



Seriously Funny: Mexican Political Jokes as Social Resistance

By Samuel Schmidt

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Political jokes exist around the world and across many types of political systems. But what purposes do they serve? Do they have an impact on politics—or on politicians? Surprisingly, scholars have paid scant attention to these significant questions. And, until the publication of this book, no one had ever systematically studied political humor in Mexico. When the first edition of this work was published in Mexico, it caused a stir. Elected officials, it turned out, had grudgingly accepted that they and their politics could be the target of jokes uttered in public, and even on television, but they were incensed that a leading academic had collected political jokes into a book and analyzed their function in a country that had experienced nearly a century of one-party rule.

Now available in English for the first time, *Seriously Funny* is a groundbreaking work. Its goal is to examine the ways in which political humor—including nicknames, anagrams, poems, and parodies of religious prayers, in addition to jokes—has developed and operated in one country over more than four centuries. Although political humor thrives in Mexico, it is often cleverly encoded so that it doesn't appear to be critical of government policies or officials. But, writes Samuel Schmidt, that is precisely its purpose: to question the actions and assumptions of the party in power. Schmidt argues persuasively that political jokes are acts of minor rebellion: their objective is not to overthrow a government but to correct its mistakes.

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Editorial Review

Review

“In my opinion, Mexicans have the best, most biting, and most bitter humor in the world. Schmidt is Mexico’s leading authority on humor.”—William H. Beezley, author of *Mexican National Identity: Memory, Innuendo, and Popular Culture*

“Political humor offers a different view on politics, one that is not usually written in history books. Schmidt’s book is a very important contribution to a field of study that deserves much wider coverage.”—Pablo Vila, author of *Border Identifications: Narrative of Religion, Gender, and Class on the US–Mexico Border*

“The fact that Mexicans have a unique genius to find humor in worst case events and scenarios is omitted in books by foreigners because they cannot imagine repeating jokes and odd situations that so often abandon 'good taste.' Hence this book (long delayed as being 'politically incorrect' for publication in English) is important to help foreigners finally understand that all factors need to be analyzed frankly if world social science research on Mexico is to advance. Congratulations to Dr. Schmidt for his professorial courage in addressing the 'unmentionable' incisive sense of humor that 'defeats' group think, propaganda, and systemic impunity in Mexico.”—James W. Wilkie, professor of history, University of California, Los Angeles

“In this book on political jokes, Schmidt provides a different perspective on politics and even on history, without inhibitions, mixing celebrities and institutions, structures and events.”—Antonio Hermosa, University of Seville in Spain

"This book, besides analyzing seriously the subject of humor and politics, and documenting it thoroughly in the case of Mexico but with many examples of other political frameworks is also a thesaurus of political jokes that makes the reader laugh all along the reading. The author, Professor Samuel Schmidt has to be commended for the extraordinary work he has carried out, that clearly reflects along the chapters of this book."—Mario Sznajder, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

About the Author

Samuel Schmidt is a professor at the Benemerita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla. He is the author of twenty-two books, including *The Deterioration of the Mexican Presidency: The Years of Luis Echeverría*.

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