

Black Laughter Matters:

Comedy in the Age of Obama and Beyond Professor Bambi Haggins

Thursday, April 13 | 4:00 PM | Humanities Hall 303 | UC Irvine

Black comedy is always already a reflection and refraction of the changing Black American condition. Like identity itself, Black humor is simultaneously fluid and evolving, resilient and deeply rooted in a history that is still being written. As an excerpt of a larger work, I engage the acts of comics, who embrace varying degrees of socio-cultural specificity and/or racial critique, in relation to the politics of respectability, or as I like to say, “acting right,” in the 21st century and its intersection with the presidency of Barack Obama. In addition, there are ruminations on the clearly refutation of a Post Racial America in the waning months of the 44th president’s administration. If, as Martin Luther King Jr. stated, “Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted,” then Black comedy plays a vital strategic role in getting people to “stay woke” and vigilant in terms of confronting issues of anti-Black racism. Thus, Black laughter matters, in the seminar room, in the comedy club, and on the streets.



*Bambi Haggins is Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies in the Department of English at Arizona State University. Haggins received the Katherine Singer Kovács Book Award for her first book, *Laughing Mad: The Black Comic Persona in Post Soul America*. Haggins was a writer for Showtime's *Why We Laugh: Funny Women* and historical consultant/onscreen talent for HBO's *Whoopi Goldberg Presents Moms Mabley*.*