

On the difficulties of being an anti-racist researcher in Sweden
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In an Anglo-American academic context, it is accepted to be both a researcher and activist. In the Swedish research context, however, this is not as accepted, at least not anymore, and it can also have unexpected and unpleasant consequences. This article is based on my own experiences of being a politically engaged researcher and tells a story that includes dismissal, divorce, ostracism, professional and social isolation and even threats and violence.

Within the U.S. academic community there is a position known as the scholar-activist and which partly can be comparable to the French cultural world's *l'intellectuel public*, the public intellectual, in terms of social and cultural acceptance and academic respect. In both cases it regards researchers and writers who deliberately engage in both academic life, culture and society at large by discussing and debating current issues and problems, and in many cases also participate in political activism of various kinds. In most cases, the activist academics have been Left-Liberal or Socialist, and have been linked to social movements such as the labour movement, the women's movement, the anti-racist movement and various minority movements.

The list of people who have inhabited this position to be both an academic and an activist is long with a genealogy going back to DuBois in the U.S. and Zola in France, who about a century ago both were active anti-racists (Drake 2005; Robbins 1990; Wolin 2010). Many of the scholar-activists in the 1900s also spent time in prison and participated in militant and radical activism. The very idea behind being an academic and an activist at the same time is simply to utilise the social position of researchers and intellectuals, and use this privilege to be able to speak and act in the public sphere in relation to different political issues and social movements.

In the U.S., the anti-racist scholar-activists, to limit this article to this group, have come to be associated with the struggle for the establishment and maintenance of ethnic studies, namely the teaching and researching on minorities in the United States and which corresponds to Swedish and Nordic so-called IMER research (IMER=research on migration and ethnicity). The fight for the introduction of this field at the universities in the United States was an integral part of the civil rights movements and the other social movements that emerged among minorities in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s (Butler & Schmitz, 1992; Lowe 1996: 37-59).

During the 1980s and 1990s, ethnic studies had been institutionalized within the American academia, and new critical theories such as queer and postcolonial theories and critical race and whiteness studies were introduced at the American universities (Jonsson 1993). Today, however, postcolonial research and ethnic studies suffer from a backlash in the United States as a result of the War on Terror and the criticism of multiculturalism, and which has led to postcolonial scholars being accused of supporting anti-Western tendencies and attitudes, and many ethnic studies departments have been closed down.

Turning to the Swedish context, historically the researchers and intellectuals who acted as activists in Sweden mainly belonged to the New Left in the 1960s and 1970s. Nowadays the activist position is not as common anymore within Swedish academia with the exception of those who are engaged with issues related to the categories of gender, sexuality, race and

ethnicity. As for the anti-racist researchers, since 2006 many of them are organized within the association the Anti-Racist Academy.

However, there is a crucial difference between American ethnic studies and Swedish IMER research, namely the fact that the former research field emerged and grew as an integral part of a social movement led by the minorities themselves while the Swedish research field's emergence and growth was a result of a governmental migration and integration policy in the 1970s (Olsson & Rabo 2009; Wigerfelt 2010). The emergence of American ethnic studies can instead be compared with the emergence and institutionalization of Swedish gender research, which was supported by a social movement and a community of researchers dominated by women (Liinason 2011). This discrepancy in Swedish IMER research in relation to the situation in Swedish gender research has Ylva Habel (2008: 49) noted in an article about Swedish whiteness where she points out that: "Something which reveals our collective ability to ignore power aspects of whiteness is that we accept that the Swedish whiteness criticism and intersectional and postcolonial research has mostly been written by whites. Within feminist and queer research, it would be impossible to accept that men and heterosexuals would lead and dominate the field. Anyone would instantly see the conflicts of interest in this."

Stefan Jonsson (2008) has also pointed this out in a similar way in an article about how Swedish discrimination research was marginalized at the moment when a number of researchers who themselves had a migration background started to enter the IMER field and introduced new concepts and perspectives on discrimination: "They have faced discrimination in Swedish society and have a deep understanding of how it works. They have given a vital contribution to Swedish society and its self-understanding. It is an achievement that should be recognized and welcomed. But instead – indifference, condescension, or worse. The researchers had the opportunity to say something about the Swedish society. What they said was apparently something that Sweden does not want to know about."

All this taken together means that although there exists a number of IMER research centres at the country's universities, postcolonial research and critical race and whiteness studies have never been institutionalized within Swedish higher education and academia, unlike for example in North America, Australia, the UK and Germany, where such departments exist.

