UCU Motion on Race Science

This branch notes that the 'Oxon Universities Reform Society' has invited the blogger and researcher Nathan Cofnas to speak at Oriel College on 17th November 2026, on the question of whether equality, diversity, and inclusion initiatives undermine Higher Education. Cofnas's views on race and higher education, which are well known, are clearly incompatible both with a rigorous commitment to academic research, and with the University's public sector equality commitments to support the safety, well-being, and success of its BME staff.

Cofnas is a self-professed "race realist" and has expressed his desire to head a department of race science and eugenics someday. He has written that if Harvard University hired on merit alone, the number of Black professors it employed would approach zero, and that in a meritocracy Black people would have no place in public life except in entertainment and sports. Most recently he accused Professor Jason Arday, the youngest Black Professor at Cambridge University, of plagiarism in a blog post that claimed that Cambridge had lowered its standards for equality and diversity reasons. This post led to a blatantly racist media storm that continued well after Professor Arday first resigned his post and then was found dead in his home. The race science in which Cofnas grounds his intellectual project has been robustly rejected as pseudoscientific many times over and for decades by leading scholars across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. His own colleagues at the University of Ghent, where he is employed as a postdoctoral researcher, have further raised concerns on the white supremacist content of Cofnas's work.

The risk that Cofnas's work poses to the public good is evident in the decision that Unia, Belgium's independent anti-discrimination monitor, has made, to bring legal action against him on the grounds that his work advocates to "establish a hierarchy amongst human beings on the basis of so-called scientific knowledge, in order to justify discrimination based on origin or skin colour, or to promote forms of segregation." It is also notable that Unia considers Cofnas to have violated not only Belgium's anti-racism law, but also the United Nation Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) Race Science and Eugenics emerged in the 19th century to justify the colonial enterprise. Their resurrection in the present moment within a moral panic about equality, diversity, and inclusion in universities serves no purpose but the exclusion of Black and racialised scholars, as well as antiracist scholarship, from the academy. This branch resolves therefore:

- That race science and eugenics have no place in our educational institution and are not legitimate research agendas.
- To make a representation to the university to affirm its commitment that race science and eugenics have no place in the University of Oxford
- To affirm its full support to its Black, Minority Ethnic, and disabled scholars whose place in the academy is not open to question.