

The use of the concepts of race and ethnicity in Sweden

Tobias Hübinette



The concept of race -1968

The word may originate from Arabic "ras" meaning head or from an Indo-European word which was used in Old Norse as "rás" and which means current, stream and something which floats – c.f. the Modern Swedish verb "rasa" and the noun "ras" in the sense that something falls.

From the 1500s to the 1700s the word was used to denote blood lineage among the aristocracy according to the principle of the "cleanliness of blood" but also to describe physical and biological differences between human beings in relation to converts in Europe and to natives, slaves and mixed people in the European colonies.

From the mid-1700s and onwards it becomes a scientific term and a research field of its own – race science (Carl Linnaeus, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach).

Between 1950-67 the UN agency UNESCO issues four statements on race which results in the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1965 (Ashley Montagu, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Julian Huxley, Gunnar Myrdal, Gunnar Dahlberg).

The concept of ethnicity -1968

The word derives from Classical Greek – "ethnos", "ethnikos" – meaning people and popular, and was used by the Europeans in relation to people who were seen as pagan and heathen, and "barbaric" and "wild", during the Medieval Age and the Early Modern Period.

From around 1900 some scholars started to challenge the dominant essentialist race thinking (Max Weber, Franz Boas, WEB DuBois).

The concept is used in the US in the 1930s to denote immigrants and minorities from Europe and elsewhere who were often seen as being difficult to "integrate".

In the 1960s the concept becomes popularized as part of the 1968 movement and the birth of modern antiracism and in relation to the idea of social constructionism (Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann) and a new understanding of ethnic groups (Fredrik Barth), and in 1972 it enters the Oxford English Dictionary.

The concepts of race and ethnicity in the Anglophone world 1968-

In the English speaking world, race is today generally seen as a category linked to differences in appearance and to DNA while ethnicity is seen as a category linked to culture, language, religion, traditions, customs and so on.

Sometimes race is said to be about an "external" categorisation by others while ethnicity is said to be about an "internal" self-identification.

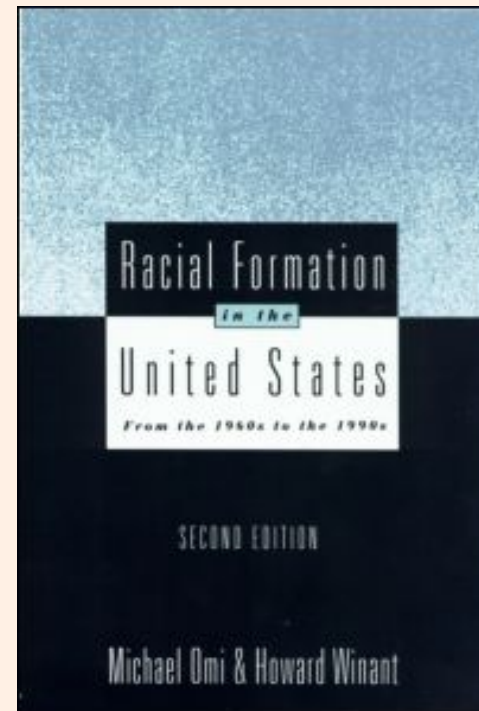
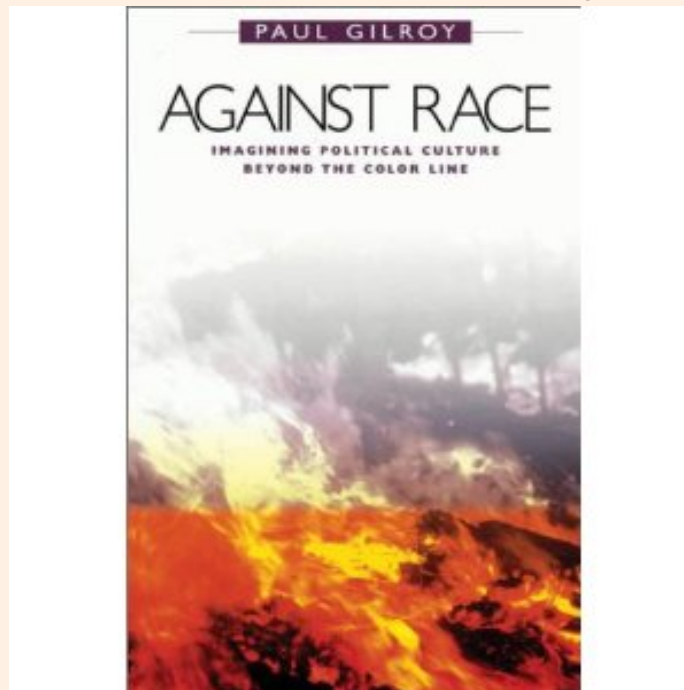
In practice, the difference between the two concepts is not always sharp, and the US Census for example also takes into account "social and cultural characteristics" which are not just "primarily biological or genetic in reference" when defining race.