So how do I locate myself within this context of Swedish academia? I have a background as a political activist, as an Anarchist and an Anti-Fascist, and I also have a former career in the media behind me with Nazism, Fascism, racism and colonialism as the main topics before I took a PhD in Korean Studies at Stockholm University and began researching issues related to Korea and adoption. It is in relation to Swedish Asian studies and Swedish adoption research that this article will revolve around in the first place, and which deals with the limited possibility in Sweden to be an anti-racist researcher and an anti-racist activist at the same time. The article is thus autobiographical in the sense that I use my own experience as an example of what an anti-racist researcher may experience within the Swedish higher education sector and research community.

At the department where I went through my undergraduate and graduate education in Korean Studies, the Department of Oriental Languages at Stockholm University, teaching and research on Asia and Asians take place, and which geographically covers a wide variety of cultures, peoples and countries from Turkey in the west to Japan in the east. During my time as a doctoral student in Korean studies between the years of 2001-05 at this department, I

presented and published several texts that criticized Swedish Asian studies to be antiquated, non-theoretical and colonial, and I also ran a campaign within the university to try to get the department to rename itself from a postcolonial critique (Hübinette 2002, 2003b, 2007).

Furthermore, I published several critical articles which problematized how white Swedes relate to Asia and Asians also in non-academic contexts, and because of this criticism I became regarded as a troublesome colleague who challenged a discipline wherein most researchers are white Westerners and not Asians (Hübinette 2003c, 2005a, 2005b). At the same time, I also published and was active within Swedish and Nordic adoption research, and championed a postcolonial feminist perspective within a field wherein most researchers are white adoptive parents and not adoptees (Hübinette 2001, 2003a, 2004). Simultaneously, I also took part in producing several critical media documentaries about adoption and adoptees.

The strong resistance from Asian studies and adoption research scholars against my publications and perspectives also resulted in that my critics brought up my previous life as an Anarchist and an Anti-Fascist, as I had been prosecuted several times for actions against Nazis. They used this background as a proof that I was standing for extremism or even criminality. Similarly, several of my previous publications and documentaries in the media on Nazism and Fascism were taken up as examples of what was seen as unethical and disreputable research as I had previously devoted myself to dig up names of Swedish right-wing extremists in the interwar period and participated in revealing several prominent Swedes as former Nazis and Fascists.

My supervisor was from the outset hesitant to take me in as a doctoral student because of my previous convictions, and the head of the department, the dean of the faculty and the rector of the university as well as several colleagues at the department were contacted and courted regularly by a number of Asia and adoption related researchers from Sweden and other countries, who expressed their desire to stop me from publishing and to stop my forthcoming dissertation. My supervisor, the department head and some colleagues also allied themselves with these critics behind my back, held meetings with some them and contacted additional people who were critical towards me and who all had in common that they perceived that they had been offended, hurt, humiliated and attacked and disgraced through my publications. The critics represented different groups and individuals in the society such as Swedes with a right-wing extremist in the family belonging to the upper-class, white Westerners engaged with and interested in Asia and Asians, white men who are married to Asian women and white Westerners who had adopted non-white children.

All these conflicts around me were reported in Swedish and foreign media including for example Svenska Dagbladet, Aftonbladet, The Times and Le Monde, and I was portrayed as a "reverse racist" and as a previously convicted "extremist" as well as an unethical researcher after publishing a book that named almost 30 000 Swedish right-wing extremists. I was also being expelled from the European academic society for Korean Studies researchers after having debated publicly on interracial relationships and on international adoptions as many white male Asian Studies researchers are married to Asian women, and as many white female Asian Studies researchers have Asian adopted children. My former website that was linked to the department's website was shut down on the university rector's request after all the negative media attention, and Stockholm University's head lawyer was called in to examine whether my publications could be examples of hate speech, and notifications for this were submitted to both the police and the Ombudsman against discrimination. I became an issue of the Dean and the Faculty of Humanities which received a large number of letters which in most cases

demanded that I should simply be dismissed as being a "reverse racist", a "criminal" and an unethical and disreputable researcher. The incoming letters were collected in a special folder together with my own outgoing e-mails which without my knowledge ended up there to become public documents for the media and for my critics to read and take note of, and I was forbidden by the head of the department to participate in public debates and discussions outside the academy where I stated that I was affiliated to Stockholm University.

My public dissertation defence which took place at the end of 2005 was therefore perhaps not surprisingly an almost unbelievable event with a packed auditorium consisting of on the one hand, Asian studies and adoption research scholars and Asia and adoption related people, right-wing extremists and children and relatives of upper-class Nazis as well as white adoptive parents and white men living with Asian women who wanted to highlight that they disliked me, and on the other hand, a large group of Asians and adoptees who gave me support. The opponent who had been called in by my supervisor focused almost solely on me as a person instead of on my dissertation, and the defence developed into an aggressive interrogation and something of a farce with strong reactions from the audience, including a so-called extra opposition from the floor by a senior researcher who indignantly accused me of "reverse racism", and afterwards a professor at Stockholm University even tried to get my dissertation to be declared failed retroactively.

