

Comics for Conversation—Because It's Not Always a Laughing Matter—Set to Launch On December 16th in New York

The First Initiative of Don't Hate Debate: A Joint Venture Between The Heart Monitors and Stand Up NY

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Conversation, a grassroots activation

and live event blending comedy and civil discourse, will make its debut in New York City as the first initiative of Don't Hate Debate, the brainchild of Jon Bond and Robin Lemberg, a joint venture between [The Heart Monitors](#) and Stand Up NY. Seed funded by civically minded nonprofits, foundations, and individuals, the event is designed to model respectful, empathetic engagement and become a platform for respectful dialogue on the most difficult issues in an increasingly polarized world.



Strategic Vision: Dialogue, Not Discord

At the heart of Comics for Conversation is a commitment to dialogue over discord, creating a platform for bringing opposing views together and engaging the “moderate middle” who feel disillusioned by the extreme rhetoric dominating public spaces. By leveraging humor and non-controversial comedy sets as a tool to break down barriers, this initiative aims to address some of today's most divisive topics in a way that is both impactful and entertaining.

The event will feature acclaimed comedians, including voices from pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian perspectives, performing stand-up sets followed by a moderated discussion by a neutral influencer. This format exemplifies the broader mission of the Don't Hate Debate movement: to spark civil discourse through culturally relevant, grassroots activations that resonate with younger generations and diverse communities.

Why the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict as the First Subject Matter?

Studies have found that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict serves as a microcosm of many of society's most pressing issues, including:

- Free Speech: The ability to discuss and debate contentious topics without fear of retribution.
- Self-Determination: The ongoing struggle for national identity and sovereignty.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI): The conflict raises critical questions about representation, justice, and fairness.

Moreover, the Free Palestine movement has ignited Gen Z, with 70% of young people agreeing that it is as important as, if not more important than, the civil rights movement of the 1960s. By choosing this topic, Comics for Conversation aims to engage this generation in a way that is relevant, timely, and deeply resonant. Civility is needed now more than ever.

Robin Lemberg, co-founder of The Heart Monitors shared the insight that inspired this initiative: “Civility is needed more than ever—not rocket science. But no one knows how to communicate anymore. No one models it—professors, politicians. People feel their personal values are under attack and live in social media echo chambers which only validate and fuel extreme feelings. Don’t Hate Debate is grassroots media platform or activation that brings two opposing sides of influencers to weigh in on the issues that matter most but we can no longer discuss without an agenda.”

Jon Bond, co-founder of The Heart Monitors, added, “Small activations can create big change when they tap into a gestalt of the moment. When we design programs with virality in mind, they have the potential to grow into movements. This is how real shifts in culture happen.”

Dani Zoldan, founder of Stand Up NY, emphasized the role of comedians: “Comedy gives us a glimpse into the things that unite us—our humanity and our shared ability to laugh. It’s a powerful way to break barriers and bring people together. Comics for Conversation is about modeling how to speak and engage respectfully with empathy and understanding—not aggression, violence, or hate. These are non-controversial comedy sets designed to foster connection and dialogue.”

Guided by the Contract of Civility

At the heart of Comics for Conversation is the Contract of Civility, a guiding framework for every interaction:

1. Listen with Respect: Engage with the intent to understand, not to argue.
2. Speak with Empathy: Use humor as a bridge, not a weapon.
3. Build a Better Dialogue: Embrace discomfort as a step toward understanding.

This contract reflects a commitment to fostering a community built on empathy and understanding—proving that civil discourse is not only possible but essential.

A Movement in the Making

Comics for Conversation is just the beginning. Plans are already underway to bring this initiative

to cities like Los Angeles, Austin, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. By expanding nationally, Don't Hate Debate aims to build a legacy of understanding and empathy, one conversation at a time.

Please consider joining us at our event.

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