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Surviving the Obama Comedy Crisis: A Report From the Front Lines
By: *Daniel Kurtzman*, Guest Humorist

For those in the business of political mockery, the last 16 years have been a glorious golden age. If Bill Clinton was a full-employment act for political comedians, then George W. Bush was a welfare program.

But when Barack Obama takes the oath of office on Tuesday, the era of easy presidential punch lines may be coming to a close. As it has been widely noted in humor circles, Obama remains a tough target. So far, the most memorable Obama mockery has ranged from the utterly atrocious (see: the "[Barack the Magic Negro](#)" song parody debacle) to the mildly amusing (Fred Armisen's competent but guffaw-free impersonation of Obama on "Saturday Night Live").

What's in store for political humor in the age of Obama? Will he be the president who presides over the bursting of the comedy bubble? Or can he find a way to bail out the comedy industry too? There's no better way to find out than directly from those on the front lines of the comedy crisis — the comedians, joke writers, and satirists tasked with the urgent work of fortifying our nation's strategic humor reserves:

SElaine Newport, co-founder of the [Capitol Steps](#) comedy troupe:

Of course, every time we lose a president we worry, "Will the next one be funny?" I remember being quite distressed to lose Bill Clinton — how could George Bush possibly be as good for comedy? But they always come through! In the case of Obama, I'm thinking that this might be the scenario: he's the straight man, surrounded by comedy gold in the form of Joe Biden, Hillary Clinton — and I think we're also entitled to several second-round draft picks. For now, we are having fun with the fact that the press is so enamored with Barack, in the form of our song "Obama Mia." And Hillary grits her teeth and tries to be happy to be Barack's Secretary of State, in the song "Ebony and Ovaries." But it's true, the worst thing for comedy would be a quietly competent president. Let's hope that doesn't happen!