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Chelsea fans exhibit racism, violence

White fans seen pushing a black man off of the metro as he attempted to board

BY BRIANNA PARKER
STAFF WRITER

"We're racist. We're racist, and that's the way we like it." These are the words that Souleymane Sylla, a 33-year-old French business man, was met with when attempting to board the Paris Métro on Feb. 17.

Aboard the Métro were English soccer fans on their way to a Champions League match between Chelsea and Paris SG. These men were filmed shouting racist chants and pushing Sylla off the train twice when he attempted to board.

"I was a little bit hurt physically, but in terms of morale I was hurt a lot," said Sylla to The Guardian. "It has really affected my life. I can't go back into the Métro; it makes me really afraid."

Many people, including Sylla himself, have been left wondering how such a thing could happen in 2015. Unfortunately, this is not a solitary incident but one which reflects a long history of racism in English soccer. This is not the first incident for Chelsea, either — in 2012 Chelsea captain John Terry was briefly banned for racial abuse of an opposing player.

Dana Professor of Psychology Richard Zweigenhaft told the Guilfordian that when people are in large groups, like sports teams or fans, they are more likely to participate in violent behavior because there is less of a chance of them being individually held responsible.

"I do think the culture of the group does play into it," said Zweigenhaft. "It would be less likely to happen at Guilford, or UNCG, than with soccer fans in England where there is a tradition of hooliganism."

"It is a challenge for owners and clubs to figure out how to deal with it because on the one hand they want enthusiastic fans because that's how they make their money. On the other hand they don't want them to be so enthusiastic that they are racist or dangerous."

Chelsea Football Club has said that any season-ticket holders found responsible for the incident could be banned.

"Such behavior is abhorrent and has no place in football or society," said Chelsea in a statement per The Guardian. "We will support any criminal action against those involved."

The Union of European Football Association cannot take punitive action towards the offending fans because the incident took place away from a stadium. UEFA does have a zero tolerance policy towards racism, though.

"We are appalled by the incident which took place in the Paris Metro on Tuesday," UEFA said in an official statement.

Junior and soccer player Lucas Prillaman told the Guilfordian that while respect and sportsmanship have

come a long way, racist incidents still happen in the sport, even to one of his old teammates.

"(I'm) unsure whether it was tempers flaring from the other team or just the way he had his mind set, but he was blatantly racist towards one of my teammates," said Prillaman. "He looked at him directly and said, 'You dumb n—.'"

"While one of the biggest mottos of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association is 'Say No to Racism,' it is still seen a couple times a year in huge professional games and collegiate games alike. While some trash-talking and a little banter between players is quite common, it is sad to see how far players will go with their trash-talking."



Chelsea soccer fans were caught on tape chanting racist slogans while pushing Souleymane Sylla off a Metro car twice in Paris.

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Chelsea Football Club

Fighting Ebola in Liberia



Brian Castner is the author of "The Long Walk," an Amazon Best Book of 2012 and Chautauqua Literary & Scientific Circle selection for 2013. Previously, he served as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal officer in the US Air Force from 1999 to 2007, deploying to Iraq to command bomb disposal units in Balad and Kirkuk in 2005 and 2006.

Cheryl Hatch is currently a visiting professor at Allegheny College. Hatch has focused her camera and reporting on war, its aftermath and its effects on soldiers, their families and those caught in the crossfire, especially women and children. She has worked in Liberia, Somalia, Iraq and Eritrea.

3:45-5:00pm
Thursday, March 26
Guilford College
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Pulitzer Center grantees, journalist Brian Castner and documentary photographer Cheryl Hatch reported on the efforts of the U.S. military and local community to contain the Ebola epidemic in Liberia.

Castner and Hatch discuss how they adapted to the changing story with the turning tide of the Ebola crisis.



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Images by Cheryl Hatch and Brian Castner. Liberia, 2014.