

Race Play: A Very Polarizing and Controversial Kink

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In many leather contests, participants are required to perform a fantasy scene of some sort – usually a scene that includes a fetish of their own, and is a representation of something they just fantasize about, or something they would do if given the chance. It is a fantasy, but could also be a reality. It is a representation of their deepest, darkest desires, or maybe the things they do behind closed doors when no one is watching – or out in the open while everyone is watching.

There was one particular story I remember making the rounds on social media about a contestant in a leather contest who performed a scene that featured race play. One player was black, the other was white. The white player played the role of a slave master, while the black player played the role of his slave/servant.

Social media was in an uproar. There were people on both sides of the argument – some who believed the scene was triggering, and some who believed that, with race play being a valid kink in the BDSM community, there was nothing wrong with the scene.

Race play, for very obvious reasons, is a very polarizing and controversial kink within the BDSM community. It involves interracial sex partners (usually black/brown and white) who engage in sexual practices that revolve around race, domination, dehumanization and, sometimes, impact play – or hitting. In many of these scenarios, the person of color is the submissive partner, while the white person is the dominant one. In some scenarios, however, the white person is the one who desires to be dominated by the person of color.

For obvious reasons, there's a huge amount of controversy surrounding these types of relationships and sexual practices. It seems absurd to many, especially people outside of the leather/kink community, that anyone would willingly subject themselves to racial degradation and humiliation for sexual kicks, let alone a person of color. In the kink community there's saying – "Don't yuck someone else's yum". It's used by those who are opposed to kink shaming, and maintain the view that every adult has the right to engage in any sexual practice that is "safe, sane and consensual".

However, there are many who argue that, when it comes to certain kinks, the word "sane" is a bit subjective. To many, any person of color who submits themselves to a white "master" given the troubling history of slavery and race relations in America, and the inhumane treatment of people of color around the world, has to be insane. To some in the black community, you may even be considered an "Uncle Tom", or a sell out.

Before I delve deeper into why race play is a problem for some, I want to highlight that there is a huge misconception about what it means to be a slave or submissive in the BDSM sense. As I mentioned in [my article about the difference between kink and abuse](#), there has to be consent – primarily from the submissive – in order for this type of kink play to work.

The submissive's ability to give consent and use safe words to communicate with the dominant that something is too rough for them and/or they need them to stop gives the submissive more control in the situation. For many, being in the role of a submissive is seen as a reclaiming of power, because submissives/slaves in BDSM scenes are given the ability to control scenarios – an authority that an actual slave would not be given. Many people of color have given this as the reason why they allow themselves to be dominated by white partners.

But race play, especially when it concerns people of color submitting to white people, is still understandably triggering for some. For some, it is a reminder of the dominance and privilege of white society, in both historical and present day contexts. It is also a reminder of the lack of agency given to people of color over their bodies.

I want to go back and examine the flip side to this race play scenario that I mentioned previously. There are many white men in the LGBTQ community, for example, who have a huge fetish for being dominated by black men. From my personal experiences, I think I've lost count of the number of white men – usually older white men in their 50s and over – who have asked (begged) me to dominate them.

On apps like Growlr and Scruff, “Please dominate/fuck me” is not an uncommon introductory message that I've received from many white men who usually either allude to or explicitly state the fact that they want to be completely used by my “big black cock”. I am aware that, even in being asked to dominate or violate them in some way, the idea is for them to be in control.

The stereotype of the massively endowed black brute with insatiable and animalistic sexual urges dates back to American slavery. Black men were seen as brutal, aggressive and strong, and therefore, useful when it came to hard labor. But black men were also sold with a huge caution label- one that painted them as dangerous. The fear was that this big black brute is strong and useful, but would also probably attempt to rape your entire family if given the chance.

The combination of all these things – fear, aggression, hate, strength, danger – became somewhat of a sexual fantasy. Black men were dangerous, and their “big cocks” were a forbidden fruit. It was the thing white people were not supposed to desire, so it became the thing they desired most.

I want to say that I am in no way suggesting that a white person cannot find me or any other black person attractive without the existence of some problematic ulterior motive. I am a black man with a white partner, and it is very clear to me that I am loved and appreciated, and not being fetishized.

What I am saying is that it becomes very clear when a person is being pursued or desired as a checklist of traits (namely, a big black cock) that feed urges rooted in racial fetishization, rather than being pursued as person who is desired completely.

These fetishizing urges never died, but have followed us into this century. For many people of color, being asked to dominate a white person feels like fetishization, and being asked to submit to a white person feels like actual slavery. It makes some people uncomfortable, and for very valid reasons.

Does this mean that race play should never happen? No. Consent in these situations becomes essential. I am of the mind that, if a person consents to submission in a race-related sexual fantasy, then it's their right to do so and no one should take that autonomy away from them. Even if they are aware that they are being fetishized or objectified, they reserve the right to make any decisions they please regarding their body and sexuality.

However, when public displays of race play are concerned, both parties should take into account how this dynamic will be perceived by those who may be negatively triggered by it, given the very real instances of racial discrimination, fetishization, and white privilege that still exist in our society, and the tensions surrounding these issues. Race play is an understandably touchy kink, and it's definitely one that should be handled with care.