

# EDITORIAL CARTOONING SATIRE & FREE SPEECH

BY TOM BIVINS





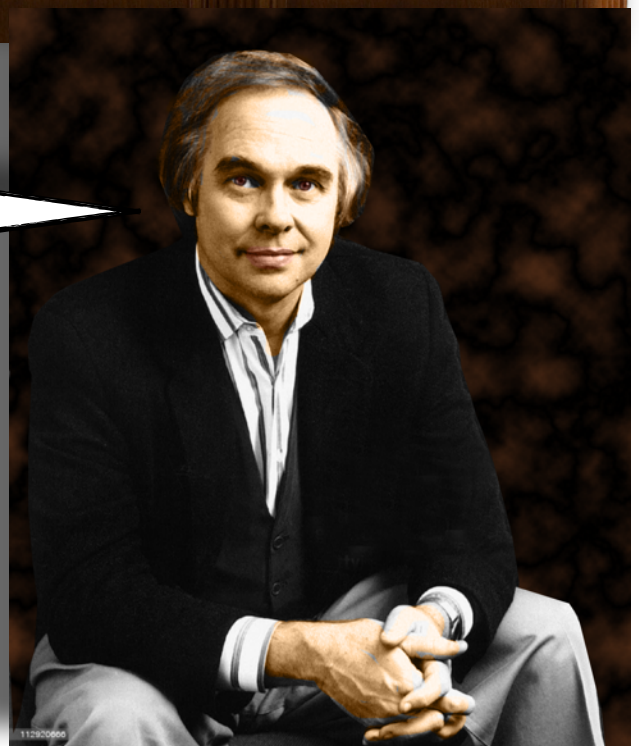
EDITORIAL CARTOONS — ALSO KNOWN AS POLITICAL CARTOONS — HAVE BEEN AROUND AS LONG AS THERE'S BEEN POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND DISSENT.

- IN THE U.S., THEY'RE A VIBRANT PART OF AMERICAN CULTURE AND HISTORY, AND NO MATTER HOW CONTROVERSIAL, ARE PROTECTED AS FREE SPEECH UNDER THE FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION.
- THE LATE PULITZER-PRIZE WINNING CARTOONIST DOUG MARLETTE DESCRIBED THEM THIS WAY...



Cartoons are the acid test of the First Amendment. They push the boundaries of free speech by the very qualities that have endangered them: Cartoons are hard to defend.

MARLETTE



**SATIRE** is a centuries-old use of humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues.

Although satire is usually meant to be funny, the purpose of satire is not primarily humor in itself so much as an attack on something the author strongly disapproves of, using wit as a weapon.

Stephen Colbert



## **SATIRE HAS BEEN CALLED THE OLDEST FORM OF SOCIAL COMMENTARY.**

- A TIME-TESTED APPROACH TO DEAL WITH THE INJUSTICES AND PROBLEMS IN SOCIETY HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO START WITH COMEDY.
- BY LAUGHING AT SOMETHING, WE CAN ACKNOWLEDGE ITS REALITY WHILE DENYING IT POWER OVER OUR EMOTIONS.
- SATIRE ALSO GETS PEOPLE TO PAY ATTENTION TO SOCIAL ISSUES WHEN THEY MIGHT OTHERWISE IGNORE THEM.
- SATIRISTS HOLD A MIRROR TO THE FLAWS OF SOCIETY, HELPING PEOPLE THINK CRITICALLY ABOUT THINGS THEY MIGHT OTHERWISE JUST TAKE FOR GRANTED.



# MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SATIRE

- BECAUSE SATIRE OFTEN COMBINES ANGER AND HUMOR IT CAN BE PROFOUNDLY DISTURBING.
- BECAUSE IT IS ESSENTIALLY IRONIC OR SARCASTIC, IT IS OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD.
- COMMON UNCOMPREHENDING RESPONSES TO SATIRE INCLUDE ACCUSATIONS OF POOR TASTE, OR THAT "IT'S JUST NOT FUNNY,"
- OR THE IDEA THAT THE SATIRIST ACTUALLY DOES SUPPORT THE IDEAS, POLICIES, OR PEOPLE THEY ARE ATTACKING.

IN 2008, THE COVER OF THE NEW YORKER MAGAZINE WAS DENOUNCED AS "TASTELESS" BY DEMOCRATIC PARTY CANDIDATE BARACK OBAMA'S CAMPAIGN WORKERS.

THE EDITOR DAVID REMNICK EXPLAINED THAT THE CONTROVERSIAL ILLUSTRATION BY BARRY BLITT ON THE JULY COVER WAS MEANT TO BE SATIRE, AND MOCKED THE RIGHT WING'S PERCEPTION OF THE FORMIDABLE COUPLE.

APPARENTLY, MANY PEOPLE DID NOT GET THE JOKE, AND THE IMAGE WAS QUICKLY CIRCULATED AROUND THE WORLD.



