

# The Alliance

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

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## Hearts in Harmony Program is ACEH Topic Friday, February 8

Rev. Angela Taylor Perry, pastor of Reconciliation Ministries at Faith Christian Reformed Church in Holland, will meet with the Alliance for Cultural and Ethnic Harmony on Friday, February 8, to talk about her program, Hearts in Harmony, the intentional development of multiracial friendships.

The meeting, which is open to the public, will begin at 7 p.m. at the Center for Women in Transition, 411 Butternut, Holland. The presentation will include group discussion and exercises and the video, "Lunch Date."

Hearts in Harmony Ministry Partners uses a one-on-one format and a topic guide, pairing two people of different ethnic backgrounds who make a commitment to mutual conversation and meetings over a year's time; it encourages honest, personal storytelling and accountability and seeks to "build transformative bridges of understanding and appreciation for cross-culture communication."

An artist, poet, and vocalist, Rev. Taylor Perry graduated from Spring Arbor College and in 2005 became the first African American woman to graduate from Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, joining the staff of Faith Christian Reformed in August 2007. She also defines herself as a "22-year survivor of multiple sclerosis." She is married and has adult children and several grandchildren.



## The Alliance Thanks Renewing Members

Many thanks to these renewing members: **Marcia Meoli, Doug Schwentor, and Dale VanLente,** and the **Ottawa County Community Mental Health Department.**

Please consider joining with Marcia, Doug, Dale, and other 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 Janie Briones, c/o ACEH, P. O. Box 3007, Holland, MI 49422-3007. If you want to pay by credit card, please go to the ACEH website [www.harmonyalliance.org](http://www.harmonyalliance.org), click on "Join Us" and use the secure Pay Pal system.

### Positions Available on ACEH Board

There are a couple of open positions on the ACEH board, which meets once a month to plan programs and activities and oversee finances and membership. What's needed: a commitment to diversity and social justice and a willingness to share ideas and make connections in the community. The term is for two years. Are you interested? Would you like to help out as ACEH moves toward its 10th anniversary next January? Contact Kim Romero at (616) 212-7159. Your participation is invited!

## Holland Chorale Invites ACEH to March 14 Event Featuring Music and the Poetry of Langston Hughes

The Holland Chorale has invited Alliance for Cultural and Ethnic Harmony members and friends to attend a special program on Friday, March 14: "Meet the Composer--Poetry and Music," featuring contemporary composer Dr. Gwyneth Walker and the poetry of Langston Hughes. The free event will take place at **6 p.m.** (note earlier time than usual ACEH meetings) at the Holland Area Arts Council, 350 East 8th St, Holland. There will be no other ACEH general meeting in March.

Langston Hughes, who was born in 1902 and died in 1967, was one of the leading writers of the Harlem Renaissance, the African American artistic movement of the 1920s, producing poems, novels, plays, essays, and children's books that "promoted equality, condemned racism and injustice, and celebrated African American culture, humor, and spirituality." One of his most famous poems was "The Negro Speaks of Rivers."

On Saturday, March 15, the Chorale will perform two sets of Hughes/Walker music, "Harlem Songs" and the world premiere of "I've Known Rivers," at Central Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Holland. More information will be in the March issue of the ACEH Newsletter.

## Mixing It Up: What Happens When You Try It

*Tolerance.org, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama,, annually sponsors "Mix It Up at Lunch" Day, when students at middle and high schools across the country change the usual tables where they sit for lunch; instead, they meet students who are "different" from themselves in ethnicity, religion, style, economics, home community, etc. The following is excerpted and printed with permission from [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org) and was written by eighth grader Raven Taylor.*

For as long as I can remember, I have had my friends by my side. The same people, day after day, year after year. I guess my friends are all the same type of people...Usually, it takes a lot for me to become comfortable with someone different; someone who, for example, has pink hair. Well, Mix It Up has changed all that. I've learned that no matter what hair color someone has, or whether he or she wears black every day, I can still find a friend in there somewhere.

Last November my teacher had us participate in Mix It Up at Lunch Day. She notified us of our assigned partners, the students who we were to sit with at lunch. I felt butterflies, I dreaded it. I hadn't spoken to this girl since second grade. What am I going to say? I thought we had nothing in common. All week I avoided her.

However, at lunch I realized this girl was very interesting and I really enjoyed her company. I thought my heart would drop when she took the initiative to speak to me first. She offered me the option of choosing where to eat.

When I look back at that day and remember all the students whining, it makes me sick. Mix It Up changed my life. Out of nearly 120 students who participated at my school, I think the majority learned a lesson. No one I knew expected it to be fun.

For years I have been attending a school that values diversity. I've come to notice that when push comes to shove, schools can put as many diverse students in a classroom, grade, or school as they want, but nothing is effective until the "diversity" becomes "unity." I'd like to think people would appreciate everyone, and accept everyone for who they are, but, in reality, I know that's not the case. I truly believe that if cliques would dissolve and students become friends with a variety of people, the world would be a better place.

Mix It Up is a very good experience that can be unique to each school that participates. It can change students' outlook on people who are different from them. Everyone should try to make a difference and mix it up. Change the people around you, literally. And give things you normally wouldn't do a shot. Variety is the key.

### **TALK IT OUT**

- Would you be comfortable making friends with someone who is very different from you in appearance or background?
- Have you ever had butterflies in your stomach in anticipation of meeting someone new? Why? What can you do to decrease the butterflies?
- Can you think of a time when you complained about an event or project but then ended up having a good time?
- What does Raven mean when she writes, "nothing is effective until the 'diversity' becomes 'unity'"?
- If you could change the people around you for a lunch period, or for the day, what else would change?

### **A QUESTION FROM ACEH**

- As an adult, what could you do to Mix It Up in your neighborhood, workplace, or elsewhere in the community?

***The Alliance***

THE ALLIANCE FOR  
CULTURAL AND ETHNIC  
HARMONY

Box 3007  
Holland, MI 49422-3007

PHONE:  
616-212-7159

E-MAIL:  
aceh@harmonyalliance.org.

WEB ADDRESS  
www.harmonyalliance.org

***Bringing People  
Together from  
Worlds Apart***

## **Websites Offer Resources About Diversity, Anti-Racism**

Parents, grandparents, teachers, caregivers—there are websites out there in cyberspace to help you in your work and personal relationships with your family or with students.

1) The Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama, has terrific resources, including videos, booklets, and a magazine, *Teaching Tolerance*, that are free for teachers and nonprofit groups. The Center also tracks hate groups throughout the United States. (334) 956-8200. [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)

2) New/Demographic, an anti-racism training company, has an internet blog for parents “committed to raising children with an anti-racist outlook.” It also publishes an online booklet, in which “real-life parents share real-life tips” about how they teach their children about race, racism, and discrimination. Check it out at [www.antiracistparent.com](http://www.antiracistparent.com)

3) A good source for games, books, videos, crafts, calendars, language and social studies, ESL/ELL, bilingual books, information on festivals, and other materials covering many countries is the catalog *Culture for Kids*, [www.cultureforkids.com](http://www.cultureforkids.com). A similar catalog, including materials on adoption, is *Asia for Kids* at [www.asiaforkids.com](http://www.asiaforkids.com). The phone number for both is (800) 765-5885.

4) The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) publishes books, videos, posters, curriculum guides, and exhibits to help young people “unlearn hate, fear, anti-Semitism, and other forms of bigotry.” Materials include lesson plans, teaching tips, and useful classroom resources. (212) 885-5822 [www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org)

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and Ethnic Harmony

Box 3007  
Holland, MI 49422-3007