

East Village Magazine

August 2020

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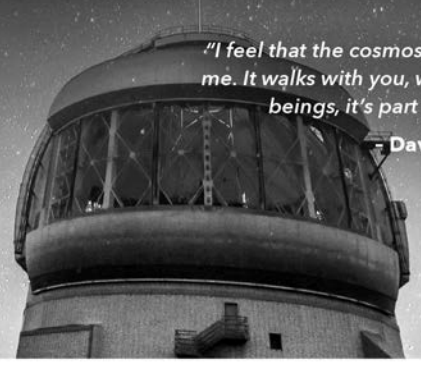
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Commentary

A comet, a COVID pandemic, and a summer of violence. Is there any good news in 2020?

By Paul Rozycki



This summer, astronomers have discovered a new presence among the stars, the Neowise comet, in the northern sky. It's not a large comet, just visible under the Big Dipper. It has come closest to the earth in the middle of July, and has been observable for the last few weeks.

Many ancient peoples often felt that comets were portents of doom and ruin. The Romans and the Greeks felt they were a sign of major events, both good and bad. In the Middle Ages, comets were thought to predict natural disasters.

Today, we are in the midst of a pandemic that has killed more than 155,000 Americans as of Aug. 2, and threatens to grow worse in the months to come. As a result, unemployment has reached near-depression levels, with little relief in sight. Race relations are more fragmented than they have been for a half century. We are led by a bombastic, blowhard president who grows more authoritarian by the day. All of this is happening as we prepare for an election that may be unlike any in our history.

We've already received more than a few 2021 calendars in the mail, as if we can't wait for this year to be history.

With the year only half over, is there any good news that can come out of 2020?

Maybe. Just maybe, the current tsunami of crises may give us the opportunity to emerge from 2020 with some hope for a better 2021.

Obviously there are no guarantees, but here are a few possibilities.

1. The pandemic: Unlike pandemics of ages ago, science has a greater

ability to respond to this one. At this time, there are dozens of serious attempts to create a viable vaccine by early next year, and several seem promising. This research hasn't happened as quickly in past years, and it may give us a roadmap for dealing with the next pandemic that we face.

2. The American medical system: For all the boasting about how the U.S. has the most advanced medical system in the world, our response to the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed shocking weaknesses in our preparation, and our ability to deliver medical services. Many other nations have responded much more effectively than we have, and the infection rate reflects that. Perhaps this will give us reason to reevaluate how we deliver medical care. Whether it's Obamacare, Medicare for All, or something else, few can doubt that we have great room for improvement. Perhaps the crisis will give us the incentive to take action.

3. Racial division: The Black Lives Matter movement highlighted the racial disparities and divisions in a way that we haven't seen since the 1960s. Whatever excesses that might have been in some protests, no one can deny the blatant unfairness of the criminal justice system, the educational system, and the economic system. The hopeful news is that most of the protests have been integrated, multiracial events. In spite of all the partisan presidential attacks, public opinion strongly supports most of the goals of those working for change, and major institutions seem

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Cover: Summer in Flint a time of protests



Photo of the Month: Charles Boike mural of Frida Kahlo, East Side of Flint

(Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

Flint Public Library opens in temporary quarters with COVID precautions in place

By Coner Segren

After a months-long closure due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the Flint Public Library (FPL) reopened its doors to the public at its temporary location in Courtland Center Mall July 23.

Conditions for the “phased re-opening” include face masks, social distancing, frequent sanitizing, the use of “quarantine bins” for item returns, a 25-patron occupancy limit, and a one-hour browsing policy.



The library is now open 11 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and will be closed Sunday and Monday.

The move, set in motion long before the pandemic, was part of a plan to make way for a massive makeover of

the library’s 60-year-old building on Kearsley Street — to transform the aging facility in the Cultural Center and create 16,000 additional square feet.

Courtland Center is at 4190 E. Court St., Burton. Library visitors should use the main entrance (Entrance A) and look for library signs east of Sloan Museum @ Courtland. Plenty of free parking is available, and the mall is served by the #10 bus (Richfield Road), a press release detailed.

Director Kay Schwartz announced the re-opening plans, along with the slew of safety procedures, in a video press conference. The reopening will mark the first time the library will have in-person services since the celebration that marked the closure for renovation of the old FPL building back in February.

“Before COVID, we had planned to be all moved into Courtland Center and be open to the public by the end of May. Here we are opening about eight weeks behind schedule and everyone knows where that eight weeks went,” said

Schwartz at the beginning of the conference.

Between then and now, the library has continued to offer downloadable content, such as audiobooks, e-books, and magazines, and will continue to expand that catalogue to accommodate patrons who still feel uncomfortable with in-person attendance.

Now the library will be instituting what Schwartz has termed a “phased reopening.” The main library area which houses the main collection of books, CD’s, audiobooks, and children and teen materials will be open to browsing with certain coronavirus restrictions.

Re-opening is “a complex process,”

Schwartz said, and safety is considered the top priority.

“We’re asking people to follow the same guideline that they do in other public spaces,” Schwartz said in a press release. “This includes the use of face coverings, hand-sanitizer, and social distancing.” The library will have masks and sanitizer on hand for those who need them.

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... Library

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In addition to the restrictions set forth by the governor's mandate, the library is adopting a new "browse-and-go" policy. "In that [browse-and-go] phase, we welcome patrons to the library for one-hour time periods to browse, we will have staff available to help them, and then they will go to check out," explained Leslie Acevedo, director of library operations.

The one-hour limit is partially due to the reduced occupancy limit under the governor's executive order, which limits the main library to 25 percent of the fire marshal's limit. In this case, that will be an occupancy load of 31, including eight staff members, in the main library.