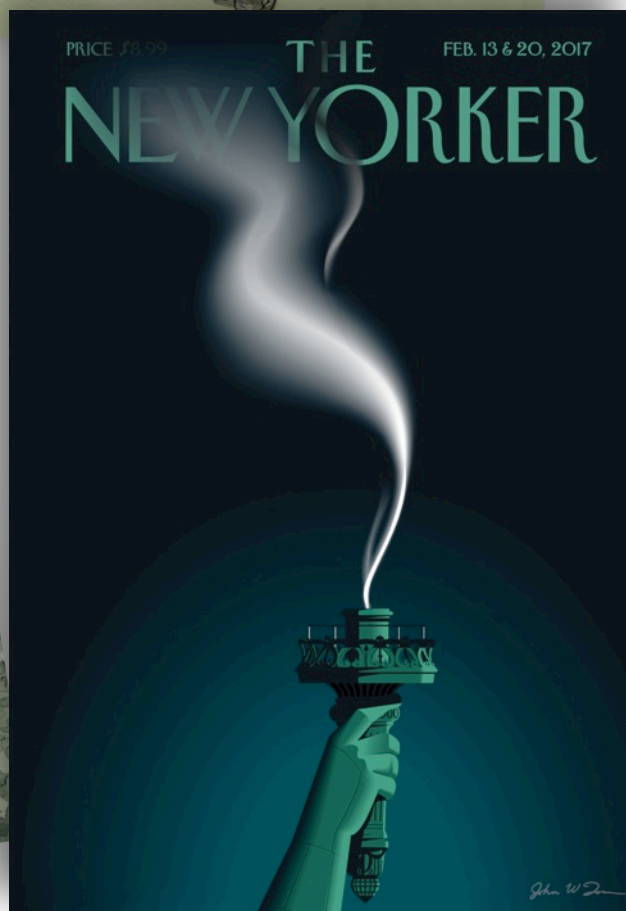


THERE'S NO MISTAKING ANY OF THESE IMAGES AS ANYTHING OTHER THAN SATIRE.





THE NEW YORKER MAGAZINE HAS ALWAYS BEEN NOTED FOR ITS SATIRICAL COVERS, AND THE TRUMP PRESIDENCY BROUGHT OUT SOME OF ITS BEST WORK.





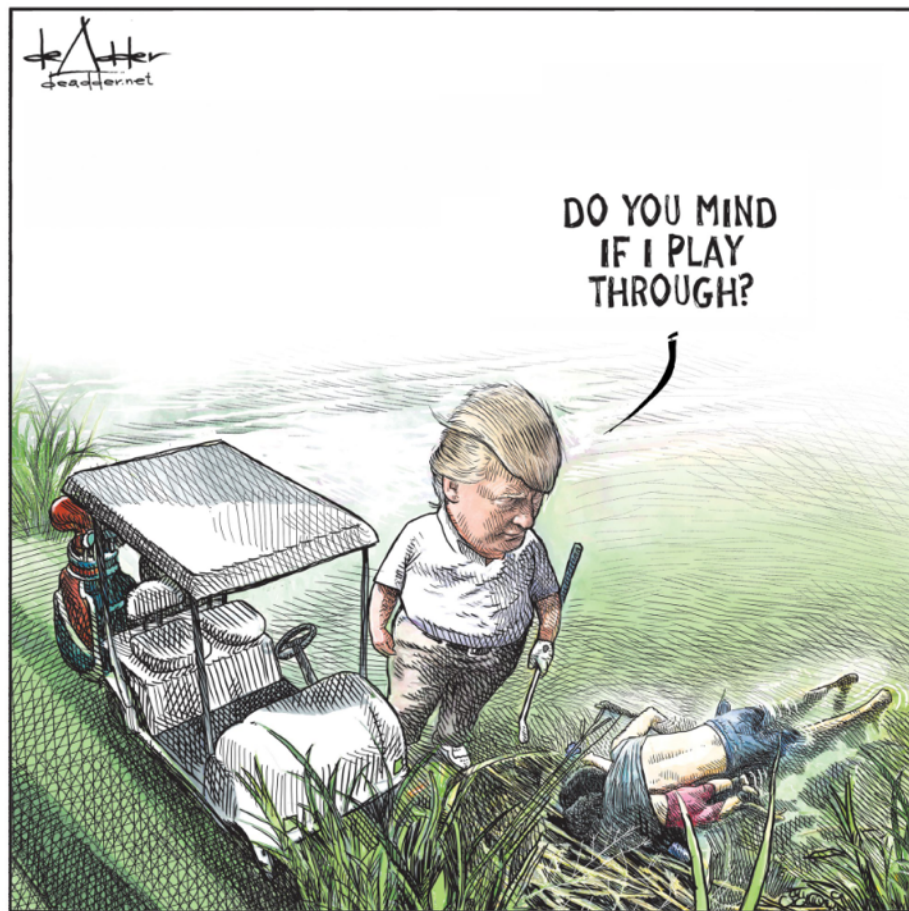


THE WEEK, A JOINT PUBLICATION IN THE UK AND US, USES A MUCH STRONGER APPROACH ON ITS SATIRICAL COVERS.



# OFFENSIVE MATERIAL VS. FREE SPEECH

RECENTLY, CARTOONIST MICHAEL DE ADDER CLAIMED HIS CONTRACT WITH FOUR CANADIAN NEWSPAPERS HAD ABRUPTLY ENDED AFTER HE DREW THIS...

