron Winter describe this process for the British and French cases, and Gavan Titley describes the specific role free speech discourse plays in carrying it.^{28,29} That model predicts that movement press would use the DEI framing first and mainstream press later.

The opposite happened, and the interval is three days rather than three years.

The originating post appeared on 21 July. The first mainstream article appeared on 24 July already carrying the racialised frame in its headline. The Spectator, the closest thing in this corpus to a movement outlet, did not publish a DEI-framed headline until 7 August, 14 days after the Telegraph. There was no lag, no period of normalisation, no movement-media incubation. The frame did not diffuse into the mainstream. It was installed there at the point of entry.

That is what I mean by acceleration, and it is a stronger claim than gradual mainstreaming. It implies that the normalisation had already occurred before this case began, in the years of anti-woke beat-building that preceded it, so that when the material arrived there was no adaptation to perform. The apparatus was pre-tuned. The three days between the Substack post and the front page are the measure of how pre-tuned it was.

8. FAR-RIGHT OUTLETS AND MAINSTREAM OUTLETS

The differentiation this section makes is between an originating ecosystem and a mainstream press, and it is deliberately not a claim that any national newspaper is a far-right organisation. That distinction matters analytically, because the argument is about the migration of discourse rather than the character of institutions, and it matters practically, because a paper that called the Times a far-right newspaper could be dismissed on that sentence alone and every finding in it lost.

8.1 The originating ecosystem

The far right in this case is located precisely. It is a hereditarian intellectual project holding that measured group differences in intelligence have a substantial genetic basis and that racial disparities in elite institutions are therefore evidence of lowered standards rather than of discrimination. Angela Saini traces the 20th and 21st century career of this project and its repeated rehabilitation.³⁰ The scientific consensus against it has been stated repeatedly by professional bodies, and the sociological literature describes the networks through which it is sustained as counterscience rather than science.³¹

Attached to it is an organisational infrastructure: a free-speech membership organisation that sponsored the originating author's litigation, published his statements and hosted his legal fund, and which operates internationally, including in Aotearoa New Zealand as a licensed sister organisation with Atlas Network funding.^{5,6,20}

That is the far right in this case. It is a body of ideas with a funding structure and a litigation strategy, and it did not publish a single article in the corpus.

8.2 The tiers

For analysis the 15 outlets are grouped by market position and editorial alignment rather than by ideology imputed to them.

Table 1: Outlet tiers and prevalence of attack-use DEI and culture-war framing. Three defensive uses of the same vocabulary, in the Independent, the Guardian and the Times, are counted separately and excluded here.

TIER	OUTLETS	ITEMS	DEI-FRAMED	SHARE
Movement right	The Spectator, GB News	24	3	12%
Mainstream right	The Telegraph, The Times and Sunday Times, Daily Mail, The Sun, Daily Express	142	21	15%
Centre-left and public service	The Guardian, The Independent, BBC News, Sky News, Metro, Daily Mirror, Daily Star	70	0	0%
Specialist	Times Higher Education	7	0	0%

The differentiation is clean and it does not fall where a casual account would put it.

Not one headline in the centre-left and public service tier, across 70 items, used DEI or culture-war vocabulary as an attack frame. Not one in the specialist tier across seven. Every attack use in the corpus, all 21 of them, came from the mainstream right tier, or, three of them, from the Spectator. GB News, which sits in the movement tier by alignment, produced nine straight news headlines and no DEI framing at all, which is worth stating because it cuts against the easy assumption that the ideological signal tracks the outlet's political identity. It tracks the desk and the beat.

The delegitimation data reinforce this. Eighty four per cent of Daily Mail headlines carry either the cluster attacking the person or the anti-DEI cluster. The Spectator sits at 61, the Express at 58, the Sun and Telegraph at 50, the Times at 42. The Independent sits at seven and the BBC at eight. The Mirror and the Star between them produced six headlines and not one delegitimizing frame.

The mass-market and broadsheet right, not the movement press, was the operative instrument of this campaign. That is the finding with the most consequence, because it is the tier with the circulation, the institutional credibility and the political reach.

9. THE MIGRATION OF DEI LANGUAGE

DEI is an American administrative acronym. It has no purchase in British university governance, where the corresponding function has historically been called equality and diversity or, in statute, the public sector equality duty. Its appearance in British national newspaper headlines is therefore traceable, and its arrival in this corpus can be dated.

Diffusion of DEI and culture-war language

Cumulative count of attack-use headlines by outlet tier; three defensive uses of the same vocabulary are excluded. The mainstream right press does not receive this vocabulary downstream. It carries it from the first article.



Figure 3: Cumulative attack-use headlines carrying DEI or culture-war framing, by outlet tier.

The mainstream right line begins at one on the first day of the cycle and never stops climbing. The movement right line does not leave zero until 7 August. The centre-left line never leaves zero at all.

First use of DEI and culture-war framing, by outlet

Grey bar = the outlet's first article on the case. Dot = its first article frames in DEI or culture-war terms as an attack.

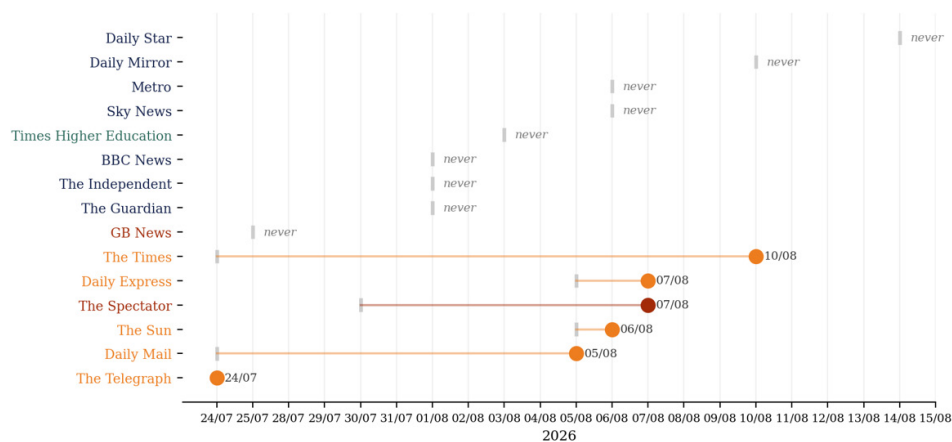


Figure 4: First article on the case and first DEI-framed article, by outlet.

Read outlet by outlet, the sequence is this. The Telegraph published its first article on the case and its first DEI-framed article in the same item, on 24 July. The Mail followed on 5 August, the Sun on 6 August, the Spectator and the Express on 7 August, the Times on 8 August. Seven outlets never used the vocabulary at all: GB News, the BBC, Sky, Metro, the Mirror, the Star and Times Higher Education.

Three uses of the vocabulary ran the other way, and honesty requires reporting them separately rather than folding them into the total. The Independent on 6 August carried a warning that the case would provide racists with a weapon. The Guardian on 7 August ran a leader saying diversity advocates must stand firm. The Times on 8 August carried a column arguing that establishment outrage at diversity hires is a masterclass in hypocrisy. Three defensive uses against 21 attack uses.

9.1 What the vocabulary did

The function of the DEI frame in this corpus is to convert an individual case into a systemic verdict, and the headlines state it without embarrassment. The case proves the ruling class is in thrall to DEI. DEI must die to prevent another Jason Arday scandal. How Black Lives Matter created Jason Arday. New Labour is to blame for the march of equality, diversity and inclusion madness. Jason Arday and the Dukes and Dauphins of DEI.

The cluster analysis shows this is the tightest formation in the corpus. The two frames of ideological conscription co-occur 5.36 times more with each other than with anything else, the highest cohesion of any cluster. It is a closed and portable argument that arrives fully assembled and needs only a name to attach to.

Its timing is equally clear. It appears in three per cent of headlines before the resignation and 15 to 16 per cent afterwards. The systemic verdict became available for delivery at the moment the individual could no longer contest it.

9.2 Why this constitutes capture

Teun van Dijk's work on elite discourse and racism makes the argument that the reproduction of racism in liberal democracies runs primarily through elite institutions speaking in respectable registers rather than through explicit prejudice.³² The DEI frame is a textbook instance. It contains no racial claim on its face. It asserts only that a selection process was corrupted by considerations other than merit. The racial claim sits underneath, in the premise that the beneficiary would not otherwise have qualified, and that premise is exactly the proposition the originating hereditarian text states openly and the newspaper does not have to.

That is why this counts as capture rather than coincidence. The mainstream did not adopt the far right's vocabulary of racial hierarchy. It adopted the far right's conclusion in a vocabulary that permits the conclusion to be held without the premise being avowed. The premise is supplied by the reader, or by the originating source for anyone who follows the trail, and the newspaper retains deniability throughout.

The phrase that opens the entire corpus makes the point better than any analysis. Diversity poster boy is not a racial epithet and could not be found to breach any clause of any code. It states that a man's position is a function of a policy about race. It was published at 13:46 on the first day, reused in at least eight further headlines by the same title, and it never once appeared alongside a headline naming the racism it enacted.

10. VOLUME, FRAMES AND MOVEMENT

10.1 Volume as a mechanism of harm

Two hundred and forty nine articles in 22 days. One hundred and eighty eight in the nine days between the resignation letter and the death, an average of 20.9 a day across 15 outlets. Twenty seven or more on the day he died, counted at around 10 in the evening while follow-ups were still landing.³

A resignation ordinarily ends a story. Here it multiplied it. The heaviest publishing days of the affair came after the letter in which he said he had reached his limit.

The distribution matters as much as the total, and the record should be honest about it. The Mirror ran two items across the whole period and the Daily Star one. The pile-on was led from the top of the market. The Times and Sunday Times published 44 items, the Telegraph 43, the Daily Mail 38, the Spectator 21, the Express 12. Those five titles account for 158 of the 249.

Volume itself is a mechanism of harm, and British press regulation has no concept for it. The Editors' Code adjudicates individual articles against individual factual claims. It has nothing to say about 21 articles a day for nine days about one man. Each could be individually defensible and the aggregate would still constitute a campaign.

