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Satire, snark and sarcasm in today's society

Isabella R. Moyer | Aug. 29, 2012 NCR Today

A video parody in favor of President Barack Obama called One Term More [1] is circulating the Internet. It's a witty, satirical rewrite of the great song from Les Misérables, "One Day More." And the singing is wonderful.

I love satirical humor. I grew up watching "Monty Python's Flying Circus" and "Saturday Night Live." Here in Canada, we have our own political comedy icons, such as Rick Mercer [2] and the cast of "This Hour has 22 Minutes." [3] And, yes, I like to end the day with that inimitable duo of Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert. I need a good laugh to help fill the gaping chasm of hopelessness that too often comes from following the daily news. I need to see the mighty brought down a peg or two, especially if the mighty happen to be on the other side of my political fence. And, ay, there's the rub.

Bruce Reyes-Chow, a Presbyterian minister, has written a thought-provoking piece over at The Huffington Post called "The Role of Satire, Snark and Sarcasm in Building Community." [4] Like me, he loves Les Mis and loves good satire. He also has a deep desire to build bridges, and he challenges us to look carefully at the destructive side of humor.

He writes:

> Thoughtful satire, witty snark and timely sarcasm can be powerful forces, but it seems that in today's uber-connected and politically charged climate these tactics serve mostly to galvanize communities already in agreement in order to be a force against the enemy and they do very little to help build bridges of reconciliation, relationships and commonality. I am willing to be pushed on this, but I simply do not believe bridges are built with snark, satire and sarcasm, and I would bet that most satirist are not really interested in reconciliation with those whom they are satirizing.

Reyes-Chow believes that if we are serious about building community, we need to "choose to engage with a different posture and see the landscape through a different lens. Sure, I want to 'win the day,' but more importantly, I want human relationships, all human relationships, not just my ideological kindred, to be built up and not further torn apart."

I have learned the hard way that quick wit needs to be tempered. Words that seemed brilliant in my mind a moment ago can fall flat into awkward silence when spoken. When it comes to dialogue, we need to choose our words even more carefully. Does this mean that we need to put aside satirical humor?

Source URL (retrieved on *04/18/2014 - 11:07*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/satire-snark-and-sarcasm-todays-society

Links:
[1] http://www.onetermmore.com/video.html
[2] http://www.rickmercer.com

[3] http://www.cbc.ca/22minutes
[4] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bruce-reyeschow/the-role-of-satire-snark-sarcasm-in-building-community_b_1823360.html?ncid=edlinkusaolp00000008