The library will continue to offer other normal services such as card sign-ups and renewals, and seating will be available although limited.

However, any public gatherings, such as the programming room and a children's story time room, both built before the onset of the pandemic, will be suspended indefinitely.

The annex wing of the library, which houses the computers and genealogy materials, will remain closed to the public for the time being while the staff assesses the reopening procedures in the main library first.



FPL patrons Mary Jo Hobart-Parks & Jody Wienckowski
(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

However, Acevedo stressed the importance of getting the computer wing open as soon as safely possible saying, "Last year, we provided over 30,000 hours of computer access to people in Flint, and we're committed to moving forward with that as soon as we possibly can."

Schwartz also stated that when the annex does eventually open, the computers will also be limited to a one-hour browse-and-go policy, and that the occupancy will be limited to 25. Patrons will also be able to reserve computers over the phone to attempt to cut down on lines.

Among the new safety precautions to help limit the spread of the virus is the use of quarantine bins, where unwanted items can be placed and sanitized. Surfaces will also be cleaned daily. Patrons are also allowed to check out 20 items per library card to help reduce the frequency with which they have to come back to the library.

For people still uncomfortable going to public places for prolonged periods, patrons can browse online and place holds on books, which can be picked up quickly at the mall. Patrons can also sign up for e-cards, which allow them to download material over the internet and which is completely contactless.

Above all, Schwartz stressed the need for the library staff and patrons to be flexible and patient as they navigate which procedures work best to serve the community.

"Everything is under consideration to be able to meet the needs with the staffing that we can bring to bear on the kinds of services we want to provide," she said.

Besides outlining the new safety precautions, Schwartz also gave a brief update on the progress of the building renovation. The keys of the Kearsley Street building were turned over to the project manager June 15, and while eight weeks of work were lost during the lockdown order, Schwartz stated their architects "estimate that they could still have us moving into the renovated building in about 13 months from now, in the fall of 2021."

The library has also raised over half of the \$3 million capital campaign to make sure the project is financially secure and to cover extra expenses for the new building installations and the renovations, Schwartz said.

The Library will post updates about the re-opening on its website. This website will be updated regularly as services change. "We know that our patrons are still looking for computer access, genealogy resources and much more," notes Schwartz. "We will phase in additional services slowly and safely."



Main entrance to the Flint Public Library's temporary quarters at Courtland Center
(Photo by FPL)

Checked-out library items can be returned to three outdoor drop boxes: the usual drive-up box at Crapo Street, a box near the main Courtland Center mall entrance, and one behind Courtland Center at the movie theater entrance. During business hours, books can also be returned to a drop box inside the library.



FPL staff Autumn Zuniga & Cheryl Williams
(Photo by Jan Worth-Nelson)

The Flint Public Library first opened in 1851. More information about the library is available at fpl.info. To follow the progress of the library's renovation go to yournewfpl.org.

EVM Staff Writer Coner Segren can be reached at csegren@umich.edu.

East Village Magazine launches “get-out-the-vote” videos starring 130 Flint faces

By Jan Worth-Nelson

Two videos that aim to highlight human connectedness and get out the vote have been produced by *East Village Magazine* (EVM) and are available for viewing online now at the magazine’s website, *eastvillagemagazine.org*.

The videos, both titled “Faces of Flint ... a message from the anvil of America’s democracy,” feature 130 Flint residents photographed by Flint native, Kansas City photographer Dan White, in three days of shooting last November at the Flint Farmers’ Market and Berston Field House. Flint filmmaker Justin Brown was editor for both videos.

The narration for both videos was written by Ted Nelson, *EVM* editor at large and a participant in civil rights actions in Washington D.C. in the 60’s and 70’s. (For full disclosure, Nelson is my husband and I am co-producer of the films.)

Asked about the significance of the “anvil” as a symbol of Flint, Nelson said, “We have been pounded on and our values have been tempered by our struggles. Flint has an incredible history of firsts in this country: it is the city where organized labor got its real start at the Sitdown Strike of 1936; it is the city that many say created the middle class; it is the city that gave us the first black mayor in the country; it is the city that gave us the first open housing ordinance in the United States of America. And Flint is the city that was the first to be poisoned by its own government.”

Nelson said the idea for the videos came from his recollection of

those times 50 years ago, when attempting to protest against racism and poverty sometimes led to violence — very much like today. Back then, as head of the Volunteer Speakers’ Bureau of the original 1968 Poor Peoples’ Campaign, he created a slide show featuring the faces of participants in a series of caravans of poor people converging on D.C. to educate politicians about poverty, racism, economic inequality and the war in Vietnam. He said seeing those faces helped create a sense of common humanity instead of hostility.

Nelson narrates the first video, six minutes long, featuring about 70 of the photo subjects. Flint poet laureate Semaj Brown loaned her voice for the 10-minute version. She is the author of *Bleeding Fire* and is creating literacy programs for Flint children even during the pandemic through the Poetry Pod Project.

Both versions feature Flint musician Erik McIntyre, violinist William Harvey, and Ann Arbor musician and songwriter David Tamulevich.

McIntyre teaches at the Flint Institute of Music and lives in



Carriage Town. Harvey was born on Montclair Street in Flint, but is now concertmaster of the National Symphony of Mexico. Tamulevich is a member of the ensemble Mustard’s Retreat, which has performed many times in Flint. His original song, “Ours is a Simple Faith,” concludes both videos.

The project was supported with major funding from the Community Foundation of Greater

Flint, the Flint Area League of Women Voters, and numerous individual donors locally and across the country.

Both videos debuted in a July 28 Zoom premiere, attended by more than 90 people locally and from across the country.

