



The Alliance

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

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Asian Stereotypes in the Media Are Focus of March 9 ACEH Meeting

Do you have stereotypes about people of Asian descent? Where do some of those images get their start?

On Friday, March 9, Ji Hoon Park, assistant professor in communication at Hope College, will present a program on "Asian Stereotypes in the Media," including slides showing these images. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. at the Center for Women in Transition, 411 Butternut, Holland.

Dr. Park's courses at Hope include race relations in the United States, media literacy, and documentary production. His academic interest in minorities in the media is reflected in his practice of ethnographic documentary filmmaking, he says.

Born and raised in South Korea, he received his bachelor's degree from Yonsei University, Seoul; his master's from Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada, and his doctorate from the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. His doctoral dissertation addresses "whether reality TV can serve as a cultural forum that allows consideration and discussion of important issues regarding race." He has taught at Hope since the Fall of 2006.

ACEH meetings are open to all. The children's group, UNITY, for ages 4 to 14, also will meet, at the same time and place as the adults' meeting.





Alliance Welcomes New, Renewing Members

A warm welcome to new members: **Dorothy Chamness, Sara Leeland, and Bill and Judy Parr**; nonprofit member **Bayanihan Filipino-American Outreach**; and corporate members **Development Strategies, Inc. (Jay Peters, president) and Holland Hospital**.

Thank you to these renewing members: **Mary Kaechele**; the nonprofits **Girl Scouts of Michigan Trails, Holland Human Relations Commission and International Relations Commission, and Ottawa County Mental Health**; and corporate member **T2 Communications (Ned and JoLee Timmer, owners)**.

And ACEH appreciates recent contributions from an anonymous donor in Holland, and from Sara Davelaar Otieno of Virginia.

Please consider joining with these ACEH supporters as we work together for social justice and appreciation for diversity, to make West Michigan a place where all are welcomed and respected. The ACEH dues structure is as follows:

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 ACEH fiscal year runs October 1 – September 30. In lieu of, or in addition to, paying dues, you may make a pledge of service to ACEH. Checks or service pledges should be made out to ACEH and sent to Treasurer, P. O. Box 3007, Holland, MI 49422-3007. To pay by credit card, go to our website www.harmonyalliance.org, click on “Join Us” and use the secure Pay Pal system.

In Honor of the late Gary Pepe, from his mother

The Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland area forwarded to ACEH a note from Mrs. Alice Pepe of New Jersey, mother of the late Gary Pepe. In January Mrs. Pepe contributed to the memorial fund for Gary, who was ACEH president in 2003 and died suddenly in May 2005. She said, "In remembrance of my son, Gary Pepe, to honor his work so we can have peace toward all men and in the world; that was always his wish in life. He's missed greatly. There will always be a hole in my heart." ACEH sends Mrs. Pepe our continued sympathy and friendship.

Stereotypes Undermine Student Performance, Research Shows

The following is excerpted from an article on the February 2007 Teaching Tolerance website, www.tolerance.org/teach/activities, including an interview of Dr. Aronson by interim director Jennifer Smith-Holladay. Reprinted with permission; any further reprinting or reproduction must have permission from Teaching Tolerance, which is published by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

For more than 10 years, New York University associate professor Joshua Aronson and his colleagues have looked at ways stereotypes interfere with academic performance. Comparatively low performance among African Americans and Latinos, as well as girls in math and science, is often attributed to cultural differences. Aronson looks instead at the psychology of stigma--how people respond to negative stereotypes about their racial or gender group. His research consistently shows that being targeted by well-known stereotypes ("girls can't do math," "minorities don't perform well on tests,") can be threatening to students in profound ways, a predicament he and his colleagues call "stereotype threat."

Holladay: How might teachers and schools offset stereotype threat and, at least in relation to it, maximize student performance on standardized tests?

Aronson: How schools position tests is critically important...Our research has shown time and time again that, if tests are not presented as a measure of students' intelligence, students of color do better. One teacher we worked with told students the test would be used to measure how well the school was doing, rather than how well they were doing. Students performed better. If this isn't possible, schools should be clear that the tests will measure students' current knowledge, not their overall ability or potential.

Many students believe intelligence and aptitude are unchangeable—that whatever they were born with is all they're ever going to have. And when students are aware of social stereotypes, it may seem pointless to try to do your best.

A key way to offset the stereotype threat is to stress throughout the year the *expandability* of academic abilities. When teachers, parents, and others let students know their abilities can improve with hard work, the stereotype threat loses some of its potency and, research shows, students' test scores and grade will improve.

Holladay: What else can be done to offset stereotype threat during testing season?

Aronson: Never, ever ask students to complete questions about their racial, ethnic, or gender identities as part of the test. ...These seemingly benign questions are enough to introduce stereotype threat and increase anxiety. Teachers can...prompt students to reflect on their talents, beliefs, and values...which can help build a line of defense against stereotype threat. A recent study showed affirmation procedures were related to a 40 percent drop in grade disparities between students in different racial groups.

Holladay: What else should schools do throughout the year?

Aronson: Exposure to role models is important...ideally, older students of shared racial, ethnic or gender identities who overcame difficulties through hard work and ultimately mastered the content. When students serve as role models for each other, it...shows students that progress is not only possible but also normal with persistence.

Second, if I could make just one change, it would be broad-scale adoption of cooperative learning techniques. Stereotypes abound in competitive environments. When students work cooperatively to tackle challenging material, prejudice (and stereotype threat) are reduced and academic achievement among students from stigmatized groups can improve considerably.

For a list of publications, go to www.steinhardt.nyu.edu/faculty_bios/view/Joshua_Aronson. Dr. Aronson is author of "Improving Academic Achievement: Impact of Psychological Factors"

The Alliance

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*Bringing People
Together from Worlds
Apart*

Being a "Subtle" Change Agent: What Does It Take?

Not all of us can be mighty forces for change, but we can be what Grand Rapids educator Donna Poag calls "subtle change agents," taking actions in our own lives and communities to reach across boundaries that divide us. At a program arranged by the Hope College Office of Multicultural Life on February 8, 2007, Mrs. Poag offered some ideas to do this:

- Never make assumptions based on stereotypes.
- Choose friends on the basis of their individual characteristics.
- Use good judgment and common sense.
- Inconvenience yourself for someone else.
- Be kind to an "outsider."
- Review the last time you defended someone without the support of your friends. How did you feel?
- Attend a religious service different from your own.
- Read another culture's newspaper for a year.
- Speak up when someone's behavior or comments are offensive to you. Don't do this in anger.
- Admit your own prejudices. We have to do this before we can deal with them.
- Commit yourself to steps to eliminate prejudiced language and behavior in yourself.
- Think about who and what groups have power in our society and what effect that power has on individuals and other groups.

What are your thoughts? Have you have taken action to get to know people different from yourself? ACEH is interested in hearing from you--email your comments and ideas to aceh@harmonyalliance.org or mail to ACEH, Box 3007, Holland, MI 49422-3007.

The Alliance for Cultural
and Ethnic Harmony

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