Tonika Johnson Speaks to Record Lakeshore Breakfast Crowd

The FHCWM and Lakeshore Advisory Board hosted a very successful 13th Annual Lakeshore Friends of Fair Housing Breakfast on Wednesday, October 16, 2019 in Holland. The FHCWM received a record 168 registrations for this exciting event! Lakeshore Advisory Board Member Esther Fifelski (City of Holland) opened the breakfast with some important updates about fair housing trends and local cases. Lakeshore Advisory Board Member Bart Jonker (ChoiceOne Bank) presented this year’s Lakeshore Fair Housing Award to Lyn Raymond (Lakeshore Housing Alliance, a program of the Greater Ottawa United Way). Lyn has been a long-time partner of the FHCWM and an active advocate for equitable housing along the lakeshore.

The event featured a powerful and thought-provoking keynote presentation from Social Justice Artist/Photographer Tonika Johnson, who shared pieces from her innovative, powerful multi-media project, Folded Map™. Ms. Johnson undertook a visual investigation of community that illustrates Chicago’s residential segregation which resulted in bringing residents together for important conversations about segregation and community. FHCWM Executive Director Nancy Haynes closed the breakfast with comments about the importance of being a welcoming community for all not just for some. Our guests rated their satisfaction with this year’s event at 4.9 on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)!

This event was made possible by our generous sponsors as follows: the West Michigan Lakeshore Association of REALTORS (Patron Level) as well as Brooks Capital Management, BVW Property Management, Choice One Bank, Independent Bank, and West Michigan Community Bank (Supporting Level). This event is also supported by the City of Holland and the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development and in-kind sponsor Awards Pro. Your dedicated interest in furthering fair housing along the Lakeshore is truly appreciated!

City of Grand Rapids Expands Fair Housing Protections as of December 1st

On August 27, the Grand Rapids City Commission unanimously passed a human rights ordinance in an effort to protect members of various protected classes from being discriminated against in several areas, including housing, employment, public services and crime reporting. The ordinance expands the protected classes within City limits to include actual or perceived color, race, religion or creed, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, genotype, age, marital status, medical condition, disability, height, weight, or source of lawful income. Creed is defined as “a system of beliefs, principles, or opinions that guides an individual’s actions.” (over)

Inside this issue:
- 13th Annual Lakeshore Event........... 1
- City of Grand Rapids Protections...... 1
- GR Protections (cont.) .................... 2
- Muskegon County Senior Millage..... 2
- Writing to Right Wrongs............... 2
- Sexual Harassment in Housing ....... 3
- Save the Date & Facebook............. 4

Our mission is to prevent and eliminate housing discrimination and ensure equal housing opportunity through education, advocacy and enforcement.
Genotype is “the genetic constitution of an individual.” It defines Medical Condition as “all past or present physical or mental health diagnoses, treatments, and procedures an individual has received, associated symptoms and risk factors, and effects of such diagnoses, treatments, and procedures.”

Under its Discriminatory Housing Practices section, the ordinance largely relies on existing protections at the federal or state level as well as HUD guidance. For example, the ordinance aligns with HUD guidance regarding criminal record screening in that housing providers must use conviction records versus arrest records, outright bans are prohibited, and housing providers must consider whether the individual’s criminal record poses a demonstrable risk to residents or the property. It explicitly states that “anticipated or actual objections of other residents, neighbors, or persons” and “mere inconvenience, less than an undue hardship, to a housing agent in procuring or providing reasonable aid to a member of a protected class to accommodate that individual’s needs” are not legitimate reasons to engage in housing discrimination. The ordinance further sets forward some exemptions as well as procedures for complaints, investigation and penalties. Complaints under the ordinance must be filed within 180 calendar days of the date upon which the complainant knew or should have known of the alleged discriminatory act. Read the ordinance in its entirety on our website: www.fhcwm.org/laws.

FHCWM News

FHCWM funded by the Muskegon County Senior Millage

The FHCWM is very pleased to announce an award of continued funding under the Muskegon County Senior Millage. The FHCWM will help increase the quality of life for Muskegon County seniors through providing fair housing education and outreach as well as enforcement services to adults 60 years of age and older. The Muskegon County Board of Commissioners approved 59 senior millage continuation of funding awards totaling $2,099,015 for fiscal year 2020, effective Oct. 1, 2019 through Sept. 30, 2020, as recommended by the Senior Activities Committee. Programs include home repairs, health and wellness, senior center activities, nutrition and meals, recreation programs, senior service navigation, and more. Muskegon County voters passed the senior millage in August of 2016; Senior Resources is the grants administrator.

Writing to Right Wrongs Program Funding and Expansion

The FHCWM is honored to have received another year of funding from an anonymous donor for an exciting program the FHCWM delivers in partnership with fellow non-profit, The Diatribe. This program will again engage three 12th grade classes at Ottawa Hills High School in "Writing to Right Wrongs", an interactive, fair housing and social justice-themed program designed to enrich student and family understanding of equal housing opportunity and civil rights. The program, led by The Diatribe’s Rachel Gleason and Marcel “Fable” Price with the help of FHCWM staff, focuses on illustrating the impact of where one lives has on how one lives. The FHCWM provides the fair housing content that is then paired with the work of The Diatribe, which uses performing arts to empower young people to share their stories, raise awareness of social issues, and create change within their communities. There were very positive responses from students last year including, “[I] actually want to research more.”; “I hope to change the community [maybe] the world.”; and “I hope to keep writing poems and to get somewhere with it.”

