

The media didn't kill Jason Arday
The Spectator, 18 August 2026, Brendan O'Neill

What sounds more like a mob to you? Reporters asking questions about a professor's CV and backstory? Or swarms of the perpetually offended damning those reporters as racists, fascists, scum, even murderers?

It's the latter, isn't it? This is the bleak irony of the Jason Arday tragedy: his self-styled defenders decry the media mob while forging their own frothing mob. They accuse journalists of destroying a man's life even as they hound those journalists, and libel them as 'lynchers', and demand that they face public shaming.(...) They scare me far more than the press ever could.

The dreadful death of Jason Arday following weeks of media scrutiny of his credentials has given rise to a truly toxic atmosphere. The left, once again, has turned its guns on the press. Digital mobs accuse journalists of 'hounding' Arday to death. Even I – who wrote little about Arday – have received direct messages calling me a 'killer'.

In recent days, the rhetoric has been dialled up to inflammatory levels. Arday's death was a 'modern-day lynching', say self-styled anti-racists. In this grim vision, reporters are painted as the moral reincarnates of Klansmen: white supremacists in Next suits who did with words what evil men once did with nooses. It is an outrageous slander.

We're now even seeing the circulation of lists of these 'lynching' journalists. (...) Then there was the supposed vigil for Arday in Trafalgar Square last night. A vigil for the late Arday is a fine idea: his death is a tragedy and his friends and followers are cut up about it. Yet that gathering felt more like a mass screech of rage against the 'vicious' media than a quiet tribute to a late professor.

(...) The media did what it is meant to do: found a fascinating story and it told it. I know some of the journalists who wrote about Arday. The idea that they thought to themselves 'Look, a black man at Cambridge, let's take him down' is preposterous beyond belief. It is a slur far more vile and truthless than anything the media said about Arday.

The stakes are high. We cannot allow the left to exploit a personal tragedy in the service of its long-standing animosity to press freedom. This macabre, liberty-dreading mob needs to be confronted, and shut down.