

# AMERICAN POLITICAL SATIRES TOWARD OBAMA'S PRESIDENTIAL CHAMPAIGN AS REFLECTED IN JIBJAB.COM'S ANIMATED CARICATURES

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## Abstract

This paper is intended to reveal political satires in the American media, mainly it reflects in *JibJab.com's* animated caricatures on the concentration of Obama's Presidential Champaign. It is also to discern the deep meaning of the satirical drawing in Obama's presidential election and to disclose how satire takes a part in Obama's campaign. Politics, social, and culture are to be prominent disciplines associated with the phenomenon of animated caricatures of Obama's presidential campaign. There are three functions of satirical drawing in American politics as follows: satirical animated caricature as the symbolic interaction, satirical drawing as the social control, and satirical caricature as the political correctness. Some significant values are also correlated with the political caricatures such as freedom of expression, democratic values, and the equality values. This analysis describes the contribution of the political satires in the time of Obama's presidential election, used as tools for campaign, and tools to influence the voters.

**Key words:** *caricature, political satire, Obama's presidential election, JibJab.com*

## INTRODUCTION

In the United States, animated caricatures and cartoons are quite popular tools used in advertisement, entertainment, or any kind of critic. Political satire through caricature has been grown extendedly in America to share public aspiration concerning on political issues. The existence of this political satire is dreadfully influenced by its involvement in American politics. Political satire has been as a part of American society. Even it is a reflection of popular culture.

It is rather difficult to define the term of popular culture because we also found some terminological disputes that popular culture refers to the beliefs and practices, and the objects through which they are organized that are widely shared among a population. This includes folk beliefs, practices, and objects rooted in local traditions, and mass beliefs, practices and objects generated in political and commercial centers (Mukerji and Schudson, 1993:3). If we see from the word, it consists of popular and culture. As simply popular can be defined as well liked by many people (Storey, 1996).

Culture itself refers to the ways in which people understand and relate to social situations (Nachbar and Lause, 1992).

Thus, 'American popular culture' is simply American culture that is widely favored or well liked by many people. Popular culture is mass produced-commercial culture for mass consumption. Its audience is a mass of non-discriminating consumers. Mass produced culture consists of all elements of life which are generally transmitted by the printed press, the electronic media, or by other form of mass communication, and therefore generally shared standardized form by very large number of persons. The elements of popular culture deal with the printed media such as newspaper, magazines, books, comics, caricatures, and the electronic media such as radio, television, movie, advertising and so forth.

Since political satires appear in the printed media and in the electronic media, it comes as popular. Popular culture is heavily influenced by mass media; this collection of ideas permeates the everyday lives of the society. Popular culture and the mass media have a symbiotic relationship; each depends on the other in an intimate collaboration. As simply the mass media has a contribution to exaggerate the social culture into a popular.

Meanwhile caricature itself is any kind of drawing objects with the features of ridiculous, and it usually shows an imaginative or irrational tell. Recently, the purpose of caricature has the broaden meaning into the extend course, that "*caricature as satire*" which carries the message throughout its drawing, rather than entertaining or giving pleasure as William Thrall states that

*"Satire is a literary manner which blends a critical attitude with humor and wit to the end that human institutions or humanity may be improved. The true satirist is conscious of the frailty of institutions of man's devising and attempts through laughter not so much to tear them down as to inspire a remodeling"* (1960:436).

Therefore the meaning of satire is closed to drawing objects merging both humor and critics to reveal a factual issue. Satirical caricature has purposed to draw a messiness condition of such phenomenon with a lampoon and humorous feeling in order to attract the responses of the readers.

Political satires are the prime exemplar of the mass media freedom, freedom to critic political matters which most significantly pop out in mass media with the

humorous depiction of satirical drawing arise in political matters. Ridiculously satirical drawing arises to draw a reader involvement. Political satire uses sarcasm or humor to point of incompetence, corruption, and misleading information of the elected officials and government regulations (politicalCartoonist.org.com).

