



FAIR HOUSING NEWS

Produced by the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan

FHCWM Presents Brian Copeland's *Not a Genuine Black Man*

San Francisco's Longest Running One-Man Show Coming to Grand Rapids

The FHCWM is very pleased to announce plans for its first ever evening event, featuring author and performer Brian Copeland and his one-man show entitled *Not a Genuine Black Man*. On Thursday, September 13, 2012 at 7 pm, the FHCWM will host the show as part of its 5th Annual



Brian Copeland

Members & Friends of Fair Housing event at St. Cecilia's Music Center in Grand Rapids. The FHCWM book club selected Mr. Copeland's memoir, *Not a Genuine Black*

Man: My Life as an Outsider, for reading and discussion in September of 2010; a few staff members had a chance to see the show at a HUD conference and immediately began plans to find a way to bring Mr. Copeland's incredible story to west Michigan. One of the most common requests the FHCWM receives from community members and the housing industry is for stories and testimonials about housing discrimination. Mr. Copeland bravely shares his family's experiences and how it shaped him in

his memoir and now he boldly shares it on stage, creating a truly unique opportunity for west Michigan to further understand the devastating impact of housing discrimination.

Not a Genuine Black Man reveals a little-known chapter of Bay Area, California history. In 1971, San Leandro, CA was considered one of the most racist communities in America, experienced first-hand by 8-year-old Brian Copeland and his family when they moved there in 1972 and were met by bigotry and housing discrimination. Mr. Copeland tells his story through a monologue that is both poignant and funny as he discusses how our surroundings shape who we are and who we become. His story of identity and diversity will evoke an evening of laughter, tears, & sociology. The San Francisco Chronicle described his show as, "a beautiful mix of wry humor and heartbreak, indignation and inspiration, a singular story of extreme isolation that speaks to anyone who's ever felt out of place."

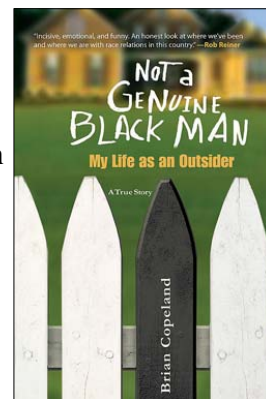
Mr. Copeland is a multitasking comedian, writer, television host, talk radio host & commentator. His incisive, cutting-edge standup comedy material won him San Francisco's prestigious Cabaret Gold Award, as well as top prize in the Monterey Laugh Off. His unique ability to humorously cut to the heart of serious

social and political problems has earned him spots as the opening act for a diverse array of entertainers such as Ray Charles, Natalie Cole, Donna Summer, Ringo Starr, Steve Allen, Dana Carvey, Kevin Pollack, Rick Springfield, Lionel Richie, Patti LaBelle, Etta James, The Righteous Brothers, The Temptations, and the Queen of Soul, Aretha Franklin.

If you are interested in learning more about Mr.

Copeland, please see the FHCWM's website for a video on his one-man show, or check out his book, *Not a Genuine Black Man: My Life as an Outsider*.

Please note that the issues presented in the performance are geared for an adult audience. Check the FHCWM website for updated information about the event. Tickets cost \$25.00 and will go on sale on-line in early August!



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FHCWM planning 26th Annual Luncheon & Workshop Series

The FHCWM is extremely pleased to announce that Ms. Carlotta Walls LaNier will be the keynote speaker for the 26th Annual Fair Housing Luncheon & Workshop Series, to be held on Thursday, April 25, 2013. Ms. LaNier is the youngest of the nine students that integrated Little Rock



Carlotta Walls Lanier

Central High School in 1957. These students lead the United States in challenging attitudes and barriers. Her journey to the school's doors

alone involved angry mobs, racist elected officials, and being escorted by the 101st Airborne. Despite having to sit out her junior year and take correspondence classes when Governor Faubus closed the schools to prevent further integration, she returned to Central in 1959, one of two of the Little Rock Nine to return. She was the first African American female to participate in a graduation ceremony at Central on May 20, 1960.

Ms. Lanier went to Michigan State University for two years and finished her degree at Colorado State College, now the University of Northern Colorado (where she sits on the Board of Trustees). She began her career working for the YMCA as a program administrator and later founded her own real estate brokerage firm, LaNier & Company. She is a recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal from President Bill Clinton and two honorary doctorate degrees, in addition to many other honors.