Race is used by the government, the state and in law and official texts as well as in the media and in everyday life, and forms the basis of equality data as well as of policy making in general. This is valid both for the English speaking world and for many Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries.

The concepts of race and ethnicity in the UK and the US 1968-

In post-imperial UK, Marxist Sociologists and cultural studies scholars have from the 1980s introduced the concept of racialization (Robert Miles, John Rex, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy) in the name of anti-essentialism (Paul Gilroy – *Against race*, 2002)

In post-civil rights US, Antiracist Sociologists and Legal scholars have from the 1980s developed critical race theory (CRT) and the field of critical race studies in the name of equality (Michael Omi & Howard Winant - *Racial formation in the United States*, 1986).



The concepts of race and ethnicity in Europe 1968-

In Western Europe, the concept of race gradually disappeared from use after World War II and the end of Fascism and Colonialism, and particularly after 1968 (Germany, France, the NL).

In Eastern Europe, the concept of race disappeared after World War II with Communism.

In the Nordic countries, the concept of race continued to be used a bit later – until the 1960s and 1970s. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, the Nordic countries with Sweden as the best example took the lead in formulating a radical colour-blind approach to race.

From 2001, Sweden started to abolish the concept of race from legislation and official texts, and Finland and Norway have nowadays both followed this example. Instead the concept of race is usually replaced by the concept of ethnicity and sometimes translated as "skin colour and similar circumstances".

Sweden's contributions to race thinking

1758 Carl Linnaeus introduces a modern taxonomy of different race categories in the 10th edition of his *Systema Naturae*. The 4-5 different races are presented in a hierarchical way and are linked to various mentalities.

1840s Anders Retzius invents the skull index measurement and Sven Nilsson develops the race war hypothesis.

1894 Race is introduced in the population register down to a quarter level (-1945).

1902 Gustaf Retzius and Carl Magnus Fürst publish *Anthropologia Suecica* which is based on measurements of 45,000 people, and which establishes the idea of the Nordic race as being the most valuable part of the white race and with the Swedes as the prime example.

1909 The Swedish Society for Race Hygiene is founded and its members dominate the International Society for Race Hygiene (46 Swedes out of 290 full members).

Sweden's relationship to race -1968

1914 An immigration law is introduced which bans Roma people from entering the country (-1954) and which hinders Jews to escape to Sweden in the 1930s and 1940s.

1915-17 A marriage law as well as an adoption law is introduced based on race hygienic principles.

1918-19 An exhibition on race tours the country and "beauty pageant" competitions are arranged to find Swedish "ideal race types".