The FHCWM has also been granted funds from the City of Wyoming Community Development Block Grant program to provide “Writing to Right Wrongs” in Godfrey-Lee Public Schools’ East Lee High School. This program will begin in December.
**Fair Housing and Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment in housing is a form of sex discrimination and is illegal under the Fair Housing Act (FHAct). Sexual harassment includes unwelcomed sexual advances, a request for sexual favors or any other type of sexual conduct as a condition of obtaining, maintaining, using or enjoying housing or housing-related services. There are two types of sexual harassment in housing: 1) quid pro quo sexual harassment and 2) hostile environment sexual harassment.

**Quid Pro Quo** occurs when a housing provider or housing provider’s employee requires a person to submit to an unwelcome request to engage in sexual conduct as a condition of obtaining, maintaining, or using housing or housing related services. “Quid pro quo” can be understood as “this for that” or “a favor for a favor.” Examples include:

- A landlord demands nude photos in return for approving a rental application.
- A property manager evicts a person because they refuse to have sex.
- A maintenance staff member requests sexual favors in return for making needed repairs.

**Hostile Environment** occurs when a housing provider or their employee subjects a person to severe or pervasive unwelcome sexual conduct as part of the sale, rental, availability, or terms, conditions, or privileges of housing or housing related services and results in an environment that is intimidating, hostile, offensive, or otherwise significantly less desirable. Examples include:

- A landlord subjects a tenant to severe or pervasive unwelcome touching, kissing, or groping without consent.
- A property manager makes persistent unwelcome and lewd comments about a tenant’s body.
- A maintenance staff member sends a tenant severe or pervasive unwelcome, sexually suggestive texts and enters the tenants apartment without invitation or permission.

**Is it a violation of the FHAct when an individual sexually harasses someone of the same sex?**

Yes, the FHAct protects both men and women from sex discrimination, which includes sexual harassment.

**Am I protected from retaliation if I report that I am experiencing or have experienced sexual harassment?**

Yes, the FHAct protects against retaliation for reporting sexual harassment. If you report sexual harassment, you are protected against any acts of retaliation, which can include increasing rent, eviction, withholding maintenance, harassing, or suing as a result of reporting. If this occurs, please report it immediately to the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan.

Under the federal FHAct, it is illegal to coerce, intimidate, threaten, or interfere with your right to report sexual harassment, as well as any person who has aided or encouraged you to exercise your rights. In other words, a property owner or property manager and/or their employees are prohibited from punishing an individual for reporting sexual harassment, or helping another individual exercise his or her fair housing rights.

**Who is held responsible when I report sexual harassment?**

A property owner or manager may be directly or indirectly held responsible for sexual harassment; they are not only responsible for their own actions, but those of their employees, which can include leasing agents, maintenance staff, or anyone who has control of or access to your housing. A property owner or manager who directs their employees, agents or contractors to engage in sexual harassment, or who knows or should have known about sexual harassment but fails to take action to stop it, is directly responsible for any resulting harm. In addition, a property owner or manager may be indirectly responsible for the acts of their employees regardless of whether they knew of the wrongful conduct, or failed to prevent it from occurring. If owners and managers had knowledge of tenant-on-tenant harassment and did not take remedial action, they would also be responsible.

**How long do I have to make a complaint of sexual harassment?**

*It is never too late.* Please call the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan to learn about your options to file a complaint.

You have the right to be safe in your home. You are not alone.

You can report discrimination anonymously. We can help!
Follow Us on Facebook!
Did you know? The FHCWM is posting information weekly on Facebook! Posts include case data on specific trends and/or protected classes; client stories and photos; national fair housing cases or news stories; upcoming events or trainings; book and movie recommendations; infographics, PSAs and much more. Please follow our Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/fhcwm.

Save The Date!
The FHCWM invites you to mark your calendar for Thursday, May 7, 2020 for our 33rd Annual Fair Housing Luncheon & Workshop Series! Please be sure to save the date as we will also be celebrating the FHCWM’s 40th Anniversary of opening doors to housing choice in West Michigan. The event will be held at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in downtown Grand Rapids. If you are interested in sponsoring, please contact us!

FHCWM Board Update
The FHCWM is pleased to announce a new addition to our Board of Directors, Kathryn Mullins (Executive Director, Grand Rapids Community College Foundation). We also want to thank Dr. Thomas Reeder so much for his Board service. Best wishes to Dr. Reeder and a warm welcome to Kathryn!

Fair Housing Trainings
The Fair Housing Center 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 is 3 hours and includes a comprehensive packet of reference materials.

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

The Fair Housing Center hosts tester trainings each month. 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 the specific training dates, to register, or any other questions contact Gabe Chapla at (616) 451-2980.

Save The Date!
The FHCWM invites you to mark your calendar for Thursday, May 7, 2020 for our 33rd Annual Fair Housing Luncheon & Workshop Series! Please be sure to save the date as we will also be celebrating the FHCWM’s 40th Anniversary of opening doors to housing choice in West Michigan. The event will be held at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in downtown Grand Rapids. If you are interested in sponsoring, please contact us!

FHCWM Board Update
The FHCWM is pleased to announce a new addition to our Board of Directors, Kathryn Mullins (Executive Director, Grand Rapids Community College Foundation). We also want to thank Dr. Thomas Reeder so much for his Board service. Best wishes to Dr. Reeder and a warm welcome to Kathryn!

Fair Housing Trainings
The Fair Housing Center 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 is 3 hours and includes a comprehensive packet of reference materials.

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

The Fair Housing Center hosts tester trainings each month. 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 the specific training dates, to register, or any other questions contact Gabe Chapla at (616) 451-2980.