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Ashley Hagar
Seattle University

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Former NFL Linebacker, Emmanuel Acho, Accepts the Final Rose

Ashley Hagar, Staff Reporter

Given the recent racist actions by a contestant on season 25 of the Bachelor, Chris Harrison has taken a step back from his role as the host of the show. Emmanuel Acho is set to take his place as the new host of the Bachelor's After the Final Rose (ATFR) episode.

As current bachelor Matt James' season comes to a close, multiple racist allegations have come up regarding one of the contestants, Rachael Kirkconnell. Claims that she bullied her peers in high school for liking people of color, as well as photos of her attending an Old South antebellum-themed party have surfaced online in recent weeks.

Former Bachelorette Rachel Lindsay was the first to address these allegations. Lindsay made history as the franchise's first Black bachelorette and continues to have ties with the franchise through her podcast Bachelor Happy Hour. She called on Harrison to take action and stand up for the people of color on the show. However, Harrison defended Kirkconnell's actions in his initial conversation with Lindsay.

"Well, Rachel, is it a good look in 2018? Or, is it not a good look in 2021? Because there's a big difference," Harrison said.

Second-year Computer Science major Arden Yazici shared her disappointment with Chris Harrison. Yazici hopes ABC and the Bachelor franchise will focus on addressing the remarks made by Harrison, as well as any other situation that may occur in the future.

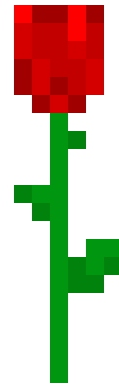
"I think the whole situation was incredibly unsettling and very unexpected. I'm pretty proud of Bachelor Nation for seeing past the Chris Harrison they know and love and holding him accountable for his actions and hurtful words," Yazici said.

Harrison ultimately apologized to Lindsay for his response through an Instagram post.

"To my Bachelor Nation family—I will always own a mistake when I make one, so I am here to extend a sincere apology," Harrison wrote. "I also apologize to my friend Rachel Lindsay for not listening to her better on a topic she has a first-hand understanding of."

Harrison announced his stepping back from the show in another post three days later. Kirkconnell released her own statement regarding the claims made against her in an Instagram post. She also went on to make a video addressing her past actions, which she shared on Instagram. James also made a statement about the issue on social media.

After hearing that Harrison will not be hosting the ATFR episode, Second-year Nursing student Desiree Hernandez shared her opinion on how the Bachelor franchise should diversify itself in the future.



Leon Lee

"I think Chris Harrison should step back permanently and should engage in training to be more inclusive. He should also engage in tough conversations to address racism and how to be better in the future," Hernandez said. "As for the franchise as a whole, I think they should focus on what's going on in the world around us and show ways that contestants and viewers can help combat racism, different ways to support and stand with BIPOC rather than focusing on the drama between contestants."

After many conversations between various Bachelor and Bachelorette stars, as well as the announcement of Harrison stepping back, Lindsay recommended Acho to take Harrison's place at ATFR.

Third-year social work student, Rowan Cuadrado, appreciated Lindsay's recommendation as she hopes to see Bachelor Nation encourage diversity rather than hide it.

"Bachelor Nation needs to be actively engaged in having these important conversations and decisions and also listening to their fanbase, not immediately jumping to their defense," Cuadrado said. "I think Acho was a good choice, he has spoken up a lot about important race issues in America. It's going to be a nice breath of fresh air to have a young person with a good heart do a test trial of working in the franchise."

As Acho hosts the podcast "Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man" and authored a book by the same title, Lindsay believed he would be the perfect person to have those difficult conversations with on ATFR, airing March 15 after the season finale on ABC.

Acho announced he would be hosting the ATFR special in a Tweet Feb. 27. Former NFL linebacker now co-hosts "Speak for Yourself," where he works as an analyst on Fox Sports 1. Given his work advocating for the Black community, especially in light of the Black Lives Matter protests that began after the murder of George Floyd, Acho seems to be the right person to host the ATFR episode and address the events of recent weeks with the contestants and James.

While it remains unclear if Harrison will step down permanently or if Acho will replace him long-term, the decision to bring Acho in for the last episode of this season helps guide the conversation regarding racism within the franchise.