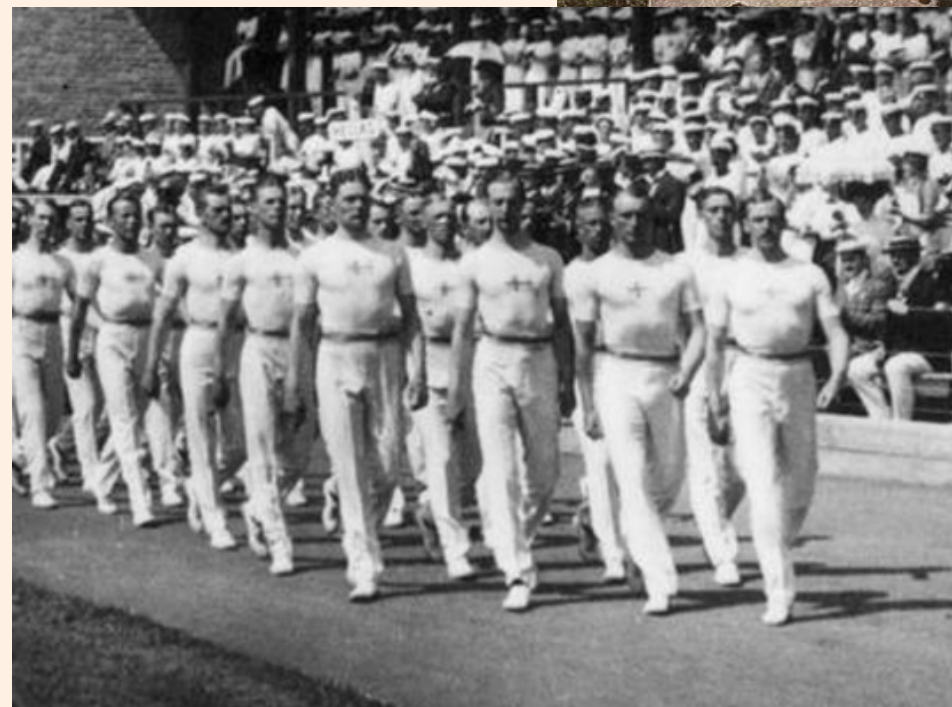
1921-22 The State Institute for Race Biology is founded after a unison parliament decision and with a strong scientific backing. In 1958, the institute becomes the Department for Medical Genetics. Between 1922-23 the institute measures 85,000 people.

1922 The first separate register for a minority, the Travellers, is set up and is followed by similar registers for Jews and Roma.

1925 The Nordic conference for race biology convenes in Uppsala.

1926 The State Institute for Race Biology publishes The Racial Character of the Swedish Nation which is based on measurements of 100,000 people.

1934 A sterilisation law is introduced which leads to the sterilisation of 63,000 people (-1975).



Sweden's relationship to race -1968

“For a nation, the preservation of the good qualities of the race is of extraordinary importance in the eternally on-going struggle between the nations. The nation's power, wealth and culture depend on that. Therefore, a mixture with a less valuable race is one of the greatest threats to an elevated people.” Instruction book for soldiers, which was in use in the Swedish army in the 1920s and 1930s



TABLE No. 33

Tentative estimates of the proportion of Nordic, Alpine and Mediterranean blood in each of the European countries.

	PER CENT. NORDIC	PER CENT. ALPINE	PER CENT. MEDITERRANEAN
Austria-Hungary.....	10	90	0
Belgium.....	60	40	0
Denmark.....	85	15	0
France.....	30	55	15
Germany.....	40	60	0
Greece.....	0	15	85
Italy.....	5	25	70
Netherlands.....	85	15	0
Norway.....	90	10	0
Sweden.....	100	0	0
Russia (including Poland).....	5	95	0
Poland.....	10	90	0
Spain.....	10	5	85
Portugal.....	5	0	95
Roumania.....	0	100	0
Switzerland.....	35	65	0
Turkey (unclassified).....	0	20	80
Turkey (in Europe) (including Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria).....	0	60	40
Turkey (in Asia).....	0	10	90
England.....	80	0	20
Ireland.....	30	0	70
Scotland.....	85	0	15
Wales.....	40	0	60
British North America.....	60	40	0

Fig. 20.3. Brigham, "Table No. 33. Tentative estimates of the proportion of Nordic, Alpine and Mediterranean blood in each of the European countries," in Carl C. Brigham, *A Study of American Intelligence* (1923).

Sweden's relationship to race -1968

In the 1960s, the former State Institute for Race Biology conducted its last race measurement study on the Swedish Roma and a debate on the adoption of children from the Third World took place which was strongly marked by the fear of miscegenation.

"Sufficient scientific studies do not exist however so that adoption can be permitted on a larger scale, particularly with regard to children belonging to strongly different racial groups than the adoptive parents." Swedish Medical Board, 1961

"Until further scientific studies have been undertaken, I believe that adoption should be allowed only to a limited extent in the case of children belonging to highly different racial groups." JA Böök, 1961, Professor at the Department of Medical Genetics, Uppsala University

"Another thing is that the crossing between two races, which are at different cultural levels, does not seem desirable from the superior race's standpoint." Torsten Thysell, 1962, M.D. in Child Psychology

Sweden's relationship to race 1968-

“We Swedes live with such an infinitely lucky situation. Our country's population is homogenous, not just in relation to race but also in relation to many other aspects.”