EVM Editor Jan Worth-Nelson can be reached at janworth1118@gmail.com.

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Judge rules in favor of ACLU brief demanding Flint City Clerk's ballot accountability

By Tom Travis

Voters' rights and prospects for proper processing of absentee ballot applications and ballots received a shot in the arm July 23 from Judge Celeste Bell of the 7th Circuit Court.

Bell ruled in favor of a lawsuit by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) ordering the Flint city clerk to comply with several terms, including the Clerk's office increasing open hours and days.

In addition, the judge ordered the city clerk to present a daily report of absentee ballot applications processed

statewide shutdown have had on the conduct of all governmental business. Bell also acknowledges the Genesee County ballots were delayed due to candidate challenges. The printing of the ballots was delayed as the Court ruled whether or not attorney Chris Christensen's name could appear on the ballot.

Bell acknowledges these issues caused delay to the city clerk's meeting a statutory deadline of providing ballots during the 40 days prior to the election.

"Nonetheless," Bell then stated, "a substantial delay has occurred in providing absent voter applications and ballots that cannot be explained or excused by the unfortunate circumstances affecting the voters and the city clerk."

Bell ordered that the voters of Flint are "in danger of irreparable harm through the loss of their constitutional absentee voting rights if the city clerk fails to take immediate steps as required by this order to comply with legal mandates regarding the issuance of absent voter ballots."

In light of these reasons, Judge Bell ordered that:

- "All absent voter ballot applications currently in the possession of the clerk, as well as any that are received through 5 p.m. on Saturday, July 25, will be processed within 72 hours from the signing of this order.

- "All absent voter ballot applications received after 5 p.m. Saturday, July 25, will be processed within 24 hours of receipt." Additionally, Judge Bell's order states "with the exception of Sunday, July 26, the clerk's office will be open to the public every day during regular business hours (7 a.m. to 5 p.m.) for distribution and acceptance of absent voter ballot applications, distribution of absent voter ballots, and acceptance of completed absent voter

ballots from the date of this order through Election Day, Aug. 4, 2020.

- "Commencing Monday, July 27, the clerk will provide to this Court and to opposing counsel, a daily summary report containing the following information for the prior day: the total number of absent voter applications received; the total number of absent voter ballots issued; the total number of completed absent ballots received; and the total number of absent ballot applications rejected or delayed due to some deficiency. The report generated July 27 will reflect the statistics from the date of this order through Sunday, July 26."

The order signed by Bell July 23 calls for increased accountability through the present election cycle to ensure improved efficiency of the processing of voters' absentee applications and ballots.

City Attorney Angela Wheeler responded by email today, stating, "We appreciate that the court recognizes the challenges that all municipalities are facing and granted many of the City's requests. The decision addresses the common interest of the City Clerk, the City and the ACLU to make sure that every vote is counted even in a pandemic."

Wheeler says Facebook post promotes hysteria; Judge Bell says, "No, it's about the clerk's failures."

In a July 22 hearing, City Attorney Angela Wheeler presented a copy of a Facebook post written by Attorney Alec Gibbs on his personal Facebook page on July 4, 2020. The Facebook post stated facts surrounding the lack of ballot applications processed and the thousands of applications already received.

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to the court.

Thursday's ruling is a response to a complaint, *Barkey, et. al. vs Brown et. al.*, filed July 16 by the ACLU and five Flint residents against City Clerk Inez Brown.

The ACLU and the five other plaintiffs requested a writ of mandamus against Brown.

A writ of mandamus is a legal term referring to a court ordering that a governmental official carry out his or her duties and obligations in the interest of the public. The five Flint voters who joined in the case as plaintiffs with the ACLU are Brian Barkey, Doris Barkey, Quincy Murphy, Nayyirah Shariff and Maryum Rasool. Cooperating attorneys for the ACLU were Flint lawyers Alec Gibbs and Muna Jondy.

Bell states in her order that the Court acknowledges the detrimental effect the COVID-19 pandemic and the

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“We will no longer auction off guns,” Mayor Neeley announces. “It’s just not worth it,” Chief Hart says

By Tom Travis

The City of Flint will no longer auction off confiscated guns, Flint Mayor Sheldon Neeley announced at a press conference at police headquarters July 29. Since 2017, when the City began that practice, 4,539 guns have been auctioned generating \$200,000.

The revenue generated was put back into the police budget, Neeley said. However, Chief of Police Phil Hart, reiterating Neeley’s words, said, “We will no longer put these weapons back out on the street. It’s just not worth it.”

A press release from the mayor’s office stated, “The decision will immediately dispose of 250 guns that previously had been on Flint streets.” The mayor said the seized guns would be given to the Michigan State Police who will melt them down.

The previous administration, with support of Flint City Council, began auctioning off seized firearms in 2017, selling hundreds of guns to the highest bidder. Included in the sales were semi-automatic rifles as well as handguns, pistols and shotguns. While gun auctions are legal and serve lawful gun buyers, Neeley said his administration will not permit the auctioning of firearms to ensure none of these deadly weapons again fall into the wrong hands.

Standing at a podium in front of a display of 30 guns from small hand-held guns to long rifles and assault weapons and pointing to the table of guns, Neeley said, “We have displayed here guns collected off the streets in the last seven days.” Looking somberly at the table of guns, Neeley added, “These are weapons of destruction.”

Noting the loss of revenue as the city stops auctioning guns, Neeley added, “We have to ask ourselves, ‘How much is a life worth?’ ”

Neeley stated, “In the first eight months of this administration we have been doing a lot of clean-up work to convey a more positive and productive mood.”

Beginning in 2017, under the

Weaver administration, guns collected by the police department were auctioned off.



