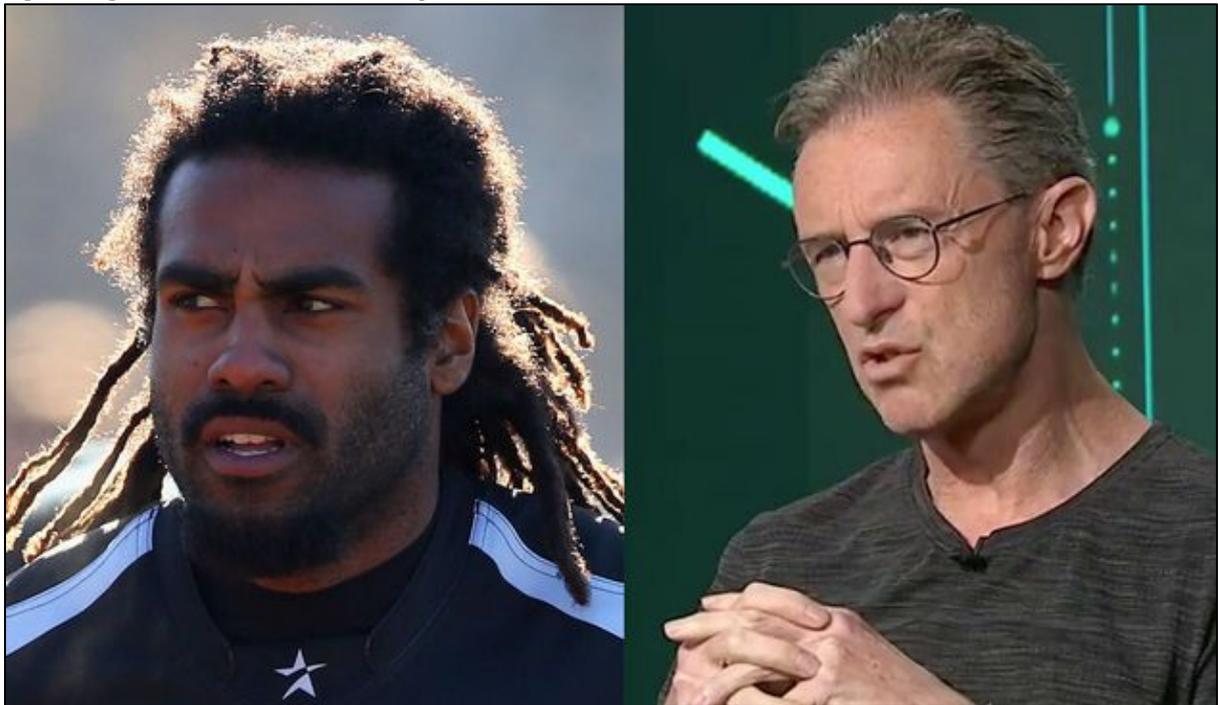


Gideon Haigh Blames Journalists' 'Whiteness' And 'Need For Access' For Discrediting Lumumba's Racism Allegations

The Veteran sports reporter said the media "bought readily" in Collingwood's campaign to disprove Heritier Lumumba's account of racism at the Magpies.

By Carly Williams 8th February 2021



Gideon Haigh calls out journalists' 'whiteness' and 'need for access' for discrediting Lumumba's racism allegations.

Sports reporter Gideon Haigh said journalists' "whiteness" was the reason much of the media followed Collingwood's lead in discrediting Heritier Lumumba's experience of racism at the club.

On Sunday's 'Offsiders' program on ABC, Haigh also blamed the media's "need for access" to players as a reason many chose to "readily" buy into Collingwood's "sotto voce" campaign to disprove the former AFL player when he went public with the claims three years ago.

Waleed Aly, who is a regular panelist on 'Offsiders' but was not on Sunday's program, has been condemned along with Peter Helliar for "discrediting" and "gaslighting" Lumumba in a 2017 segment on 'The Project'.

Lumumba's complaints of a "culture of racist jokes" at the club, where he played 199 games from 2005-14, prompted the recently leaked 'Do Better' review that found evidence of "systemic racism" within Collingwood.

In 2017, Lumumba made the allegations public and said the club failed to support him and punished him for daring to speak out.

Coach Nathan Buckley and Collingwood publicly denied his claims.

Haigh on Sunday questioned how reporters represented the story in 2017.

“Was it ever seriously so difficult to believe Lumumba in this story?” Haigh asked on Sunday’s episode of ‘Offsiders’.

“It seems the journalists bought readily into the club’s sotto voce campaign to discredit him because of their need for access, because of their general conformity and frankly their whiteness.”

‘The Project’ and its hosts Helliar and Aly have been accused of dismissing Lumumba’s experiences during what Lumumba calls a “disgraceful” 2017 on-air interview.

Sunday’s ‘Offsiders’ show discussed Lumumba’s account of players calling him “chimp” while he played at the club. Players Andrew Krakouer, Chris Dawes, Brent Macaffer, Leon Davis, Chris Egan and Shae McNamara have confirmed hearing the nickname.

Twitter users noticed panelist Aly was not on the show as Haigh made his comments and Indigenous Australian sports commentator Charlie King recalled harrowing stories of racist nicknames and the personal cost of racist abuse.

“Waleed was invited to be part of the Offsiders panel on Sunday, but wasn’t available,” an ABC spokesperson told HuffPost Australia.

Aly last appeared on ‘Offsiders’ on November 29 last year.

Viewers of Aly’s nightly news show ‘The Project’ were left outraged last week when the show ignored calls to acknowledge the resurfaced 2017 segment in which Helliar and Aly dismissed Lumumba’s experiences of racism at the Pies.

Melbourne-based comic Aamer Rahman told HuffPost Australia the program had “an active role in covering for the club” when Lumumba came forward, and its failure to acknowledge that now “is hypocritical and dishonest”.

Rahman said the segment “undermined” Lumumba’s experiences, left important details out of the final edit and echoed Collingwood’s PR messages that tried to disprove Lumumba’s story.

Helliar, who has worked with Collingwood as its ‘Strauchanie’ character, last week tweeted an apology to Lumumba, saying: “I should have believed you.” But many say it’s not enough and Aly and ‘The Project’ should apologise on-air.

Rahman added: “It’s truly embarrassing that Waleed’s white co-host has attempted an apology while he has remained silent.”

'The Project' has since removed the full 2017 Lumumba segment from its social media accounts.

'The Project' and Network 10 declined to comment.