

[FAST FORWARD](#)

Dave Chappelle under fire for ‘Saturday Night Live’ monologue about antisemitism

The comedian, who addressed recent controversies surrounding Kanye West and Kyrie Irving, has come under fire in the past for antisemitic jokes

By [Andrew Silow-Carroll](#) November 13, 2022



Dave Chappelle during the opening monologue of 'Saturday Night Live.' Courtesy of YouTube

([JTA](#)) — Hosting “Saturday Night Live” for the first time since he faced widespread criticism about jokes ridiculing transgender people, comedian Dave Chappelle opened the show with a lengthy monologue about Jews — namely, the controversy surrounding [Kanye West’s recent antisemitic comments](#).

In an unusually charged appearance for an SNL host — with rumors that some of the show’s writers might boycott in protest — Chappelle appeared to address his own near cancellation by analyzing the public and corporate backlash against West.

At the start of the routine, Chappelle unfolded a small piece of paper and read from it, saying, “I denounce antisemitism in all its forms. And I stand with my

friends in the Jewish community.’ And that, Kanye, is how you buy yourself some time.”

He then went on to explain that, over his 35-year career in comedy, he has come to learn that there are “two words in the English language that you should never say together in sequence: ‘The’ and ‘Jews.’” He then mocked West’s threat to go “death con 3” on Jews and the rapper’s boast that Adidas, his erstwhile corporate partner, would not dare sever ties with him. The [sneaker company broke ties with West days later](#).

“Ironically, Adidas was founded by Nazis,” said Chappelle, “and *they* were offended. I guess the student surpassed the teacher.”



Chappelle, an African-American who has often satirized the Black community while at the same time mocking the serious and casual racism of whites, performed a similar tightrope act in dissecting West’s antisemitism.

“I’ve been to Hollywood and — no one get mad at me — I’m just telling you what I saw,” he said, adding a signature pause. “It’s a lot of Jews. Like a lot.” As the audience at NBC’s Manhattan studio laughed nervously, he quickly added, “But that doesn’t mean anything! You know what I mean? Because

there are a lot of Black people in Ferguson, Missouri, it doesn't mean we run the place.”

That joked echoed a familiar line of Jewish defense groups, who are often at pains to point out that a disproportionate Jewish presence in an industry is not an indication of a conspiracy — an age-old canard.

But Chappelle leaned harder into the joke, leading some reports on the monologue to [suggest that he was justifying and defending West's antisemitism](#).

He said the “delusion that Jews run show business” is “not a crazy thing to think,” but “it’s a crazy thing to say out loud.” He also said of West, “It’s a big deal, he had broken the show business rules. You know, the rules of perception. If they’re Black, then it’s a gang. If they’re Italian, it’s a mob. If they’re Jewish, it’s a coincidence and you should never speak about it.”

Chappelle also alluded to a similar controversy surrounding Kyrie Irving, star of the NBA’s Brooklyn Nets, [who was suspended after tweeting about a film that promotes a series of antisemitic canards](#).

“Kanye got in so much trouble that Kyrie got in trouble,” Chappelle said. “This is where I draw the line. I know the Jewish people have been through terrible things all over the world, but you can’t blame that on Black Americans.” The line was met with silence, until a single audience member was heard to hoot approval. “Thanks, the one person that said ‘woo.’”

Chappelle closed what for SNL was an unusually long opening monologue by seeming to allude to “cancel culture” and the controversy that swirled around his own comedy and charges that he is transphobic.

“It shouldn’t be this scary to talk about anything,” he concluded. “It’s making my job incredibly difficult. And to be honest with you, I’m sick of talking to a crowd like this. I love you to death and I thank you for your support. And I hope they don’t take anything away from me... whoever *they* are.”

Twitter reaction to Chappelle’s routine was mixed. The [Jerusalem Post accused the comedian of “engaging in antisemitic tropes](#).” Adam Feldman, theater critic for Time Out New York, tweeted: [“That Dave Chappelle SNL monologue probably did more to normalize anti-Semitism than anything Kanye said](#).” Screenwriter Amalia Levari tweeted, disapprovingly, [“So cool](#)

[that SNL gave Chappelle the stage to deliver a TED Talk about how antisemitic dog-whistles are good, actually.](#)”

Carly Pildis, a [contributor to the Forward](#) and the Director of Community Engagement for the ADL, posted that she thought it was “scary as hell.” Adding that she was speaking for herself and not the ADL, she added: “The saddest thing is, with millions of people watching, Dave Chapelle could have made a really powerful moment standing up against hate while making us laugh. He has the talent to make that choice. Instead he chose to make Jews, and the hatred we face, the punchline.”



Ari Ingel, who heads [Creative Community For Peace, a group that fights antisemitism and other forms of bigotry in the entertainment industry](#), appeared more forgiving. “Some people will be offended at some of his monologue, but sometimes you just need to laugh,” he tweeted.

Wrote [Rabbi Josh Yuter, an influencer on Jewish Twitter](#): “As I understood Chappelle’s monologue, the key point is that there are double standards regarding who can say what about whom. If my Twitter feed is any indication, everyone agrees this is a problem though there’s rampant disagreement over the details.”

The Kyrie Irving controversy was also mentioned in the show’s “Weekend Update” segment, when mock newscaster Michael Che said that Irving met with the Anti-Defamation League and said that “from now on he would pretend to not be antisemitic.”

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Scott Tzvi Silverstone
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It's unfortunate. There is nuance and detail left out of this discussion. If @DaveChappelle wants to have a conversation to understand how his words cause hurt, I'm open.

SAFE CUNY @SAFECUNY ·

For those who didn't see @DaveChappelle's antisemitic monologue on @nbcsnl earlier tonight, and who don't want to watch all 15 minutes, we have edited out all of the parts that many are rightly condemning as antisemitic. Here is all the hate in 2 minutes:



6:55 AM · Nov 13, 2022 from Israel



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maggie
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dave chapelle getting on national television and saying 'kanye is right, there are a lot of jews in hollywood,' is so terrifying. and not funny at all? shame on @nbcsnl for giving this man a platform for spewing this antisemitic bullshit

12:07 AM · Nov 13, 2022



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Dr. J

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Hey @DaveChappelle - when you say sh*t like you did on @nbcnl tonight, you give #Antisemitism a boost. If you give #KanyeWest a pass, and hint that Jews control #Hollywood you only give legitimacy to #evil Please f-off.

@ADL

11:59 PM · Nov 12, 2022



34



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