Chief Hart and Mayor Neeley
(Photo by Tom Travis)

Neeley added he, Chief Hart and his administration “are going to stop that practice now. It shows a gross lack in critical thinking when you say we’re gonna fight crime and battle crime and take weapons off the streets and then to circulate weapons back into activity where people get a second chance at doing something they shouldn’t. We will not give opportunity to recirculate back into society.” In what some would consider a conflicting statement, he added, “We believe in the Second Amendment and the right to bear arms.”

Hart says the newly formed Special Investigative Unit city’s “hot spots”

Hart said the newly formed Special Investigative Unit picked up the guns over the past seven days. The Special Investigative Unit has been going to “hot-spot areas.” Hart added most of the guns displayed on the table before him were confiscated in traffic stops. He clarified that the types of traffic stops were speeding, running a stop

sign, and reckless driving.

Hart stated, “As you can see by the guns before you, they are some pretty extreme weapons.” Hart noted some were brand new and added, “We are investigating why there so many new guns out on the streets. I’m working with our partners, both federal and local, to see which institutions are putting these guns out and ending up in the hands of people who shouldn’t have access to them. All that is being looked at.”

Hart noted, “We are going out nightly to shooting scenes, and this past weekend was horrible for all of us.” Referring to multiple shootings at Hallwood Plaza on Clio Road that weekend, Hart added, “We’d like for nothing like that to ever happen again.” Noting the impact of gun violence on society, Hart said, “We have to think about the cost of this and so we can get into safety and well-being and what it does to our economy. The cost of seizing the weapons and re-seizing the weapons and the cost of medical procedures by the people impacted by these weapons. It’s extreme.”

Hart said, according to a U.S. Congressional report estimate, “gun violence costs about \$6.9 billion in Michigan, which is about \$696/resident per year. I can think of much better reasons to use our money than this kind of a thing.”

In a press release, Hart added, “Based on that average, the cost of gun violence in the city of Flint is at least triple the revenues the gun auctions.” Hart also noted the police department has received more than 70 applications for 14 vacant positions. Last year, the City Council approved funding for the positions, and in June, the council approved additional 2 mills funding for added police services.

Anti-Gun Violence Activist Joseph Pettigrew says “gun violence is a public health crisis”

Joseph Pettigrew, whose father, Sidney Pettigrew, was murdered

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... Guns

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Joseph Pettigrew
(Photo by Tom Travis)

in 2018, was invited to speak by Neeley. Pettigrew said, “Gun violence is a public health crisis.” Since his father’s murder, Pettigrew has begun an organization called Communities Against Gun Violence.

Pettigrew said the organization is made up of himself and other anti-gun violence activists in the city. “We started it in March to bring attention back to the issue of violence in the city of Flint.

“It takes people who have been through this type of tragedy to really step up and really let people know how it impacts people’s lives daily,” Pettigrew said.

Pettigrew added the City’s decision to no longer auction off guns, “is definitely a step forward.”

Neeley’s administration has a three-point plan to combat crime

- The formation of a Special Investigative Unit
- The recruitment of additional officers
- A “no-questions-asked” gun buy-back program.

Neeley said the gun buy-back locations have not yet been

announced. He added, “My wife and I will be donating the first \$1000 to the buy-back program. We will also be asking others with like-minded thinking to do the same.”

A 2019 *Newsweek* article reported that Americans own half of all guns in the world, with approximately 120 firearms for every 100 U.S. residents.”

Some research suggests gun buy-back programs yield little decline in crime. The *Newsweek* article

noted, “A 2008 review of the existing research by Matthew Makarios and Travis Pratt in the journal found that gun buy-back programs have generally been ineffective in reducing crime in the U.S. Challenges include the types of guns purchased, the involvement of law enforcement, and the costs involved.”

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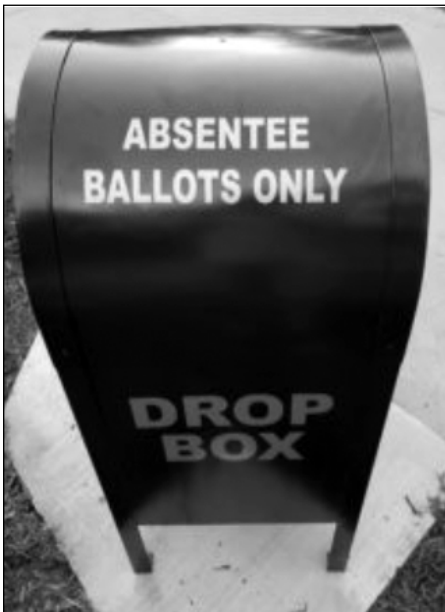
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... ACLU

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Wheeler asserted that this Facebook post promoted a “hysteria of disenfranchisement” in the community



Drop Box at City Hall
(Photo Tom Travis)

and on social media. She further stated that the hysteria “grew like wild fire.”

In her ruling July 23, Bell emphatically stated the case is not about a Facebook post, but about the failure of the city clerk to carry out her duties.

At the close of the July 22 hearing, Bell asked Wheeler how many applications have been received. Wheeler responded, “I don’t have that number.” Bell said, “Well I’ve got to have that number.”

In the hearing July 23, Wheeler responded that as of close of business July

were going through the process of verification, 114 ballots were at the level of verification and were being scanned and stuffed for mailing, 211 were scanned and ready to go out in the July 22 mail, there was one ballot received from the new drop box placed in front of City Hall and there were 25 emailed applications received that day.

Wheeler noted that the city clerk has been operating with seven full-time employees, seven part-time employees and two State of Michigan election workers to assist with the absentee applications and issuing of ballots.