10.2 Frame frequencies

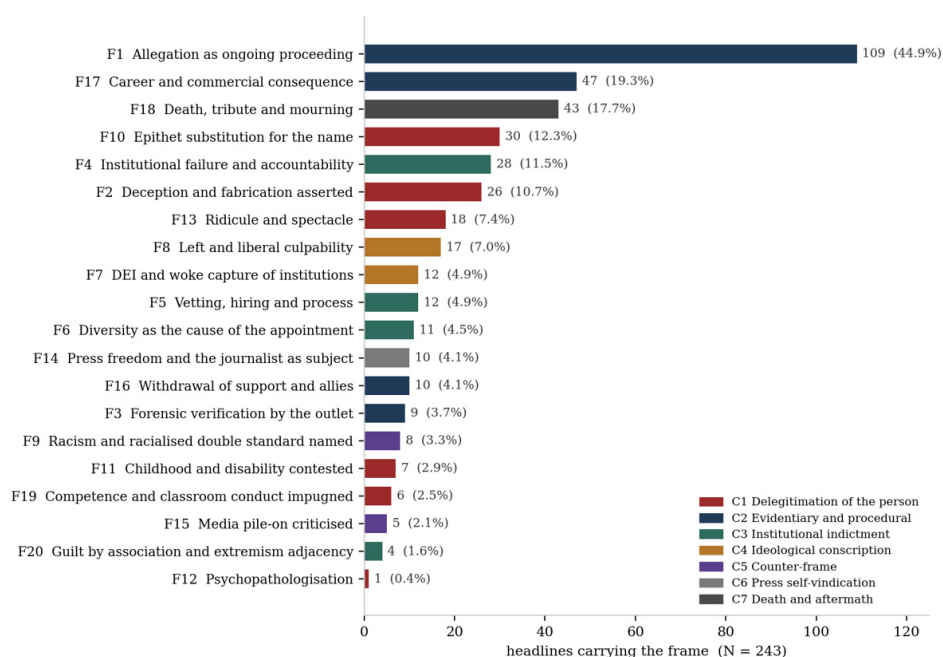


Figure 5: Frame frequencies across 243 headlines, coloured by cluster.

The most common frame is the hedged one: 109 headlines, 45 per cent, present the matter as an unresolved allegation or process. Then the picture darkens. The frame substituting a characterological label for the man's name appears in 30 headlines. Deception asserted as settled fact appears in 26. Ridicule appears in 18. The frame naming racialised scrutiny appears in eight, and criticism of press conduct in five. Together those two account for 5.3 per cent of everything published.

10.3 Movement across the cycle

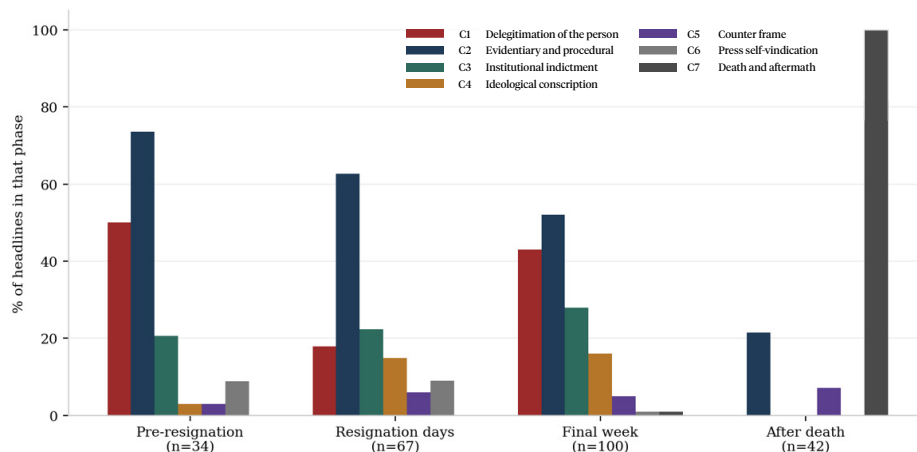


Figure 6: Cluster prevalence by phase of the cycle.

The evidentiary cluster thins as the volume grows: 74 per cent of headlines before the resignation, 63 across the resignation days, 52 in the final week, 21 afterwards. Coverage became less evidentiary as it accumulated, in a period when the daily rate roughly tripled.

The delegitimation cluster traces a U. Half of all headlines before the resignation, falling to 18 per cent across the resignation days as hard news displaces it, returning to 43 per cent in the final week. The proportional figure understates what happened because the denominator moved. In absolute terms the final week carried 43 delegitimizing headlines against 29 across the entire preceding three weeks.

The ideological cluster arrives only after the fall: one headline in the first three weeks, three per cent, rising to 15 per cent across the resignation days and 16 in the final week. The case acquired its value as political proof at the moment its subject lost the capacity to contest it.

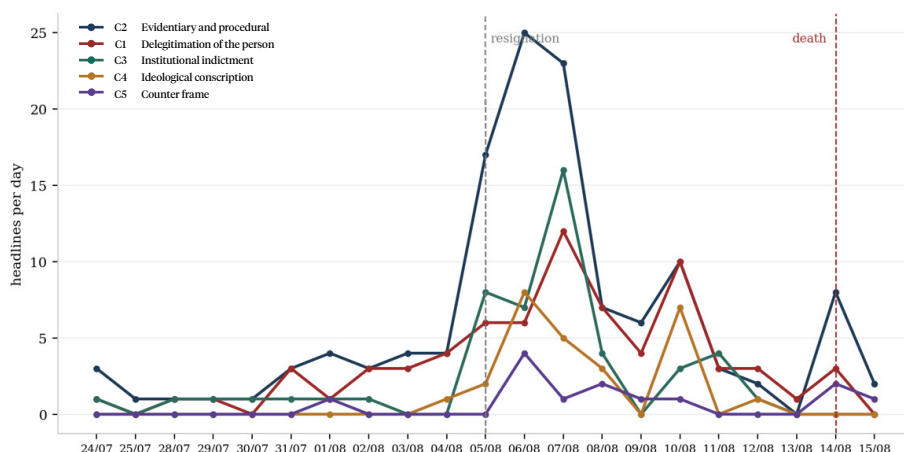


Figure 7: Daily trajectory of the clusters operating during his lifetime.

11. CLUSTER ANALYSIS

The seven clusters used above were formed conceptually, by what each frame does. This section tests them empirically against the co-occurrence structure of the corpus, and reports what the test shows, including where it does not support the grouping.

11.1 Cluster strength

Cohesion is the mean Jaccard similarity among frames inside a cluster. Separation is the mean Jaccard similarity between those frames and every frame outside it. The ratio is the factor by which frames in a cluster co-occur with each other more than with the rest of the corpus. A ratio above one indicates a real grouping; below one indicates that the grouping is conceptual only.

Table 2: Cluster cohesion and separation. C6 and C7 contain a single frame each and cannot be tested internally.

	CLUSTER	FRAMES	HEADLINES	COHESION	SEPARATION	RATIO
C1	Delegitimation of the person	6	72	0.029	0.021	1.39
C2	Evidentiary and procedural	4	128	0.074	0.025	3.00
C3	Institutional indictment	4	50	0.044	0.012	3.69
C4	Ideological conscription	2	27	0.074	0.014	5.36
C5	Counter-frame	2	13	0.000	0.006	0.00
C6	Press self-vindication	1	10	n/a (single frame)	0.004	n/a
C7	Death and aftermath	1	43	n/a (single frame)	0.008	n/a

Four of the five testable clusters are strongly supported. Ideological conscription is the tightest formation in the corpus, its two frames co-occurring 5.36 times more with each other than with anything else. Institutional indictment follows at 3.69, and the evidentiary cluster at 3.0.

Two results demand attention because they cut against the tidy picture.

The delegitimation cluster is the weakest coherent grouping in the corpus, at a ratio of one point three nine. Its frames barely prefer each other. They attach to everything.

That is a finding rather than a defect in the coding. The frames that operate on the person are promiscuous. The epithet does not travel with the ridicule and the contested childhood as a bounded register; it travels with the allegation, the verification and the resignation. Delegitimation in this corpus is not a genre. It is a solvent, distributed through the whole discourse.

The counter-frame cluster returns a cohesion of exactly zero. The frame naming racialised scrutiny and the frame criticising press conduct never once appear in the same headline across 243 items. The counter-argument was not merely marginal at 5.3 three per cent. It was internally fragmented, so that the two things a defence would need to say together were never said together.

11.2 What unsupervised clustering finds

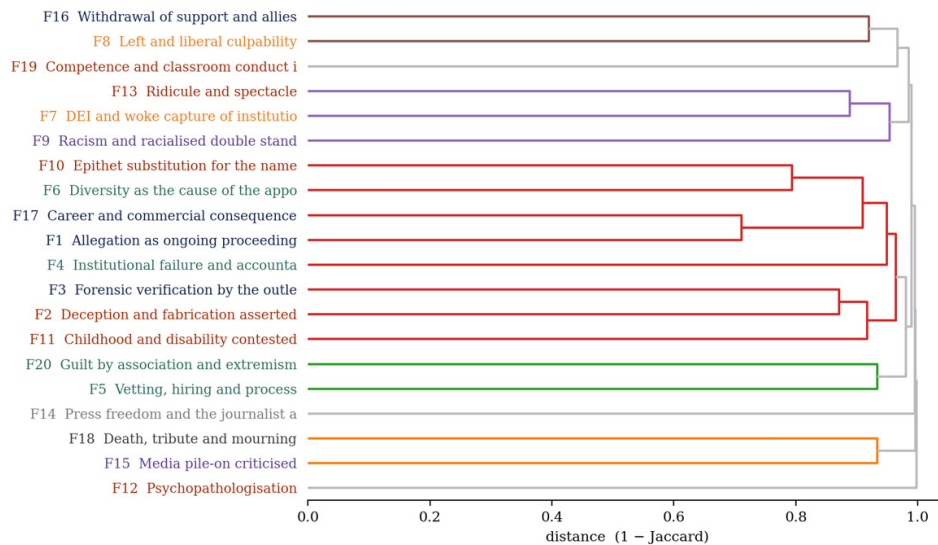


Figure 8: Hierarchical clustering of the 20 frames by average linkage. Label colour shows the a priori cluster; the branch structure is derived only from co-occurrence.

Given no instruction about what the frames mean, the algorithm produces the central result of this paper.

The largest branch joins the epithet frame and the diversity-as-cause frame to the career-consequence frame and the allegation frame, and then joins that whole assembly to institutional failure, forensic verification, deception asserted and contested childhood. The character attack and the reporting occupy one branch. Unsupervised clustering cannot tell them apart, because in this corpus they are not apart.

A second branch joins ridicule to the anti-DEI frame and then to the frame naming racism, which is the signature of a discourse in which the racism frame appears mainly as the thing being answered. A third joins withdrawal of support to left culpability. Psychopathologisation and press self-vindication sit as isolates.

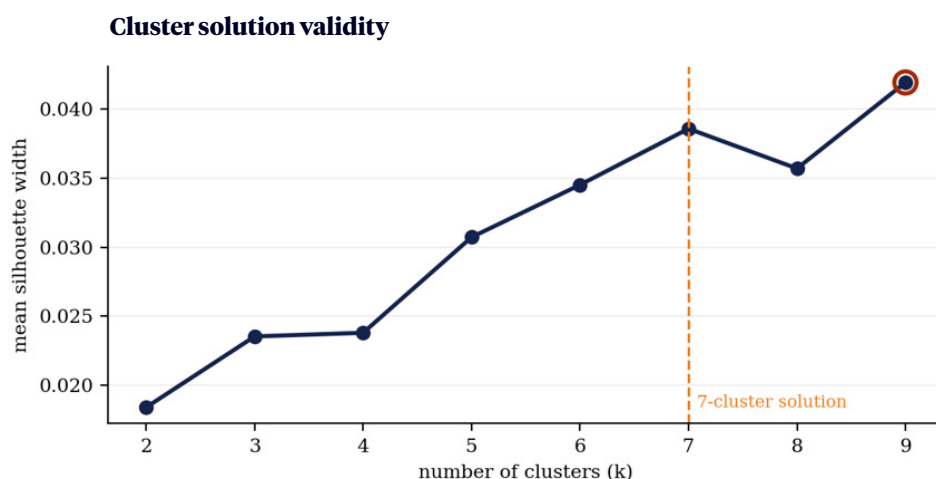


Figure 9: Mean silhouette width across candidate cluster solutions.

