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Haitian Relief Benefit Set for Jan. 25

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San Francisco comedians will again take the Deco Lounge stage for Haiti earthquake relief on Jan. 25, following the success of the Jan. 18-Haiti fundraiser, raising \$1,500. These two Monday comedy nights, known as "Funny Mondays at Deco Lounge," will benefit the Rainbow World Fund's-(RWF) earthquake relief efforts in Haiti. Some of San Francisco's funniest veteran comedians will be featured on the stellar line-ups.

ony Koester, a local up and coming comedian, who produces and hosts the weekly standup comedy show, "Funny Mondays at Deco Lounge" in San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood, told Bay Times he felt helpless when he heard the news of the devastating earthquake that hit Haiti. As news of the massive destruction and rising death tolls began to come in, he felt compelled to do something and called The Rainbow World Fund, an international relief agency based in the LGBT community. After Koester's conversations with both RWF and a couple of his fellow comedians, the plan was clear: "We need to put on a benefit comedy show for the victims of the quake," he said, "and within a few hours, I had the support and encouragement of my peers." He added, "My two passions in life are making people laugh and raising money for those in need." RWF works in the LGBT community educating people about world need. Along with raising the community's consciousness, RWF raises funds to support humanitarian relief projects. RWF works with partners around the world on various relief and sustainable development projects.-Their disaster relief partner, CARE, is already on the ground in Haiti providing emergency food, safe water, plastic for shelter, blankets, and basic medicines. One hundred percent of every donation goes directly to these life saving services.



Tony Koester is the man behind the Jan. 25 Haiti benefit

Rainbow World Fund contacted Bay Times that as of Jan. 18, RWF has raised nearly \$75,000 for Haiti. "Since 2004, Rainbow World Fund has supported ongoing projects in Haiti. We have helped improve the lives of thousands of Haitians, and we will continue to stand by them as they rebuild their lives and their future," said RWF Director Jeff Cotter. "Your continued generosity is a clear demonstration of the compassion of the LGBT and friends community toward those in need."

Among other comics, the lineup for the Jan. 25 show features Conrad Roth, Sam Wilke, Ronn Vigh, Veronica Porras, Chris Burns, and Mary Van Note - all hosted by comedian Tony Koester.

Ronn Vigh has been headlining and performing standup comedy around the Bay and nation for 10 years, featured in NBC's Last Comic Standing II and IV, and headlining events such as Palm Springs Pride, Michigan Gay & Lesbian Comedy Fest, and Lake Tahoe Gay WinterFest. He can be seen at his weekly show, which he founded in 2005, "Harveys Funny Tuesdays" at Harveys in the Castro. "For me,

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Yoga and standup comedy are very powerful, rewarding tools; therefore, an event such as 'Stand Up for Haiti' is particularly close to my heart because I can combine the two things which I have extreme passion for and hopefully make a difference, giving what I can of my time and efforts to bring others together to raise supplies and money for the victims of Haiti."

Veronica Porras started doing standup in October 2006 with the San Francisco Comedy College and has appeared with Dave Chappelle, Will Durst, and Lisa Landry. Her stand up ranges from family to work to her unique view on dating and relationships. "I didn't think twice when Tony asked me to do the show. I wanted to help in some way and laughter is a powerful weapon in coping with grief and loss, and helps in the healing," said Porras. "As tragic as this event was, great miracles are happening and more can happen when we do our part."

Conrad Roth was winning comedy competitions throughout the Philadelphia area with a cutting-edge observational style. He has appeared on Philadelphia local TV three times on "Comcast Comedy on Demand." He was also a performer at the 2009 Boston Comedy Festival and made his network television debut as a feature act on "Bill Bellamy's Who's Got Jokes."

Chris Burns is "young, gifted and fat (with a really pretty face)," she said. Her comedy has been described by her therapist as "...wonderfully narcissistic ...pure medicated fun ..." Burns' edgy and (p)fat stand up performances have been seen at the Punchline, Cobbs, The Purple Onion, San Francisco Comedy College, and Rooster T. Feathers. "I've been impressed with response to the Haiti disaster that has come from the comedy community, considering that the comedy community is almost entirely made up of some very self-absorbed and self-referential assholes, whose only redeeming quality is that they are hilarious," she told Bay Times. "To do this benefit is an automatic yes, because the money is going to an organization that already has boots on the ground in Haiti." She continued, "I think that earthquake in Haiti strikes a particular chord with us in the Bay Area, since our cities are built on an extensive fault system, and it's hard not to identify with their experience - especially since we are awaiting the 'big one' anytime now."

Justin Simpson has been at Deco Lounge almost every single Funny Mondays since August. He has also appeared at the Rooster T. Feathers Comedy Club in Sunnyvale. His act is a combination of original to noticeable voice impersonations, observations on current events, fashion trends, and his throng of international friends. "There are people out there in Haiti right at this moment who are wondering if they're going to live to see tomorrow at a bigger level than I wonder, and if I can help out by doing what I love to do, I am more than happy to do so!" He told Bay Times, "The second reason is, it's my way of giving Pat Robertson a great big middle finger raised to the sky after he said what he said about Haiti making a pact with the devil and that the earthquake was a blessing!"

Shows are at 8 p.m. at Deco Lounge, 510 Larkin St at Turk (full service bar, 21+); tix are-\$0 - \$20 donation.

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