

Rosa Parks legacy comes to West Michigan at ACEH meeting

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Holland, MI —

At its Friday, June 12, meeting, the Alliance for Cultural and Ethnic Harmony (ACEH) will hear two sisters discuss their experiences with the late civil rights activist Rosa Parks, and also talk about the five programs of the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self Development in Detroit. The Institute plans to establish four branches in West Michigan, including Holland.

The meeting, which begins at 7 p.m. at the Center for Women in Transition, 411 Butternut, Holland, is open to the public. Founded in 1987 by Mrs. Parks and Elaine Eason Steele to honor Mrs. Parks' late husband, Raymond, the Institute empowers youth to model Mrs. Parks' philosophy of "Quiet Strength." For 20 years the Institute has run Pathways to Freedom, sending young people ages 11-17 by bus to trace the Underground Railroad and perform educational and historical research. Pathways' 2009 focus, "Seeding Green Sprouts for the Next Generation," will be based in West Michigan.

Speakers are Anita Peek of Detroit, executive director and historian of the Institute, and her sister, Mrs. Steele, who knew Mrs. Parks as "a leader, a mentor, and a friend." They will be joined by Mitch Dennison of Grand Haven, new president of the Institute's board, to present the group's plans for a Rosa Parks Library and a camp in West Michigan.

There will be a brief video about the Pathways to Freedom program, and a question and answer period.

Rosa Parks (1913-2005), called "the mother of the modern civil rights movement," refused to give up her seat on a segregated Montgomery, Alabama, bus to a white man. Her action helped spark the successful Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 that lasted 381 days. Led by Martin Luther King Jr., the protest galvanized the civil rights movement in the United States.

ACEH is a grass-roots organization founded in Holland in 1999 to work for justice, equal opportunity, and cross-cultural understanding. For more information, see the website at www.harmonyalliance.org
