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Political Science

Prizewinning Political Cartoons: 2008 Edition
Dean P. Turnbloom
Dean P. Turnbloom, editor
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“A good editorial cartoonist can take an issue and sway public opinion or at least make an arguable point,” says the editor in this sometimes poignant, frequently biting collection that captures the all-too-frequent failings of the nation and world’s leaders. As might be expected, many of the cartoons comment on the war in Iraq. Others illuminate social issues, including worldwide poverty brought on by globalization, terrorist killings in the name of God, and the perpetual struggle between the haves and the have-nots.

Included are samplings of the winners and, in some instances, the runners-up of eleven major political cartoon awards. Together, they reveal how a visual image could make a more lasting impression than a written article on the same topic. A description of each award and a short half-page biography of the winners are included.

Of the eleven awards, the Pulitzer Prize is the most prestigious, and the 2007 recipient was Walt Handelsman of New York’s *Newsday*, whose works include a reminder about the health problems suffered by 9/11’s first responders and a depiction of the Bush White House labeled “The Iraq Didn’t Study Group.” Nick Anderson (*Houston Chronicle*), a runner-up, draws an airplane carrier, labeled “Troop Surge,” which is shown disgorging American flag-draped coffins.

Mike Luckovich (*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*), winner of the 2007 National Headliner Award, shows the softer, poignant side of political cartooning with a picture of Martin Luther King saying, “I have a Dream and Here She Comes Now,” as Coretta Scott King joins him in heaven. Signe Wilkinson (*Philadelphia Inquirer*), who in her acceptance speech for the Overseas Press Club-Thomas Nast Award, showing a combative streak, reflected that “if you don’t want your prophets drawn in nasty cartoons, don’t do nasty things in the name of your prophets.”

Probably the most famous political cartoonist of the twentieth century was Herb Block, whose seven-decade (1929-2001) career included fifty years at the *Washington Post*. The 2007 Herblock Award was given to Jim Morin (*Miami Herald*), a two-time Pulitzer Prize-winner, himself. His cartoon of a smug Donald Rumsfeld saying, “Old Soldiers Never Die…They Just Call for My Resignation,” sums up the provocative views of politics that underscore this collection.

One small flaw is that a few of the cartoons are repeated when the same cartoonist received more than one award. Overall, this is an entertaining—sometimes painfully so—visual look back at the year that was, and is a good choice for public libraries.