

EDITORIAL

# CARTOONIST OF THE YEAR

MIKE LUCKOVICH



Mike Luckovich's family moved around a lot when he was a kid, and at each new school, he'd draw a caricature of the teacher. "I'd pass it around and have 30 new friends," he recalls. And so was launched a career that has won Luckovich, 48, virtually every professional accolade, including two Pulitzers. This is the second time he has been named Editorial Cartoonist of the Year in *The Week's* Opinion Awards.

Luckovich, who has been based at *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* since 1989 and is syndicated nationally to about 150 newspapers through Creators Syndicate, has big ambitions for his cartoons. He not only wants to make people laugh, or at least smile, but also to make them think. And he approaches his task with no small amount of zeal. He once said he

feels a responsibility to go to bat for "the people who don't have voices—the poor, the disadvantaged."

Luckovich follows the aphorism that journalism should "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." But his work is quite different from that of opinion writers. "I'm using a whole different area of my brain," he says. "An opinion columnist has to have a lot of facts. I go in with a lot of facts in my brain, but boil it down to its essence. A line or two and a picture can say as much as an entire editorial."

And be a lot more fun, too. What's most striking about Luckovich's cartoons is how, in what feels like a single beat, the punch is landed as your funny bone is tickled. The Treasury secretary is depicted asking President Bush, "Can I get paid in euros?" Bush is shown with his head in the ground as an aide says, "He rejects a pullout."

One Opinion Awards judge said that Luckovich brings a "magical joy" to his craft. Cynthia Tucker, his editor at the *Journal-Constitution*, put it this way: "His responses to the important social issues of our day range from wickedly funny to deeply poignant to decidedly irreverent. But they are always right on the money."

