

U.S. News Anchor 'Jokes' That BTS-Themed Cookies Spell Out "Death to America"

Because that's a completely normal reaction, right?

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MAY 30, 2026

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Courtesy: OREO

By Jae-Ha Kim

May 30, 2026

Earlier this week, a Texas news outlet joined a slew of others in announcing the limited-edition OREO cookies, which were designed to taste like *hotteok*/호떡 — a

sweet Korean pancake filled with warm brown sugar. OREO collaborated with **BTS** this treat, which will be in stores on June 8.

What should've been a cute and/or innocuous soundbite about this cookie collab proved to be yet another example on why *some* white journalists, especially men, shouldn't be allowed to speak about minorities. Ever. I give you James Eppler, a news anchor and managing editor at Fox 34 in Lubbock, who is also an adjunct¹ instructor at Texas Tech University. Remember this last part, because this man is teaching the next generation of journalists.

Instead of just reading what was written for him on the teleprompter, he made a wide inappropriate ad lib that he found amusing:

"The cookie's wafer is BTS' signature colour, purple. The wafers are also engraved with one of 13 designs, which spell out a message to fans when put together. And that is: 'Death to America', which I think is really strange." —James Eppler

What I think is really strange is that a man who is supposed to be relaying the news to viewers made this defamatory comment, laughed about it, and then said *he was just joking*.² As if spreading the 21st century version of the Yellow Peril³ was something he pat himself on the back for.

There isn't enough information about him for me to know his age, but I'm guessing he's at least in his 40s or 50s. How does one get to be that old without having any awareness at all about the anti-Asian hate and violence that was fucking rampant throughout the COVID-19 pandemic? Surely the outlet he works for even covered it

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Anti-Asian Hysteria Didn't Start with the Pandemic

There has been a long and egregious history of it that has filtered down to today.

° In 1882, U.S. President Chester A. Arthur passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which placed a 10-year ban on Chinese laborers from immigrating to the U.S. This was *the first time* that the U.S. placed any kind of restriction on immigrants.

° President Franklin Delano Roosevelt put Japanese *Americans* in concentration camps. He signed the Executive Order 9066 in 1942, which made it legal to move *suspicious* people into 'internment camps.' Some Italian and German Americans were also sent to these camps, but the majority were of Japanese ethnicity.

° On June 19, 1982, Vincent Chin and his friends were enjoying his bachelor party at a suburban Detroit club. Two white men — who assumed Chin was Japanese and therefore responsible for taking away *real* Americans' auto jobs — murdered him. Witnesses (including off-duty police officers) heard the two say, "It's because of you *motherfuckers that we're out of work!*" before they bashed in Chin's head. Guess what their punishment was for killing Chin? A \$3,000 fine and not one day in prison.

° In September 2025, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) conducted an immigration raid at a Hyundai-LG battery facility in Ellabell, Georgia. The U.S. government handcuffed, shackled, and locked away about 475 South Koreans who had valid visas. They were in the U.S. *not* to take away American jobs, but to teach local how to do the work *that South Korea had created for them.*





Courtesy: OREO

Westerners Directing Racism at BTS is Nothing New

° In 2020, **Sal Governale** commented on *The Howard Stern Show* that there's no way I didn't have coronavirus. "I walked into the lobby and it was like Chinatown, out of control, there were so many Asian people," he remembered. "These people are traveling, they're not locals, they're going from country to country to country." *Chinatown. Asian people. These people.* He was describing a South Korean band whose country had immaculate screening protocols for COVID-19, while he was living in a country that didn't seem to know how to control the disease and dealt with it by ignoring its existence for much too long.

° A year later, German radio personality **Matthias Matuschik** said on-air, "These pussies bragged about covering 'Fix You' from Coldplay. This is sacrilege! They should be sent to North Korea for the next 20 years! ... You can't accuse me of xenophobia just because of this boy band. I have a car from South Korea."

All of this leads to my question about Eppler. How does this long-in-the-tooth man who teaches the *ethics of journalism* to college students — lack the basic understand

of what 'Death to America' even represents? Does he not realize that South Korea is a U.S. ally? Or does he, but still think it's funny to mock people who look like BTS (and me)?

