

Now Why'd They Have to Go and Make the New Asian Emoji Yellow?

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by [Jennifer Chen](#)

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I am an emoji addict. Who needs words when you can simply text a smiley faced poop when you're having a craptacular day? Or eggplant + peach when you want to get frisky? Apple will soon release [a set of new emojis](#) with varying skin tones as an answer to complaints that all races weren't represented in the original set.



But hold up — are the Asian faces YELLOW? Why do the new Asian emojis look like extras in an episode of *The Simpsons*? I'm not sure why we are supposedly yellow in skin tone because my Asian friends and family range from pale-as-hell white to super tan. Heck, we get red-faced when we have a thimble of alcohol, so maybe I could see a red-cheeked Asian as an emoji, but yellow?

Speaking as a person of color, I don't like seeing yellow face as representative of the Asian culture. It reminds me of my middle school history class, when we got to World War II and I learned about "yellow peril." Seeing the awful propaganda poster with a giant yellow-faced Japanese soldier ready to stab a helpless Caucasian woman or an illustrated article of "[How to Tell Japs from the Chinese](#)" that was printed in *Life* magazine made it clear to me, even at a young age, that my face was always going to be judged as "other." So yeah, I'm not cool with yellow face, and you — no matter what ethnicity you are — shouldn't be either.

It's interesting to note that the original set of emoji has an [Asian man with a Chinese hat on](#) and that the birthplace of emoji is Japan. Shigetaka Kurita created the picture-based symbols with pencil and paper — inspired by manga comic books and kanji, which are written Japanese characters. (If you want some emoji history, this brilliant [New York magazine article](#) details everything from how smiling poop is lucky, and how the emoji code on your iPhone was really just a way for Apple to break into the Japanese market.)

While the appearance of jaundice-yellow faces in the new emojis (including a yellow Santa Claus) makes me want to emoji bomb things, I've got to believe that this is some sort of horrible mistake. And amidst the [understandable Asian backlash](#), Apple analyst Rene Ritchie and this [Business Insider article](#) insist that the bright yellow emoji people are not racist—in fact, it's a default setting and you can choose another skin tone. But you've gotta admit that this is confusing, and for most Asian folks, the connotation of a seemingly Asian person with yellow skin is downright offensive. If this is an attempt to include Asian people in the spectrum, I'd rather stick to the Chinese guy in the hat. At least he looks Asian.

[h/t [SFist](#), image from [Emojipedia](#)]

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