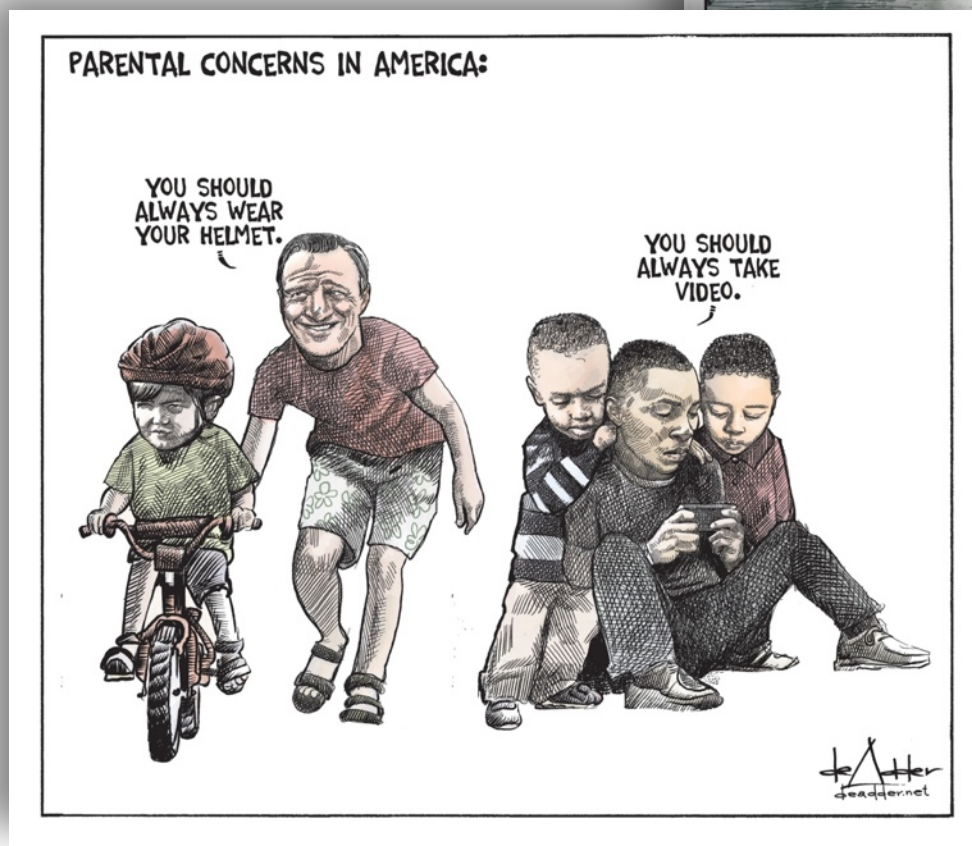
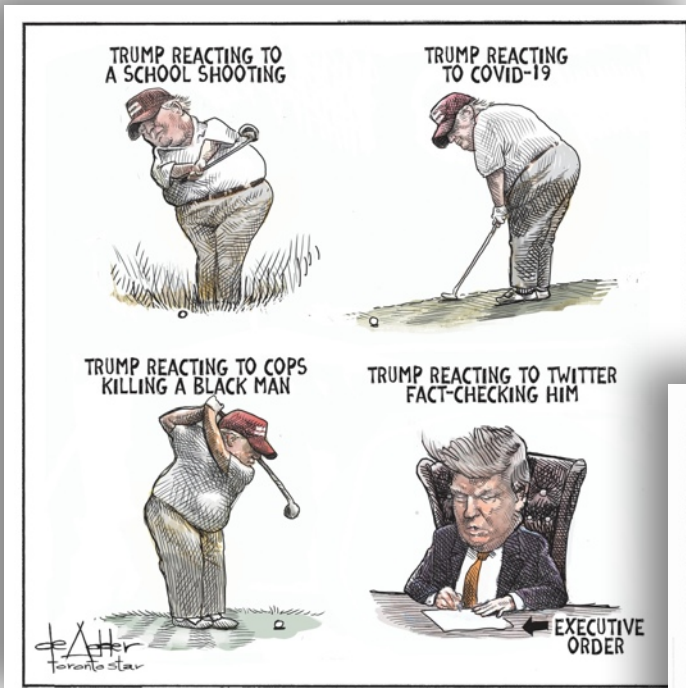


Based on an AP photo of a migrant father and his daughter drowned while crossing the rio Grande river into the U.S.





# MORE OF DE ADDER'S WORK

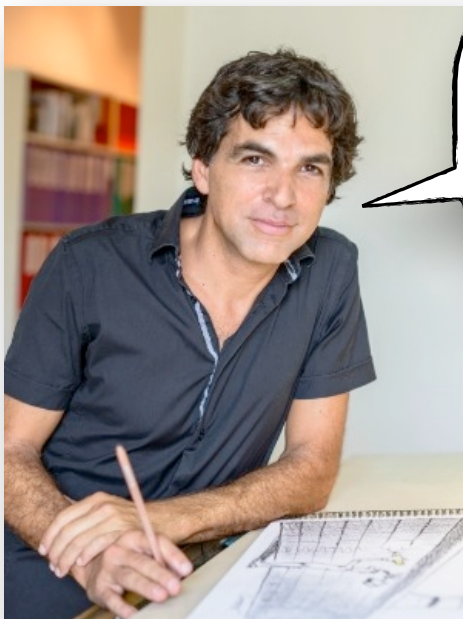




AND, THE NEW YORK TIMES INTERNATIONAL EDITION ENDED THE USE OF **ALL** POLITICAL CARTOONS BECAUSE OF THIS ONE DEPICTING A BLIND DONALD TRUMP BEING LED BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL PICTURED AS A DACHSHUND.