A few months after the defence, my then wife left me with a friend because of all the destructive attention and dramatic commotion around me, and in connection with the divorce, I became sentenced for having threatened my former friend and for having accidentally caused a small fire in the apartment which I continued to live in alone – an event that the media reported about as almost close to a terrorist attack. This led to my dismissal from the department and the university even though I was about to receive both a postdoctoral fellowship in Sweden and a postdoctoral grant abroad as well as funds for a larger research project. During the last months, I was forbidden to physically even visit the department for the fear that I would carry out a violent attack there. The head of the department wrote to several of the research councils that I was no longer welcome at the department and that I was an unethical and disreputable researcher, and I was subsequently deprived of the postdoctoral fellowships and grants.

In 2007, I started to work at the Multicultural Centre, after a dozen departments at various universities had declined to accommodate me because of my reputation accumulated during my doctoral years at Stockholm University as being a "reverse racist", a "criminal" and an "extremist". I have since increasingly profiled myself as a researcher in critical race and whiteness studies, and this has led to problems that actually have been even worse than the ones I encountered while I was a doctoral student at Stockholm University. In 2007, a group of adoption and Korea related people and right-wing extremists who had found each other through the previous campaign against me, contracted a criminal actor at a cost of 200,000 SEK with the intention of once and for all silence me and get me to stop publishing, and with an "order" which meant a "set up" in the form of a number of attacks and threats which I would be accused of and convicted for, including a fire at my former wife's and my former friend's home as well as fires at my former department and at the homes of my former supervisor and department head plus various threats and blackmail against all of these, and I would also myself be kidnapped to be raped and abused.

It all ended with a fire attack on the department and threats through the Internet, and which I was accused for in the media, which again wrote about me as being a "reverse racist" and a

"terrorist" who was said to be feared and despised by many both within and outside the academia. My former supervisor and department head submitted the case to the court of appeal with support from Stockholm University, whose security had organized watch keeping outside their homes to protect their families out of fear for me. I was luckily acquitted in a subsequent trial, but was close to get in trouble again when two hired hit men visited the Multicultural Centre before the trial to pick me up and beat me with the purpose to prevent my attendance at the court hearing. A smaller building was also burned to the ground at the Multicultural Centre in conjunction with this, ordered by the group that had contracted the criminal actors. This strange period, which lasted during the years of 2007-09, resulted in several involuntary visits abroad, and I was also regularly threatened and harassed through phone calls and colleagues at the Multicultural Centre received strange phone calls asking about me. At one point it was very close once again that I was portrayed in the media to be a "reverse racist" and a crazy and unethical researcher, but it was averted by my former wife, my former friend, my adoptive parents and some colleagues who all phoned the journalist in question, and who thereafter refrained from writing about me.

So what can one learn from this story which I have summarized here? To refer back to the beginning, for me it means that my own experience shows that the ability and potential to be a researcher and an activist, and specifically to be an anti-racist researcher, are highly circumscribed in Sweden compared with the situation in other countries, and those who are actually run the risk of being exposed to such unpleasant ingredients such as unemployment and divorce, monitoring and opinion ban, media scandals and ostracism, and the withdrawal and lack of research funding as well as threats and physical violence. Although my experience as an anti-racist researcher and activist is perhaps extreme, and possibly even unique, it is my belief that all the power and all the energy that so many people within as well as outside the Swedish academia have apparently devoted (as well as all the money spent to pay criminals) to silence and stop me from publishing indicate that Swedish society does not allow anti-racist voices and perspectives to be expressed in the public when they come from representatives from minorities themselves. In this way, the fields of Asian Studies and adoption research in Sweden will continue to be dominated by non-Asians and non-adoptees, which in practice means white Westerners and white adoptive parents.

An impenetrable wall of Swedish whiteness, to speak with Sara Ahmed (2011), thereby prevents issues of white supremacy and white privilege from being discussed within the academy and in the public, and once this is done a network of individuals and groups with privileges and resources is mobilised (who are usually already linked from childhood and school years, and through common social contexts and family connections) to stop this from being voiced by all means possible to protect their monopolisation of power positions and truth claims, their own self-imposed and self-righteous colonial projects and their own self-perceived rights to all the happiness, joy and pleasure which come with the continued hegemony of whiteness.

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