

# The Concept of Chinese Race :

## Its Creation and Popularization

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# The Concept of the Chinese Race: Its Creation and Dissemination, Taking an example of pop music

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- Contemporary Chinese nationalism appeals to racialized concepts to define “Chineseness”

Typical concepts such as:

- “Black hair, black eyes, yellow skin”;
- “descendants of the Dragon”; “the Chinese Heart” and the “Chinese blood”;
- “Peking Man is our ancestor (“we Chinese have our own evolutionary origin”);
- a mysterious relationship between the land and the people
- A strong sentiment of national grievance expressed in such language

How were these racialized concepts about the Chineseness created and disseminated?

- To a great extent through popular music in the name of “patriotic songs” since the 1980s
- The process was a complicity of the propaganda apparatus and Taiwan/Hong Kong cultural capital in Chinese pop music market
- Below are examples of the creation and popularization of some patriotic songs

The first song ‘Descendants of the Dragon’

Creation of the song

Lyrics (next slide)

In the ancient East (or far East) there is a river,  
its name is the Yangtze River  
In the Far East there is a river,  
its name is the Yellow River

Although I've never seen the beauty of  
the Yangtze, in my dreams I miraculously  
travel the Yangtze's waters  
Although I've never heard the strength of the  
Yellow River  
the rushing and surging waters are in my dreams  
In the Ancient East there is a dragon  
her name is China  
In the Ancient East there is a people  
they are all the descendants of the dragon

I grew up under the claw of the dragon  
after I grew up  
I became a descendant of the dragon

Black eyes, black hair, yellow skin,  
forever and ever a descendant of the dragon

One hundred years ago on a tranquil night  
in the deep of the night before enormous changes  
Gun and cannon fire destroyed the tranquil night

surrounded on all sides by the oppressor's words

How many years have gone by with the gunshots still ringing out how many  
years followed by how many years

Mighty dragon, mighty dragon open your eyes,  
forever and ever open your eyes

## Second song "My Chinese Heart"

- Creation
- Lyrics

(translated by NJKat, online version)

Only in my dreams the sceneries so divine  
For so many years I haven't been to the homeland  
But nothing can ever change it  
The Chinese heart of mine

Western outfits dress me  
But my heart will always be Chinese  
My ancestors branded my heart  
with a Chinese mark

Yangtze River, the Great Wall;  
Yellow Mountain and Yellow River  
They are inimitable irreplaceable in my heart  
No matter when it will be or where I will be  
My heart will never leave

blood that flows through my veins  
Rolling and roaring -- "China" -- that's the name  
Even I was born in a foreign land  
It can never change the Chinese heart of mine

Intriguing questions about different lyrics in the song "My Chinese heart"

"祖国已多年未清静" or "祖国已多年未亲近"?  
"心中一样清" or "心中一样亲"?

祖国已多年未清静/可是不管怎样也改变不了/我的中国心  
For so many years my motherland has not been peaceful  
But nothing can ever change it  
The Chinese heart of mine  
(implying the lyric writer's, i.e. Wong Jim, critique of China under the CCP or at least under Mao)

祖国已多年未亲近/可是不管怎样也改变不了/我的中国心  
For so many years I haven't been to the motherland  
But nothing can ever change it  
The Chinese heart of mine  
(implying nothing critical)

Explanation: Chinese pronunciations for 清静 (peaceful) and 亲近 (visiting or getting intimately close) sound very similar (清静 qīng jìng; 亲近 qīn jìn). Your ears really cannot distinguish one from the other when they are used in a song.

Similarly, "心中一样清" means "I know what has happened in China", but "心中一样亲" means "I just love China" or "China is so dear to me".

They have completely different implications. But very few Chinese know there is a "critical" version.

Wong Jim has passed away. Facing two versions, Zhang Mingmin has never come up to clarify which one was the original.



## The Third song: “The Yellow Race”

- Creation
- Lyrics

### Lyrics of the “Yellow People”

yellow people, walk on earth  
Stick out a new chest  
Yellow people, walk on earth  
The world knows that I am not  
the same  
More chaos, more courage  
The more the world changes,  
the more adventurous  
I become  
With nothing, I go everywhere  
After 5,000 years it's finally my  
turn to step onto the stage

There is no wound that cannot be healed  
Ancient might lasts forever  
The yellowness in the soil carries the Orient  
with doggedness  
Everywhere in the world you will see a  
yellow face  
Red blood flows in 1.3 billion people  
You say it's my fury  
I say it's my attitude  
Fearless, marching forward are only us, the  
Chinese  
More chaos, more courage  
I shed my yellowness  
With the yellow heaven above  
You will see how I become a true man

## Some other examples of “patriotic songs” using racialized lyrics

我骄傲，我是中国人！

I am proud, I am Chinese!

在无数蓝色的眼睛和黑色的眼睛之中  
我有一双宝石般的黑色的眼睛  
我骄傲，我是中国人！  
在无数白色和黑色的皮肤中  
我有着大地般黄色的皮肤  
我骄傲，我是中国人

Among countless blue and red eyes  
I have a pair of black, diamond-like eyes  
I am proud  
I am Chinese  
Among countless white and black skins  
I have yellow, earth-like skin  
I am proud  
I am Chinese  
My ancestors were the first to walk out of  
jungle  
My ancestors were the first to start farming

我的祖先最早走出森林  
我的祖先最早耕耘

(part of the lyrics of the song.  
The lyrics are also recited in 配乐诗朗诵  
lyric/poem recital with music, a performance  
type popular in China's schools)

## The Chinese

Behind 5000 years of winds and rains are many dreams  
Yellow faces black eyes our smiles remain the same  
8,000 li (half a kilometer) of mountains and rivers are like a song  
No matter from where you come and to where you go

The same tears the same pain  
Past sufferings are kept in our hearts  
The same blood the same racial seeds  
There are still dreams in the future and  
let us pursue them  
Arm in arm let's march forward together with  
heads raised high  
Let the world know we are Chinese

There are many other “patriotic songs” using racialized language to define, reinforce and popularize a racially constructed “Chineseness”

Conclusion:

- 1) some key concepts of the contemporary Chinese nationalism/national identity are constructed and expressed in racial language
- 2) the creation and dissemination was a complicity of the Mainland party-state propaganda apparatus and Taiwan/Hong Kong's cultural capitalists in China's pop cultural market