The silhouette widths are very low across every candidate solution, peaking at 0.042. In a conventional clustering exercise a figure that low would be reported as a failure to find cluster structure, and I report it as such rather than burying it.

The interpretation matters more than the number. A low silhouette means the objects do not separate into well-bounded groups. Applied to a discourse, that is a substantive finding rather than a methodological embarrassment. This corpus does not contain several distinguishable registers running in parallel. It contains one dense formation in which the evidentiary, the delegitimizing and the ideological interpenetrate. The seven clusters remain useful as functional categories, and the cohesion ratios in Table 1 show that four of them are real groupings. They are not, however, separable communities, and the coverage cannot be defended on the basis that its serious journalism was distinct from its character assassination. The data say the opposite.

12. NETWORK ANALYSIS

Treating each frame as a node and each headline co-occurrence as a weighted edge produces a network of 20 nodes and 64 edges, with a density of 0.34. Better than a third of all possible connections between frames are realised somewhere in the corpus.

Frame co-occurrence network

20 nodes, 64 edges, density 0.34, Louvain modularity 0.103. Node area = frame frequency; colour = a priori cluster; edge width = Jaccard

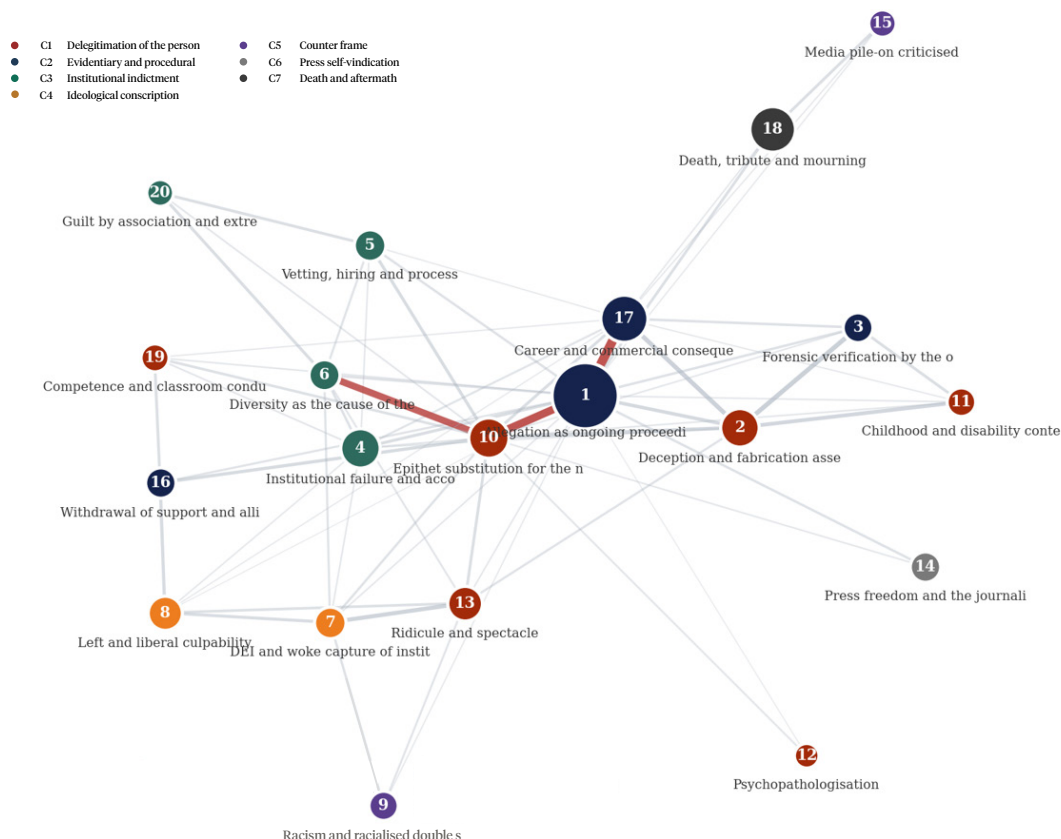


Figure 10: Frame co-occurrence network. Node area is frame frequency, colour is the a priori cluster, edge width is the Jaccard coefficient.

12.1 Modularity

Louvain community detection returns three communities with a modularity of 0.103. Modularity measures how far a network divides into internally dense, externally sparse groups; values above about 0.3 indicate meaningful community structure. Zero point one zero is close to what a randomly connected network of this density would yield.

This confirms the clustering result by a second and independent route. The discourse does not partition. Agreement between the a priori clusters and the detected communities is correspondingly weak, with an adjusted Rand index of 0.04. The frames are conceptually distinguishable and empirically entangled.

I want to state what follows from that, because it is the analytical core of the paper. When a press system is functioning as its defenders describe it, one would expect a modular structure: a reporting community, a comment community, and limited traffic between them. That structure is what the Editors' Code presupposes. It is absent here. What the network shows instead is a single formation in which the language of allegation, the language of verification and the language of contempt are wired into one another.

12.2 Centrality

Table 3: Centrality of the 12 most central frames, ranked by eigenvector centrality.

	FRAME	n	Degree	Wtd degree	Betweenness	Eigenvector
F1	Allegation as ongoing proceeding	109	18	138	0.361	0.649
F17	Career and commercial consequence	47	11	61	0.079	0.489
F10	Epithet substitution for the name	30	15	64	0.201	0.412
F2	Deception and fabrication asserted	26	7	34	0.009	0.245
F4	Institutional failure and accountability	28	9	21	0.024	0.155
F6	Diversity as the cause of the appointment	11	7	19	0.021	0.128
F18	Death, tribute and mourning	43	3	14	0.000	0.121
F3	Forensic verification by the outlet	9	5	15	0.000	0.119
F5	Vetting, hiring and process	12	6	13	0.015	0.103
F16	Withdrawal of support and allies	10	4	11	0.003	0.080
F14	Press freedom and the journalist as subject	10	2	7	0.000	0.075
F13	Ridicule and spectacle	18	7	15	0.018	0.071

The allegation frame is the centre of the network on every measure, which is unsurprising: it is the largest frame and the ostensible subject of the coverage. Its degree of 18 means it co-occurs with 18 of the other 19 frames somewhere in the corpus.

The second finding is not routine. The epithet frame has a degree of 15 and a betweenness centrality of 0.201, the second highest in the network, on a frequency of only 30 headlines. Betweenness measures how often a node lies on the shortest path between other nodes: it identifies the connectors, the elements through which otherwise separate parts of a structure communicate.

Professor Plagiarism and diversity poster boy were not epithets attached at the margins of the reporting. They were the connective tissue of the discourse, the second most structurally central element in the entire network.

This is what naming does. Once the label is affixed, it travels with everything: the procedural update, the verification story, the resignation, the book tour cancellation, the childhood interrogation. It is the mechanism by which coverage of separate matters becomes coverage of one man's character, and it is why counting individual articles cannot capture what happened. The label does not need to be argued in any single article, because it is carried by all of them.

By contrast the frame naming racism has low centrality on every measure, and psychopathologisation is a near-isolate with a single occurrence. That single occurrence was published at one minute past one on the morning of his death.

13. THE VOCABULARY OF THE COVERAGE



Figure 11: Word size is frequency across 243 headlines. Colour is the mean sentiment of the headlines carrying the word, from most negative in dark red through orange to least negative in green. Proper nouns and function words are removed so that the characterising vocabulary is visible.

With the name and the institution stripped out, what remains is the vocabulary in which a man was described to the British public for three weeks. Plagiarism, row, scandal, claim, accused, dead, death, academic, found, former, black, diversity, resigns, book, memoir, question, probe, investigation, debacle, affair, doubts, woke, DEI, poster, boy.

Two features are worth drawing out. The word *black* appears at high frequency in a corpus about a research integrity allegation, because his race was a structural feature of how the story was told rather than an incidental descriptor. And the words *diversity*, *poster* and *boy* are all independently frequent, which is the signature of a phrase used often enough to function as a name.

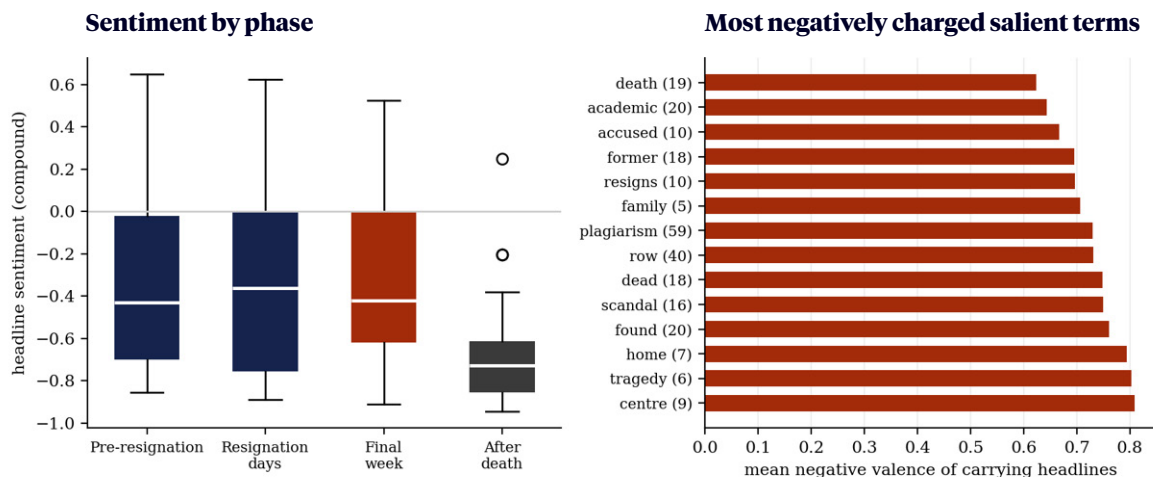


Figure 12: Distribution of headline sentiment by phase, and the most negatively charged salient terms.

The sentiment result is the one that surprised me, and it is important precisely because it does not do what a critic would want it to do.

Mean headline sentiment is -0.33 before the resignation, -0.37 across the resignation days, and -0.34 in the final week. Seventy three per cent of headlines are negatively valenced in the first phase and 70 per cent in the last. The tone does not escalate. It begins at its ceiling and stays there for 22 days.

It falls to -0.68 after his death, with 98 per cent of headlines negative, and that movement is an artefact of the vocabulary of death rather than of hostility.

The flatness is the point. A defence of this coverage would want to show a story that began in sober reporting and remained there. A prosecution would want to show a tone that escalated toward the end. Neither is what happened. The register was set within the first days and held constant while the volume tripled and the frame composition shifted from allegation toward person. What intensified was not the anger in any given headline. It was the number of headlines, and what they were about.

