

Cartoons for the Classroom

Presented by NIEonline.com and the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC)



Satire or misfire?

Between the lines

Barry Blitt's July 21, 2008 New Yorker magazine cover drew sharp rebukes from a variety of critics and pundits. The drawing shows the Obamas standing in the Oval Office, sharing a fist bump. He's dressed in traditional Muslim garb, and she's dressed as a revolutionary sporting a big afro, toting a rifle slung over her shoulder. An American flag burns in the fireplace, and Osama bin Laden's picture hangs on the wall.

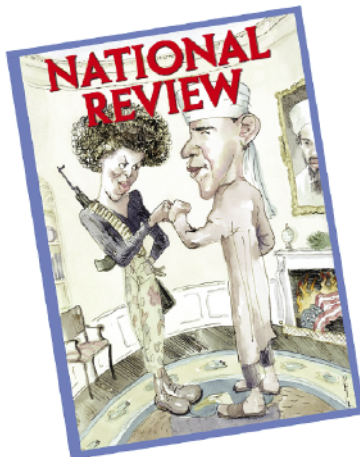
Talking points

1. Blitt said his cartoon lampoons the false beliefs that Conservatives hold -- that Obama's a Muslim (he's not) and she's a Revolutionary. Critics say the cartoon is too easy to misinterpret and instead can reinforce those misconceptions. What would help clarify the intended message? Is it the cartoonist's job to be crystal clear?
2. In R.J. Matson's cartoon below, the National Review is considered Conservative (anti-Obama); The New Yorker, Liberal. How can the same cartoon be viewed differently depending on the source? Is this a strength or a weakness in the cartoon?
3. Discuss the quotes at right and explain how they pertain to the controversy over Blitt's cartoon.



Barry Blitt / New Yorker Magazine, July 21, 2008

MALICIOUS SLANDER



R. J. Matson, / The New York Observer and Roll Call

SOPHISTICATED SATIRE



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"Satire is part of what we do and it is meant to bring things out into the open, to hold a mirror up to prejudice, the hateful, and the absurd."

-- David Remnick
New Yorker editor

"Only weak thinkers fear strong images. The publication that convenes itself as a polite dinner party, serving only strained polenta and pureed peas, need not invite me to sup."

Jack Shafer
-- Slate Magazine July 14, 2008
<http://www.slate.com/id/2195317/>

More by Barry Blitt: http://www.cartoonbank.com/search_results.asp?sitetype=1&advanced=1§ion=all&artist=Barry+Blitt

More by R.J. Matson: <http://www.cagle.com/politicalcartoons/PCcartoons/matson.asp>