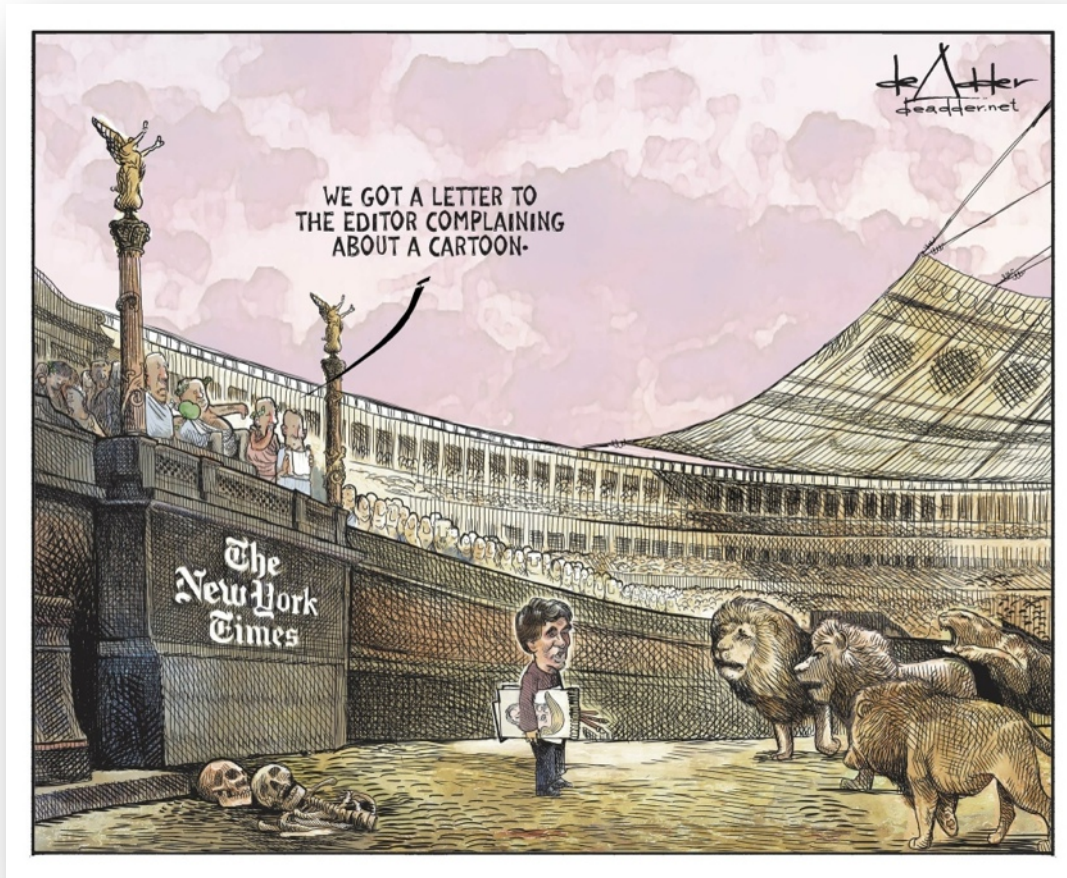
PATRICK CHAPPATTE, ONE OF SEVERAL CARTOONISTS “LET GO” BECAUSE OF THIS BLANKET BAN SAID THIS...



“POLITICAL  
CARTOONS WERE BORN  
WITH DEMOCRACY. AND  
THEY ARE CHALLENGED  
WHEN FREEDOM IS.”



# OF COURSE, CARTOONISTS "MENTIONED" THE EVENT...



Michael de Adder picturing the New York Times as the Roman Empire feeding a cartoonist to the lions for his "crimes."



And Rick McKee depicting a hot debate over whether to include editorial cartoonists as covered by the First Amendment.



SATIRICAL TARGETS HAVE TENDED TO BE ABOUT PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS ABUSING POSITIONS OF POWER—WHAT IS KNOWN HISTORICALLY IN SATIRE CIRCLES AS “PUNCHING UP,” MAKING THOSE WITH POWER ACCOUNTABLE.

THE 19TH CENTURY PAPER HARPER'S WEEKLY MERCILESSLY HOUNDED THE INFAMOUS, DE FACTO, LEADER OF NYC'S SHADOW GOVERNMENT, BOSS TWEED.

“Let's stop them damned pictures. I don't care what the papers write about me. My constituents can't read; but damn it, they can see pictures!”



CARTOONIST THOMAS NAST BECAME FAMOUS FOR HIS WORK DURING THIS TIME.