This has a direct regulatory implication. A complaints system examining individual items for tone will find, in any single item, a level of hostility indistinguishable from the level in the first week, when the story was arguably a legitimate research integrity matter. The harm is invisible at the level of the item and visible only in the aggregate.

14. THE PIPELINE

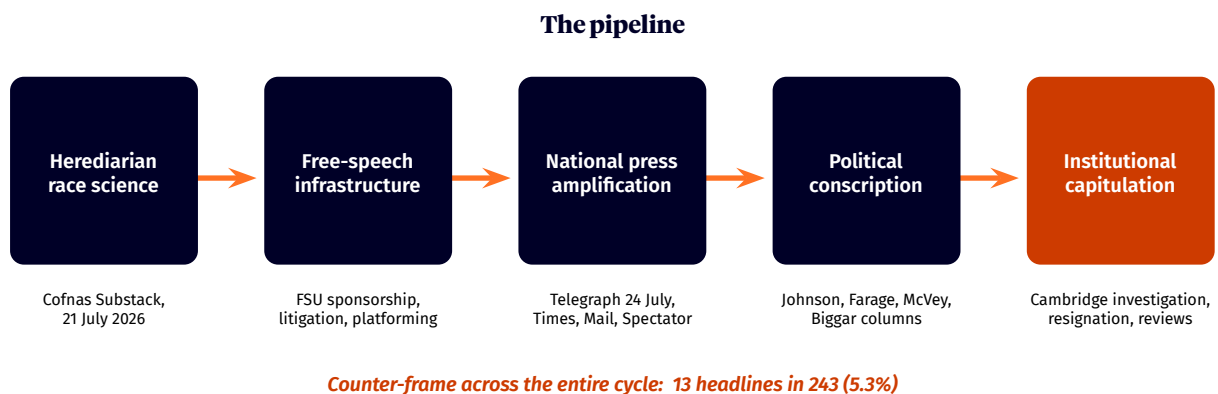


Figure 13: From race-science blog to national front page in three days.

On 21 July 2026 Nathan Cofnas published a post titled DEI Fraud and Cover-Up at Cambridge. Cofnas describes his own position as race realism and advocates what he calls a hereditarian revolution. In 2024 Emmanuel College, Cambridge terminated his research affiliation after he published a blog post arguing that in a meritocracy Black people would disappear from almost all high-profile positions outside sport and entertainment, and that the number of Black professors at Harvard would approach zero. He is suing the college for belief discrimination. The Free Speech Union is sponsoring the case, has published his statements and has hosted his legal fund.^{4,5,6}

Three days later the Telegraph carried the allegations under the headline Cambridge's diversity poster boy in plagiarism row. The Times followed six hours later. The Mail followed the same day.³

The inversion is the centre of the paper. A man whose published position is that Black academic presence in elite institutions is an artefact of lowered standards produced the allegation that a Black professor's scholarship was fraudulent. The British national press received that allegation as a question of academic integrity and reproduced it as such, without treating the originating framework as part of the story. A theory of racial hierarchy entered the mainstream wearing the costume of scholarly standards, and the costume held.

The pipeline has an earlier segment that explains why the story surfaced where it did. Times Higher Education, the specialist outlet best equipped to evaluate the evidence, had the allegations documented in a 63 page dossier in September 2025. Arday instructed the libel firm Carter-Ruck and the story was spiked. He then reported the reporter to the Metropolitan Police for harassment, and the force investigated the journalist for four months before the Commissioner conceded the complaint should never have been taken up.^{9,17,18}

Legal threats did not stop the story. They selected who would tell it. The specialist outlet held it for 11 months; when it surfaced it surfaced through a race-science Substack, and was amplified by the outlets with the least subject expertise and the fewest scruples about a disabled man's childhood. That is a lesson for every university communications office currently advising staff under attack to say nothing and instruct lawyers.

15. WHERE THE FAR-RIGHT FRAMES CONCENTRATE

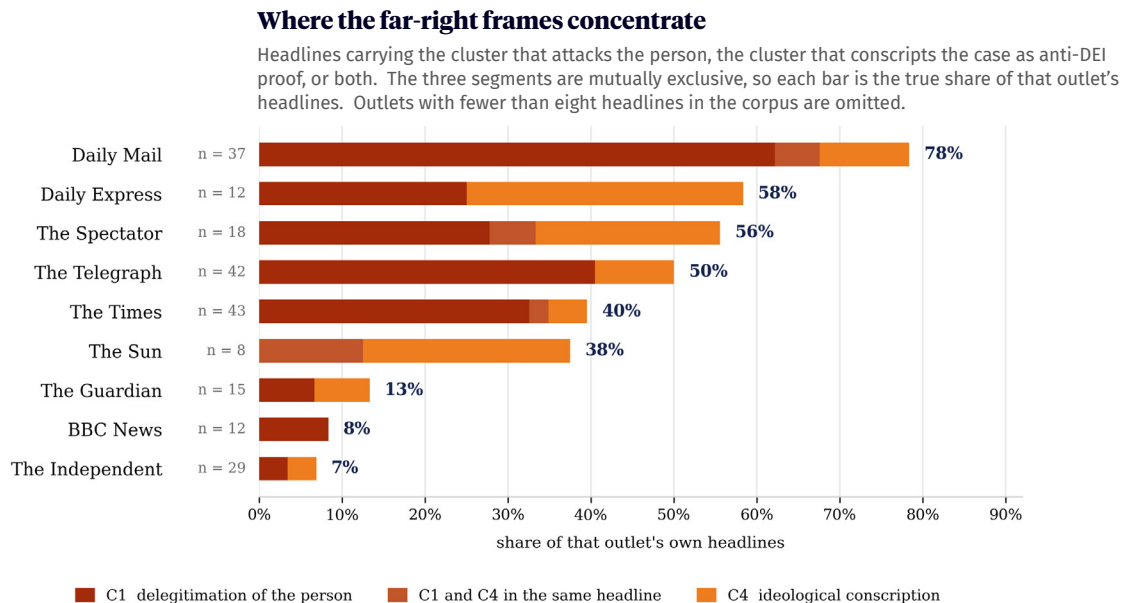


Figure 14: Combined prevalence of the delegitimation and ideological clusters, by outlet.

Eighty four per cent of Daily Mail headlines carry either the cluster attacking the person or the cluster conscripting him as anti-DEI proof. Twenty five of its 37 headlines carry a delegitimizing frame, the highest rate in the corpus. It was the Mail that coined Professor Plagiarism and ran it until it functioned as a name; that put his claim of racism to a reader poll the day after his resignation letter; that ran a former Prime Minister's column declaring the academics who appointed him the real racists; that sourced a challenge to a disabled man's account of his own childhood from a single TikTok video; and that published, at one minute past one on the morning of the day he died, a practising psychiatrist offering readers a diagnostic label for a man the column concedes he had never met.³

The Spectator sits at 61 per cent and has the highest rate of ideological conscription of any title. It made him a cover story, ran an unsigned leader titled Cambridge has fallen, and published 21 items in 21 days, including a column opening by asking whether he was a Sacha Baron Cohen creation, a piece titled The genius of Jason Arday, another referring to fools like Jason Arday, a former Metropolitan Police officer asking whether the police should investigate him, and, on the morning of his death, a podcast episode titled It's a cesspool.³

The Express sits at 58 per cent, almost entirely comment, having published nothing while the story concerned a doctoral thesis. The Sun sits at 50 and ignored the story for 12 days before arriving on resignation night with columns by Nigel Farage and Julia Hartley-Brewer. The Telegraph sits at 50 and is distinctive in a different way: it is the only title whose institutional indictment rate, 48 per cent, exceeds its delegitimation rate. The Telegraph prosecuted Cambridge. The Mail prosecuted Arday. The Times, at 42 per cent and the largest output of any title, did both.

At the other end, the Independent sits at seven per cent and carries six of the corpus's 13 counter-frame headlines. The BBC sits at eight. The Mirror and the Star between them produced six headlines and not one delegitimizing frame.

One set of titles supplied the character assassination, another the institutional indictment, and a third the ideological conclusion. Together they produced a total argument that no single title had to make, and that no single title can be held to account for.

16. THE EXEMPLAR AND THE IMPORTED SCRIPT

Why this man. The answer is in the first headline. He was framed, in the first mainstream sentence written about the case, as the embodied proof of a policy.

The exemplar function requires scarcity, and the scarcity is structural: with Black professors under one per cent of the sector, each appointment is visible enough to be made to stand for all of them. It requires celebration first, and the same press supplied that, running his life story in 2023 as an uplifting exclusive without checking it. The exemplar is manufactured twice, once as proof that the institution is virtuous and once as proof that its virtue was a fraud, by the same newspapers, using the same unverified material.

In April 2026 Arday gave the plenary at the British Sociological Association's 75th anniversary conference in Manchester. It was titled Wanted Dead or Alive: the Playbook. He told an audience of his peers that conservative activists were trawling the published work of Black academics for inconsistencies, citation errors and textual similarities, that right-wing outlets and conservative politicians then joined the pile-on and pressed institutions to cut ties, and that the tactics that brought down Claudine Gay at Harvard were being used against high-profile Black British academics. The instruments designed to protect academic integrity, he said, were being weaponised. He asked his colleagues not to sit and watch their fellows suffer, calling it a cancer that needed to be eradicated from academia.^{7,19} Some of the audience thought it strange. Keynotes are usually about one's research.⁷

He described the mechanism that destroyed him, in public, four months before it was applied to him, and named its provenance correctly. What the British case adds is the local infrastructure that received it: a free-speech organisation sponsoring the litigation of the man who launched the allegations, a political class already fluent in the vocabulary, and a press ecology that had spent five years building an anti-woke beat with staff writers assigned to it.

I write this from Aotearoa and I am not writing about somewhere else. The Free Speech Union operates here as a licensed sister organisation with Atlas Network funding, and has brought Nigel Biggar, Peter Boghossian and James Lindsay to meet Ministers. The Education and Training Amendment Act 2025 has inserted freedom of expression provisions into the governing statute of every New Zealand university, and Universities New Zealand warned during its passage about exposure to vexatious complaints.²⁰ The pipeline that ran from a Substack post to a Cambridge professor's front door in three days has a New Zealand branch, and it is fully built. The people it will be used against here are Māori and Pasifika academics, and the first cases will look like questions of academic integrity.

17. THE UNIVERSITY: WHAT WAS KNOWN, AND WHEN

This section carries the heaviest institutional charge in the paper, and it rests on documents the institutions themselves produced.

17.1 A year of documented threat

Arday began receiving racist emails as soon as he took up his position at Cambridge in 2023. They became sufficiently intense that his email had to be screened.⁷

In July 2025, a full year before the press cycle began, he set out his experiences in an open letter to the government minister Jacqui Smith. In it he stated that he had been threatened with a knife, physically assaulted and spat on; that rape and death threats had been made against him and against his family; that bananas and bullets had been posted to him through the university campus; and that corrosive substances and mutilated animals had been sent to his family home.⁷

After his death, the University of Cambridge stated that it had continued to provide extensive mental health support and security measures, including installing panic alarms and screening racist emails and post, and that this support continued through the media scrutiny and after his resignation.⁸

I take the university at its word, and I want to draw the conclusion it has not drawn.

