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Fox News' Jesse Watters interviews Chinese Americans in a controversial "O'Reilly Factor" segment.

Story highlights

Jeff Yang: Asians have understandably reacted with fury to a Chinatown segment on "The O'Reilly Factor"

Segment lampooned Chinese Americans via pop culture's most tired stereotypes, he says

trigger warning for most Asian Americans. It's usually a sign of horrendous things to come.

And, in "political humorist" Jesse Watters' [recent segment](#) for Bill O'Reilly's hoary Fox News gabfest "The O'Reilly Factor," the sound of that refrain was paid off in full.

O'Reilly set up this "[Watters World](#)" segment by talking about how in the first presidential debate, the word "China" came up a dozen times, mostly from GOP candidate Donald Trump, and almost entirely with negative connotations. This, he said, prompted the show to send roving correspondent Watters to New York's Chinatown to get the scoop on what voters thought of the election.

Editor's Note: *Jeff Yang is a columnist for The Wall Street Journal and a frequent contributor to radio shows including Public Radio International's "The Takeaway" and WNYC's "The Brian Lehrer Show." He is the co-author of "I Am Jackie Chan: My Life in Action" and editor of the graphic novel anthologies "Secret Identities" and "Shattered." The views expressed are his own.*

(CNN) — At this point, the opening notes to Carl Douglas's classic ode to chopsocky, "Kung Fu Fighting" -- at least when not accompanied by an animated panda -- have become a

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Manhattan headquarters. The Asian American Journalists Association [released a statement](#) calling itself "outraged and shocked" at the segment's "open ridicule" of Asians: "It's 2016. We should be far beyond tired, racist stereotypes and targeting an ethnic group for humiliation and objectification on the basis of their race...Host Bill O'Reilly called the segment 'gentle fun.' There was nothing gentle or fun about it. It was rude, offensive, mocking, derogatory and damaging."



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And it's Trump who has dismissed critiques of his casual slurs as nothing more than "political correctness" from thin-skinned individuals who can't handle his humor, or can't accept his honesty.

On Twitter, Watters issued a lame response to his critics that shows he's of the same opinion: "My man-on-the-street interviews are meant to be taken as tongue-in-cheek and I regret if anyone found offense."

In classic Trumpian style, he regrets if anyone "found" offense, rather than admitting he was actually offensive.

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As soon as Douglas's twanging riff began to play under the crude "Watters' World" logo, it was clear the segment wasn't

population group in the United States.

But who would have imagined that Watters would use the opportunity to lampoon Chinese Americans through the lens of pop culture's most tired and anachronistic stereotypes -- martial artists, inscrutable elders -- while mock-interviewing elderly immigrants and mugging for the approval of his largely white audience like a toddler pointing proudly to his first successful potty poo?

Asians have understandably reacted with fury. In New York, officials representing Chinatown have denounced Watters and O'Reilly, and are planning a rally in front of Fox News's

The source of the disconnect between Watters and O'Reilly's view of the segment and that of the community it targeted is clear.

After all, the network has provided succor to a presidential candidate whose bullying antics have normalized ridiculing those who fail to meet the standards established by white, straight, Christian, able-bodied and monied males: "Fat" and "ugly" women, the handicapped, the poor, people of color, immigrants, Muslims and, yes, the Chinese.

It's Trump who has set a new low bar on transpacific diplomacy, referring to China's trade policies as "[theft](#)" and "[rape](#)" (it's odd and unsettling how frequently the metaphor of rape surfaces in his speech) while [using a crude broken English accent](#) to depict Asian trade negotiators as cowering before his deal-making prowess.

Fortunately, we no longer live in "Watters' World," or for that matter, Trump's. The era in which a single empowered race, class or gender legally held all the levers of political power ended centuries ago: By 1856, the right to vote was extended to the poor and unpropertied; in 1868, to naturalized immigrants; in 1870, to nonwhites, and in 1920, to women.

And each of these groups is poised to vote against Trump in record proportions that surge higher every time he and his

