

October 2008  
 Volume 10 Issue 10

Page 1 of 4

# The Alliance

*The Alliance for Cultural and Ethnic Harmony is dedicated to promoting unity, justice, equal opportunity, ethnic awareness, cross-cultural understanding and appreciation for diversity.*

*Inside this Issue:*

Membership	2
Responding to Hate	2
Unity Potluck	2
Asian Stereotypes	3
Healing Racism	4

**Board of Directors**

- Becky Arenas**
- Natalie Avila**
- Linda Blauwkamp**
- Jack Hyde**
- Bin Lim**
- Norma Luna**
- Rev. Angela Taylor Perry**
- Mary Yedinak**
- Marvin Younger**

**COMMUNITY UNITY  
 POTLUCK IS SUNDAY,  
 SEPTEMBER 21: See  
 Page 2 for information.**

## ACEH Launches Partnership with Hearts in Harmony Oct. 10

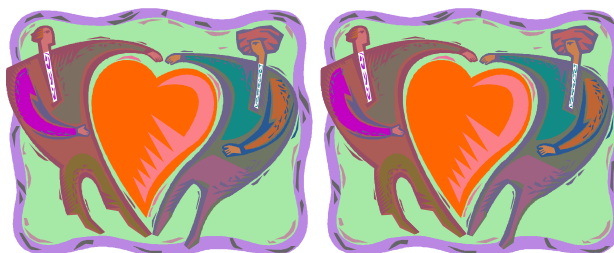
On Friday, October 10, the Alliance for Cultural and Ethnic Harmony will launch a new partnership with Hearts in Harmony, a program developed by Rev. Angela Taylor Perry, pastor of Reconciliation Ministries at Faith Christian Reformed Church, Holland, to foster intentional development of cross-cultural 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.

ACEH president Marvin Younger said, "The Alliance has worked for almost 10 years to create networks of people who are committed to justice and diversity in West Michigan. In light of a recent incident of racism in the area, and the public response, it's more important than ever to undertake this exciting program. We warmly invite people to join us in Hearts in Harmony, which offers a process to bring about honest and deeper personal friendships and understanding across cultures."

Hearts in Harmony 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." Rev. Taylor Perry, an ACEH board member, introduced her program at Alliance meetings earlier this year.

An artist, poet, and vocalist, Rev. Taylor Perry in 2005 became the first African American woman to graduate from Calvin Theological Seminary; she joined 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 grandchildren.





## ACEH Thanks New, Renewing Members

Welcome to new members **Dar Kolean, Joann Steggerda,** and **Gordon** and **Barb Stegink.**

And thanks to renewing members **Jeff** and **Elizabeth Ebihara, Sally Farabee,** and **Herb** and **Ann Weller.**

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

**An email or postal mail reminder will be sent to those whose current membership expires in October 2008. By renewing promptly, you will help ACEH maintain its programs and outreach to the community.**

### **NOT HERE. NOT NOW. NOT EVER AGAIN**

More than 2,600 people responded to a call by local groups—ACEH, LEDA, LAUP, and others--and churches to support a northside family whose driveway was defaced August 17 with a racial slur and a caricatured face; to seek justice for the person or persons who intimidated the family in this way; to work so that no other family has this experience; to celebrate diversity; and to commit themselves to be anti-racist in their personal and community lives. Ads listing the people who signed the pledge were published in the Holland Sentinel Sunday, September 7, and the Grand Haven Tribune September 6.

If you were not able to sign before the ads were published, or your name was omitted, you can list your name online at [www.ethnicdiversity.org](http://www.ethnicdiversity.org). **And see article below: Come to the Unity Potluck!**

### **Community Unity Potluck September 21**

On Sunday, September 21, from 3 pm until 6 pm, everyone is invited to a Community Unity Potluck, to show continued friendship for the Robinson family of Park Township, create a welcoming event for all people, and recommit ourselves to anti-racism in this community.

The Community Unity Potluck will be held in the bandshell area of Kollen Park, on Van Raalte Ave. at Lake Macatawa. Please bring a dish to share, your own table service, your own beverages (nonalcoholic), and lawn chairs; a food vendor, Vic's Tiki Hut, will be available also. The afternoon will feature music, drumming, dance groups, a steel band, other entertainment, and remarks by community leaders. ACEH president Marvin Younger will be master of ceremonies. For more information, call Kim Douglas at 355-6698; also working on the potluck are Lindsey Ajega, Darla Robinson, and Robin Afrik.

