

WHIPPING UP A MEDIA STORM

In a new podcast funded by *The Guilty Feminist* and Acast, two City alumni have addressed the “dramatic misrepresentation” of minority groups in the media. Since launching in November 2021, *Media Storm* has provided a platform for minority groups to share their lived experiences omitted in the media.

Mathilda Mallinson (*International*, 2019) and Helena Wadia (*Broadcast*, 2017) met while working at a national newspaper. Ms Wadia said: “The Channel migrant crossings were massive in the media and they were splashed across every newspaper. The newspaper that we worked for had written around 60 articles [about migrants] in a week, and not one of them had spoken to a person who had actually crossed the Channel.”

She added: “Mathilda pointed this out to me, and I said I think about that all the time, but in terms of representation of trans people or people with disabilities. They are always talked about, but we never actually hear from them.”

The podcast’s first episode illustrates the lived experience

of the migrant crisis, featuring conversations with multiple refugees, including Steve Ali, a journalist and Syrian refugee who once lived in the Calais Jungle. Mr Ali also co-founded the Refugee Media Centre with Ms Mallinson in August 2020.

In the episode, Mr Ali describes mainstream media as “agenda driven”, saying: “One of the most pervasive and ignorant ways of uniting people is creating a common enemy.”

Ms Mallinson said: “Our broad topics are often based on conversations being had in the media – groups being actively demonised. We often go with the things that we think need urgently addressing – where there is very dramatic misrepresentation.”

Media Storm has been well-received by listeners and journalists alike. Ms Wadia said: “We started to get direct messages through social media, or random people tweeting things like ‘I found this, and I love it. This is so important.’ Reading stuff like that is the best.”

“I got into journalism in the first place to try and change the same old narrative, especially



Left to right: Helena Wadia and Mathilda Mallinson. Image credit: Callum Baker

for minority groups,” added Ms Wadia. “So to hear people understand that is really amazing. It has been a pretty great reaction.”

However, Ms Mallinson and Ms Wadia have received some criticism for presenting a biased view of current affairs, because they prioritise lived experience over expert opinions.

Ms Mallinson said: “The way that the media reports these issues is currently unbalanced. We just try to weigh down the scales a little bit to even it out. We’re not encapsulating the two-sided balanced debate in itself.”

“Sometimes that message can get missed,” Ms Wadia added.

“In theory, getting people with lived experience to speak about the things that have happened to them – not only their experience, but their expertise on the issue because they have lived it – is not a shocking thing. But our media has become so obsessed with this false notion of balance.”

Ms Mallinson and Ms Wadia have balanced releasing weekly episodes of *Media Storm* with other freelance projects. Ms Mallinson called *Media Storm* “a big time commitment”, but she added: “it helps when you love it and we love each other.”

OLIVIA EMILY