America is appreciated and pledged with the freedom. Hence, the appearance of caricature as a satire is an extension of freedom values. Satire has become a tool to share public aspiration, to show unsatisfied feeling of the roles and to critic the issues. Through satire, the author wants to ridicule the messiness condition along the society. Although satire is usually meant to be funny, the purpose of satire itself is not primarily humor, in contrast to attack the issues which are strongly disapproved.

Political satires are often dedicated to the ruling class. They are as main target because of their significant roles in American government. One of them is the position of President in the U.S. The American president is both the head of State and the head of government. The uniqueness of the president election of America is always held on Tuesday after the first Monday in November. There are two steps of election in America, firstly they may choose the political party those are Democratic Party or Republican Party through the Senate. When one of the parties has won, then the Congress will decide the president of that party. The American president takes the position for four years.

During the Champaign, two candidates both Democratic party and Republican party give their vision and mission due to the platform issues from their own parties. Absolutely, The psycho war between two parties can be clearly stated from some slogans and propagandas. In this case, political satire of caricature is used as a tool for campaign to influence the voters. Campaign is a kind of political behavior in which that each political party took an action to influence people.

In the context of election, the campaign action is significant. It makes enormous contributions to the society by managing and controlling their interests of any political party. Campaign raises legitimate concerns about the role in the inception of the electoral process in the United States. In this case, the caricatures also arise for political purpose, it pops out the notoriety of a party in order to defeat another.

And internet is recently as a sophisticated tool of communication for campaign. Millions of American browses, connects, or visits link and site in the internet

in their whole time. Internet is a product of the press which is the effective media to share or publish information faster and worldly widespread than any other media. Internet closely relates to American society.

And Sendables.jibjab.com is a kind of electronic media which provides the funny satires video. Jibjab.com is one of audacious websites in America which produces the satirical video of political issues. Jibjab.com serves American to perceive political issues with humor, not merely to ridicule or to entertain but in the other side it also brings people to think. Nowadays, sendables.jibjab.com has produced a thousand viral satiric videos with various topics, including presidential election, president policies, or the current issue of politic to inform public and to aware public with the matters. It is actually jibjab.com to lead people to express their political commentaries, political protests, or political opinion through fun ways.

Based on the above information, there are some questions dealing with caricatures and American politics as follows: how far do American criticize their government?; what are the impacts of political satires toward American politics?; what are the inside purposes of satirical drawings or the words which bandage it? There is any note that political satire is mixture and unmask the follies politician and lampoon foibles with the humorous drawing, therefore analyzing political satire through the caricature is very interesting.

### **SATIRICAL ANIMATED CARICATURE IN AMERICAN POLITICS**

Sendables.jibjab.com is a kind of phenomenal website in America creating the animated caricatures with most of American prominent figures as president. In a great event like presidential election, jibjab.com also provides funny animation about these. One of the funny but satires video was entitled “He\_s Barack Obama” designed in time of Obama’s election. In that video, Obama is depicted as a “Super Hero” wearing a red-blue costume as the symbol of American flag with the super power quality. The original texts of the video are bellow:

*When darkness had descended  
All across the land  
Alone voice in the distance uttered  
Yes! We Can!  
He gave good speeches  
Never Sweat  
He was real good in the internets*

*Hope is Here*  
*Hope is Here*  
*He's Barack Obama*  
[Seeking / 00:00:01 – 00:00:32]

Based on the text of the video above, we can interpret the political satire with its hidden motive. Each of the phrases carries the denotative and connotative meaning, or even in a deep meaning. Here are some analyses on satirical animated caricatures toward American politics.

### **Satirical Animated Caricature as Symbolic Interaction**

The video “He\_s Barack Obama” is a kind of symbol of society in shaping the presidential election. It is the symbol of how people perceive the political phenomenon; the video came out in society as a symbol of politic in satires. Jibjab.com as the courageous website provides satirical video illustrating the current issues. The satirical video of Barack Obama shows that there was the interaction between society and government. Society can give their responses and their ideas in relation to the government’s policies.

