

Vocal Minority

PEOPLE-OF-COLOR COMEDY SHOW COMES TO EUGENE

By Will Kennedy

When it comes to race, the Pacific Northwest talks out of both sides of its mouth, says Jason Lamb, co-host and producer of Minority Retort, a Portland-based, all-people-of-color stand-up comedy show.

Fancying itself progressive, our region often denies the racist historical foundation on which it was built, Lamb says, calling the climate in the Northwest for people of color “well-meaning, polite racism. Racism with a please and thank you.”

It was space for just this kind of perspective Minority Retort hoped to create. Portland is known as the whitest major city in America, Lamb says. “That’s part of the



(TOP) IRENE TU, (BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT) JULIA RAMOS, D. MARTIN AUSTIN, JAMES BOSQUEZ AND RANDY MENDEZ

reason why the show was started. That was reflected in the comedy scene — lineups of mostly straight white dudes on your typical comedy show. When we first were developing the show, we thought it would be an

opportunity to fly in the face of that.”

A lot of talented comedians in Portland also happen to be people of color. Minority Retort is a place for them to say whatever they want, to give their life experience in the manner they feel comfortable doing so, Lamb says — “as opposed to what they would normally do if they were on a lineup with people who aren’t people of color.”

Since 2015, Minority Retort has presented some of the Northwest’s most talented comedians, who are also people of color, as well as performers from Los Angeles and New York City. Recently, Minority Retort has traveled outside the Portland market — to Seattle, Salem and Eugene.

This time in Eugene, Minority Retort presents San Francisco-based stand-up comedian, actor and writer Irene Tu, as well as performers from Portland, and Eugene-based comic Randy Mendez.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* calls Tu an “artist on the brink of fame.” Tu has opened for such well-known comics as Patton Oswalt, W. Kamau Bell, Hari Kondabolu and Aparna Nancherla.

In Portland and Seattle, Minority Retort audiences are often also mostly people of color. But Lamb also sees value in mixed audiences.

“One of the goals for the show was to provide the platform for the comedians,” he says.

“But to use as vehicle to bring people together, share experiences they wouldn’t normally share.” ■

Minority Retort Presents Irene Tu 8 pm Friday, June 28, at Old Nick’s Pub; \$10 door, \$12 advance.

classifieds

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