

Beat: Vips

Obama praises Harold Ramis as `one of America's greatest satirists`

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USPA News - U.S. President Barack Obama on Tuesday expressed his sadness over the death of actor, writer and director Harold Ramis, describing the `Ghostbusters` star who died in Chicago on Monday as one of America's greatest satirists and a comedic genius. "[First Lady] Michelle and I were saddened to hear of the passing of Harold Ramis, one of America's greatest satirists, and like so many other comedic geniuses, a proud product of Chicago's Second City," Obama said in a statement released by the White House on Tuesday, a day after Ramis died at his Chicago-area home as a result of complications from a long illness.

"When we watched his movies - from `Animal House` and `Caddyshack` to `Ghostbusters` and `Groundhog Day` - we didn't just laugh until it hurt. We questioned authority," the president added. "We identified with the outsider. We rooted for the underdog. And through it all, we never lost our faith in happy endings." Obama also extended his condolences to those who knew and loved Ramis. "Our thoughts and prayers are with Harold's wife, Erica, his children and grandchildren, and all those who loved him, who quote his work with abandon, and who hope that he received total consciousness," the president said. Born in Chicago, Ramis got his start in comedy in 1969 at Chicago's Second City improvisational theatre troupe while still employed as Associate Editor at Playboy Magazine. His breakthrough came in 1978 when he co-wrote the blockbuster comedy "National Lampoon's Animal House." Ramis went on to co-write the 1981 movie "Stripes," the 1984 movie "Ghostbusters," and the 1989 sequel "Ghostbusters II," movies in which he also co-starred. He will also be remembered for the popular 1993 movie "Groundhog Day," which he co-wrote, produced and directed. The 1993 movie, which starred actor Bill Murray as local weatherman Phil Connors, made Groundhog Day an internationally known annual event. In the movie, Connors finds himself stuck in a personal time loop that repeats February 2 over and over while he is on a hated assignment to cover Groundhog Day. In December 2006, the Library of U.S. Congress added "Groundhog Day" to its film preservation list that was established to ensure "culturally, historically or aesthetically" significant movies are preserved forever. There are currently 625 movies on the list. Ramis' work throughout the years earned him an American Comedy award, a British Comedy award, and a BAFTA award for screenwriting, among other awards. The actor is survived by his wife Erica, two sons, Julian and Daniel, daughter Violet, and two grandchildren.

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