Tage Erlander, 1965

“Muddy race theories have never got a foothold here. We readily consider ourselves to be without prejudices and tolerant.”

Olof Palme, 1965

After 1968, Sweden's relationship to race changes dramatically and a radical colour-blind antiracism is formulated which is exported to other countries as Sweden actively strives to make other countries abolish the concept of race.

The consequences of the abolishment of race

What happens after when the concept of race has been abolished?

- linguistic problems (c.f. "ethnic Swedes", "immigrants")
- academic problems (c.f. Nordic migration research)
- statistical problems (c.f. equality data)
- legal problems (c.f. antidiscrimination law)
- conceptual problems (c.f. colour-blindness)



[Politics](#)

Integration Minister Erik Ullenhag meets children in Husby, Stockholm. Photo: Jonas Ekströmer/TT

Race to be scrapped from Swedish legislation

Published: 31 Jul 2014 17:22 GMT+02:00

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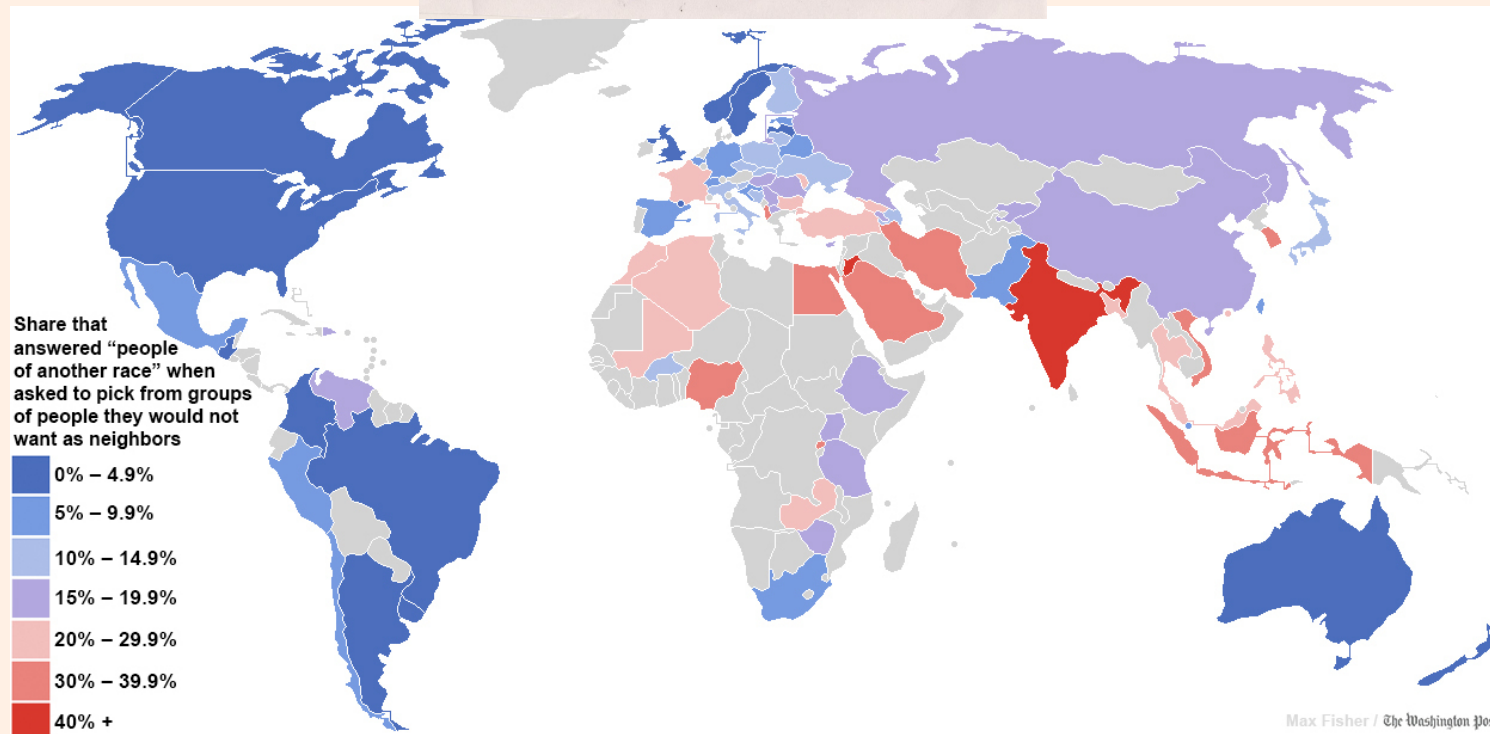
The Swedish government announced that it plans to remove all mentions of race from Swedish legislation, saying that race is a social construct which should not be encouraged in law.