An institution installing panic alarms in an employee's home and intercepting racist mail before it reaches him possesses, in its own risk register, a complete documentary account of a sustained racist campaign. Cambridge held that account for at least a year. It never placed it into the public record.

Bananas and bullets were posted to a Black professor through a university mailroom. That means the campus post system had a record. Mutilated animals were sent to a family home. That means there was a police report, or there should have been. Panic alarms were installed. That means a security assessment was written, signed and filed.

Every one of those is a document. Not one of them entered the public argument during the 22 days in which 20 a day were published about him, while national newspapers debated whether his account of racist targeting was credible and one of them put the question to a reader poll.

The counter-frame in this corpus runs at 5.3 per cent, and the institution best placed to supply it held the evidence in a filing cabinet.

17.2 What duty of care actually requires

Cambridge did some of what a duty of care requires. It provided counselling, alarms and mail screening. Those are the private, individualised, low-cost components: they protect the person from the mail, and they protect the institution from the charge of having done nothing.

What it did not do is the part that costs something.

It did not make a sustained public statement placing the documented racist campaign on the record. It did not fund independent legal representation answerable to him rather than to the university. It did not contest the framing while the framing was being built. And at the moment of maximum external pressure it announced an investigation into his appointment, which is an act that speaks in public, and it did not simultaneously speak in public about the bullets in the mailroom.

A duty of care that operates only in private is not a duty of care. It is risk management for the employer. The distinction is this: private support reduces the institution's liability, while public defence reduces the individual's exposure. The first is cheap and the second is expensive, and the pattern across the anglophone academy is that institutions buy the first and call it the second.

I set out below the three components that a statutory duty must contain, because voluntary codes have now been tested to destruction.

Legal support

Independent legal representation, funded by the institution and instructed by the staff member, with the staff member as client. Not the university's solicitors, whose duty runs to the university and whose advice in a reputational crisis will be to distance. Arday instructed Carter-Ruck privately in 2025 and the effect was to move the story from a specialist outlet with the expertise to weigh it into a race-science Substack. Institutionally funded, independently instructed representation is the difference between a defamation strategy and a defence.

Security

Threat assessment, home and campus security measures, mail interception, digital security and travel arrangements, provided as an entitlement on a documented trigger rather than as a discretionary favour, and reviewed on a schedule. Cambridge provided several of these. What was missing was the obligation, the trigger and the record.

Public statement

The component institutions resist, and the one that matters most. Where an institution holds evidence of a racialised or coordinated campaign against a member of staff, it must state publicly, with the staff member's consent, that the campaign exists and what it holds. Publicly, promptly, repeatedly, and in terms that name the conduct.

Had Cambridge said in early August that a professor of theirs had been sent bullets through the university post and mutilated animals to his home, that the police had been involved, that panic alarms had been installed, and that the institution regarded the campaign against him as racist, the corpus documented in this paper would look different. Not because newspapers would have stopped, but because the counter-frame would have had an authoritative source at the moment it was needed, instead of thirteen headlines across twenty two days, none of them citing an institution.

The reason universities do not do this is that public defence commits the institution to a position it may later have to abandon if allegations are substantiated. That is precisely the reasoning that must be legislated out of existence, because the two things are separable. Investigating an allegation of research misconduct and stating publicly that a campaign of racist intimidation is being waged against the same person are compatible acts. Holding them apart is not difficult. It is simply not in the institution's interest, which is why it has to be a duty.

18. THE REGULATORY VOID

Five of the outlets most criticised are members of the Independent Press Standards Organisation. The Guardian is not; it never joined and answers through its own readers' editor. The regulator confirmed on 17 August that it had received a high volume of complaints and concerns about the coverage and reminded editors of the importance of reporting with sympathy and discretion in the aftermath of such an event.²¹

Consider what the Editors' Code can reach. A reader poll on whether a man's claim of racism is valid is audience interaction, not a factual claim. A column comparing him to a reality television villain is protected comment. A headline questioning a disabled man's childhood account on the basis of an attributed TikTok claim attributes properly and therefore complies. A mocking column published while its subject lies dead and then deleted without a note is protected as comment, and silent deletion has no clause of its own.

The register is the offence and the code does not police register. Volume is the mechanism and the code cannot count. The network analysis in section twelve establishes why this is structural rather than incidental: the code presupposes a modular discourse with separable reporting and comment, and the measured modularity of this corpus is 0.10.

The complaints will largely fail. When they do, the outlets will report the failure as exoneration, and the central finding of this paper will have been demonstrated by the regulator itself.

19. A CATALOGUE OF COMMUNICATIVE INVERSIONS

Academic integrity

The originating allegation came from a hereditarian project whose published claim is that Black presence in elite institutions is an artefact of lowered standards. The integrity of scholarship was the costume worn by a theory of racial hierarchy.

Academic freedom

Invoked, and litigated, to protect the circulation of race science. Never once invoked in this corpus to protect the Black professor whose home required panic alarms.

Free speech

A free-speech organisation sponsored the litigation of the man who launched the campaign. The subject of the campaign had one interview across two hundred and forty nine articles.

Meritocracy

Deployed to attack an appointment in a sector where Black professors are under one per cent, by writers who have never audited the appointment of any of the other 99.

Scrutiny

Adjudicated plagiarism by a white professor at the same university, upheld by tribunal and followed by retraction, produced almost no national coverage. Contested allegations against a Black professor produced 249 articles.

Accountability

The institutional indictment cluster, 48 per cent of Telegraph headlines, held Cambridge accountable for appointing him and never for failing to defend him.

Press freedom

Nine per cent of headlines in the early phases concerned the mistreatment of journalists. In the final week, when the treatment of Arday was the more available story, that fell to one headline.

Duty of care

A university that installed panic alarms and screened racist mail announced an investigation into the appointment of the man it was protecting, and never placed what it knew into the public record.

Balance

The frame naming racism appeared in eight headlines of two hundred and forty three, and never once appeared in the same headline as the frame criticising the press.

Sympathy and discretion

The regulator's reminder to editors was issued after the death. In the 24 hours following it, the same 15 outlets published 43 articles, more than double their daily rate while he was alive.

20. STRATEGIES

What follows is written for organisers rather than for a policy audience that will file it. I have written for the British context in which this case occurred and for the Aotearoa context in which the same apparatus is now assembled, because the strategies do not differ and the pretence that they do is how each jurisdiction avoids acting until it has its own death.

20.1 Community organising

- R1 Build a rapid response network with named individuals on rota reachable within hours when a racialised academic or public figure comes under coordinated attack, modelled on anti-deportation and anti-raid networks rather than on communications teams.
- R2 Establish community-held monitoring that counts coverage in real time. The census underlying this paper was produced in days by a small outlet using the newspapers' own sitemaps. The count converts a felt experience into an evidentiary object, and it is the single most useful intervention available.
- R3 Create a standing complaint infrastructure so that filing does not depend on individual initiative in a moment of crisis.
- R4 Organise public assembly early rather than only after a death. Assembly during a campaign changes what editors believe they can publish without consequence.
- R5 Hold direct relationships with the family or the individual, so the community acts on their stated wishes rather than its own reading of them.
- R6 Build community media capacity that can carry a counter-account at speed, through podcasts, community radio and diaspora networks, before the national frame settles.
- R7 Build secure infrastructures where individuals under attack can deposit racist correspondence, so the environment can be evidenced without the individual reliving it in public.
- R8 Train organisers to recognise the epithet as the operative device. The network analysis shows it is the connective tissue of the discourse; campaigns that contest the label directly are attacking the load-bearing element.

20.2 Academic unions

- R9 Recognise media campaigns against members as an industrial and health and safety matter rather than a reputational one, and test the employer's statutory duty on that basis.
- R10 Negotiate a media attack protocol into collective agreements: automatic workload relief, a guaranteed institutional public statement within a defined period, independently instructed legal support, funded security, and a named senior contact who is not from the communications team.
- R11 Establish that no member under external attack faces an institutional investigation opened in response to that attack without independent review of whether the timing is defensible.
- R12 Build a dedicated fund covering legal advice, security, mental health support and professional communications support answerable to the member rather than the employer.
- R13 Collect and publish sector data on who is subjected to these campaigns, disaggregated by ethnicity, disability and gender.
- R14 Use the union voice during a campaign rather than in mourning after one. Unions have standing to make statements individual academics cannot safely make.
- R15 Train branch officers to recognise the pipeline signature: an originating post outside the mainstream, first mainstream pick-up within days, an epithet in the headline, and rapid movement from the professional allegation to the person's biography.
- R16 Demand disclosure of the institution's threat log for any member under campaign, and make the log a bargaining item.
- R17 Coordinate internationally, since the funding structures and the script are transnational.

20.3 Universities

- R18 Adopt a published duty of care protocol with defined triggers, obligations and timeframes, containing the three components in section seventeen: independently instructed legal support, entitlement-based security, and a public statement obligation.
- R19 Separate the response to allegations from the response to the campaign carrying them, and state in policy that the two are compatible.
- R20 Where the institution holds evidence of a racist or coordinated campaign against a member of staff, place that evidence into the public record with consent, promptly and repeatedly.
- R21 Never open an investigation whose timing is set by a media cycle. Where an allegation has been adjudicated by the competent institution, say so publicly and repeatedly.
- R22 Maintain the threat and academic freedom logs set out in section twenty one, and publish the aggregate annually.
- R23 End the practice of promoting individual racialised appointments as institutional achievement. The publicity that makes a person a symbol makes them a target, and the institution captures the benefit while the individual carries the risk.
- R24 Report annually on professorial demographics so that no single appointment stands as evidence of institutional change.
- R25 Establish an independent, externally chaired duty-of-care review whenever a staff member dies during or following a period of public scrutiny.
- R26 Publish a threshold test for vexatious complaints and apply it, particularly in jurisdictions with new statutory freedom of expression provisions.
- R27 Fund independent communications capacity placed at the disposal of the staff member and answerable to them.
- R28 Require that any decision to withdraw public support from a member of staff under campaign be recorded, reasoned in writing, and disclosable to the individual and their union.

20.4 Academic collectives

- R29 Organise standing collectives rather than ad hoc letters. A constituted body with a spokesperson can sustain a position under pressure; a list of signatories can be dismantled signature by signature, and was.
- R30 Agree in advance that signatures will not be withdrawn under media pressure, and that withdrawal happens through the collective rather than through a journalist.
- R31 Build scholarly infrastructures able to adjudicate contested claims quickly and publicly, so that evaluation does not default to newspapers with no capacity to perform it.
- R32 Establish disciplinary association protocols on public commentary during live allegations.
- R33 Audit the integrity apparatus itself. Plagiarism detection deployed selectively against racialised scholars is a technology of racial discipline, and disciplines should know who is being checked and by whom.
- R34 Support and fund the scholarship on these cases being produced by Black scholars, and resist the pattern in which analysis of racism becomes the unpaid labour of the people it harms.
- R35 Decline platforms that require commentary on the allegations rather than on the campaign, because such commentary supplies the appearance of scholarly legitimisation.

