

Burnham's is pandering to the right over Jason Arday's ...

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The [FT reported](#) yesterday that:

Andy Burnham has called for a “moment of reflection” after the “tragic” death of Jason Arday, as tributes were paid to Cambridge’s youngest-ever Black professor who resigned last week amid allegations of plagiarism.

They added:

Burnham told broadcasters while on a visit to Cornwall: “It’s a tragedy on so many levels, but particularly just for everybody who knew Jason . . . It’s not a moment for any rushing to judgment. It’s a moment for reflection, I would say, reflecting on how things came to this.”

It might be possible to call this fence-sitting, prevarication, or playing for time, but let me be clear: it is none of these things.

This is deliberate. It is Burnham refusing to say what is obviously necessary, as Sadiq Khan and so many others did in the aftermath of Jason Arday’s death.

Arday was put under intolerable and unjustified scrutiny in well over 200 media articles, which can only be explained by a combination of racism and anti-autistic sentiment. He dared to be different, and right-wing media like the Telegraph, Mail, Times, Spectator and even the Guardian were not going to put up with that.

As Jo Maugham pointed out yesterday, not only was the risk real and obvious to those who knew Jason Arday, but he advised the Guardian to back off, and they did not.

This does not, then, require a moment of reflection on Burnham's part, except on the tragedy for Arday and his family. What it required was a moment of condemnation of vicious bullying that, in the end, looked like a lynch mob in action.

As I noted yesterday, Arday might have made mistakes, but Rachel Reeves plagiarised much of a book that she wrote, and our current Business Secretary claimed to be a

solicitor when that is untrue. They got away with this. Arday's errors, if they existed, were not forgiven in the same way. That is the evidence that this vile reaction in the media was motivated not by what he did, but by the fact that he was different, and that was unacceptable to some of those in power.

A genuine leader would have the courage to say that.

A person who knew their own mind would not need time to reflect on something as obvious as this.

A person who could tell the difference between right and wrong, and between innocent comment and targeted venom, would not sit on the fence.

Either Burnham lacks these qualities, or he has them but is willing to suppress his natural sentiments to appease the neoliberal right, who are the people who created this tragedy with their hatred of everything to do with diversity, equality and inclusion, which they thought Jason Arday represented.

I had my doubts about Burnham before he made that comment. Now I know that he is just another person in office willing to excuse the power of wealthy neoliberal thuggery. He and the Labour Party he heads deserve their consignment to political oblivion in 2029, or earlier if possible. They have nothing to offer this country.