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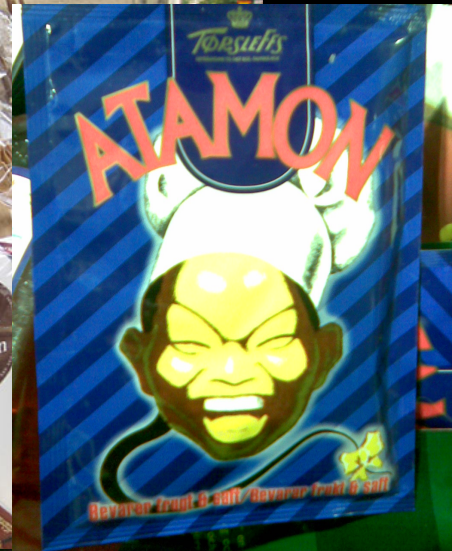
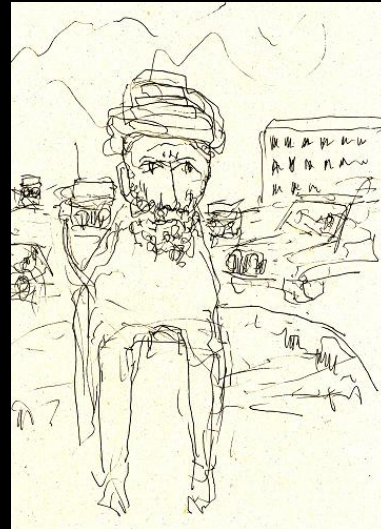
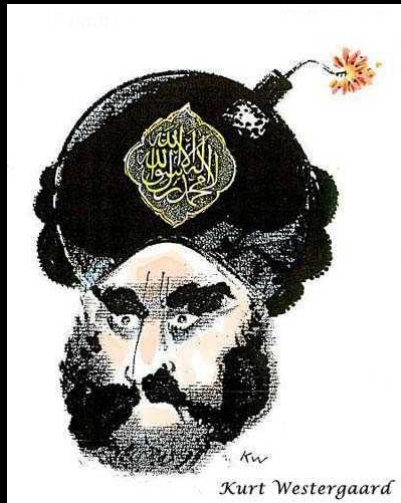


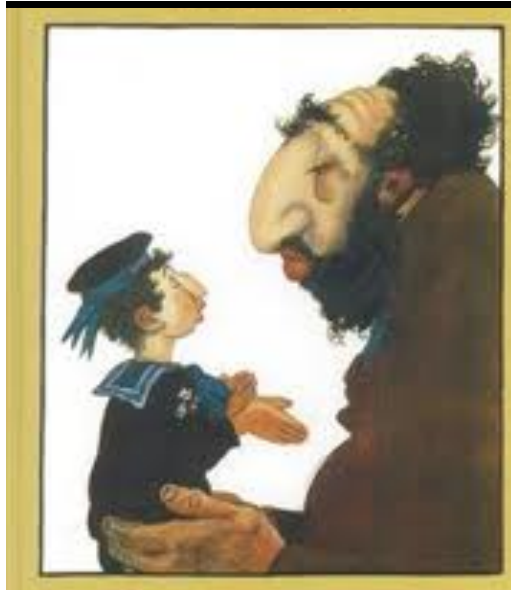
Contemporary racial stereotypes in Sweden