Finally, in the July 23 hearing, ACLU Attorney Gibbs said there may not have been nefarious actions, but there have been systematic failures by the city clerk’s office. Gibbs added that “The time line presented establishes the city clerk’s office had no intention to comply.

“No other municipality in Genesee County has had this problem of getting absentee applications and ballots processed and issued,” he said. “We have seen a pervasive pattern of non-compliance. The only thing left for the Flint residents is for this court to issue relief.”

Judge Bell, along with all the courtrooms in the 7th District Court, are holding session by Zoom broadcast on YouTube.

Before moving to this judgeship, Bell was a city attorney in San Francisco and the former corporation counsel for Genesee County.

For full disclosure, Alec Gibbs is a board member of *East Village Magazine*.

EVM Assistant Editor Tom Travis can be reached at tomntravis@gmail.com.

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The East Village Magazine is looking for volunteer distributors in some of the residential blocks bounded by E. Court, Franklin, Tuscola and Meade streets. Less than one hour of exercise a month ensures your neighbors get the magazine. Contact ecuster@sbcglobal.net or write to 720 E. Second St. Flint, MI

Lead/galvanized tainted pipes replaced so far in Flint:

9,659

Because of the governor’s order, no pipeline replacements were conducted in April or May, but work has resumed. Totals as of July 17 were 9,659 lead or galvanized pipes replaced, 25,790 pipes excavated. A total of 16,131 pipes have been discovered to be copper service lines.

Support community journalism!

Donations to *East Village Magazine* are tax deductible. For easy giving, go to: eastvillagemagazine.org

Unclassified ads

• **Tools Needed:** We are mentoring a student enrolled in auto class at Mott. We are in need of tools. Please check grandpa’s, dad’s, or mom’s toolbox for donation or sale of wrenches, pliers, screwdriver sockets compression gauges, etc; Thank you! IT TAKES A VILLAGE and there’s none better than East Village. Call Jerry at 714-342-7531.

• **One-bedroom Apartment for Rent:** Clean, partially furnished, upstairs. Walking distance to UM-Flint and Mott College. Call 810-625-3924 for appointment. Please leave a message.

• **Apartment for Lease:** Large (1600 sq. ft.) two-bedroom, second-floor apartment on Crapo St. just off Kearsley St. available early August. Extra bedroom and study on finished third floor. Featuring central air conditioning, newer appliances, sunroom, smokeless fireplace, hardwood floors, pantry, laundry, garage with auto-door and other off-street parking. \$745 per month includes water. Enjoy concerts, dance, art galleries, theaters, planetarium, library, museum, horticultural gardens and art classes, K-8 charter school all across the street. Five-minute-or-less walk to UM-Flint, MCC, downtown, Cultural Center, Farmers’ Market. References and credit check requested. No pets. E-mail: ecuster@sbcglobal.net or write Apartment 16, 720 E. Second St. Flint, MI 48503.

LET
✓
PEOPLE
VOTE

(Photo from ACLU website)

22 there were 1,064 outstanding ballots to be processed, 98 ballot applications were received in the mail, 615 applications

... Comet

(Continued from Page 3.)

committed to making some real progress in healing our racial divisions.

4. The 2020 election: This year's election will be different in many ways. Many of us will be voting absentee for the first time. By all measures, an absentee/mail-in voting process is as honest



and fair as any. It will probably increase voting turnout, and will not automatically benefit either party. By receiving the ballot early, voters will have an opportunity to evaluate the candidates and proposals in more detail, rather than having to make a quick decision in a voting booth. Voting by mail will also provide a paper copy for those concerned about computer fraud and hacking.

5. Party conventions: This month's political party conventions will be different as well. The Democrats will be hosting an all-virtual convention. At this time, the Republicans have also cancelled their large gathering planned for Florida and are likely to have a similar convention.

That also may not be all bad. For many years, the party conventions were the real place where the nominee was chosen, with smoke-filled rooms, and back-room deals. They were genuine newsworthy events, and they were often covered gavel-to-gavel by the major networks.

For the last half century, there has been little drama and suspense and the nominees were well-known months before the conventions met. They have become TV specials to promote the party. This year may give us reason to focus on issues beyond the balloons and banners.

6. State budget: In spite of all their differences, the Republican state legislature and Democrat Governor Gretchen Whitmer reached an agreement on next

year's budget. This came as they made painful choices to cut and shift spending in response to the loss of revenue from the COVID-19 pandemic.

If it could happen in Michigan, could it happen in Washington? Maybe the partisan divisions can be healed. Sometimes a crisis can make the impossible seem possible.

7. Education: However schools open — or don't open — we are certain to see many more online classes and learning. While the online experience lacks the interaction of a real classroom, and there is unfairness for those who don't have technology, if it's done right, it's also possible that there can be some advantages to online classes. Students can pace themselves, and perhaps be more creative in how they respond to new ideas. It can offer flexibility for those with other demands on their time.

Online learning isn't perfect and it has some real problems, but there are at least a few advantages to using it. We may learn how to use it more effectively during the pandemic.

8. Working at home: While working from home has been a growing trend long before the pandemic hit, it has grown and, while it has its limits, there may be some real advantages.

A number of studies show workers are more productive when they work at

home, as they avoid long commuting times and traffic jams. The environment seems better with fewer cars emitting gasoline fumes on the expressways.

9. Essential workers: If nothing else, the pandemic has given us a new appreciation of who is — and isn't — an essential worker. All too often, those who are the lowest paid are expected to deliver the most essential services we all need. Maybe the pandemic will create the motivation to pay clerks, truck drivers, postal workers, waitresses, trash collectors, and medical workers more fairly.