American is familiar with the concept of individualism. It is any kind of responsibility by yourself. Absolutely, if the U.S. government cannot give its people with prosperity and peace, American people usually make any revolt. As the conservatism movement in America, it was the revolt of American Tea Party in 2008. But this movement can also be in political satire of caricature. They convey their dissatisfaction with satirical drawings or words. American people believe that there is someone who can save them from the crisis. In short, there is any communication between government and people. The text of video states as bellow:



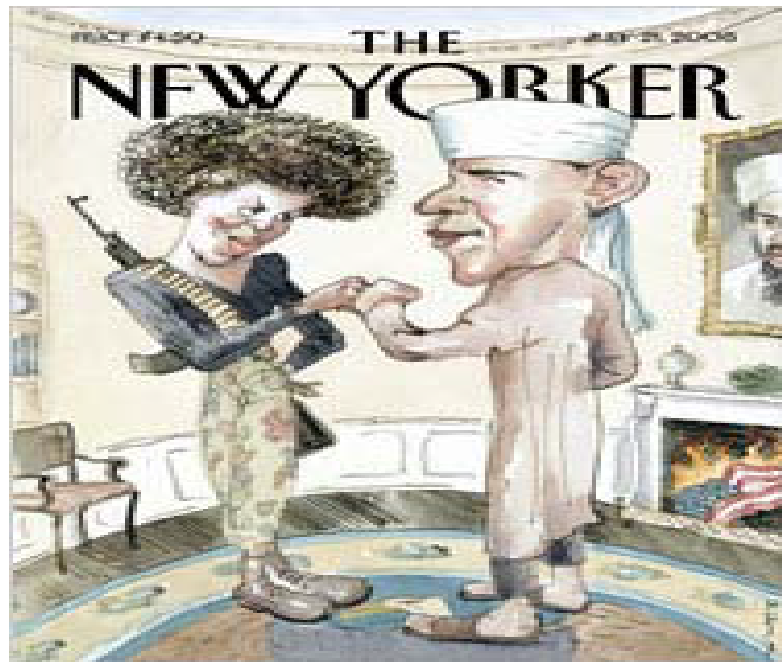
*Youtube.com He\_s Barack Obama Animated Caricature*

*HE'S COME TO SAVE THE DAY!  
He passed a major stimulus  
Then said he'd half the deficit  
HE HE! HA HA!  
Stop unemployment!  
Fix healthcare in his spare time!  
He's Barack Obama  
HE'S COME TO SAVE THE DAY!  
[Seeking / 00:00:33 – 00:00:50]*

The meaning of political satire itself can be the denotative meaning and the connotative meaning. . The denotative meaning of the text above tells that as if Obama will save the American people, he overcomes every obstacle and fixes the problem such as un-prosperous, unemployment, and brings to notice on health. Obama who will resolve any kind of American problem. The hidden meaning shows in some way the creator supports Obama's campaign via those phrases to influence and to attract the viewers, and finally to choose Obama. It also depicts how the creator reacts to the presidential election and campaign occasion.

The text within satirical video by jibjab.com of "He\_s Barack Obama" contains many words, or the pictorial of Obama itself that illustrates the symbolic interaction among society and their government. It appears in the video in which Obama draws as the super hero that will save the world or save the America. The video reflects as a good response toward Obama or in other word, the society is well welcome to the Obama's presidential election. In the video it also appear that there are full of wishes and hopes within the satirical pictorial of Obama.

In another case, here also the satirical drawing of Obama and his wife Michelle Obama as the cover of “The New Yorker” magazine that released on July 21 2008. In the cover magazine, Obama draw as an Osama’s in dressing, wearing turban, and traditional Arab clothing. While in another hand, Michelle Obama is depicted with an Afro with army’s clothing with the gun on her backs. Also note the portrait of Osama bin Laden on the wall and the American flag burning in the fireplace



The Cover of New Yorker Magazines (JibJab.com)

Shortly, satirical animated caricature in jibjab.com is clearly provides and purposes as the symbolic interaction of the society and their government. With the existence of satirical animated caricature by such website as jibjab.com in the internet, people may easily interconnected with their government. The societies can easily critic their government, and critic political policy through satire, or even support the government, give the positive response to the governmental system through satire too. So, this is what concludes that satirical drawing as symbolic interaction. However, that human nature and political cartoons somehow have a connection, and because of this connection, an image is capable of communicating complex messages, and influence a person’s thought and reason.

