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**THE LGBT OPPORTUNITY: INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE LGBT EMPLOYEES AND GUESTS**  
MFHA and Johnson & Wales University to Host Inaugural Cultural Intelligence Event

MIAMI (January 23, 2012) – In an effort to create an inclusive space for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) workers in the food and hospitality industry and to unlock the hidden business potential of the LGBT community, The Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance (MFHA) will present a Cultural Intelligence event on “**THE LGBT OPPORTUNITY: Innovative Strategies to Engage LGBT Employees and Guests**” on Friday, Feb. 10, 2012, at Johnson & Wales University’s North Miami campus.

The highly interactive and solution-oriented session — part of MFHA’s newly developed Cultural Intelligence Initiative — promotes cultural intelligence and understanding, demonstrates the need for creating a respectful and inclusive work environment, and instructs leaders on how to support their employees and engage their customers, including those from the LGBT community, in order to optimize business opportunities.

“There is so much misinformation regarding the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities that permeates businesses today, and the food and hospitality industry certainly is not immune,” said Gerry Fernandez, MFHA’s president and founder. “Our program will cut through the chatter, dispel the myths, and get to the heart of the matter. Anyone leading or supporting a hospitality team today cannot afford to miss this **LGBT Cultural Intelligence event.**” The session will offer unparalleled insights that inform, educate, and equip attendees with knowledge and know-how so they can effectively lead and support their LGBT employees. Attendance is open to anyone affiliated with the food and hospitality industry and advocates of LGBT employees.

Roy Jackson, MFHA chair and central zone vice president of The Coca-Cola Company’s Foodservice and On-Premise division, said his company is proud to support the event and hopes it will help industry members to build welcoming workplaces for all employees at their respective businesses.

“At The Coca-Cola Company, diversity is at the heart of our business,” Jackson said. “No worker should ever be judged based on his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. We believe this session and the work MFHA is doing is integral to understanding the value that cultural intelligence brings to our businesses and creating long-term fairness and inclusion in the industry.”

The event will be moderated by Lou Kaucic, chief executive officer and founder of **Coaches Collective International (CCI)** and former chief people officer of Applebee’s International; Fred Sainz, vice president of communications & marketing of **Human Rights Campaign (HRC)**; Thomas Mathes, senior general manager of **Eventi Hotel**, a Kimpton Hotel; and Simma Lieberman, founder of **Simma Lieberman Associates**.

To register for the event, visit [www.mfha.net/event-list](http://www.mfha.net/event-list). To learn more about the Cultural Intelligence Initiative, check out [www.mfha.net/index.php/cultural-intelligence-video](http://www.mfha.net/index.php/cultural-intelligence-video). For more information on MFHA and its various programs, go to [www.mfha.net](http://www.mfha.net).

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**The Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance (MFHA)**

2012 marks The Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance's (MFHA) 15<sup>th</sup> year of making the case for multicultural opportunities in the food and hospitality industry. The 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization educates, advocates for, and connects its members with opportunities to build their cultural intelligence in order to effectively engage multicultural employees, customers, and communities. For more information, visit [www.mfha.net](http://www.mfha.net).

**Johnson & Wales University**

Johnson & Wales University, founded in 1914, is a nonprofit, private institution. A recognized leader in career education, we offer accredited degrees in business, hospitality, culinary arts, technology, and education. With a diverse student body of more than 16,000 graduate and undergraduate students, representing all 50 states and 89 countries, JWU prepares students for personal and professional success by integrating rigorous academic and professional skills, community leadership opportunities, and our unique career education model.