20.5 Anti-racist collectives

- R36 Name the pipeline rather than the individual article. The persuasive object is the documented route from hereditarian blog to national front page in three days.
- R37 Build the comparative evidence base systematically. The single most effective argument here is the control comparison with an adjudicated case involving a white professor at the same institution.
- R38 Target the concentration. Campaigns addressing the press in general dissipate; campaigns addressing the four titles carrying the load do not.
- R39 Work the advertising and distribution relationships of the concentrated titles, since the regulatory route is largely closed.
- R40 Build alliances with disability justice organisations. The interrogation of an autistic man's account of his own childhood was a disablist act as well as a racist one.
- R41 Resist the respectability trap. The demand that a subject be blameless before he can be defended is the trap the campaign sets; the disproportion is the offence regardless of what the allegations establish.
- R42 Organise the pressure that makes a family's request for privacy enforceable.
- R43 Internationalise, since collectives in Britain, the United States, Australia, Canada and Aotearoa face one apparatus with one funding structure and one script.

20.6 Media reform

- R44 Establish aggregate volume as a regulable category, with own-initiative investigation powers triggered by defined thresholds.
- R45 Abolish the fact and comment distinction as the boundary of regulatory reach, on the evidence that the two are fused in the same headline in 45 instances and that measured discourse modularity is 0.10.
- R46 Bring headlines under direct regulatory scrutiny as a category, since they are the unit of framing and are controlled by editors rather than reporters.
- R47 Create a right of reply proportionate to coverage.
- R48 Require disclosure of the provenance of allegations, every time, where the source's published positions bear on the framing.
- R49 Prohibit silent deletion. A deleted article must carry a public note and a preserved archive, particularly where a matter is before a coroner.
- R50 Establish an independent, statutorily underpinned regulator able to require prominent corrections, investigate patterns rather than instances, and act without a complainant.
- R51 Mandate ethnicity, disability and gender monitoring of the subjects of sustained coverage, published annually.
- R52 Require that the adjudication status of any academic allegation be stated in the article.
- R53 Fund independent public interest journalism at community level.
- R54 Treat psychiatric or diagnostic characterisation of a named living individual by a registered clinician who has not examined them as a breach, with a parallel route to the professional regulator.
- R55 Establish a duty of care in the code toward subjects known to be in acute distress, triggered by a public statement from the subject or a representation from an employer.

21. A MODEL LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Voluntary codes have now been tested to destruction. What follows is a framework in five parts, written to be adaptable to the Higher Education and Research Act in the United Kingdom and to the Education and Training Act in Aotearoa New Zealand. I am a communication scholar and not a legislative drafter; this sets out the obligations a statute must contain and the mechanisms by which they would bite, and it would need parliamentary counsel to become law.

Part A Statutory duty to protect

A duty on every institution, owed to each member of academic and professional staff, engaged automatically on a defined trigger, and enforceable by the individual, their union and the sector regulator.

- L1 The duty is engaged when any of the following occurs: the staff member reports a credible threat to their safety or that of their family; the institution receives such a threat on their behalf; coverage of the staff member in national media exceeds a defined threshold within a defined period; or the staff member reports that they are the subject of a coordinated campaign.
- L2 On engagement the institution must, within 72 hours, offer independently instructed legal representation at institutional cost, with the staff member as client and legal professional privilege running to them.
- L3 On engagement the institution must, within 72 hours, complete a documented threat assessment and provide the security measures it identifies as an entitlement rather than a discretion, reviewed at defined intervals.
- L4 On engagement the institution must, within seven days and with the staff member's consent, make a public statement setting out the existence and character of the campaign and what the institution holds by way of evidence, and must repeat it as the campaign continues.
- L5 Where consent to a public statement is withheld, the institution must record the fact and the reasons, and the obligation revives on consent.
- L6 The institution must not open a disciplinary or reputational investigation into a staff member within a defined period of the duty being engaged without an independent assessment, disclosable to the staff member and their union, of whether the timing is justified by anything other than external pressure.
- L7 The duty survives resignation for a defined period, and survives the substantiation of unrelated allegations. Investigating a person and protecting them are compatible obligations and the statute must say so expressly.

Part B Mandatory logs

Three registers, kept contemporaneously, retained for a defined minimum period, disclosable to the individual concerned, to their union, to the regulator and to a coroner.

- L8 A threat log recording every threat to a member of staff of which the institution becomes aware, whether reported by the individual, received by the institution, or identified through mail screening or security monitoring, with date, nature, channel, whether police were notified, and the reference number of any report.
- L9 An academic freedom log recording every occasion on which a member of staff raises a concern that their academic freedom is threatened, whether by external campaign, political pressure, funder pressure, media conduct or internal management, with date, substance, and whether the concern was accepted or rejected.

- L10 A response log recording, against each entry in the two logs above, every step the institution took, the date of each step, the officer responsible, and where the institution decided to take no step, the reasoning for that decision.
- L11 A failure to log is itself a breach, actionable by the individual and sanctionable by the regulator, and the absence of a log entry raises a rebuttable presumption in favour of the individual's account.
- L12 The logs are disclosable in full to any coroner, public inquiry or independent review examining the death, serious harm or departure of a member of staff.

The importance of Part B is established by this case. Bananas and bullets posted through a university mailroom, mutilated animals sent to a family home, panic alarms installed at institutional expense: each of these generated an institutional document, and none of them entered the public record while it mattered. A logging duty converts private institutional knowledge into a disclosable public asset, and it does so before anyone dies.

Part C Mandatory public reporting

An annual return to the sector regulator, published in full, in a common format permitting comparison across institutions and aggregation across the sector.

- L13 Aggregate counts from the threat, academic freedom and response logs, disaggregated by ethnicity, disability, gender and academic level of the staff member concerned, with suppression only where numbers are small enough to identify an individual.
- L14 The number of complaints received against staff members from external parties, and of those, the number assessed as vexatious, with the threshold test applied and its outcomes.
- L15 The number of complaints assessed as originating in or amplified by a coordinated campaign as defined in Part D, the organisations identified, and the institution's response.
- L16 The number of occasions on which the duty in Part A was engaged, and against each, whether legal representation was offered and taken, what security was provided, and whether a public statement was made and when.
- L17 The number of investigations opened into staff members within the Part A window, and the independent assessments of timing that accompanied them.
- L18 A statement, signed by the accountable officer, of what the institution learned and changed. Regulators must have power to require a remediation plan where a return discloses a pattern.

Part D Defining the coordinated hate campaign

This is the most legally demanding part of the framework and it must be drafted narrowly, because a broad definition would be turned against the anti-racist organising it is meant to protect. That risk is real and I want to be explicit about it: any instrument capable of restraining a campaign against a Black professor is capable of being pointed at a campaign against a university, and the far right will attempt exactly that inversion. Narrow drafting on multiple cumulative conditions is the protection.

- L19 A coordinated hate campaign means a course of conduct, pursued by two or more persons or through the amplification of a single originating source, directed at an identified individual, which is substantially motivated by a protected characteristic of that individual, and which causes or is likely to cause serious distress, damage to livelihood or risk to safety.

- L20 All the following must be present: an identified individual; conduct sustained over time or by volume rather than a single publication; evidence of coordination or of amplification through a recognisable chain; and a substantial connection to a protected characteristic, established by the content of the originating material, the selection of the target, or the register in which the target is described.
- L21 The originating material may establish motivation. Where the origin of an allegation is a source whose published positions assert the inferiority of a group to which the target belongs, that is evidence going to motivation, and may be relied on notwithstanding that the allegation itself is framed in neutral terms.
- L22 Truth of an underlying allegation is not a defence to the classification, though it remains a complete defence to any claim founded on the falsity of what was published. The statute is directed at disproportion, coordination and motivation, and a true allegation may be the instrument of all three.
- L23 Classification is made by an independent body on application by the individual, their union, their employer or the regulator, on the civil standard, with reasons published and a right of appeal.
- L24 Classification is expressly not a restriction on publication. It has no prior restraint effect. It creates evidential status and triggers the consequences in Part E.

Part E Accountability of sources and of media

Two limbs, because the pipeline has two ends and the existing law reaches neither.

Originators

- L25 Where conduct is classified under Part D, the originating source and any organisation that funded, sponsored, published or litigated on behalf of that source may be joined to civil proceedings brought by the individual, and contribution apportioned according to their role in the chain.
- L26 Organisations operating in the jurisdiction that fund or sponsor litigation or campaigning must disclose the source, jurisdiction and amount of funding received from outside the jurisdiction, in a public register, with penalties for non-disclosure.
- L27 Charitable or educational status must be reviewable where an organisation is repeatedly identified in Part D classifications.
- L28 Platforms hosting originating material must, on classification, preserve that material and associated metadata for evidential purposes, and must disclose it on lawful request.

Media

- L29 On classification, the regulator acquires a duty to conduct an own-initiative investigation into the coverage, without requiring a complainant, examining the aggregate rather than individual items.
- L30 The investigation must consider volume, sustained register, the substitution of characterological labels for the subject's name, the interrogation of protected characteristics, the proportionality of the coverage against comparable cases, and whether the subject was afforded reply proportionate to coverage.
- L31 The regulator must have power to require prominent published findings, of a size and placement proportionate to the original coverage; to require a right of reply; to impose financial penalties calibrated to turnover; and to refer individuals to their professional regulators where relevant.
- L32 Where an outlet has published material about an individual subsequently classified under Part D, and has deleted that material without a public note, the deletion is an aggravating factor.
- L33 Membership of an approved regulator with these powers must be made materially advantageous through costs and damages incentives, so that non-membership carries a price. The Guardian is not a member of the current regulator and neither incentive nor sanction currently reaches it.

- L34 Where a person who is the subject of coverage dies during or shortly after a period of classified conduct, the regulator must open an investigation as of right and report publicly, and the investigation must be capable of running alongside coronial proceedings without prejudicing them.

Drafting cautions

Three risks must be managed on the face of the statute. The classification power must not create prior restraint, and Part D is drafted so that it operates after publication and on aggregate conduct. The cumulative conditions in L20 must be genuinely cumulative, because a disjunctive test would be captured immediately by well-resourced actors claiming that criticism of an institution constitutes a campaign against its officers. And the independent body in L23 must be constituted with the participation of the communities most exposed to these campaigns, because a body drawn from the same professional class as the outlets it examines will reproduce the judgement that register is a matter of taste.

22. A FRAMEWORK FOR RADICAL DEMOCRATIC MEDIA REFORM

The recommendations above will be read by policy audiences as a list from which items may be selected. The framework that follows is the argument that gives them coherence, and it is written from the culture-centered approach and from a decolonizing register because the liberal media reform tradition has no adequate account of what happened here.

The liberal account treats the press as a marketplace of ideas requiring occasional correction when individual claims are false. It assumes error is the harm, accuracy the remedy, and the subject of coverage a participant in a shared public sphere with recourse to reply. Every assumption failed. The claims were largely attributed and often accurate. The harm was volume, register and duration. The subject had one interview against 249 articles.