Western representations of the Others



Nordic representations of the Others



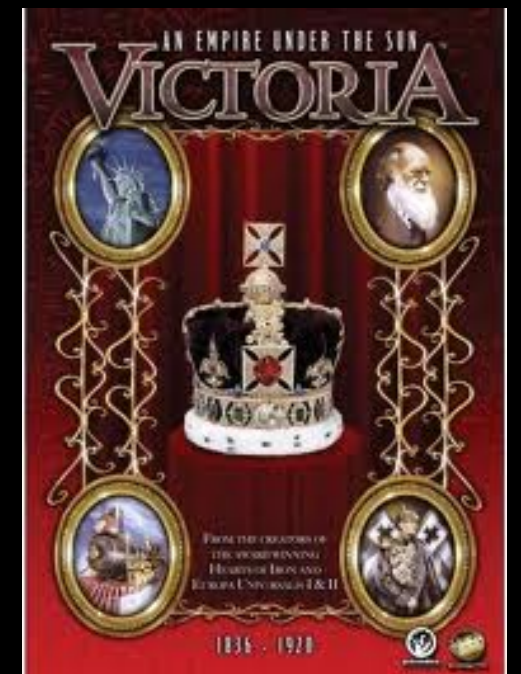
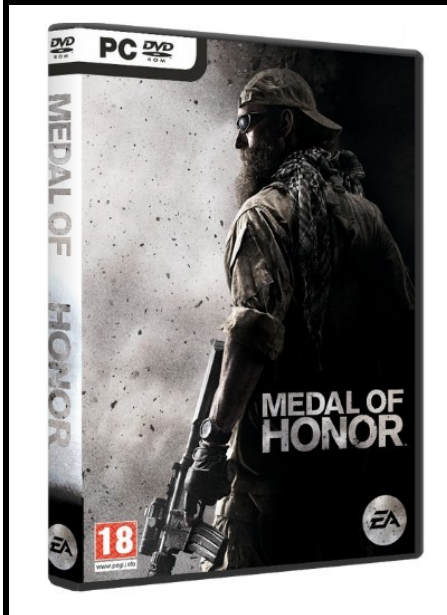


<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZThzFXc2xQ>





<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfPIUsijQ9s>





http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9E2B_yI8jrl



Chocolate Chinaman 'not racist': poll

Published: 29 Sep 11 15:49 CET
Online: <http://www.thelocal.se/36436/20110929/>

Some 97 percent of Swedes did not find the picture on chocolate giant Fazer's "Knapuffar" product offensive despite claims of racism, according to a recent survey carried out by market research company Sifo.

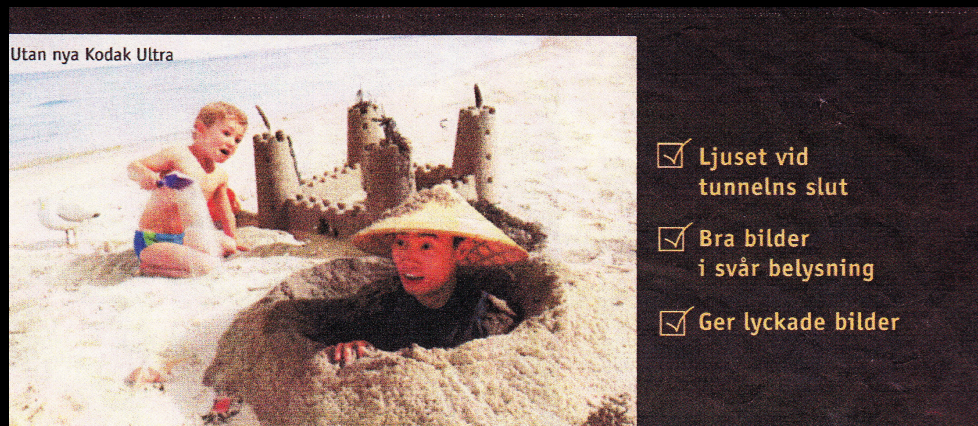
- **Silence won't solve the problems with a multicultural society** (26 Sep 11)
- **Candy giant bows to 'China racism' complaint** (20 Sep 11)
- **Holding the hate at bay - defending free speech in the Internet age** (20 Sep 11)

Last week confectionery giant Fazer announced that the product was to be re-designed after complaints that the current packaging featured a "racist" image.

"Knapuffar" (literally: Chinese pops) is a chocolate-covered sweet with packaging that features a caricature of a bright yellow Chinese face with a red pointed rice hat.

Fazer's move to change the packaging came in response to the debate following the publishing of a column in Swedish newspaper Helsingborgs Dagblad (HD) which questioned the stereotypical picture used to market the sweet.