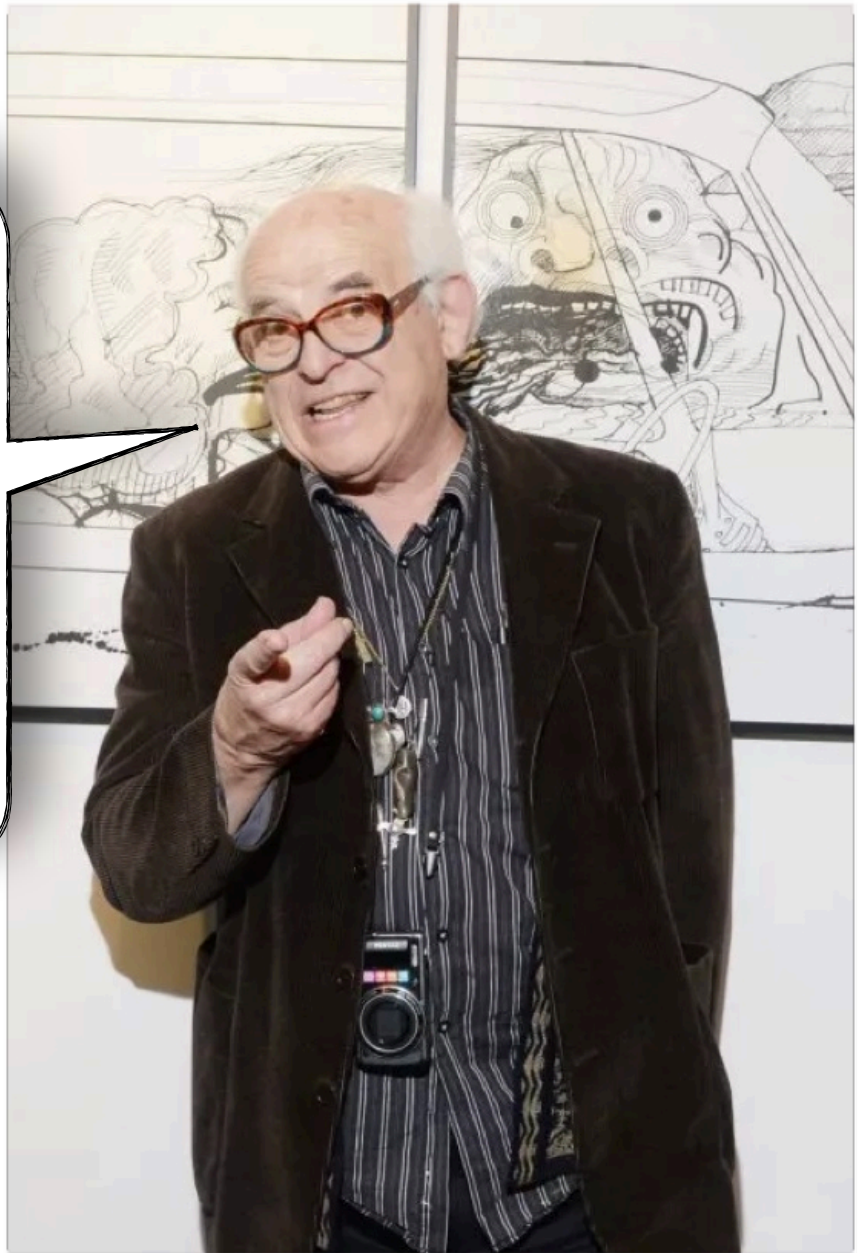
EVENTUALLY, NAST'S SATIRICAL PEN HELPED PUT TWEED AND HIS CRONIES OUT OF BUSINESS.



# WHAT CONSTITUTES PUNCHING UP TODAY?

CONTEMPORARY CARTOONIST AND ARTISTIC CHRONICLER OF GONZO JOURNALIST HUNTER S. THOMSON, RALPH STEADMAN SAYS . . .

“THERE CAN COME A STAGE WHERE WHAT YOU ARE PRODUCING IS JUST IRRESPONSIBLE GRAFFITI. FOR WHICH THERE IS NO POINT. BUT WORKING AS A RESPONSIBLE SATIRIST . . . YOU WOULD SEEK TO PRODUCE SOMETHING THAT IS VERY FUNNY IN SOME WAY.”



Ralph Steadman



STEADMAN HAS PUNCHED UP, PARTICULARLY AT PRESIDENTS,  
FROM RONALD REAGAN. . .



A take on Reagan's penchant for being on camera matched  
with his sometimes anti-democratic tendencies.

TO GEORGE BUSH. . .

TO DONALD TRUMP.



The suicide bomber of Baghdad



The Statue of Liberty Takers



SOME PEOPLE HAVE FOUND HIS IMAGES, ESPECIALLY OF PRESIDENTS, TO BE OFFENSIVE AND IN POOR TASTE.



The caption reads, "Donald Trump, Porky Pie"

## STEADMAN REPLIES. . .

- TO OFFEND THE RIGHT PERSON IS ITS OWN REWARD. TO GET THAT RESPONSE FROM SOMEONE, YOU ALMOST FEEL IT'S A COMPLIMENT.
- BUT CHOOSING THE RIGHT PERSON TO OFFEND IS PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE JOB. BUT IT COMES NATURALLY TO ME. I DON'T LIKE BULLIES. I TRY TO INSULT THEM, IF I CAN.
- BECAUSE OF ITS UNIQUE POWER TO COMMUNICATE, AS [THE LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHER] LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN ASSERTED, THE ONLY THING OF VALUE IS THE THING YOU CANNOT SAY.
- SOMETIMES YOU CAN'T COMMUNICATE THE IDEA OR THE EMOTION, BUT A DRAWING CAN.