The decolonizing account begins elsewhere. It begins from the recognition that the modern press emerged inside empire, that its authority to narrate was built on the presumed absence of the colonised as knowers, and that the contemporary media system reproduces that architecture whenever it constitutes the racialised subject as an object to be adjudicated rather than a voice to be heard.

One. Voice is infrastructure, and infrastructure must be built

Media reform framed as restrictions on publishers leaves the underlying distribution of communicative capacity untouched. The reform that matters is the construction of infrastructures through which communities at the margins can narrate their own conditions and be heard: community-controlled outlets, guaranteed and non-discretionary access to platform, funding held by communities rather than dispensed to them, and editorial control located with the people whose lives are the subject.

Two. Listening is the reciprocal obligation

Voice without listening is decorative, and every institution here performed the decorative version. The newspaper that received a safeguarding concern before publication and published anyway had heard him. The university that screened his racist mail had heard him. Listening in the culture-centered sense is a structural obligation that changes what the listener does, and Part A of the framework above is an attempt to make it enforceable.

Three. Aggregate, not instance, is the unit of harm

This is the technical heart of the framework and where the evidence does the most work. The sentiment analysis shows tone flat across the cycle at its ceiling; the frame analysis shows composition shifting from allegation to person; the network analysis shows a discourse that does not partition. Every one of those

findings is invisible at the level of the individual article and visible only in aggregate. A democratic media system requires institutions capable of perceiving pattern, and the own-initiative powers in Part E are the minimum form of that capability.

Four. Provenance is a public interest fact

When a story originates in a project committed to the proposition that a racial group is intellectually inferior, that origin is the most important fact about the story, because it determines what the story is for. British readers encountering these allegations in late July were not told what they were reading.

Five. The settler-colonial and imperial genealogy must be named

The apparatus is transnational, funded across borders, and continuous with a longer history in which the authority to determine who counts as a knower was a colonial prerogative. Naming that genealogy explains why the interrogation moved so quickly from a thesis to a childhood, why an autistic Black man's account of his own life became a matter for public adjudication by newspapers, and why the entire register vanished the instant he died.

In Aotearoa this framework has a specific anchor, and it is Te Tiriti o Waitangi. A media system on these islands that took Te Tiriti seriously would treat the guarantee of tino rangatiratanga as extending to communicative sovereignty: the right of Māori to control the narration of Māori lives, held as a constitutional obligation rather than an editorial courtesy. The reason I write about a Cambridge professor from Palmerston North is that the apparatus is already here, the statutory instruments are already in place, and the first person it takes will be someone I know.

23. CONCLUSION: THE MACHINERY, ASSEMBLED

I have spent this paper taking a media cycle apart. This section puts it back together, because the parts are only alarming in combination, and because the argument I want to leave with the reader is not about any single newspaper or any single article. It is about a machine that now exists, that ran to completion in 22 days, and that is installed and operational in every country where I have colleagues.

23.1 What the record shows

Set the findings out together and the shape becomes visible.

Two hundred and forty nine articles in 22 days across 15 national outlets. One hundred and eighty eight of them in the nine days after Jason Arday resigned with a letter saying he had reached the limits of what any person should reasonably be expected to endure. A publishing rate that went from 2.8 a day to 33.5 at the resignation and settled at nearly 15 for the week that followed, five times its opening rate, sustained for eight days after he told the public he could not bear it.

As that volume grew, the reporting function shrank. The share of headlines doing evidentiary work fell from 74 per cent to 52. The share operating on his person rather than on any allegation returned to 43 per cent in the final week, so that more headlines attacked the man in those seven days than in the entire three weeks before. The share conscripting the case as proof of an argument about DEI went from three per cent to 16, arriving at scale only once he had resigned and could no longer answer.

Sentiment did not escalate, and this is one of the more telling results in the corpus. Headline valence sat at roughly -0.34 in the first phase and -0.34 in the last, with 73 per cent of headlines negative at the start and 70 per cent at the end. The register was set within days and held at its ceiling for three weeks. What intensified was never the temperature of any given piece. It was the number of pieces and what they had become about.

Formal analysis of the structure returned three results that a defence of this coverage has to answer.

Hierarchical clustering, given no instruction about meaning, placed the epithet frame, the deception frame and the contested childhood frame on the same branch as the allegation frame, the verification frame and the institutional frame. Silhouette widths peaked at 0.042, which in any ordinary clustering exercise is reported as a failure to find separable structure. Network analysis returned a density of 0.34 and a Louvain modularity of 0.10, close to what a random network of that density would produce. Three independent procedures agree: this discourse does not divide into a reporting register and a contempt register. It is one formation.

Within that formation the epithet was load-bearing. Professor Plagiarism and diversity poster boy occurred in only 30 headlines, and yet the epithet frame reached 15 of the other 19 frames and held the second highest betweenness centrality in the network. It was the connective tissue, the mechanism by which coverage of a book tour, a resignation letter, a university review and a childhood all became coverage of one man's character. The label never had to be argued in any single article because it was carried by all of them.

And the counter-argument never assembled. The frame naming the racialised character of the scrutiny appeared in eight headlines out of 243. The frame criticising the conduct of the press appeared in five. The two never once appeared together, giving that cluster an internal cohesion of exactly zero. The defence was not merely outnumbered at 5.3 per cent against 94.7. It was incapable of stating itself whole.

Two hundred and forty nine articles, and the two things that needed saying together were never said together once.

23.2 *Why an academic, and why this one*

It would be possible to read this case as a story about one man's claims and their unravelling. That reading cannot account for the numbers. It cannot account for 249 articles against the one national report that followed an adjudicated finding of plagiarism, upheld by a Cambridge tribunal and followed by a journal retraction, against a white associate professor at the same university who kept his job. It cannot account for a doctoral thesis dispute becoming, within a fortnight, a national interrogation of an autistic man's account of learning to speak.

The university is the target because the university is where the legitimacy of knowledge about race is manufactured. A political project holding that racial hierarchy is natural and that remedial policy is fraud has to contend with the fact that the institutions society trusts to adjudicate such questions say the opposite. It can respond by producing better evidence, which it cannot, or by destroying the authority of the institutions, which it can. The academy is therefore not incidental to the far right's strategy. It is the strategic object.

Within the academy, the scholars who study racism are the sharpest target, because their work is the specific knowledge that has to be voided. Arday had spent his career documenting how Black students and Black staff are treated in British universities. In April 2026 he stood at a conference plenary and described the mechanism precisely: activists trawling the published work of Black academics for citation errors, right-wing outlets and politicians joining the pile-on, institutions pressed to cut ties. He named Claudine Gay. He said the instruments designed to protect academic integrity were being weaponised. He asked his colleagues not to watch their fellows suffer. Some of the audience thought it an odd choice of subject for a keynote.

Four months later that description was executed on him, in the order he had given.

There is a further logic in the selection, and it is the exemplar function. In a sector where Black professors are under one per cent, visibility and precarity are the same property. The institution had made him the evidence

of its own virtue, celebrating the appointment and circulating the life story without checking it. That made him available as the evidence of the opposite. The exemplar and the target are the same position, and the press manufactured him twice, from the same unverified material, in both directions.

I want to be exact about the ethical structure here, because it is where this argument is most often attacked. Some of the allegations against him had substance. Two articles were corrected for text overlap. The evidentiary questions were legitimate and some of the reporting was serious work. None of that touches the finding. A campaign of this kind does not require its target to be innocent, and a critique that depends on innocence is a critique that can be defeated by a single documented error. What the evidence establishes is disproportion, racialisation and the migration from the professional to the personal. Those are properties of the coverage, and they would be present in identical measure if every allegation were eventually upheld.

23.3 *The media: capture rather than bias*

Bias is a position taken within a shared frame of description. Capture is the adoption of another project's frame as the grammar of description itself, so that the ideological content no longer has to be argued because it has become the ordinary way of saying what happened.

The distinction is visible in the data. Twenty one of the 24 attack uses of DEI and culture-war vocabulary came from the mainstream right tier, three from the Spectator, and none at all from the 70 headlines produced by the centre-left and public service tier or the seven from the specialist press. The originating hereditarian project published nothing in the corpus. Its analytic frame was carried by titles with mastheads, circulation and institutional credibility, and in being carried it was laundered. Readers of the first mainstream article on 24 July were not told what they were reading.

The phrase that opened the whole cycle demonstrates the mechanism better than any statistic. Diversity poster boy is not a racial epithet. It could not be found to breach any clause of any code in Britain. It asserts only that a man holds his position because of a policy about race, and it leaves the reader to supply the premise on which that assertion depends, which is that he would not otherwise have qualified. That premise is exactly what the hereditarian text states openly and the newspaper never has to state at all. It was published at 13:46 on the first day, reused in at least eight further headlines by the same title, and it never once appeared in a headline alongside any naming of the racism it performed.

This is why the regulatory apparatus cannot reach what happened. The Editors' Code presumes a modular discourse in which reporting and comment are separable and can be judged by different standards. The measured modularity of this corpus is 0.10. The code adjudicates individual items for accuracy, and accuracy was largely not the problem: the claims were attributed, the sourcing was often present, and the tone in any single item was indistinguishable from the tone in the first week when the story was arguably legitimate. The harm lived in aggregate, in register and in duration, and there is no instrument in British press regulation that can perceive any of the three. The complaints filed after his death will mostly fail, and their failure will be reported as vindication.

23.4 *The institution: what was held, and what was withheld*

The most serious finding in this paper is not about a newspaper.

In July 2025, a full year before the press cycle began, Arday set out in an open letter to a government minister that he had been threatened with a knife, physically assaulted and spat on, that rape and death threats had been made against him and his family, that bananas and bullets had been posted to him through the university campus, and that corrosive substances and mutilated animals had been sent to his family home. His email had been screened for racist abuse since he took up the post in 2023. After his death, Cambridge confirmed it had installed panic alarms and screened his racist correspondence, and that this support continued through the media scrutiny and after his resignation.

Every one of those is a document. Bullets through a university mailroom means a post-room record. Mutilated animals at a family home means a police report. Panic alarms mean a signed security assessment. For at least a year, the University of Cambridge held in its own files a complete documentary account of a sustained racist campaign against one of its professors.

It never placed that account into the public record. Not while national newspapers debated whether his claim of racist targeting was credible. Not when one of them put that question to a vote of its readers. Not when it announced, in public and at the height of the pressure, an investigation into his appointment.

The counter-frame in this corpus runs at 5.3 per cent, and the institution best placed to supply it had the evidence in a filing cabinet.

Cambridge did the private, individualised, low-cost parts of a duty of care. Counselling, alarms, mail screening. Those measures protect a person from the post and protect the institution from the charge of having done nothing. What it did not do was the expensive part: a sustained public statement, independently instructed legal representation answerable to him, and a contestation of the framing while the framing was being built. Private support reduces the employer's liability. Public defence reduces the individual's exposure. Across the anglophone academy institutions buy the first and describe it as the second, and this case is what that substitution costs.

