

## "I WAS A LITTLE NERVOUS ABOUT PERFORMING IN KENYA"



KATHRYN LIPTROTT (VICE TV) & COMEDIAN CURTIS COOK PHOTO CREDIT THE ASIAN WEEKLY

**C**urtis Cook is a comedian from Cleveland, Ohio now living in Portland, Oregon. He has performed in venues and festivals throughout the United States. He had his first performance outside the US during The Village Market's Halloween Party this year. The Village Beat's editorial coordinator Ann Gitari, interviewed Curtis about his style of stand-up comedy, the place of African comedy on the world's stage and why he chose comedy as a career.

**Q.** *Would you describe your comedy as morbidly dark or from being from a dark place, hence the invitation to perform at a Halloween Party?*

**Curtis.** I don't think of my comedy as particularly dark, but I'm often told that it is. If that's the case, I can see how that type of comedy might work for a Halloween Show.

**Q.** *Some of your best jokes revolve around race, sexuality and a tad bit on feminism, why is this the case?*

**Curtis.** Haha! "A tad bit on feminism" is a solid way to phrase it. I guess I rarely hear those topics being casually discussed in public even though they're issues that affect everyone's life in one way.

**Q.** *Was this your first time performing in Kenya? Which other African countries have you performed in and what was the response like?*

**Curtis.** This was my first time performing comedy anywhere outside of the United States. It was an exhilarating experience I'm thankful to have (performed) in Nairobi.

**Q.** *Were you nervous about performing in front of a Kenyan audience?*

**Curtis.** I was a little nervous to perform in Kenya. I was worried that, as a North American performing in Kenya, the cultural differences would be a difficult hurdle to jump. But it worked out okay, and some of

the jokes I wrote specifically to tell in Kenya are jokes I still tell back in the US.

**Q.** *How would you describe the comedy scene in Africa and Kenya by extension?*

**Curtis.** With Trevor Noah taking over as host for The Daily Show, it seems that African comedy is beginning to have more of an influence on the United States. In Kenya specifically, I think stand-ups like Churchill and Eric Omondi, as well as comedy television programs like The Real Househelps of Kawangware, are examples of how strong the Kenyan comedy scene is right now.

**Q.** *Who are your favorite comedians overall and in Africa?*

**Curtis.** There are a lot of great comics in the States doing amazing things, and it's hard to pick a favorite. In Africa, Kenya's Eric Omondi is a funny guy doing some big things. As a North American, I wasn't familiar with the many different Kenyan tribes and cultures, but hearing his jokes was a fun way to learn more about them. I also had the chance to meet a comedian named Vamboj (Earnest Brewah) in Sierra Leone a few months ago before the country was declared Ebola free. The way he was able to take the misery and hardship of what his country was facing and translate it into comedy was incredible.

**Q.** *Why did you choose to be a comedian?*

**Curtis.** I've wanted to be a comedian since I was a kid. Something about making people laugh has always been appealing.

**Q.** *What would you advise anyone aspiring to get into comedy as a career?*

**Curtis.** Do as much as you can. Write as much as you can, perform as much as you can, and try as many different things in comedy as possible. The more you do, the more you'll improve and the more comfortable you'll be with yourself on stage.