

Standup comics band together to combat ethnic stereotypes



BY MIKE TSCHAPPAT
DAILY RECORD

Did you hear the one about the black guy, the Jew, the Mexican, the Arab woman and the white guy who go into the Darress Theatre in Boonton?

They tell jokes aimed at celebrating diversity and dispelling some of the myths about ethnic groups. And they field questions about ethnicity from the audience.

The punch line? Oh, there will be lots of those tonight when the United Nations Comedy Tour presents its first show at the Darress.

Delivering the jokes will be the show's creator, Amaru (the black man), Chad Daniels (the white guy), Helen Maalik (the Arab woman), Reuben Reuben (the Mexican) and Davin (the Jew).

"It came about through the whole (Barack) Obama change theory," Amaru said. "Standing hand to hand supporting Obama, I tried to think to myself how we could keep this happening."

His idea was to bring together comics of different nationalities, religions and ethnic backgrounds. Humor would be the glue that bound everyone, comics and audience, together.

He quickly found an enthusiastic supporter in comedy colleague Davin. Then he put out feelers to round out his troupe of ethnic jokesters.

Based on the comic snippets to be found on the Web, tonight's audience at the Darress Theatre should be in good hands.

Amaru doing standup: "I like Mexicans, Hispanics. I think they should be on the football team too. If they can cross the border, man, they can score touchdowns."

Amaru's first recruit, Davin, lives in Warwick, N.Y. But he comes down into Morris County to teach comedy at the Darress Theatre. He sees the United Nations Comedy Tour having a large impact.

"We're going to go all over the country," he said, "take it to theaters, colleges. I think we can really make a difference."

He's hoping tonight's audience will be as diverse as its entertainers.

"I want to see Asians, Mexicans, blacks, Jews in



Amaru



Helen Maalik



Davin

there," he said. "What the goal is is to bring these people together and they're all laughing and hav-

ing a good time together."

Davin doing standup: "I wish cops would be more honest when they pull me over. Don't call it a moving violation. Call it what it is — fundraising. They always ask, 'Do you know why I pulled you over?' 'Yeah, because I didn't see you.'"

It was through Davin that Syrian-born Maalik heard about the United Nations Comedy Tour. She e-mailed Amaru, who checked out her act, and she was added to the ensemble.

"We want to break down the stereotypes," she said. "People can come out and hear about the different ethnicities."

Maalik, who became a comic seven years ago with the goal of being a comedy writer, came to

Brooklyn from Syria when she was 7 years old.

"You can't mess with me," she said. "I'm from Brooklyn and I'm an Arab."

Maalik doing standup: "Have any of you ever been on a date and your cell phone goes off and it's your husband telling you to come home? And they ask you the stupidest questions: 'Where are you? What are you doing?' 'I am out getting a free meal and a compliment. And now thanks to you I'm not going to get any sex tonight.'"

Amaru is confident he's bringing a winning lineup into the Darress Theatre.

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Darress Theatre
615 Main St., Boonton
Tickets are \$18 in advance;
\$20 at the door
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"The people who are performing in this show — they're going to bring the house down," he said.

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