

RACE PREFERENCE OR RACE FETISH?

by *Racialicious* Special Correspondent [Latoya Peterson](#)



[Warning: Post contains links to pictures of hot male entertainers in various stages of undress. Click at your own risk.]

Back in April, I read [this Kimchi Mamas post](#) and was reminded of an ongoing debate I have with a few friends: is exclusively dating members of your own race being racist or having a preference? Is dating outside of

your race exercising a fetish?

I've heard arguments on both sides of the debate, of equal merit. (Check the Kimchi Mamas post for some other ideas on race and dating).

When my friends and I discuss the idea of race and dating (or interracial sex, depending on the day) we tend to take the debate a step or two further and pose the following question: is it a preference or fetish? At what point does admiration of certain characteristics (mocha skin, jet-black hair, a petite stature, a porcelain complexion) become a full-blown fetish?

And further, can you fetishize your own race?

Tackling the first idea, I believe it is difficult to differentiate between a fetish and characteristic. The only rule that sticks seems to be making blanket statements about an entire race of people (i.e. all white women are wild in bed) as an indicator of a fetish. So when I hear a comment like "Asian girls are hot," it does give me some pause. Hearing a statement like that kind of makes me think that the speaker already has a preconceived notion of what "Asian" is - and it probably excludes women from Malaysia, the Philippines, India, or Sri Lanka.

On the other hand, sometimes certain characteristics (which may or may not be common to a certain race or ethnicity) can be highly coveted by individuals. Darker skin is not common to all races. Neither is long, straight, jet black hair or blue eyes. So, it would stand to reason that people who find certain characteristics attractive would start seeking out individuals with those characteristics - which may lead to dating along racial lines.

Hmmm...preference or fetish?

One of my close friends tends to date white women, though he maintains he dates the rainbow. When I ask him about the reasons for his attraction, he goes into different factors of why he is attracted to the women he dates. He lists things like body type, hair, and complexion. I prodded him playfully about one of his recently revealed fetishes - the fact that he, a black male, wants to have a white woman tie him up and treat him like a slave.

He asked one of his former sex partners to do it, and she didn't speak to him for a week.

He acted puzzled.

"I just asked her to beat me a few times and call me Toby."

I asked him if his desire for that particular sex act has caused him in recent years to narrow his focus in dating, pointing out that he has not dated anyone of color since freshman year of college.

He contemplates that for a moment.

"Maybe," he finally answers.

Still, I'm not really one to talk. I've been accused of harboring a fetish myself.

Some of my friends noticed a spark of interest in the hotties populating the videos I watch from South Korea. They were quick to attribute my Otaku-zeal for learning about all things Asian to the desire to snag my very own Asian Boyfriend/Accessory. (Their way of thinking isn't so far fetched. Check out [this shirt](#) and [this shirt](#) - apparently top sellers over at J-List aka Otaku Depot.)

Still, to me, having a passive crush on a celebrity is a logical thing - pop stars are forged on sex appeal as much as talent. If a small crush on the ever-sexy [Rain](#) comes out of all my J-drama and K-drama watching, what am I to do? (Obviously, [People Magazine](#) agrees with me.) If I watch Hong Kong action movies and dramas, it is logical that leading men like [Aaron Kwok](#) will start looking pretty attractive. And can admiring the talents and *ahem* other strengths of [Kim Song-Soo](#) be construed as a bad thing?

Apparently so. According to a couple of my black friends, I have a fetish. My current boyfriend expanded on said hypothetical fetish by saying that due to my interests and eating habits, an Asian boyfriend would only be construed as an item, yet another acquisition in some kind of quest to be more-Otaku-than-thou.

While at [Otakon](#) last weekend, I got to indulge myself a bit more in the various cultures of Asia. Late Saturday night, we decided to camp out in the film room, to check out three different movies - a South Korean comedy, a Chinese/HK fight flick, and a South Korean melodrama. In, another friend, decided to join Hae and I during the films, so we were all present for most of the films.

In the last half of an amusing but flat gangster melodrama, a hot guy debuted on the scene.

My head whipped toward Hae in the darkened theater.

“Who is that?” I hissed.

“Eric from Shinhwa,” she replied, “He’s cute right?”

In swung across us.

“No he isn’t,” she said, “the main character is much hotter.”

“Yeah, but he’s old,” Hae managed to reply before we started getting dirty looks from other Otaku.

After departing the movies, we spent the rest of the night in our hotel, watching music videos and comparing pictures of Asian stars.

Do I have a fetish?

Are Hae and In fetishizing their own race?

The idea of fetishizing one’s own race is another charged idea. Growing up, I was taught that “black is beautiful” and that edict guided most of my ideas about attractiveness and appeal until I became an older teen. Many of my friends still cite same race preferences in dating (though most of us actively dabble other places.)

Why is it that a preference for certain characteristics - like locs, a thicker/thinner body type, skin tone - are more acceptable with your own racial group? Is it fetishizing if a dark-skinned black male only dates light-skinned black women? Is it fetishizing if my Korean friends express a preference for Korean men only? Or Korean men and white men only?

There are no answers in this post, unfortunately - just some things I am thinking about.