The deeper failure is prior to all of it. The institution manufactured the exemplar. It circulated the life story it had not verified, took the reputational return, and left the individual holding the entire evidentiary burden of the sector's claim to have changed. When the burden came due it was he who paid it. Every senior leadership team in the anglophone academy will read this case, and I expect most of them to draw the conclusion that visible diversity appointments carry reputational risk. The correct conclusion is that abandonment carries a body.

23.5 Mainstreaming without a lag

The scholarship on how far-right ideas enter respectable politics describes a process with a shape: a frame originates at the margin, circulates in movement media, is repeated until it loses its shock, and is eventually taken up by mainstream actors who can then deny its provenance. Mondon and Winter document this for Britain and France. Titley shows how free speech discourse does the carrying. The model is a diffusion model, and it assumes a lag, and the anti-fascist strategy built on it is a strategy of interception: monitor the fringe, contest the normalisation, raise the cost of adoption before the mainstream picks it up.

This case breaks that model, and the evidence is unambiguous.

The originating post appeared on 21 July 2026. The first mainstream article appeared on 24 July, already carrying the racialised frame in its headline. The Spectator, the outlet in this corpus closest to movement press, did not publish a DEI-framed headline until 7 August, 14 days after the Telegraph. The mainstream did not receive this vocabulary downstream. It was ahead of the movement press by a fortnight, and it was ahead of it on day one.

There was no lag to intercept. There was no period of normalisation during which the frame was made acceptable, because the frame was already acceptable. The years of anti-woke beat-building that preceded this case had done that work, so that when the material arrived from a race-science Substack there was nothing to adapt. The desk knew what the story was. The three days between the blog post and the front page are not a measure of how fast the story travelled. They are a measure of how completely the receiving apparatus had already been built.

I call this discursive accelerationism, and I distinguish it carefully from the militant sense the term carries in far-right studies. What is accelerated is the transit from fringe articulation to mainstream adoption, compressed to the point of simultaneity. And the strategic implication is uncomfortable for everyone who works on this. A politics of interception cannot function against a mechanism with no interval. By the time a campaign is visible it has already completed its migration, which means the work has to move upstream, into the conditions that make a press ecology receptive, and downstream, into what happens to the individual once it starts.

Both of those are institutional questions, which is why this paper ends in a legislative framework rather than in a call for better journalism.

23.6 *What this predicts*

The machinery has five components and all five are now assembled in Britain, in the United States, in Australia, in Canada and in Aotearoa New Zealand.

A hereditarian intellectual project supplying the premise. A transnationally funded free-speech infrastructure supplying litigation, platform and legitimacy. A press ecology with an established anti-woke beat and staff writers assigned to it. A political class fluent enough in the vocabulary to produce columns within seventy two hours. And universities whose managerial instinct under pressure is to protect the institution by distancing from the individual.

In Aotearoa every component is present. The Free Speech Union operates here as a licensed sister organisation with Atlas Network funding and has brought Nigel Biggar, Peter Boghossian and James Lindsay to meet Ministers. The Education and Training Amendment Act 2025 has written freedom of expression provisions into the governing statute of every university in the country, and Universities New Zealand warned during its passage about exposure to vexatious complaints.²⁰ The receiving apparatus is built and the statutory handle has been fitted to it.

The next case here will be brought against a Māori or Pasifika academic. It will concern citation practice, or research funding, or a claim about whakapapa, or the conduct of a consultation. It will arrive framed as a question of academic integrity and it will be reported as one. It will not announce itself as a racist campaign and neither did this one. By the time anybody in a university executive recognises what is happening, the frame will have been installed for a fortnight and the person will be reading about themselves at two in the morning.

That is the prediction, and I would be glad to be wrong about it.

23.7 *What would have had to be different*

It is worth stating plainly, because the recommendations in this paper can otherwise read as abstraction.

Times Higher Education, holding a documented dossier in September 2025, would have published it, and the story would have been told by the outlet with the expertise to weigh it rather than by a race-science Substack 11 months later. Cambridge, holding a year of threat documentation, would have said publicly in the last week of July that a professor of theirs had been sent bullets through the university post, that police had been involved, and that it regarded the campaign against him as racist. A regulator with own-initiative powers would have opened an investigation on volume alone somewhere around 6 August, when fifteen outlets published 33 articles in two days about one man who had just written that he had reached his limit. A threat log would have existed and been disclosable. Independently instructed lawyers would have been acting for him rather than for anyone else.

None of those requires a newspaper to have behaved better. Each of them is an institutional obligation that could be written down, triggered on a defined event, and enforced. That is the entire argument of sections 20 and 21.

23.8 Voice, and what was taken

The culture-centered approach begins from the proposition that the erasure of voice is the organising principle of communication systems rather than an accident within them, and that structural violence is made sustainable by the communicative construction of the subaltern as absent. I have used that framework throughout this paper and I want to close on what it accounts for that the other frameworks do not.

Across 22 days and 249 articles, Jason Arday spoke once, in a single interview, in which he said that being positioned as a liar and a fantasist was unacceptable. He raised a safeguarding concern with a national newspaper before it published a piece contesting his account of his own childhood, and the piece was published. When he organised statements from named classmates who supported his account, the paper introduced them as statements he had organised, a provenance qualification it did not apply to the witnesses who contradicted him and whose provenance it did not disclose at all. He had written to a minister a year earlier and the letter changed nothing. He had told a room full of his own discipline exactly what was coming and they thought it an odd topic for a keynote.

He was not silent. He was unheard, which is a different thing and an engineered one. Every institution in this account had a channel through which his account could have travelled and every one of them declined to carry it. The press had 249 opportunities and used one. The university had a filing cabinet full of evidence and used none. The regulator had a code that could not hear the question. The learned society heard the warning and filed it under conference programming.

That is what the absence of voice infrastructure means, and it is why the reforms in this paper are infrastructural rather than attitudinal. Nobody needed to be persuaded that racism is wrong. They needed to be obliged, on a defined trigger, within a defined period, to place what they knew where it would count.

23.9 A last word on the register

I have used the word lynching in the title of this paper and I have used it with attribution, because a scholar at Brunel University said in the immediate aftermath that Arday had been hounded to his grave and that it would hardly be hyperbole to call it that, and because Stand Up to Racism called it a racist witch-hunt, and because his family called it a campaign of misinformation that was too much for him.

I use it because it names a specific historical form and this case has its features. A crowd action against a racialised individual. Conducted in public, as spectacle, with an audience invited to participate and in one case invited to vote. Guilt asserted rather than adjudicated. And, above all, made possible by the participation of respectable people, which is the feature that historians of the form always emphasise and that commentary on media pile-ons always omits. The Mirror ran two articles. The Star ran one. The instrument of this campaign was the top of the market: the papers with the largest editorial resource, the greatest institutional prestige and the strongest claim to be doing serious journalism.

And then, at the moment of the death, every one of them stopped at once. Across 43 headlines in the following 24 hours, not a single epithet. Delegitimation, institutional indictment and ideological conscription all fell to zero, instantly and universally. I have been careful throughout this paper to separate what the data establish from what they suggest, so let me mark this as inference and state it anyway. A register that can be switched off in an hour by 15 organisations simultaneously was never a description of a man. It was a decision about him, made daily, by people who knew they were making it.

24. CODA

At one minute past one on the morning of 14 August, a national newspaper offered its readers a psychiatric explanation for a man's conduct, in a column conceding its author had never met him. At 11 minutes past three that afternoon, another national newspaper published a piece contesting his account of his own childhood. At 12 minutes past three the ambulance service called the police. At 12 minutes past six the Times published a joke about him. He had been dead for three hours. The news had not broken.

By 10 that evening the death stories were landing, written in many cases by the same desks that had spent three weeks on him. In the 24 hours that followed, the same 15 outlets published 43 articles, more than double the rate they managed while he was alive. Not one carried an epithet in its headline. Every outlet made the switch at once, which tells us that every outlet knew what it had been doing.

Jason Arday was 41. He was a father, a partner, a brother, an uncle and a son, in the words his family used. He had spent his working life studying how Black students and Black staff are treated in British universities, and in April 2026 he stood in front of his peers and described, accurately and in advance, the machinery that would be used against him. A year before that he had written to a government minister listing the knife, the bullets in the campus post, the mutilated animals sent to his home. His university installed panic alarms and said nothing in public.

The coroner will determine how Jason Arday died. This paper documents the conditions in which he was living when he did, names the project that built them, identifies the outlets that carried it and the institution that held the evidence and said nothing, and sets out what would have to be written into law for the next person to survive it.

NOTES

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3. NewsCord, article census and analysis of British national press coverage of Jason Arday, newscord.org/editorials/jason-arday-pile-on, published 14 August 2026, updated 16 August 2026. Individual article citations, with bylines, timestamps and URLs, appear in the chronological master register accompanying this paper.
4. Nathan Cofnas, DEI Fraud and Cover-Up at Cambridge, Substack, 21 July 2026.
5. Varsity, Race-realist fellow Nathan Cofnas launches legal action against Emmanuel College, 16 August 2024; Varsity, Race realist fellow: College actively encouraged protests, 30 January 2026; Varsity, Uni clears don accused of abhorrent racism, October 2025.
6. Free Speech Union, Academic freedom under threat at Cambridge, legal fund and published statements in support of Nathan Cofnas, 2024 to 2026.
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8. The Irish Times, Cambridge University defends its mental health support for Jason Arday, 16 August 2026.
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15. Higher Education Staff Statistics, Higher Education Statistics Agency, as reported in analyses of professorial demographics; see also Advance HE equality in higher education statistical reports.
16. Nature and BBC reporting on Black professorial numbers in the United Kingdom and at Cambridge at the time of the 2023 appointment.
17. Times Higher Education, Editor's note: the Jason Arday case and Times Higher Education, 3 August 2026.
18. Jack Grove, I was reported to police over the Arday case. I was just doing my job, Times Higher Education, 5 August 2026; Metropolitan Police Commissioner's concession reported 6 August 2026.
19. Reference accounts of the April 2026 British Sociological Association 75th anniversary conference plenary, Manchester; and Ashique KM and colleagues, An academic's death foretold, The News Minute, August 2026, an eyewitness account by attendees.
20. Education and Training Amendment Act 2025 (New Zealand), freedom of expression provisions; Universities New Zealand submissions during passage.
21. Press Gazette, on the Independent Press Standards Organisation reviewing a high volume of complaints and concerns about the coverage, 17 August 2026; Times Higher Education, on Black Leaders in Higher Education UK asking IPSO to examine reporting of Arday's private life, 17 August 2026.
22. Trades Union Congress statement, 16 August 2026; University and College Union and Stand Up to Racism vigil announcements, 15 to 17 August 2026; petition calling for an independent review into the circumstances surrounding the death, August 2026. Comment from Gareth Dale, Brunel University, and from Weyman Bennett, Stand Up to Racism, reported in Al Jazeera and The Irish Times, 15 to 16 August 2026.
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AI use statement

Source gathering, corpus assembly, frame coding, statistical and network computation, figure generation and drafting support for this paper were undertaken with the assistance of a large language model. The corpus was verified against published sources; the analytic framework, the argument and the recommendations are the author's.