## Satirical Animated Caricature as Social Control

Social control is a social arrangement which either prevent strains from leading to deviance. Not all strains is avoidable in any social system, but there may still be ways of deterring people from expressing their tension in deviance and encouraging them to manage their tensions in accordance with certain safety values. In such case, however the control is deviant, since it fails to conform to institutionalized definition of the legitimate use of social control (Bredemeier & Stephenson, 1962).

Political satire using symbols as a tool of expression provides pictorial to represent the tension. The language of diplomacy which is something more than highly flown phrase and vague formalities. It permits communication through a special case which carries the “hidden meaning”. Satires perform the ideas as a function of critical vague in a modern society like USA.

Satirical animated caricatures in jibjab.com as the social action give the control toward political issues in time of the “Presidential Election”. Political satire is the concrete of the use of symbol in society. People and government have their own relations as government is for, by and from people. People take it as the agent to control social condition or government system by giving critics. In fact, political caricature does not only influence mass intellectually, but also give great influences for any society to change. The texts of the “Time for Some Champaign” video bellow show how the society give their controls in the satirical words and drawings.

*Bush:*  
*Come gather 'round, Dick, Condi, Scooter 'n Rove,*  
*It's time to get packin; we must hit the road,*  
*But there's war, recession, and bad mortgage loans,*

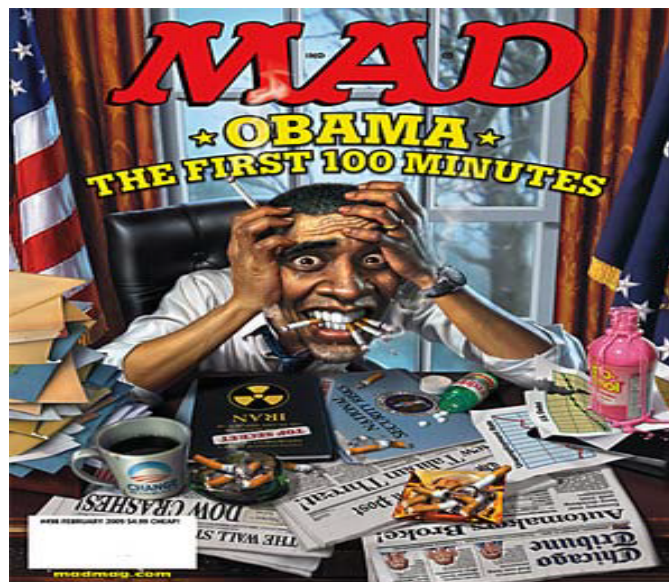
*Cheney:*  
*And our legacy needs savin'!*  
*[Seeking / 00:00:23]*

It shows that those are some American problems and it needs government's hands to solve them. By giving this satire, society sharply deliver critics toward the social and economical problems in American society. Those problems will be a crisis if government only acts “taken for granted”. So this satire also describes that American society needs some renewals and changes. It seems this video inscribes with the word “CHANGE” and “Yes, we can”.



## Satirical Animated Caricature as Political Correctness

Satire appears as social struggle to correct the politics, in the other word, it also reveals the existence of power in society. By the satire, a society shows its power to react or to protest the political issues in lampoon drawing. The term political correctness as satirical self-criticism is that satire as a guard against untruthfulness in efforts of social change.



The Cover of MAD Magazine (JibJab.com)

The satirical drawing as shown in the cover of “MAD” magazine above, provides many interpretations of the readers or viewers. The magazine cover inscribing “OBAMA, *The First 100 Minute*” demonstrates the dizzy and whirling of Obama on his desk in silly picture. The political correctness in the satirical animated caricature illustrates in a form of political psycho war and power of the society.

