

‘We’re Tired of Just Letting This Happen’: Two Plus Size Models Start Mini-Online Movement After Getting Denied Entry at a Los Angeles Club



Two women are going viral on TikTok for detailing how they were denied entrance to a club in Los Angeles earlier this month.

Models Ella Halikas and Alexa Jay said they attempted to enter the Hollywood-area club The Highlight Room, which is owned by Tao Group Hospitality, but were not allowed in by a bouncer – and the videos have since sparked a mini-online movement of discussing the various prejudices in nightlife.

@ellahalikas sharing our story to be the voice of so many others that experience this. we're here to make a change.
@flexylexxy ♪ original sound – ella

‘We’re tired of just letting this happen,” Halikas said in the original TikTok video. “We [were] clearly being discriminated against. It’s very evident.”

Jay said she was with a large group and was “definitely the biggest in the group.” They were meeting up for a birthday party and were getting let in by a promoter, she said.

“Right when it gets to me at the front, the bouncer puts the rope in front, looks me up and down, and says, ‘yeah, not tonight,’” Jay said. She told NBC News it’s not the first time she’s experienced racism or fatphobia in nightlife, but that night, she had had enough.

Fellow plus-size model, Halikas, who Jay said she had run into in line, ended up going to the front of the line to figure out what was going on, and she was also looked up and down and told “not tonight” by the bouncer.

The two made a joint video on Halikas’s TikTok page, and both are active on the platform. Halikas has over 500,000 followers and Jay has over 78,000. Halikas has been a content creator for years and a signed model since 2019, she said. She has also been in Sports Illustrated. Jay is signed with DT Model Management, according to her Instagram.

“We’re are no longer letting this fly anymore,” Jay said in the original video. They also advocated for a hashtag based on the bouncer’s words, “Not tonight,” which they said in another video had been commented on dozens of times on The Highlight Room’s Instagram page (commenting is now turned off).

The club has faced a fair amount of online backlash. Besides Instagram comments, the company has negative reviews about

discrimination (posted after the video) everywhere, from its Facebook page to Google reviews, at least according to the models. Halikas said in another video that the Google reviews were deleted.

“Absolutely awful. They discriminate against weight. They should be ashamed. Would never recommend this place to anyone. Terrible customer service and people skills,” one Facebook user wrote on November 7.

People have also left negative reviews on a location of the same name, The Highlight Room in New York City, leading other people in the reviews to ask them to stop because it’s not in the same city.

But Tao Hospitality Group actually owns that club in New York, along with several other clubs including TAO and Marquee. Tao did not respond to a request for comment right away. It told NBC news it is “aware of ... Ella and Alexa’s experience and [is] actively engaged with them to discuss the incident further.”

“We are always appreciative of feedback on our operations and continue to work on how to improve our guest experience... Our company does not tolerate discrimination of any kind,” the company added.

The girls affirmed in a follow-up video that they had spoken to the club but were not satisfied with the results.

@flexylexxy #stitch with @ellahalikas #nottonight ♪ original sound – Alexa Jay

“So far we’ve been extremely disappointed in how Highlight Room is handling all of this,” Jay said. They further said women have been publicly discussing their own stories about facing discrimination in nightlife, and that they hope to use the situation to pressure Tao and others about the larger

issue.

At least one other person has made a video on TikTok discussing being evaluated by promoters and club staff.

“We want to talk to the big guys at the top that are making these rules and hiring all these bouncers because, at the end of the day, this is on you,” Halikas said in the follow-up video.

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