

Racism in football

This is a provocative video that could stimulate interesting and important questions about unfairness, racism, solidarity, responsibility and the ways people and institutions respond to racism.

What to watch

I suggest you play the video through for 2.06 minutes and stop just after the interview with Marc Zoro. Here he talks about why he picked up the ball and tried to walk off the pitch in response to racist abuse from Inter Milan fans (and maybe some of his own team's fans?).

Inviting and discussing questions

Ask pupils to create questions in pairs and then form them into groups of four to choose a question to submit for discussion. Write up the questions for all to see and allow the class to choose a question the question they think will lead to the most valuable discussion. Whatever pupils say in response to the question and to each other, make sure they identify the principles and the emotions behind the suggestions they make or the opinions they express. Ask them for reasons for their views. We can imagine some of the questions that might come up. Stopping the video just after the Marc Zoro interview invites questions on what he other people involved should or shouldn't do given the circumstances. Some questions might be:

- ◆ Should the referee have stopped the match?
- ◆ What should the limits be to fans intimidating players of the opposing team?
- ◆ Would some fans mocking a player for being 'fat' or 'gay' be comparable with the abuse dished out to Marc Zoro?
- ◆ Should all the players have walked off in solidarity with Marc Zoro?
- ◆ Did fans who didn't shout racist abuse have any right to expect the game to be continued?
- ◆ What should the football authorities do about this incident and others like it?
- ◆ Should Marc Zoro be disciplined for 'unprofessional conduct' or congratulated for his courage?

The range of these questions show that there are a lot of moral actors in this drama and, whatever questions come from the pupils, it would be useful to draw attention to this and to ask pupils to imagine the possible ethical principles that could be applied such as: solidarity with the oppressed, professionalism (with a clear definition of what that should mean), accepting or rejecting responsibility in responding to a wrong, deserving (or not) to be punished for the actions of others. Find out which principles carry the most weight with pupils here and why.

The rest of the video

The last part provides an interesting complement to the first part in that it gives more shocking examples of continuing racist behaviour in football (and not just by fans). Whatever the pupils thought after their discussion of the first part, the second will give them further food for thought and reflection.

It also reports on responses from official footballing and sporting bodies. This could raise questions about how relative responsibility of sporting institutions for the creating cultures and expectations that either tolerate or repress racism and other anti-human behaviour.

I'd be interested in the responses of your pupils if you discuss this video with them. Email me if you have anything interesting to report. Email: williams.sheehy@yahoo.co.uk