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## Holland pastor to deconstruct color blindness

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The Rev. Denise Kingdom Grier recalls the first black female leader she knew: the principal of her New York City elementary school. Being a child, Kingdom Grier "didn't think of her as a leader and someone to be taken seriously," she said in a phone interview with The Sentinel Thursday, Oct. 9. "But no one could tell me a black woman couldn't lead, because I grew up seeing it."

Kingdom Grier grew up to be Western Seminary's first African American woman to graduate with a masters of divinity, led a diversity team for four years at the school and was diversity consultant to the school's president for two years. She is Holland's Maple Avenue Ministries' lead pastor.

Her own two children, now Holland Public School students, may never see black educators, she said. At District Superintendent Brian Davis' invitation, she spoke with school officials about rethinking "color blindness" before September classes started.

The word "colorblind" is often used to denote a lack of bias but may do just the opposite.

"Color blindness is not really helpful," she said. "It means you only see certain colors ... while it's a well-intended gesture to say 'I don't see color,' it's important for us to really see each other."

Everyone sees the world through a set of lenses "often are placed upon us," she said.

Kingdom Grier is set to speak on "Implicit Bias: Examining the Lens of Color Blindness" at 7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 10, to Alliance for Cultural and Ethnic Harmony's public meeting, at the Center for Women in Transition, 411 Butternut Drive, in Holland. Her talk is free and open to the public.

"I try hard not to make people feel ashamed," she said, adding, "hopefully my talk will invite people to look at their own lenses in a safe place."

ACEH, a grass-roots organization founded 15 years ago to work for justice, equal opportunity, appreciation for diversity, and cross-cultural understanding is open to new members. Learn more online, [harmonyalliance.org](http://harmonyalliance.org), or call (616) 392-5086.

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