

Press Release

Esther Goodhart, Oriental Beauty, Dishes About Being A Comedienne And Jewish Convert.



From Kimchee to Stuffed Derma, Korean and Jewish Influences on Esther Paik Goodhart, Comedienne

Using Humor to Teach Tolerance and History, Lessons From An Oriental Beauty

(March 1, 2012; Demarest, NJ) “Everyone is gorgeous when they laugh,” said Esther Paik Goodhart, daughter of The Most Divine Reverend John Yewon Paik, PhD., Doctor of Divinity, and Borscht Belt Portrait Artist Joyce Paik. “Once people laugh, we can learn, we can teach. The Torah teaches us how to think and its stories illustrate how to persevere, how to chose and make right decisions. Judaism is about how we live our lives and relate to others. For me, it’s not about being ‘The Chosen’/The Favorite. It’s about making righteous choices and becoming a mensch.”

The Korean Jewish “Panda Mother” of two grown sons, Isaac and Jacob, Hebrew teacher and subject of a Smithsonian exhibit uses humor to bridge cultures and teach tolerance to audiences around the globe. “I was born with Familial Dystonia, a movement disorder that causes the muscles to contract and spasm involuntarily. I was confined to a wheelchair and spent my summers at The Fallsview Hotel in the Borscht Belt with my mother. This

exposure to Judaism, the quintessential New York City Jewish culture that saturated my life growing up in Flushing, Queens and the humor that was so prevalent and rich made an impact on me,” explained Goodhart, who was born Esther YooJung Paik. “I was in a wheelchair until I was 33, rolled down the aisle to marry a nice Jewish boy, my Alan. I am out of the wheelchair and successfully living with Dystonia because of my conversion to Judaism,” explained Goodhart. “My belief in the healing power of humor, the positive forces inherent in Judaism, and a lot of chutzpah and determination got me out of the wheelchair and into the comic spotlight.”

Fast-forward to today, and the Oriental Beauty, a beloved member of The Friar’s Club in New York City and celebrated for her wicked, zany sense of humor, believes she is the new face of Judaism. “I never complain about the bad things in my life because there is so much good in my life,” went on Goodhart. “My religion and handicap have helped me be open to others. I speak in a manner that brings people and cultures together, regardless of their background.”

“Judaism is a sacred, magical religion and my way of life,” explained Goodhart. “Winning the Funniest Female Comic competition at Caroline’s launched my career, leading to more competitions, awards, my one-woman Broadway show *Out of the Wheelchair and Into the Fire* and my hosting the PBS television program *Asian America* as well as *The Jewish Hour* on WOR 710 radio.”

“I bring cultures together with my routine, in my workshops at schools and in my meetings with political and religious leaders through humor,” continued Goodhart. “People can hear things through laughter that they otherwise wouldn’t be open to. Whether Jewish, Korean, Christian, Buddhist or anybody of color, humor is the great equalizer. Not taking ourselves too seriously is what helps us find ways of working cooperatively. Humor brings us together. It’s hard to stay angry when you are smiling and laughing.”

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For interviews, images and more information, please contact:

Heidi Raker, Raker Goldstein & Co., [201-784-1818](tel:201-784-1818), [201-681-5878](tel:201-681-5878)
heidi@rakergoldstein.com

Esther Paik Goodhart, [201-767-9443](tel:201-767-9443) orientalbeautyeg@gmail.com
www.esthergoodhart.com,

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Raker Goldstein & Co. · 180 Old Tappan RD · Suite 4, Building 3 · Old Tappan, NJ 07675