And, yeah, I'll say it. *We all know* that if he was announcing a cookie collab between OREO and Taylor Swift or the Jonas Brothers, he would *not* have said anything negative about the messages they wanted to share with their fans.

But It's Just a Joke ...

Whenever I write about racism, there is a loud *well-ackshually* contingent who will tell me that **my own lived experience** (as well as others who I've written about) isn't racism.



So taking emotion and anecdotes out of the equation, let's *define* racism.

In a study of racism and its effects on children, Dr. David R Williams defined it as “an institutional system in which the dominant group uses its power to devalue, disempower, and differentially allocate valued societal resources and opportunities to groups defined as inferior.”⁴

And then there's the sticks-and-stones⁵ crowd that refuse to believe that **microaggressions** and taunting jokes have anything to do with Asian men and women.

being beaten and killed.

“Both violent racism and non-violent racism are harmful to individuals and societies. Peter H. Huang wrote in his 2022 study for the University of Colorado Law School. “Importantly, **the proportion of racism that is violent racism tends to grow over time and across locations if and when the occurrence of non-violent racism becomes more accepted and normalized as the baseline in society.**” ⁶

And another study by Brigham Young University noted that “Asian American people are often the target of unchecked racist jokes levelled by fellow Americans. Because of the model minority myth, racism towards Asian Americans has received less attention than that of other minority groups. Stereotypes furthered by racist jokes may seem innocuous, but they lead to mental, emotional, and potentially physical harm. Victim blaming is a common response to objections levied by Asian American people and the process leads to further psychological damage for the offended.” ⁷

It has now been five full days since Eppler made his remark. Neither he or his network has bothered to address his defamatory words. ⁸ Perhaps they are thinking that an apology is unwarranted because *we're* the ones who can't take a *joke*.

To paraphrase what I wrote in a [2021 article](#) addressing anti-Asian hate, “Make no mistake. This isn't a witchhunt and Eppler is not the victim. If a grown man — who has a job it is to report on the news on TV — can't get across his true intent, does he even belong there?”

If I have any facts incorrect, please do reach out and I will fix them (and attribute the correction to you, unless you don't want to be mentioned). But if you simply disagree with what I've written, I can live with that and hope that you can, too. Cheers!

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K-DRAMA INDEX

JAE-HA KIM · MAY 1



These are some of my reviews and essays about K-Dramas (and also Korean films and other Korean centric projects). You may also read more about my take on Korean pop culture in outlets such as Rolling Stone, Mashable, Victoria & Al...

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- 1 Adjunct means he's hired part-time and isn't on the tenure track to become a full-time professor. You don't have to have a PhD to be an adjunct instructor.
- 2 I used to be on-air live doing both TV news and radio reports. While most of my work was fine, there were a few instances where I fumbled with words. However, what I said was correct. I just said it in an awkward manner.
- 3 I'll sum it up with Merriam-Webster dictionary's definition of Yellow Peril: a danger to Western civilization held to arise expansion of the power and influence of eastern Asian peoples.
- 4 Williams DR, Lawrence JA, & Davis BA (2019). Racism and health: Evidence and needed research. Annual Review of Public Health, 40, 105–125. 10.1146/annurev-publhealth-0402

043750 [DOI] [PMC free article] [PubMed] [Google Scholar]

- 5 For those of you who grew up without hearing this children’s rhyme, the chant goes: “*Sti and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.*” Which is 100 percent untrue.
- 6 Peter H. Huang, Univeristy of Colorado Law School, “**Anti-Asian American Racism, COVID-19, Racism Contested, Humor, and Empathy**” (page 725). Note: *I* bolded part of t sentence for emphasis.
- 7 Researched by Sedric Jacobsen in “**When Racist Jokes Go Unchecked: The Plight of Asia Americans at the Hands of Fellow Americans**” (2024)
- 8 Honestly, I’m suprised that OREO hasn’t made a statement by now deriding Eppler’s comment.



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Elizabeth Tai Tai Tales 14h

♥ Liked by Jae-Ha Kim

Man, the tanking of US journalism continues to astound me.

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