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The Epidemic of Yellow Fever

On November 11, 2000, two Japanese school girls were abducted and raped by "Eddie" Balls and David Dailey for over 7 hours while being filmed before being returned to their school campus. An incident that the Spokane Police Chief describes as "one of the most despicable crimes" he has ever dealt with, and yet the case was left to soon be forgotten. The perpetrators purposely targeted Japanese girls under the impression that all Asian women were submissive and would not report the crimes if they threatened to show the tapes. Unfortunately, this is only one of the ways that the subject of the fetishization of Asians is rarely touched upon and yet can have such drastic consequences.

Yellow fever is an umbrella term to describe having a preference, usually sexual, towards Asians. While it is passed off as simply a specific fetish, it does nothing to excuse the fact that having a racial fetish is different from having a fetish for feet or brunettes because it directly stems from a preconceived notion of what it means to be from a certain race. This should be considered racist, however, it is shrugged off so often that there has been a lack of proper research on the issue itself. Consequently, many people do not realize that such a problem exists in the first place— much like discrimination towards Asians overall; They are seen as submissive and forgettable, a distorted perspective fostered by pop culture.

Asian fetishization sexualizes the women and emasculates the men. It is normalized and does more harm than good, coming from a history of misrepresentation and racism. Nevertheless, there cannot be a proper solution to this problem without acknowledging that it is an issue and standing against it by speaking up.

This problem has been around for years, originating in historical racism from decades or even centuries ago. Notably, Stars and Stripes, the main military newspaper, once released an ad during a time in both Korea and Vietnam when the US military was purposefully promoting prostitution stating it was good for morale and encouraging troops to visit the sex industry, which stated, "Picture having three or four of the loveliest creatures God ever created hovering around you, singing, dancing, feeding you, washing what they feed you down with rice wine or beer, all saying at once, 'You are the greatest.' This is the Orient you heard about and came to find." In addition, the US military was notorious for their coital involvement with the Asian population, such as the Korean-US Mutual Defense treaty, including an estimated amount of 300,000 sex workers or the victims of the My Lai massacre showing signs of rape before being killed.

This image of East and Southeast Asian women became a caricature for all Asian women for years afterward, especially once it made its way into the media. The misconception that all Asian women are hypersexual even led to an influx of anti-prostitution mindset in the West, combined with the rising fear and disdain toward the Asian population, which resulted in the passing of the Anti-Prostitution Act of 1870 in California. It was not "lawful, to bring, or land from any ship, boat, or vessel, any Mongolian, Chinese or Japanese females, without first presenting to the Commissioners of Immigration evidence satisfactory to him that such female desires voluntarily to come into this State, and is a person of correct habits and good character." The stereotypes of the "Lotus Blossom," "China Doll," or "Dragon Lady" formed the conception that Asian women are objects to be sexualized and dominated in order to fulfill the sexual fantasy of the typical Western male. Pierre Loti's 1887 "Madame Chrysantheme" depicted a story of a naval officer taking in a Japanese woman as a temporary wife, whom he described as being not "much bigger than a doll" and who he eventually abandoned to return to his normal life in

Europe. The novel consequently caused heavy influence on the Western perspective of Asian women and turned them into objectified "china ornaments" in which white men had total authority over as "submissive" sexual playthings that can be quickly left behind. Following "Madame Chrysantheme," came other versions of the same storyline such as "Miss Saigon," "Lotus Flower," or the most infamous, "Madam Butterfly." It became an overused archetype, all following the same premise involving the white male abandoning his Asian prostitute for a white wife.

Sexualization of Asian women in mass media continues even today in the 21st century. In 2019, Pornhub, the popular pornography site, released data that showed that four of the six top searched terms of the year all included Asian pornography, such as "Japanese," "hentai," "Korean," and so on. The popularity of this category has earned it its own Asian-specific sites, whose existence is to provide users with Asian featured pornography like Asian Porn Life and Pro Asian Porn. It should be noted that the majority of Asian-related pornographic content consistently emphasizes the "petite" aspect of the Asian woman as she is "dominated" by her partner, often depicting non-consensual violence in the process. This stereotype is implemented so deep in society that it becomes the cause of incidents such as the Apple iOS 14 problematic update, in which turning on the adult content filter would block out searches that included the word "Asian," suggesting any content that involved Asians should be assumed to be NSFW (not safe for work).

However, while women in media are oversexualized, it is the opposite for men. Instead, they are portrayed as emasculated, perverted, or evil compared to their Caucasian counterparts (Long Duk Dun, Charlie Chan, etc.). In the LGBTQ+ community, several gay Asian men have spoken out about constantly being assumed they were a bottom and when told otherwise, were

forced to act as one despite any initial refusal. Either way, Asian men are simply depicted as undesirable as a whole, "No fats, no femmes, no Asians" being a popular mantra on Grindr.

There is such a lack of acknowledgment and even normalization of this kind of behavior that no one regards it as a problem in the first place. AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islanders) racism as a whole has been so overlooked that it is viewed as more of a source of entertainment due to ignorance. Humor is often used to disguise the indecency when the feminization is shown in stereotypes such as Asian men having typically small penises or Asian women having slanted vaginas. Without regard to this topic, it has caused a shortage of prevention of the dangerous incidents that have occurred because of it. The most current and relevant example that can be brought up is the 2021 Atlanta shootings when Robert Aaron Long shot up three spas and took eight victims, six of whom were Asian women. During questioning, RAL admitted to the crime while trying to reason that his excuse for doing so was to get rid of his "temptations," as he claimed to suffer from sex addiction. The spa and massage industry has been stigmatized for years in association with sex workers. What was arguably the hate crime of the year occurred only because of a single man's association with what he presumed all Asian women are worth.

Ultimately, there are not many solutions provided to stop this sort of issue. Sexualization based on race is a form of racism, and as it so happens, racism is a problem that cannot be fixed without admittance of wrongdoing, an act that many people prove to be complicated. However, what started with inaccurate representation can be set right with better representation; it can only be hoped that as time goes on, people can finally start to spread awareness and make an effort to improve themselves. As the popularity of Asian media such as Kpop and anime have been on the rise, it broadens peoples' horizons and better attention has been put on the AAPI population. It

is the acknowledgment of the existence of this injustice that will be what eventually brings the concept of racial fetishes to an end, or at least properly condemned.

The AAPI community has been constantly put in a passive, overlooked role. Furthermore, while the hate against Asians has been becoming a larger part of the discussion, we have yet to properly acknowledge the sexualization of the women and the emasculation of the men. A history encouraging to view them as eager sex toys from European and Western countries sprouts violence from those who think such and results in Asian women and men having doubts about their own identity. Unless we as a society can admit our wrongdoings on this subject and stand against it, we cannot expect this issue to be solved anytime soon. When people try to pass off an Asian “kink” as a mere preference, they fail to realize the damage it relays onto a whole culture while ignoring the origin of said preference coming from what is an unreliable caricature of what it means to be Asian.

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