# BUT, HOW FAR CAN YOU GO?

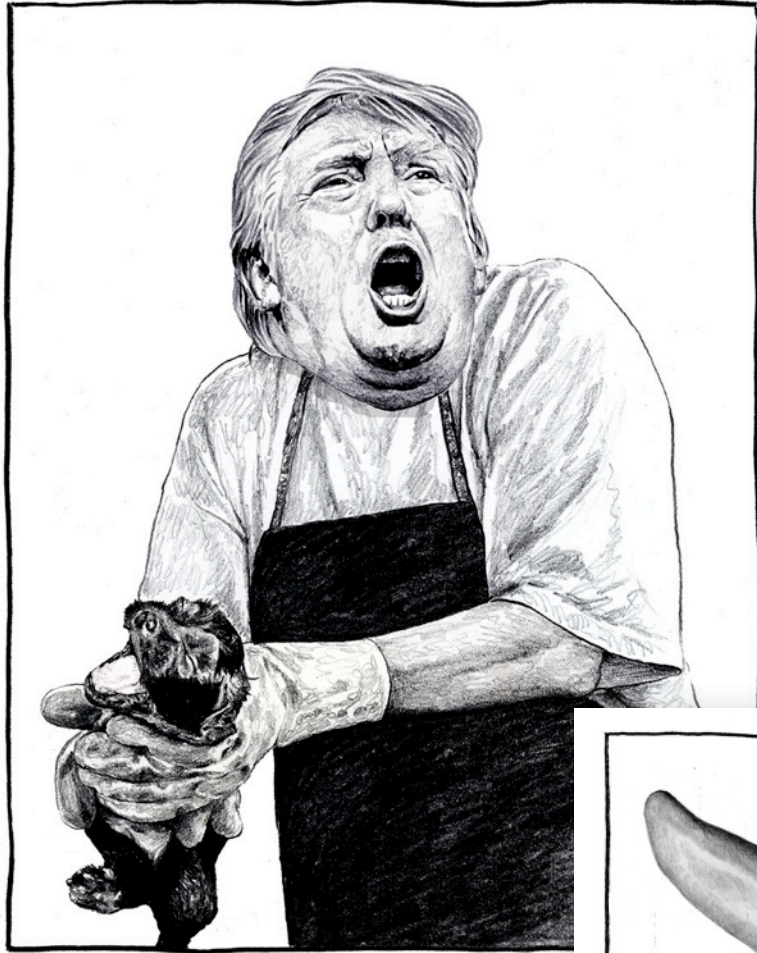
DWAYNE BOOTH (AKA MR. FISH) PUSHES THAT LIMIT  
EVERY DAY



HE IS ONE OF THE RARE CARTOONISTS WHO REFUSES  
TO COMPROMISE WITH SOCIETY'S INCREASING  
TENDENCY TO BE OFFENDED.



DONALD TRUMP COMPLAINING THAT THE LIBERAL MEDIA IS BEING DISHONEST WHEN IT DOESN'T PRAISE HIM FOR USING AMERICAN MADE RUBBER GLOVES WHEN STRANGLING PUPPIES



HIS WORK IS NON-PARTISAN. HE'S WILLING TO POINT OUT WHAT HE SEES AS THE IMPORTANT ISSUES, NO MATTER WHO IT OFFENDS.



Ever since I first laid eyes on you I knew that I wanted to be a jackass first and a progressive second.

MR.FISH



HILLARY CLINTON BRIEFING THE NEW SPECIAL ENVOY TO AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

NOW REMEMBER - WHEN YOU SAY THAT AMERICA IS MAKING GREAT STRIDES IN THE WAR, MAKE SURE YOU'RE FACING AWAY FROM THE PRESS. WE DON'T WANT ANYBODY TO LOSE AN EYE.