## Frank Wu Speaks out About Impact of Olympics Ad

*Frank H. Wu is the author of "Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White," former dean of Wayne State University Law School in Detroit, and keynote speaker at the Ottawa Area Summit on Racism in Holland in 2005. His article appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 20, 2008, commenting about an advertisement that was published in a sports newspaper in Spain at the time of the recent Olympic Games.*

With the Olympics in Beijing being watched the world over, I was astonished to see the advertisement featuring the Spanish men's basketball team: It shows all of them carefully posed and pulling their eyes backward in the slant gesture long used to denigrate all Asian peoples, including Asian Americans. Given that several of the players portrayed are stars in the United States, their response to the international outcry is troubling. They have brushed it off by arguing that they were being affectionate.

I don't doubt that Asians in Asia are affected much less by this type of mockery. After all, they are the dominant majority and take for granted that they belong to their societies. They may be bothered a bit by negative portrayals, but for them it's the relationship among nations that is at stake. My concern is about Asian Americans and Asians who have made their home, permanently and hopefully as true members of their society, throughout the world. For many Asian immigrants and their native-born children, life is a struggle to assimilate to an impossible norm always beyond reach. For them, this is personal.

Almost all Asian Americans are familiar with the mockery of the eyes pulled back, accompanied by the chant, "Chinese, Japanese, dirty knees, what are these?" It is part and parcel with slurs that lead to worse forms of discrimination and violence. For me the lingering power of the childhood cruelties of teasing and taunting are more painful than any physical trauma I can recall. The teachers who counseled back then to retort, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me," like those who complain about political correctness now, have a point. We should stand up and speak out. It would be in keeping with the great American tradition of free speech.

Yet that is what is so surprising. For when Asian Americans do show they are real Americans, ready to assert their rights, they are met with even greater backlash about being less sensitive and taking a joke, not being politically correct or playing the race card. After all, the argument goes, the people using racial images and slurs at best mean no harm and at worst are merely ignorant. It is tempting to accept these excuses. Few who regard themselves as members of the mainstream understand what it is like to be ashamed of one's parents, to be constantly striving to be just like everyone else without ever being able to fit in.

So even if we assume that the intent is wholly innocent, the perpetrators presumably would welcome being informed of the effects of their gestures. Their hostility to educational efforts belies any notion of color-blindness. Sometimes, when I encounter this type of racial assault, I'm tempted to explain I'm offended - not as an Asian American, but as someone who indeed has a sense of humor. I want to say, "If you're going to dis me, at least get some new material. I've seen this one before. You're not even any good at it."

Perhaps in the end, the casual defamation of this most recent slight can be laughed off. It is too trivial to keep us from succeeding. The trouble is what it represents, the pattern it reveals and confirms. Multiplied out again and again, without being meaningfully counteracted, the Spanish advertisement is no different than any other stereotype in its dangerous effect. It violates our shared ideals.

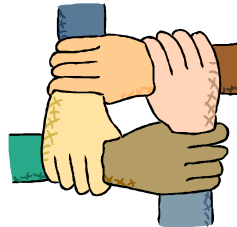


## Institute for Racial Healing To Begin Wednesday, October 1

An eight-week Lakeshore Institute for Racial Healing is set for October 1 through November 19, 2008, at the Holland Area Chamber of Commerce.

Participants will meet weekly on Wednesdays from 3 to 5 p.m., for discussion, videos, and activities facilitated by Gail Harrison of Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance (LEDA) and Bert Jara of Latin Americans United for Progress (LAUP).

Institutes bring together a diverse group of up to 20 participants to explore issues of racism and prejudice and to share their own experiences; many have called Institutes "life-changing" and "a powerful experience." Since 2000, more than 35 institutes have been held in this area. The cost is \$100; some scholarship funds are available. For information or to register, contact Patricia Strachan at the Holland Chamber, [pstrachan@hollandchamber.org](mailto:pstrachan@hollandchamber.org) or by phone at (616) 392-2389, ext. 110.



*The Alliance*

THE ALLIANCE FOR  
CULTURAL AND ETHNIC  
HARMONY

Box 3007  
Holland, MI 49422-3007

PHONE:  
616-392-5086

E-MAIL:  
[aceh@harmonyalliance.org](mailto:aceh@harmonyalliance.org).

WEB ADDRESS  
[www.harmonyalliance.org](http://www.harmonyalliance.org)

*Bringing People  
Together from Worlds  
Apart*

The Alliance for Cultural  
and Ethnic Harmony

Box 3007  
Holland, MI 49422-3007