In his column, HD journalist Patrik Lundberg wrote that "to joke and laugh at Asians seems to be the only racism which can pass by unremarked".

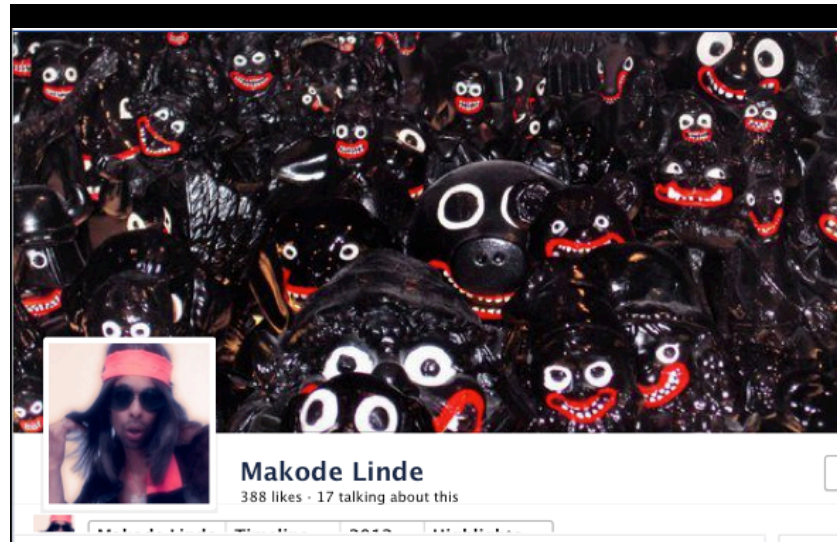


- ✓ Ljuset vid tunnelns slut
- ✓ Bra bilder i svår belysning
- ✓ Ger lyckade bilder



by [Hrsg. Vertrieben](#) on April 16, 2012by [Hrsg. Vertrieben](#) on April 16, 2012

In the last few days, Afro-Swedish artist Maseela Linde has learned the power of the viral web. His controversial [cake performance](#) at Stockholm's Moderna Museet



Spoken word links

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Eka weekendpaket: hfr. Personlig service & toppläge
 M, Tu, Th, F, Sa, Su

Altart: 4-aktig

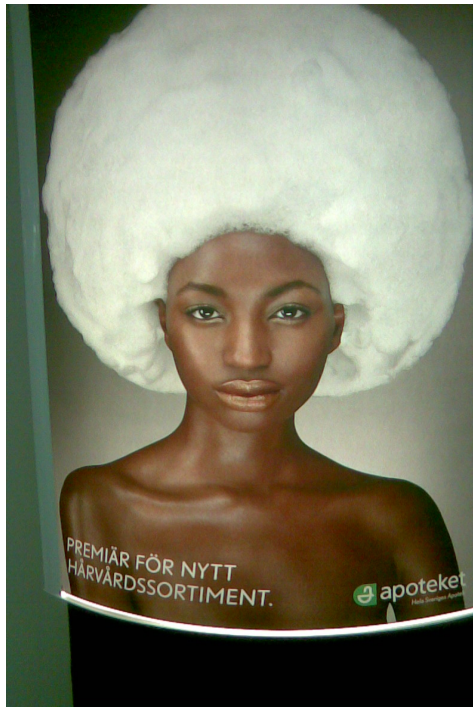


Makoto Ueda och Kenta Zama.

bioarchaeologist, Marcelline Lurie, and a geneticist, Dr. David Reich, of Harvard Medical School, have recently published a paper in the journal *Science* that suggests that the genetic relationships between the ancient Egyptians and the modern Egyptians are not as close as previously thought. The researchers found that the ancient Egyptians were more closely related to the ancient Nubians and the ancient Libyans than to the modern Egyptians. This finding challenges the long-standing view that the ancient Egyptians were a direct ancestor of the modern Egyptians. The researchers also found that the ancient Egyptians were more genetically diverse than previously thought, suggesting that they may have been a mixture of different populations. This finding has important implications for our understanding of the history and genetics of the ancient Egyptians.







UPPTÄCK SVERIGE

VANDRARHEM, FJÄLLSTATIONER, FJÄLLSTUGOR
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 SVENSKA
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