10. Appreciation of the basics: As most of us stay home and live without the usual public events that fill our lives, we may learn that there is a lot to be said for a quiet afternoon at home, reading a book, working in the garden, writing letters to friends, and sharing our time with loved ones.

There is no guarantee that any of these things will happen. Each has the potential for more problems and turmoil, and any of these hopes could change in an instant. But if all else fails, there is still one piece of good news: if the Neowise comet has anything to do with this year's crisis, it won't be back for another 6,800 years.

EVM political columnist Paul Rozycki can be reached at paul.rozycki@mcc.edu



Plan your visit at SloanMuseum.org



Now open! Masks required



Open Wed./Thurs./Fri./Sat./Sun. Closed Mon. & Tues.		
Ticket Time:	Closed for Cleaning:	Ticket Time:
12:00-2:00 PM	2:00-3:00 PM	3:00-5:00 PM

Capacity is limited to 50 visitors per ticket time.

4190 E. Court St. Burton, MI 48509 | 810-237-3450 | SloanMuseum.org

THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

"This Month" highlights a selection of events available to our readers — beginning after our publication date of August 5. It is not an exhaustive list, rather a sampling of opportunities in the city which, due to the pandemic, is currently very limited. To submit events for our September issue, email your event to pisenber@gmail.com.

Flint Institute of Arts

Reopened July 6.

Open Mon. through Sat. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sun. 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Safety measures include temperature checks, mask requirement, enhanced cleaning and an air filtration system. There's a self-check test to take before visiting, which can be found in the "Reopening Guide" on their website.

Flint Institute of Arts

1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint

For info such as current exhibits and events and cost of admission, visit flintarts.org

Flint Farmers' Market

Reopened June 15.

Open Tues. and Thurs. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Sat. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Safety measures include allowing customers to only enter through one door and exit through another. Masks are required for all customers and staff. Purell sanitizing stations have been set up. There is limited public seating and restrooms will be closed for five minutes at the top of each hour for sanitizing.

Flint Farmers' Market

300 East First St., Flint

For more info visit flintfarmersmarket.com.

Flint Public Library

Reopened July 23.

Open Tues. through Thurs. 11 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Fri. and Sat. 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Masks and social distancing are required. Capacity is limited. Please plan on visiting one hour or less so that everyone gets a turn.

Flint Public Library

Courtland Center (corner of Center Rd. and Court St.)

is the temporary location during renovation

For more info visit fpl.info.

Buckham Gallery

Reopened July 15.

Open Wed. through Fri. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sat. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sun. 1 to 5 p.m.

Wearing masks required by visitors and staff. Entry to the gallery regulated by staff, and visitors limited to eight. Modifying hours or future closures may occur. Disposable masks and hand sanitizer available. Gallery brochures will be disposed of after use.

Buckham Gallery

121 W. Second St., Flint

For more info visit buckhamgallery.org.

MW Gallery

Reopened July 2.

Open Thurs. and Fri. 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sat. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Open 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. on the second Fri. of each month.

Masks and social distancing are required. Maximum capacity is 25 visitors at a time. Coat room and "Black Box Video Gallery" are closed. No food or beverages to be consumed. Hand sanitizer and masks available.

MW Gallery

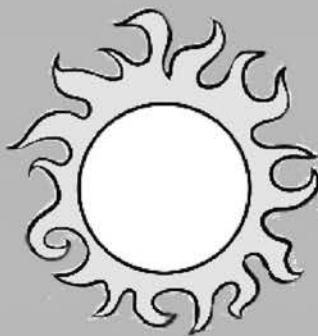
815 S. Saginaw St., Flint

For more info visit m-wc.org.

Lumosity

This site offers "brain training" games played on a computer, phone or tablet. There is a free membership in which a limited number of games are given each day. Paid subscription plans that give access to all of the games and progress monitoring can be purchased. Participation might actually improve the brain, but it's a lot of fun anyway.

For more info visit lumosity.com.



Ed Custer's East Village Magazine logo reimagined for each issue by Patsy Isenberg

Review

“Begin Again” blends James Baldwin’s urgent lessons and the call to face “the American Lie”

By Robert R. Thomas

“Begin Again,” by Eddie S. Glaude Jr. is a clear example of a historical genre I call living history, i.e., history being written in real time by living historians. Glaude is the James S. McDonnell Distinguished University Professor of African American Studies at Princeton, where he is also the chair of the Center for African American Studies and the chair of the Department of African American Studies.

Glaude’s perspective of history’s *déjà vu* all over again is stated in the book’s subtitle: “James Baldwin’s America And Its Urgent Lessons For Our Own.”

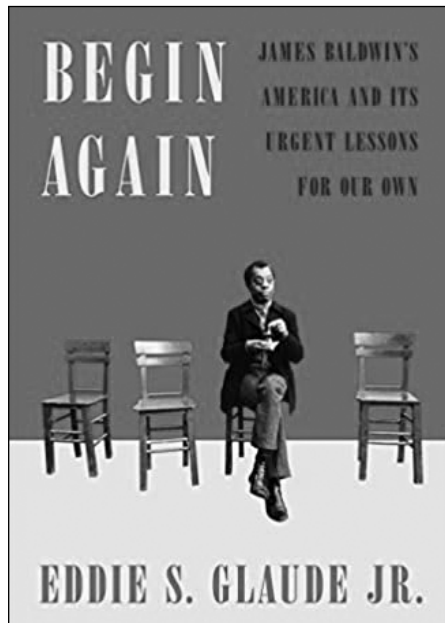
“It is, alas, the truth that to be an American writer today means mounting an unending attack on all that Americans believe themselves to hold sacred,” Baldwin wrote in 1962. “It means fighting an astute and agile guerrilla warfare with that American complacency which so inadequately masks the American panic.”

