

Obama Blackface Skit on Kremlin-Funded TV Sparks Outrage

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The former U.S. president is depicted by an actress in blackface wearing a red bandana, gold chains and an oversized T-shirt. **Screenshot NTV**

A Russian late-night television sketch featuring a racist impersonation of former U.S. President Barack Obama by an actress in blackface has sparked controversy after airing on a Kremlin-funded network over the weekend.

After lampooning Obama's recently published memoir during his Saturday evening political satire show *Mezhdunarodnaya Pilorama* ("International Saw-Panorama"), host Tigran Keosayan segues to an interview with the fake former president.

Embed:

Не могу пройти мимо очередного шедевра Боброедов. Автор и сценарист программы - Маргарита Симоньян. Вместе с мужем ведущим они

получают за каждый выпуск в районе 5 млн рублей. И, напоминая, свою дочь Кеосаян отправил учиться в Нью-Йорк pic.twitter.com/dd9nTFAr5j

— Alexey Navalny (@navalny) [November 29, 2020](#)

“We now go live to the dark side of America’s history, Barack Obama,” Keosayan jokes as the actress in blackface wearing a red bandana, gold chains and an oversized T-shirt appears on the other side of the split screen.

With the exaggerated gesticulations of a rapper, the fake Obama chants “Black Lives Matter” — a slogan used to protest police brutality against African-Americans — before Keosayan shuts him down with assertions that “there’s no racism in Russia.”

The split-screen interview on the NTV broadcasting network then descends into straw-man insinuations that Obama’s family was illiterate, that the ex-president is driven by greed and that he should pursue a rap career.

“Do you consider this book your achievement?” asks Keosayan, the husband and [writing partner](#) of the Kremlin-funded RT broadcaster’s editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan.

The actress wearing blackface agrees enthusiastically, saying “none of my relatives that came before me could write.” Asked to name the most important part of his memoirs, the Obama impersonator shouts “royalties.”

“You should have been a rap musician,” Keosayan tells the fake Obama after the actress performs a Donald Trump-themed rhyme when asked to cite a passage from his memoirs.

Kremlin critic and anti-corruption campaigner Alexei Navalny [lashed out](#) at the skit, writing on Twitter that the husband-and-wife pair earn an estimated \$65,600 per episode and that they sent their daughter to study in New York.

Russian Twitter users have also criticized the clip, calling it “[garbage](#),” criticizing the use of blackface on a state-run channel and pointing to the real-life Obama’s eloquence.

Obama and Russian President Vladimir Putin were often at odds during the U.S. president’s eight years in office despite his attempts at a “reset” in relations with Russia. Tensions came to a head in 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine, as well as in 2016, when the U.S. accused Moscow of interfering in its presidential election.

The Kremlin in recent weeks has pointed to the Obama administration as the “[harbinger](#)” of deteriorating U.S.-Russian ties.

Obama’s vice president, Joe Biden, has been declared the winner of the 2020 presidential race while the incumbent President Donald Trump has yet to concede. Putin is among the shrinking number of world leaders who have yet to congratulate the president-elect in what the Kremlin has waved off as a diplomatic courtesy ahead of official results.

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