

Finding Your Safe Zone

When you're a comedian, sometimes your jokes can cause some controversy. Heck, when you're a BIPOC or LGBT comic, sometimes your mere existence can be controversial. Causing you to have a smaller audience, fewer bookings, and more complaints than you might have hoped. But that doesn't stop Black and Brown comics from traveling and spreading laughs. Still, it's important to stay safe during your comedic escapades. Protecting yourself while on the road (or sky) comes in many forms. Knowing the places you can go or where you should avoid can be easier said than done, but comics have found their own methods over the years.

Assessing the Risks

Unfortunately, the life of a BIPOC or LGBTQ person is always going to come with some struggles. The outspoken life of a comic can also put some unwanted spotlight on you, leading to some conflicts with others and some doors unfortunately closed. Sometimes a space with a comic that gets offensive past jokes or a crowd that stops laughing when you bring topics relating to ethnicity or sexuality might not be the best place to stay in. Research before you visit a club or country. It might just save your life.

Going International

It's great to expand your horizons by traveling the world. Finding more opportunities and audiences outside of an American audience. Sharing your personal lives to other people that have no idea that your experiences even existed. Getting recognized on the international stage can be a dream come true for comics. Granted, with a wide variety of eyes on you comes with the caveat of a wide variety of different cultures, perspectives, tastes, and opinions. Different perspectives might take offense to certain jokes while others start bursting into laughter. Acknowledge that no two places are the same and keep an open mind to people's differences. You can even find some new material to use in the future.

Finding a Support Network

Even if you're traveling local, going across the country, or flying around the world, it's always reassuring to know people got your back when you're going out. A support network is how you build a community and even your career in some cases. Even if it's just knowing that people are in your corner, the support of others keeps comics sane and safe.

A support network can be an official group or network, such as Kevin Hart's Laugh Out Loud Network. The streaming network is designed as a platform that provides opportunities for young black and brown talent. One of LOL's claims is that it amplifies black and brown voices and how that is represented even with the staff.

Outside of the spaces created by the 1%, comedians can come together on their own to navigate unfriendly spaces. Take the brown comedians that converged at the 2024 Edinburgh

Festival Fringe, one of the largest performing arts festivals in the world. Despite the large scale of the venue, the Fringe still maintained a very white dominated culture. For example, the percentage of South Asian comedians was less than 1%. During the event, the small amount of South Asian comedians there developed a sense of camaraderie despite their different backgrounds. Some were older and more established, looking to perform for their audience. Others wanted to establish themselves. But despite their differences, multiple comedians have found common ground in their insights to form their own community at the Fringe.

Carving Out Your Own Space

For minority comedians, there's often a lot of times where they find themselves in spaces that might not be the most welcoming. In places where whiteness and heterosexuality are dominant, it's harder to gauge whether a club is tolerant, accepting, or outright hostile. What's the easiest way to make sure a place is safe? Make your own.

While some venues and opportunities can be an uphill battle. Minority comics have made their own spaces. One of the classics includes the Chitlin circuit. From as early as the late 1800s, Black performance spaces arose to deal with segregated theaters. Even as America desegregated, more Black performance circuits started rising.

In modern times, BIPOC spaces from artists such as Kevin Fredericks (A.K.A KevOnStage). After having to adapt to the COVID pandemic shutting down entertainment venues, Fredericks and a few other comics created the "Keep Your Distance" comedy show for a live, socially distanced audience accessible to people who watch from their houses. Due to the show playing virtually, it opened the door for Black comics to perform for audiences that wouldn't see them otherwise. Leading to him creating spaces for black audiences online. An alternative to the traditional methods in comedy sphere that may be historically white dominated.

Keep it Lighthearted

The world can be unfair and dangerous, there can be obstacles and opposition at any time. It's a comic's job to bring humor and light to the harsh realities of life. But a comic doesn't need to neglect themselves while they do their job. Keeping themselves safe and supported only makes the routine better. A space that doesn't welcome the comic is a space that the comedian can't bring their A Game to. But in the big 2026, there are more spaces for comics and that can be created by comics. Success and peace of mind can be found anywhere.