As Glaude notes, “In this sense, Baldwin’s view of the writer was a decidedly moral one. The writer puts aside America’s myths and legends and forces a kind of confrontation with the society as it is, becoming a disturber of the peace in doing so.”

A renowned American writer, Baldwin also became a brilliant critic of America’s conflicted condition: a so-called democracy in which one’s skin color determined the value of one’s life and justified America’s organizational system. The essence of this conflict is the contradiction at the heart of America’s self-understanding.

“Baldwin’s understanding of the American condition,” writes Glaude, “cohered around a set of practices that, taken together, constitute something I will refer to throughout this book as the lie. The idea of facing the lie was always at the heart of Jimmy’s witness, because he thought that it, as opposed to our claim to be the shining city on a hill, was what made America truly exceptional.”

Opening with historical examples of



various forms of the lie from revisionist history to the lies we tell ourselves, Glaude distills the forms as a value gap. He adds:

“If what I have called the value gap is the idea that in America white lives have always mattered more than the lives of others, then the lie is a broad and powerful architecture of false assumptions by which the value gap is maintained. These are narrative assumptions that support the everyday order of American life, which means we breathe them like air. We count them as truths. We absorb them into our character.”

As Glaude relates, Baldwin put the lie at the heart of the country’s founding in his 1964 essay “The White Problem.”

“The people who settled this country had a fatal flaw. They could recognize a man when they saw one. They knew he wasn’t ... anything else but a man; but since they were Christian, and since they had already decided that they came here to establish a free country, the only way to justify the role this chattel was playing in one’s life was to say that he was not a man. For if he wasn’t, then no crime has been committed. That lie is the basis of our present trouble.”

Glaude’s deft blending of Baldwin’s writing and his own life’s witness to expose the American lie offers myth-busting course corrections on the path to a different

America, then and now.

In “The Fire Next Time”, Baldwin says, “To accept one’s past — one’s history — is not the same thing as drowning in it; it is learning how to use it. An invented past can never be used; it cracks and crumbles under the pressures of life like clay in a season of drought. How can the American Negro’s past be used? The unprecedented price demanded — and at this embattled hour of the world’s history — is the transcendence of the realities of color, of nations, of altars.”

Glaude examines two critical moments of moral reckoning in our history, the Civil War/Reconstruction and the black freedom struggle of the mid-20th century, both of which failed to create a new America. He views our current national condition as a moral reckoning of the same magnitude.

“We should have learned the lesson by now that changing laws or putting our faith in politicians to do the right thing are not enough,” Glaude writes. “We have to rid ourselves, once and for all, of this belief that white people matter more than others, or we’re doomed to repeat the cycles of our ugly history over and over again.”

George Santayana, the Spanish-born American philosopher, was right to point out that “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” But what he didn’t say is that those who willfully refuse to remember become moral monsters.”

Baldwin put it this way: “Ignorance allied with power is the most ferocious enemy of justice.”

Glaude’s review of those times and their lessons through Baldwin’s dark and hopeful message is prescient to our current challenge to democracy. By illuminating the dark times in Baldwin’s life, “Begin Again” also witnesses to Glaude’s hope for that New Jerusalem after which he so mightily sought.

EVM board member and frequent reviewer Robert R. Thomas can be reached at capnz13prod@gmail.com.

Flint Poet Laureate Semaj Brown bringing “Word Power” online Aug. 13

How do words define and confine our reality?

Flint’s first poet laureate, Semaj Brown, will explore that question in “Word Power: How words define and confine our reality” in a virtual performance and interactive discussion at 7 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 13.

The event, sponsored by UM-Flint’s College of Arts and Sciences, will be accessible on Zoom or Facebook Live.

Attendees can register by going to <http://go.umflint.edu/wordpower>.

Brown will read from her book “Bleeding Fire! Tap the Eternal Spring of Regenerative Light: Conversations in Poetry and Prose,” and will include performances by Billie Scott Lindo, artistic director of Flint’s New McCree Theatre, and James Brown, a Flint-area physician and the author’s husband.

Following the performance, UM-Flint Associate Professor of Sociolinguistics Erica Britt will moderate a discussion on the power words exert over our everyday lives, probing why we choose the words we do, what names truly

mean, and who has the power to name.

Discussion panelists include former Flintside Managing Editor Alexandria Brown, UM-Flint student David Guster, and author Xzavier V. Simon.

Brown said the event will help participants gain insight into the power of ordinary words, according to a press release issued by UM-Flint.

“In this time of upheaval, in

this time of great change, time of grief and triumph — poetry is microphone, earbuds to the heart,” Brown said.

“Poetry is microscope, exposing the hidden and the hazardous. Poetry is magnet, drawing out, and dragging from us the pooling pus of oppression.

“We need our words to be art: sculpting and painting, fabric working new threads of freedom. We need our words to be science: measuring and dissecting, deconstructing the obsolete paradigms of injustice. We need words to be — OUR words,” she added.

Britt has published research on how language influences the world around us. She believes exploring how we speak can help us discover new things about ourselves and our community.

“Words have the power to shape how we view — and act — in the world around us. Words create our reality, so by creatively using language we have the power to redefine our experience,” Britt said.

— EVM Staff, from UM-Flint press release.



... John Lewis

(Continued from Page 16.)

Barack Obama’s ascension to the presidency in 2008 and 2012 signaled the increasing power of the nation’s black electorate. On his Inauguration Day in 2009, Obama sent a signed message to Lewis that read: “Because of you, John.”

In 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court weakened the provisions of the Voting Rights Act in its Shelby County v. Holder decision. The ruling eliminated provisions that were believed to have substantially increased voting turnout among minorities.