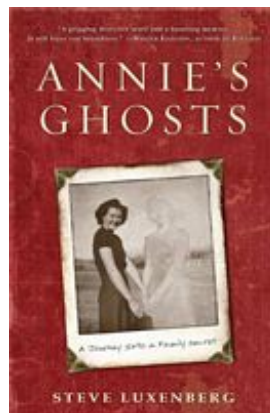
Ms. LaNier will share her experiences, many of which she has written about in her book, *A Mighty Long Way: My Journey to Justice at Little Rock High School*. Her memoir is a testament not only to the power of one person to make a difference but also to the sacrifices made by families and communities.

Spotlight: Fair Housing Book Club

Each month the FHCWM selects a book that includes themes or topics that touch on housing, discrimination, and/or diversity for staff, volunteers, and community members to read and discuss. The topics discussed vary widely and include historical events, civil rights, personal experiences and feelings, as well as how these books affect the readers professionally and personally. Participants come to understand how losing equal housing choice affects a person's entire quality of life and limits access to not only the home and neighborhood of their choice but also to education, transportation, healthcare, and job opportunities among other amenities.

These meetings have opened up opportunities for the staff to further connect and spread awareness of fair housing in west Michigan as well as nationally. In addition, the Book Club has resulted in partnerships with various authors, including Carlotta Walls

LaNier, Brian Copeland, Steve Luxenberg and Heidi Durrow. Mr. Luxenberg, author of *Annie's Ghosts: A Journey into a Family Secret* even joined FHCWM staff and Lakeshore Book Club members for a discussion of his



book. Due to the Book Club's success, the FHCWM has been contacted about its model and book selections as well as the discussion questions and quotes. These books and authors stimulate discussions that are both powerful and poignant. The first ever book read by the FHCWM Book Club was *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age*; the Book Club has read a total of 30 books to date.

See our website for the upcoming selections, times and dates! The book clubs meet at the FHCWM office in Grand Rapids and at the Disability Network Lakeshore office in Holland.

Lakeshore Friends of Fair Housing Breakfast: Save the Date!

The 6th Annual Lakeshore Friends of Fair Housing: Opening Doors to Housing Choice breakfast will take place at 8:30 am on **Tuesday, October 16, 2012** at the Midtown Center in Holland. This year's event will feature **Jim McCarthy** (President/CEO of the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center in Ohio; Chair of the National Fair Housing Alliance), who will provide an overview of fair housing, accessibility and current cases. Please contact the FHCWM if you are interested in sponsoring and/or attending this significant event!



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...FHCWM Notes & News...

Fair Housing & Condominium Associations

The FHCWM recognizes that many members of condominium associations, and particularly those that volunteer their time to serve on the governing boards of the association, often have little or no experience with fair housing. Although these individuals may have little experience with or access to fair housing resources, their position within the condominium association may subject them to the same level of responsibility under fair housing laws as a trained real estate agent or landlord. For that reason, the FHCWM wishes to promote equal housing opportunity by helping condominium associations and their boards understand their rights and responsibilities under fair housing laws. To that end, the FHCWM has compiled the following list of fair housing best practices particularly applicable to condominium associations.

FAIR HOUSING BEST PRACTICES FOR CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATIONS:

- Regularly review the bylaws, as well as any other rules, policies or procedures, to ensure compliance with all applicable fair housing laws.
- Provide fair housing training for association Board members and decision makers. FHCWM trainings focus on risk management and best practices related to fair housing in housing sales, rental, lending, insurance, and advertising.
- Use and occupancy restrictions should not contain any unlawful preference or limitation, and specifically should not indicate any limit on the basis of marital status or familial status (i.e. occupancy should **not** be limited to individuals “related by blood, marriage or adoption”)
- Any definition of family used should be consistent with the

definition of familial status under the Fair Housing Act, and should not discriminate on any other legally protected basis, including marital status or age.

