

Why I won't miss the *Colbert Report*

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

April 10, 2014

[It's official](#): Stephen Colbert will take over David Letterman's show, and the *Colbert Report* will end. I, for one, won't mourn the *Report*.

I love Colbert. But his O'Reilly/Hannity character always seemed like one really good sketch, not a longterm destination for a person of [such diverse talents](#). (Have you seen his old clips from *Whose Line?* He was better than the show's tropes deserved—note how [his Shakespearan dating-show contestant disregards the setup's mild homophobia](#), and how [his is the only freestyle rap with a modicum of flow](#). The skiing dance move is amazing, too.)

Early on, when guests didn't get the joke, the *Colbert Report's* interviews were a sight to behold—like the *Daily Show* segments they grew out of but way funnier for Colbert's uncanny timing and poise. Also because he was never satisfied to get laughs *just* at the poor guest's expense. His instincts always take him through this territory but past it, to more sublimely silly places. I can't find the clip but one of my favorites is when an abstinence-only advocate emphasizes that there are other ways to have fun besides having sex. Colbert deadpans something like, "Exactly right. You and I are not having sex *right now*. And I'm having the time of my life."

Lately, it seems like Colbert's best moments are always when he breaks character, whether partly or entirely. So I'm excited to see him retire "Stephen Colbert" and just be Stephen Colbert again. I've always found the latter guy at least as funny.

Some see this as a daring move for CBS. I guess, since the *Report* character is politically polarizing. But Colbert's a smart, gifted, extremely charismatic *white guy*, so let's not pat the network on the back *too* much. Late night's getting quite the generational shakeup, and good riddance—[Letterman's staggering influence aside](#), his funniest days are long behind him, and Leno hasn't been funny since before he started doing late night. Seems like an opportunity to [finally put someone like Tina Fey behind the desk](#). Now, with all these funny guys under 50, it might be a while.

Still, I look forward to seeing what Colbert does on network late night. He's really got the complete package of skills to elevate this sort of programming—skills that have taken a backseat to a single silly character for almost nine years.