*Psycho war* is commonly used in presidential election or the campaign period by a political party to ruin its opponents. In psycho war, the turning point of harassment is the psychology of the figure so it takes a role in shaping public opinion. In the democratic political system, the forms of “*psycho war*” are that every political party equally claims each other through the political advertisement.

*Psycho war* commonly used as the political strategy in the media to puss their opponent. The satirical drawing of MAD magazine above, obviously contents psycho war, in which the creator tries imaging Obama in his duty as the stress and oppressed man. The creator of the picture seems trying to depict Obama in getting mad to face the complicated problems of America within in the first week as the American president. The cover MAD magazine has completely spoofed Obama on his presidency duty.

Politics has fundamentally been connected with the power and the authority in attempting to reach out of political goals. The satirical drawing pictured in jibjab.com or in the cover of MAD magazine is as a tool to show society power to involve in political system and to change society into steps forward. America itself is well known as a democratic country, thus satirical drawing in politics illustrates the uses of power in society to take a part in politics.

Barrack Obama is very interesting because of the uniqueness. He is the first African American who was democratically elected as the President of the U.S. after George W. Bush administration. The key to Obama's victory to his presidency was that most American people disliked or was not in accordance with the previous administration. Therefore, there was a new shifting in political paradigm among the United State's voters. Moreover Obama could turn out the WASP (White Anglos-Saxon Protestant) canon and racial discrimination toward the presidency election.

But one thing is noted for Barrack Obama that he was called a new phenomenon. He is as the first American from Blacks and he is not also from WASP. He is a charismatic leader and a good listener. His popularity can be seen from his humility, flexibility, and outreach toward the changing of era. He has those values cause of his educational and experimental background. One point is religious values merged with his foreign policies, mainly for Islamic world.

In the jibjab.com video entitled Time For Some Campaignin\_ shows how the society involves in the campaign with the text of the video bellow:

*People:  
Oh, it's time for some campaignin'!  
Citizens gather from both far and near,  
For a ritual we practice every four years,  
When we promise you anything you wanna hear,  
To win the crown we're chasin'!*

*People:  
And now their tune is changin'.*

*People:  
Oh, it's time for some campaignin'!  
We spend billions of dollars to make our points clear,  
To get you to step up and cast your vote here,  
Then we spin you around and poke you in the rear,  
Oh, it's time for some campaignin'!*

*Yes, it's time for some campaignin'!  
[Seeking / 00:01:47 – 00:02:05]*

In the text of video *Time For Some Campaignin\_* of jibjab.com reveals how people so appreciate with the election like the candidates themselves, which they are so enthusiastic in promoting themselves to bring them to the White House. In the video, the satirical animated caricatures appear hand in hand to jazz up the campaign and election of the 4years ceremonial campaign. The words in the video, “*And now their tone is changing*” It shows that the preceding government is still undesired, and leave many problems in America, so they need some revolution on the governmental system.

The words: “*We spend billions of dollars to make our points clear; to get you step up and cast your vote here*” tell us how the candidates taxes great quantities to make them to be chosen. The critics arouse as a sign of awareness of society toward the political issues, and attempting in line to correct the politics. Fortunately, political satire seems indirectly become “watch dog” for the government in perceive any political issues. Thus satirical animated caricatures emerge as a kind of drawing to correct the situation or the expression of protest.



Youtube.com Times for Some Campaign Animated Caricature

### **SOME VALUES IN SATIRICAL ANIMATED CARICATURE TOWARD IN AMERICAN POLITICS**

Satirical animated caricature contains some values in relation to American government. They are such as democratic values, freedom values, and equality values. Those values are to be significant cultural traits in America. **Democratic** system focuses highly on the society goals and society power rather than individual power. Democracy lets the media to inform society in unhampered news about the states, government, and their elites.

Satires develop in society as the delineation of the democratic values of America. Satires become the weapon in acquisition process as a kind of communication among society and their states. They expose the irony of political condition in a spoof words or picture of their figures. In 2008 presidential election and campaign, JibJab.com produced satires in various forms of videos, and or drawings to contour their participation in the land of democracy.