A brush with greatness

I’m certain that John Lewis was at the front of marchers as they arrived in Montgomery on March 25, 1965. I

didn’t notice, as my eyes were fixated on Dr. King as he waved to those of us on the sidewalks waiting to take our places in the long column of marchers that followed.

Thirty-seven years later, in 2002, while visiting the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, I had the opportunity to meet John Lewis, shake his hand, and introduce myself. It went something like:

“Hello, I’m Harold Ford from Flint, Michigan. I participated in the Selma-to-Montgomery March in 1965.”

Lewis was incredibly gracious and warm as he informed me that I had become the second Harold Ford he knew. His friend and colleague, Harold E. Ford, represented Tennessee in the U.S. House.

As I walked away from that brief conversation, I knew that I’d just brushed up against greatness.

I’ve fancied myself a social justice warrior all my adult years, but I’ve never been beaten, arrested, or jailed as was John Lewis dozens of times. The beating of this little, black man at the Edmund Pettus Bridge cast a giant shadow over this nation’s history, and changed my life forever. He absorbed those blows for me, and for you.

In light of voter suppression and interference in our elections, our nation would do well to honor the legacy of John Lewis by restoring and strengthening the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

EVM Education Beat reporter and reviewer Harold C. Ford can be reached at: hcford1185@gmail.com. He is retired from 43 years as an educator in the Beecher Community School District and from ten years as administrator of the Beecher Scholarship Incentive Program (BSIP).

Village Life

He changed my life:

A remembrance of John Lewis

By Harold C. Ford

“When you see something that is not right, not just, not fair, you have a moral obligation to say something. To do something.”

— John Lewis, December 2019

It was Sunday, March 7, 1965. I was an 18-year-old freshman student at Flint Community Junior College (FCJC). I still lived at my parents’ home with four younger siblings.

The images on the family’s black and white television had riveted my attention. Some 600 peaceful marchers came to a halt after crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. They were confronted by an imposing array of state troopers sent by Alabama’s segregationist governor, George C. Wallace. The troopers were augmented by a ragtag collection of local law enforcers, many of whom had just been deputized by Selma’s infamous racist sheriff, Jim Clark.

The marchers — all black, unarmed — knelt. The troopers and lawmen — all white, many on horseback, equipped with firearms, clubs, and gasmasks — lobbed canisters of tear gas into the line of marchers and charged. Men, women, and children were beaten indiscriminately.

In all, 17 were hospitalized and 50 treated for lesser injuries. Lynda Blackmon Lowery, age 14, needed seven stitches for a cut above her right eye and 28 stitches on the back of her head. The shameful episode became known to the nation as “Bloody Sunday.”

The most visible victim in those televised images was a small, black man in a tan trench coat at the front of the march. That man was 25-year-old John Robert Lewis.

“Conscience of the Congress”

John Lewis died last Friday from pancreatic cancer. He was 80.

Lewis was the youngest of the “Big Six” civil rights leaders that organ-

ized the 1963 March on Washington that also included A. Phillip Randolph, Whitney Young, Roy Wilkins, James Farmer, and Martin Luther King. Lewis survived them all.

Lewis was everywhere during the Civil Rights Movement. He participated in lunch counter sit-ins, freedom (bus) rides, and voting rights marches. He was beaten, arrested, and jailed dozens of times.

His crusade for social justice eventually led him to Congress in 1986, where he served 17 terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. In 2011, President Barack Obama awarded him the Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian award. Obama dubbed him the “Conscience of the United States Congress.”

Bloody Sunday

Bloody Sunday in Alabama was a wake-up call for me, a seminal moment in my life. Suddenly, the elevated schoolhouse lessons about American democracy — the “land of the free, home of the brave” — went crashing to the floor of my nation’s unfulfilled promises.

Images of the brutal beating suffered by Lewis and others stretched 850 miles, from Selma to suburban Flint, rupturing forever the naivete of this privileged white male. Lewis — the embodiment of Jesus, Thoreau, Gandhi, and King — summoned me from my sofa into a lifetime of social justice activism.

Within days, I joined eight other FCJC and UM-Flint students on a journey to the Selma-to-Montgomery Voting Rights march that grew out of the Bloody Sunday beatings. The 50-mile march ended in front of the Alabama statehouse in Montgomery, where a multiracial throng of some 30,000 demanded the right to vote for all.

In 1965, blacks made up approximately half the voting population of Dallas County within which Selma was located. But just 156 of Selma’s 15,000 black citizens of voting age were registered to vote.

Before its conclusion, the Selma campaign was bloodied further by three deaths. Black activist Jimmie Lee Jackson was beaten and shot by a white police officer; his death ignited the march. Northern white activists — Detroiters Viola Liuzzo and Unitarian Universalist minister James Reeb — were murdered by southern white racists.

In the seventh decade of my life, that week-long journey remains my most frightening experience ever. That fear, however, was tempered quickly by the emerging realization that black citizens in the Deep South experienced that fear every day of their lives.

Voting Rights Act

Only five months after Bloody Sunday, on Aug. 6, 1965, the Voting Rights Act (VRA) was signed into law. The act may well be the most effective civil rights legislation ever enacted in our country.

By the summer following the bill’s passage, 9,000 black citizens in Dallas County had registered to vote. Black voter registration in the entire U.S. soon went up by 61 per cent to more than 5 million.

In 1965, there were only 100 black elected officials in the entire continental U.S. By 1989, there were more than 7,200: 24 U.S. Representatives (including John Lewis); one governor; 101 state senators; 315 state representatives; nine state supreme court judges; 760 law enforcement officials; 299 mayors; and thousands of others.

(Continued on Page 15.)

LVIII: 8 (688 issues, 7,088 pages)