

July, 2005
Volume 7, Issue 7

The Alliance

Dedicated to promoting unity, justice, equal opportunity, ethnic awareness, cross-cultural understanding and appreciation for diversity.

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Coming to America: July 8 Meeting to Hear 3 Immigrants

Three local people who immigrated to the United States and have now become citizens will tell their stories in "Coming to America," the Friday, July 8, program of the Alliance for Cultural and Ethnic Harmony.

The meeting, which is open to the public, will begin at 7 p.m. at the Center for Women in Transition, 411 Butternut, Holland.

Ursula Boersma, who is from Peru; Steve Cheung, from Cambodia; and Blanca Mara, who was born in Mexico, will speak about their journeys to this country and their experiences in the Holland area. A video, "American Citizenship," will be shown.

For information, call Liz Barveld at 399-0914 or Jill Cooper at 786-0829.

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ACEH Members Talk About Race

At the ACEH June meeting, people sat together in small groups, facilitated by David Douglas, to share their experiences, feelings, and beliefs about the questions listed below. Douglas first showed part of a video, "*Race: the power of an Illusion*," that demonstrated the amazing DNA shared by all people on earth.

Think about these questions for yourself; talk about them with your family and friends. Race has been called "the elephant in the living room" in U.S. society—a huge issue that too often is ignored, overlooked, or tip-toed around but not confronted directly, openly, and honestly.

What's your earliest memory of race? How old were you? Where were you? Who was with you? What was the conversation? How did you feel? What did you learn from the experience? What's the next step in race relations? What does our nation or community need to do to dismantle racism? What do you as an individual need to do?

Editor's note: Would you like to share your thoughts on any of these questions with ACEH? Send an email to aceh@harmonyalliance.org, write to ACEH c/o Box 3007, Holland 49422-3007, or call 396-2201. Some of the questions were adapted from a New York Times series in 2002, "How Race is Lived in America."



ACEH Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Our warmest welcome is extended to new ACEH member **Cheryl Schut!**

Make your commitment to diversity, anti-racism, and cross-cultural understanding in the greater Holland community, by joining with Cheryl and the dozens of other people who belong to ACEH. It's easy, it's rewarding, and you'll meet like-minded folks who want this to be a community where all are welcomed and respected.

Individual: \$20.00 one year; \$35.00 two years
Family: \$30.00 one year; \$50.00 two years
Nonprofit: \$40.00 one year
Business: \$75.00 one year

The membership year runs from October 1 – September 30. In lieu of, or in addition to, paying dues, you may make a pledge of service to ACEH. Checks should be made out to ACEH and sent to Treasurer Bin Lim, ACEH, Box 3007, Holland, MI 49422-3007.

Human Relations Commission Needs More Board Members

Want to make a difference in the City of Holland? Three people are needed to fill vacancies on the city's Human Relations Commission. The HRC meets on the third Thursday of each month, except July and August, at 6 p.m. in City Hall. Members also serve on one of the following committees: Housing, Employment, Education, or Government/Community Relations. The terms are for three years, and a second term can be requested.

In order to be appointed, you must (1) live within the Holland city limits; (2) complete an application and ask to be appointed. The mayor reviews all applications and makes recommendations to the City Council. Applications are available in the mayor's office in City Hall, 270 River Ave., or visit the city's website at www.cityofholland.com and download an application by clicking on Job and Volunteer Opportunities. For more information, contact Human Relations director Al Serrano at 355-1328 or by email at a.serrano@cityofholland.com.

Local Study Shows Evidence of Discrimination in Rental Housing

When people calling about rental housing in Holland and Grand Haven were presumed to be white, they received better treatment than callers thought to be people of color, according to research conducted in the Holland and Grand Haven areas in March 2005. While not all relationships identified were statistically significant, in no set of cases did perceived minority callers receive preferred treatment, according to the study.

The social scientific study, developed and carried out by Hope College political science professor Joel J. Toppen and students Jacob I. Kain and Randall J. Owen, was presented to a June 14 workshop of the Lakeshore Fair Housing Center.

Dr. Toppen said an analysis of the data “reveals a pattern of differences in which presumed white callers received preferred treatment and provides statistically significant evidence that a discriminatory rental housing system is operating in the Holland and Grand Haven area.”

The two students called 78 rental housing units advertised in local papers in Grand Haven and Holland. They used a common script and always described themselves as single, nonsmoking males, recent college graduates employed in sales, and with no pets.

The only variable was the name each assumed when he called about a rental unit. Three groups of three names were used: 1) non-Hispanic white: Matt VandeKamp, Ryan DeHaan, Tim McCormick; 2) Hispanic/Latino: Miguel Garcia, Javier Martinez, Carlos Gomez; and 3) African American: Kareem Jackson, Darnell Washington, Jermaine Jones. The two researchers spoke in their usual voices, without assuming an accent other than correctly pronouncing the names; they called each unit only once, and names were randomly assigned to the listings.

According to the study, “presumed white callers were more likely to be called back when leaving a message, more likely to be told the property was available, more likely to be given specific information such as a unit description and the rental price, more likely to be invited to see the property, and the length of the calls from presumed whites was likely to be longer.”

For example, the specific rent amount was mentioned in 87 percent of the conversations between rental agents and presumed white callers, but in only 38 percent of calls when the caller was believed to be a person of color. The rental unit was described for presumed white callers in 93 percent of the conversations, but in only 58 percent of the calls for Hispanics.

The Lakeshore Fair Housing Center was established in July 2005 to ensure that everyone in Ottawa County and along the local lakeshore receives free and equal access to housing opportunities by ensuring compliance with federal, state and local fair housing laws. People who believe they have experienced discrimination when trying to rent or buy housing, secure a loan, or obtain homeowner’s insurance can contact the Center. The Center also offers training and education for the housing industry. The Center’s director is Chuck Jones, and the telephone is (616) 994-6311, which is a local call in the Holland/Grand Haven area. The office is located at the Macatawa Resource Center; email is lfhc1@charter.net.

The Alliance

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WEB ADDRESS
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*Bringing People
Together from Worlds
Apart*

Help Needed for Potluck in the Park

Summer's movin' along, and it's time to save the date for the annual Potluck in the Park!

The 7th annual ACEH event will be Sunday, August 7, at 1 p.m. at Ransom Park. The park is on Ransom north of Quincy between 152nd and 160th Sts.

But before we can have the potluck, we need some volunteers who will help set up, plan children's games and activities, be in charge of the pinata, provide music, clean up, etc. None of this will take a long time, but we'd like to have some extra hands. Please call Mike Jones at 738-6070, Bin Lim at 335-8139 or email aceh@harmonyalliance.org.



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and Ethnic Harmony

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