Democracy refers not only to right of life, liberty and happiness individually and personally, but also to the rights of people in determining their own government. People have a central and strong position and right in establishing their own government system. They have rights to abolish the government if the government is corrupt or weak and institute again a new government that can secure and save their lives and freedom.

Democracy explores the media as an integral part of American democracy. It gives freedom of press cited in the U.S. Constitution. And Jibjab.com as the online media shows its existence to join in the presidential election and campaign by producing the satirical videos such as “He\_s barrack Obama” and “Time for Some Campaignin”. In this case, American people have rights to express their freedom of press by political satires and to tell what government should use the power and run the administration.

American is also considered as the nation of “*freedom of expression*”. This value, of course is a vital part of the American ethos, guaranteed by the first amendment of free speech, press, assembly, and religion. Freedom is a central value to the democratic system. The American media are sometimes referred to serve as a valuable check on the powers of government.

There are no significant values of democracy, except the freedom of citizens which is used to debate political issues and criticize the government policies. Satirical animated caricatures are reflects the freedom values. With the weapons of mass interruption, mass media tries portraying the issues clearly to resuscitate the society from the problems. The satirize video of JibJab.com exposes how American are free to show their ideas to face the issues of politics. Many satirize videos and satirize drawings are defined as the form of freedom in recognizing the critics, scolding the issues, and disappointment in various ways of satires as funny lampoon critics.

Satire is a freedom way to critic the governmental apparatus in the point of mocking them with funnies drawing. The freedom of the press as like in the first amendment has encouraged printed or electronic online media to attach the satirical prominent figures of government in it. In a time Obama’s presidential election, many of mass media or online media make satires of him. Basically, all of those satires depict the impressive values of America. It is freedom.

American is represented not only the land of freedom, but also the land of *equality*. Equality is one of the most honored values in the American democracy. Equality determines that all of the individual is in the same fundamental sense alike, that no person posses greater intrinsic worth than another, and that all prized as members of common humanity.

Everyone has the same chance to get a certain status. It is important to understand what Americans mean when they say they believe in equality of opportunity.

They do mean that each individual should have an equal chance for success. Americans see much of life as a race for success. For the equality means that everyone should have a chance to enter the race and win. In other words, equality of opportunity may be thought of as ethical rule.

American gratefully respect and realize of their equality values, hence they also criticize or satirize the significant figures even their presidents. The satirical of the JibJab.com's video of He\_s Barack Obama and Time for Some Campaignin\_, as well as some satires of the MAD magazine and The New Yorker magazine, are some examples of media tools to depict the equality values.

## CONCLUSION

Caricature is a media to entertain for the readers. But It needs deep knowledge to get a deep meaning in the political animated caricature. In order to get better understanding of satirical animated caricature, related it to the political issues, it is much better to integrate the material of language, politics, social, and culture. The combination of understanding government system with practicing social and cultural knowledge in reading satirical animated caricature is greatly needed. The readers with foresight and creativity will get success to open the window and to travel across the world in understanding more about phenomena in politics, social, and culture as reflected in satirical animated caricatures. And they also have capabilities to establish a clear concept of what contextual, connotation and a deep meaning of sentences and pictures, to uncover the dim and the vague parts of satirical caricatures, and to get better understanding of strong as a whole.

The main purpose of caricature is to give any critic but it is not vulgar in order to avoid the opened conflicts. Therefore, the presentation of satirical caricatures is softer with humor sense. As media of social critics, the existence of caricature in both the electronic media and the written media becomes the significant uniqueness for the readers to scrutinize some problems such as politics, social and culture happened around the readers. So caricatures can be a tool of learning for any society in improving their intellects and in sharpening their thoughtful toward the social problem around them. There are three main purposes of political satires in American government. They are as a tool of symbolic interaction, a devise of social control, and a tool of political

correctness. In America, the freedom of press gives great influences to create satirical caricatures. JibJab.com is one of media in producing satirical animated caricatures.

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