- Limits on the number of allowable occupants should be implemented with caution. Where such limits exist, they should not be more strict than local health and safety standards governing occupancy to ensure that they are reasonable and non-discriminatory. In most circumstances, occupancy should never be limited to less than the average of 2 persons per bedroom.
- Condominium associations must make reasonable accommodations and allow reasonable modifications for individuals with disabilities. This includes making a reasonable accommodation to allow a service or companion animal where there may be a policy prohibiting certain or all animals. Also, an individual with a service or companion animal should not be required to pay any “pet fees” or any other fees or deposits as a condition of having the assistance animal.
- A condominium association should never take race, color, religion, gender, disability, national origin, or marital status into account when exercising the right of first refusal or considering an individual for residency. Age and familial status should also never be taken into account, except as allowable within an association that has been legally established as “housing for older persons” exempt from the age and familial status provisions of fair housing law.
- The bylaws, policies and procedures should be applied equally to all persons regardless of race, religion, sex, disability status, etc., and all persons should consistently receive the same quality of treatment.
- **Call the FHCWM with any fair housing questions or concerns!**

National & Local Fair Housing News

The FHCWM recently became a party to a complaint filed by the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) against Wells Fargo & Co. and Wells Fargo Bank, N.A., alleging discrimination on the bases of race and national origin in the marketing and maintenance of foreclosed properties in over 9 metropolitan areas throughout the nation. This complaint, which was originally filed by NFHA in April 2012 with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, is the result of an undercover investigation of Wells Fargo’s bank-owned properties that found foreclosed properties in White areas are much better maintained and marketed by Wells Fargo than such properties in African-American and Latino neighborhoods. The FHCWM’s investigation of such properties in the Greater Grand Rapids area yielded results consistent with those found in the 8 different metropolitan areas originally represented in the NFHA complaint.

For example, NFHA identified almost twice and up to four times as many “for sale” signs in White communities than in communities of color; without a “for sale” sign, homebuyers would simply not know the property was available, and, if there was storm damage or unauthorized occupants, neighbors would not have a real estate agent to call to maintain the home. Also, Wells Fargo properties in communities of color in the included cities had almost twice as much trash as those in White communities, causing a health and safety hazard and making the home unappealing.

The higher deficiencies in marketing and maintenance of these properties in predominantly minority neighborhoods causes higher instances of urban blight, lower property sales and home values, increased health and safety concerns, among many other outcomes that devastate the neighborhoods and perpetuate patterns of inequity. The FHCWM hopes that the pursuit of this matter will lead to immediate corrective action by Wells Fargo and remedies to help rebuild and revitalize the communities ravaged by the unfair practices.

Save the Dates! Upcoming Fair Housing Events

Friends of Fair Housing: You are invited!

The FHCWM is bringing Brian Copeland's one-man show, Not a Genuine Black Man, to Grand Rapids! Mr. Copeland, author of a memoir of the same name, shares his experience as a lone Black child struggling to blend in after his family moves to San Leandro in 1972—a community in California that was 99.4% White. We are hosting this show at 7:00 pm on **Thursday, September 13, 2012** at the St Cecilia's Music Center. Please contact the FHCWM if you are interested in sponsoring and/or attending this significant event!

Check them out!

Fair Housing Book Club Selections

You are invited! The Fair Housing Book Clubs will be discussing A Tugging String by David T. Greenberg on **August 14, 2012**. This novel portrays the emotions and events surrounding the Selma-Montgomery Voting Rights March. It is also one boy's coming-of-age story set against the backdrop of a moment in history. We meet at 11:45 am in the FHCWM office (20 Hall SE, Grand Rapids). Bring a lunch, bring a friend and come join the discussion! Our next selection will be Sag Harbor by Colson Whitehead.

Fair Housing Trainings

The FHCWM offers fair housing trainings, including Fair Housing & Advertising, Fair Housing Training for Rental Professionals and Fair Lending sessions. Costs vary depending on the type of training. Each training includes a comprehensive packet of reference materials.

Some sessions are held at the FHCWM office; we can also come to your location. Call Liz Keegan at (616) 451-2980 to learn more. **Check our website home page for upcoming dates: www.fhcwm.org.**

The FHCWM hosts regular **tester trainings**. Testers are volunteers that play the role of a homeseeker and receive a stipend in return for their time and services. In order to accommodate differing schedules, one training will take place during business hours while the other will be held in the evening. For specific training dates, to register, or to learn more, contact Gabe Chapla at (616) 451-2980.

www.fhcwm.org
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