

The Revolution Will Be Hilarious: Comedy for Social Change and Civic Power

Caty Borum

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In response to years of clear social upheaval in the United States, from renewed fights for social justice to new threats of authoritarianism, a new, diverse set of comedy voices are using humor in their activism. Caty Borum chronicles this phenomenon in her entertaining book *The Revolution Will Be Hilarious*.

Beginning with the stories of performers who harnessed new technology and social media to become viral stars, the book covers comedic acts like Randy Rainbow, who began making YouTube videos more than a decade ago but turned more political during the 2016 election cycle. His topical parody songs, such as “Desperate Cheeto,” poked fun at Donald Trump while showing off his musical chops. And comedian Sarah Cooper was, like many Americans, stuck at home during COVID-19, watching White House briefings during which the president spread dangerous theories about the virus. In TikTok videos, she lip-synched to his statements, highlighting the absurdity of the moment; this earned Cooper her own television show. Through humor, these comics and others were able to reach audiences who might not have engaged otherwise.

Borum also examines how underrepresented groups made recent strides in the entertainment world. One chapter looks at Indigenous showrunners who crafted shows like *Rutherford Falls* and *Reservation Dogs* to speak to their experiences with funny and memorable moments. Another chapter discusses Southern comedians using what they know of their home region to put progressive ideas into routines that can win over (or at least earn laughter from) otherwise skeptical listeners. Borum muses on what these trends mean for comedy in the future, too.

The Revolution Will Be Hilarious focuses on comedians who chose to “agitate the status quo and reimagine social realities to inspire social change and come closer to the promise of equity and justice in America.”

JEFF FLEISCHER (January / February 2023)

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