MR.FISH

GIVE ME YOUR TIRED, YOUR POOR, YOUR HUDDLED MASSES YEARNING TO BREATHE FREE . . . OR I'LL FIND AND DEPORT THEM MYSELF



MR.FISH



SOME MORE CURRENT MESSAGES



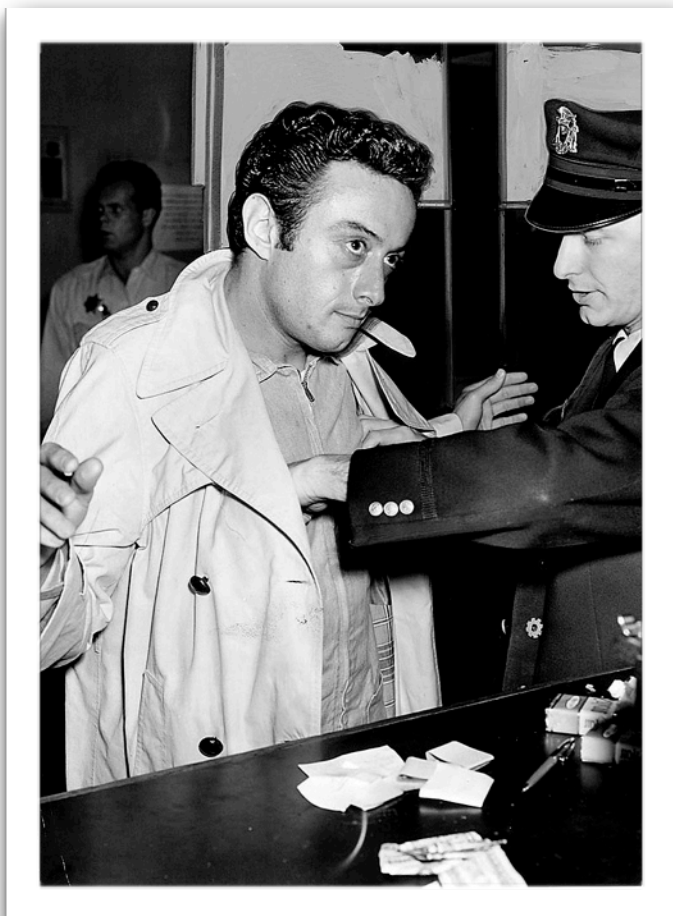
MR.FISH



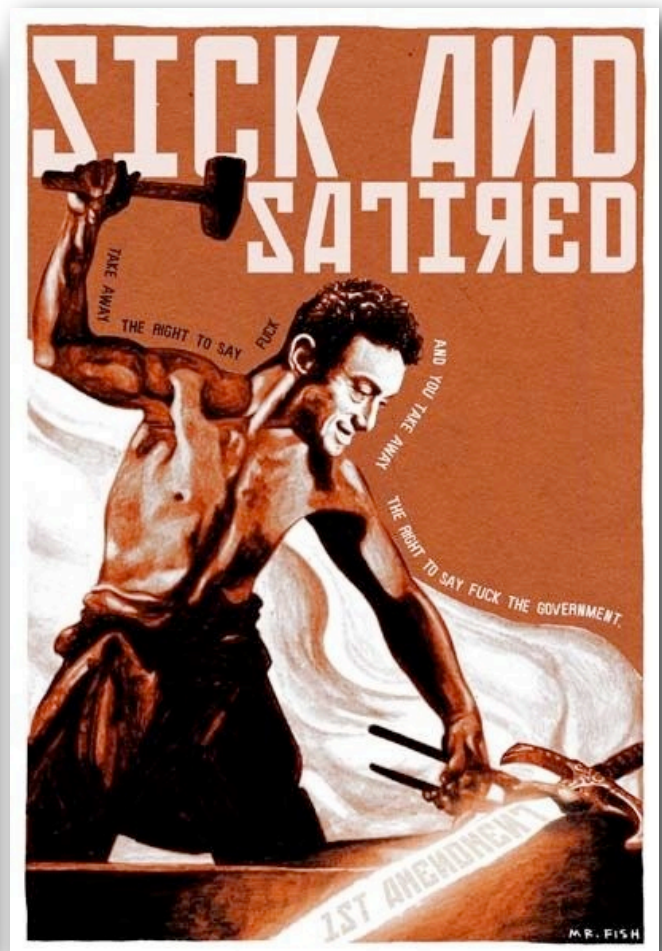


## MR. FISH OFTEN QUOTES ONE OF HIS HEROES, LENNY BRUCE.

- COMEDIAN LENNY BRUCE, IS RANKED NUMBER THREE ON THE LIST OF ALL-TIME GREAT COMEDIANS.
- DURING THE 1950S THROUGH THE MID-1960S, HE WAS RENOWNED FOR HIS OPEN FREESTYLE AND CRITICAL FORM OF COMEDY WHICH CONTAINED SATIRE, POLITICS, RELIGION, SEX, AND LOTS OF VULGARITY.
- HE WAS ARRESTED SEVERAL TIMES FOR HIS STANDUP ROUTINES BECAUSE OF THAT VULGARITY.
- HE CONTINUED TO BELIEVE HE SHOULD BE PROTECTED BY THE FIRST AMENDMENT.
- HE DIED FROM A DRUG OVERDOSE IN 1966.



Bruce being arrested for vulgarity



A poster by Mr Fish depicting one of Bruce's more famous quotes



# WHO CARES, AND WHY?

CARTOONISTS HAVE ANSWERED THAT QUESTION TOO





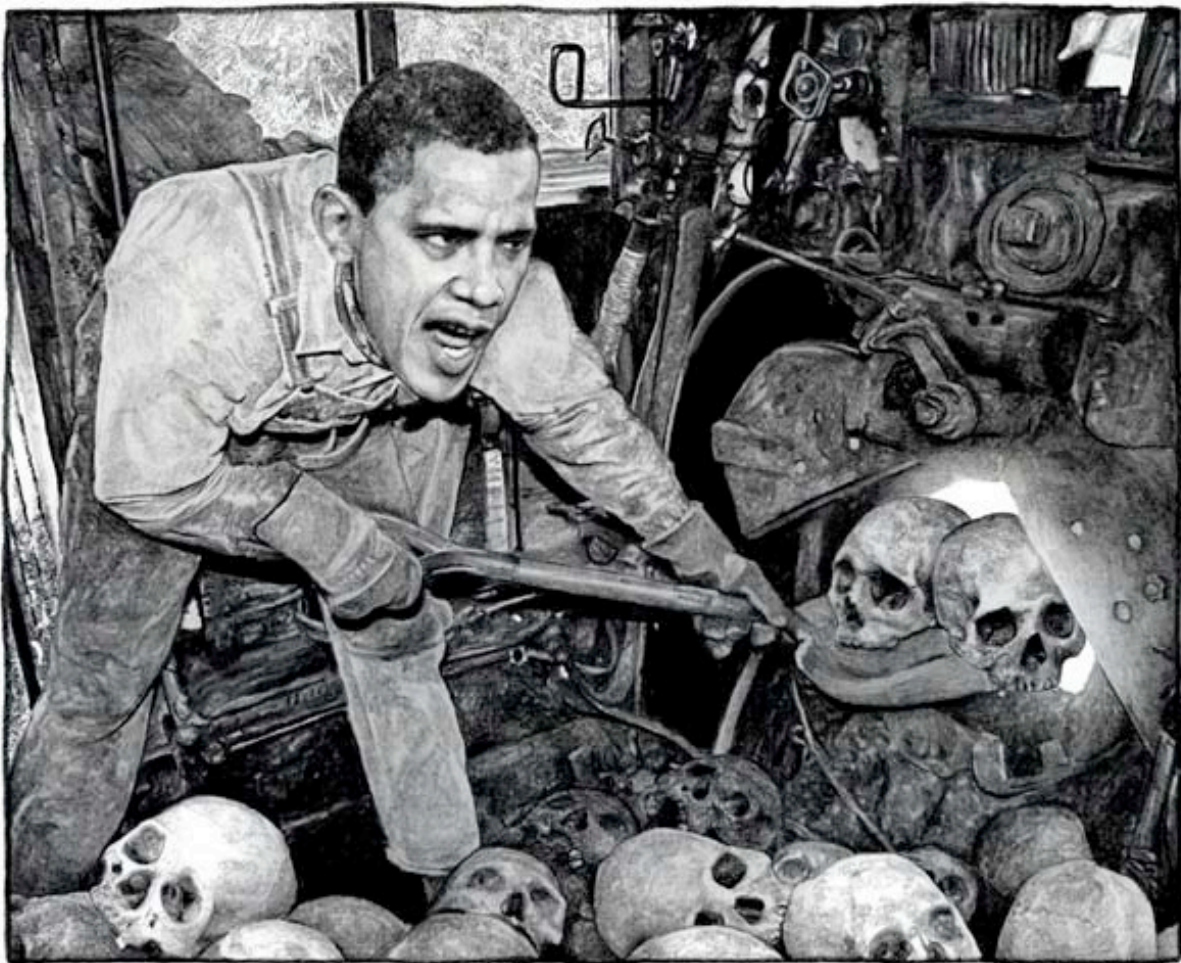
## BUT, AS RALPH STEADMAN SAYS:

“IF YOU ARE TRYING TO WARN A POPULATION AGAINST AN APPROACHING DOOMSDAY, YOU DON’T WANT TO MAKE THAT CLEVER AND CARTOONISH. YOU WANT TO MAKE THAT UGLY AND WORTHY OF DISDAIN.”

