

The Advertiser

Boxer's low blow rouses racial divide

Editorial

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Even in a sport renowned for gaudy and boastful pre-fight showmanship, Mundine's provocative comments are extreme. The indigenous fighter is unlikely to have too many in his corner over branding the anthem racist and disrespectful of "our people".

In particular, Mundine was wrong to insult Jessica Mauboy, who will sing the anthem, by saying she was being "used" because she was black. Mauboy grew up in a multicultural family - her father is of Indonesian descent and her mother is an indigenous Australian. As her website says, she is a "true-blue Australian success story", a decorated singer, songwriter and actor. She was picked to sing the anthem because of her talent.

Mundine is known for his controversial comments. In 2007 he branded Olympic gold medal-winning sprinter and fellow Aboriginal athlete Cathy Freeman a "sellout" for being involved with corporate Australia. After the September 11, 2001 terror attacks on America, he said that country had "brought it upon themselves".

Mundine's stance follows that of San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick, an African American who last year refused to stand for the US anthem.

Mundine, a former rugby league star, says he has done his research. He argues Aboriginal Australia is not "young and free" and "it's about respecting each other's cultures". But this is a deliberately antagonistic act designed to incite outrage. Unfairly, it casts Friday's bout with Danny Green as a white versus black fight.

If Mundine is really so upset about the anthem, he should pull out of the fight. But his opposition to the anthem is hollow - he won't sacrifice a \$10 million payday for his principles.

In a country which values free speech, Mundine is entitled to express his opinion. It is a pity that, in doing so, he sows the disunity and division that he says he is campaigning against.