## OR AS MR. FISH SAYS

“IF YOU DON’T LOOK, YOU CAN’T SEE.”

**BARACK OBAMA STEAMING HIS WAY THROUGH AFGHANISTAN TOWARDS OSLO TO PICK UP HIS NOBEL PEACE PRIZE.**



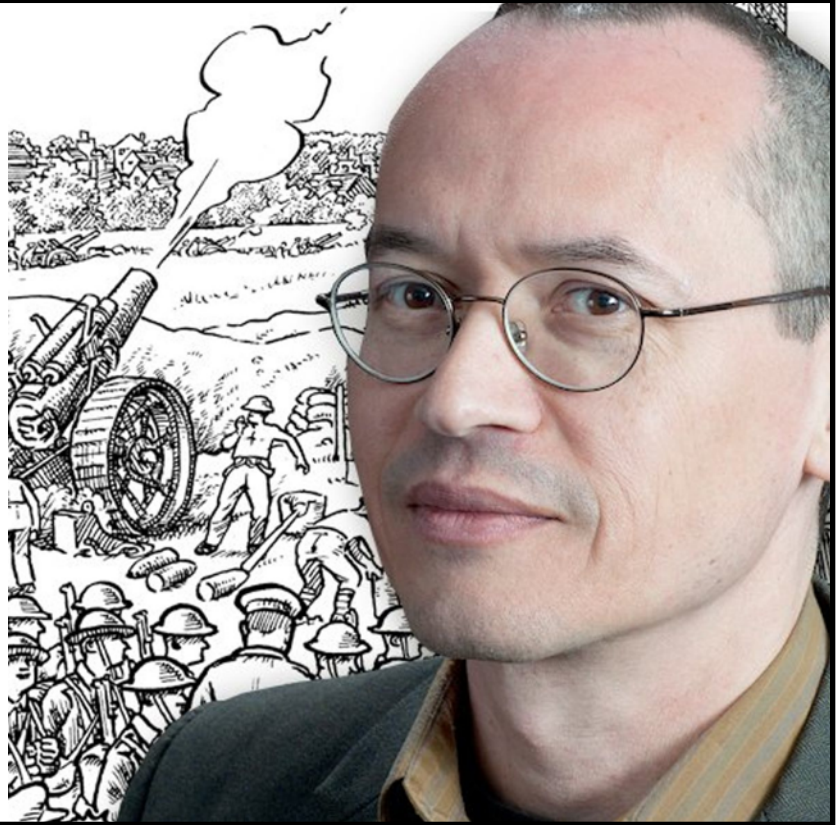
MR. FISH

# BUT, IS THERE A LINE?

GRAPHIC ARTIST JOE SACCO THINKS SO.

“WHEN WE DRAW A LINE, WE ARE OFTEN CROSSING ONE TOO. BECAUSE LINES ON PAPER ARE A WEAPON AND SATIRE IS MEANT TO CUT TO THE BONE. BUT WHOSE BONE? WHAT EXACTLY IS THE TARGET? AND WHY?”

-- JOE SACCO



THE LAST 3 PANELS OF A MULTI-PANEL REBUTTAL OF THE CHARLIE HEBDO APPROACH TO SATIRE, WHICH HE VIEWED AS PUNCHING DOWN.





HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN RIGHT. FOLLOWING THE MURDER OF MUCH OF THE MAGAZINE'S STAFF BY TERRORISTS, CHARLIE HEBDO CONTINUED TO OFFEND PEOPLE.

THIS IS A CHARLIE HEBDO CARTOON LIKENING THE VICTIMS OF A MASSIVE ITALIAN EARTHQUAKE TO ITALIAN FOOD.



IS THIS PUNCHING UP?

## SO, THINK ABOUT IT THIS WAY...

- ANYONE IN THE BUSINESS OF PERSUASION NEEDS TO ASK THEMSELVES: WHO AM I POTENTIALLY OFFENDING, AND WHY.
- JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN SAY IT, DOESN'T MEAN IS SHOULD BE SAID. (DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LAW AND ETHICS)
- THE FIRST AMENDMENT SIMPLY ALLOWS YOU TO DO SO. (THE LAW)
- YOUR CONSCIENCE TAKES OVER FROM THERE. (ETHICS)



- CONVERSELY, IF YOU ARE OFFENDED, ASK YOURSELF BY WHAT AND WHY.
- DO YOU OBJECT TO THE MESSAGE OR SIMPLY THE WAY IT'S PRESENTED?
- AND REMEMBER, "IF YOU DON'T LOOK, YOU CAN'T SEE."



REMEMBER, SATIRE CAN TAKE MANY FORMS, AND IS  
CONSIDERED PROTECTED SPEECH UNDER THE FIRST  
AMENDMENT.

## FOR A VERY GOOD REASON.

Satire and parody have served for generations as a means of criticizing public figures, exposing political injustice, communicating social ideologies, and pursuing such artistic ends as literary criticism.

Or, as Mark Twain noted:

