

# East Village

## Magazine

May 2022

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*Edwin D. Lester*

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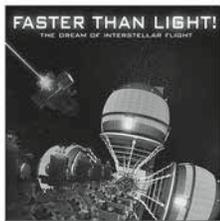
## SHOW SCHEDULE

OPEN TUES-SUN | CLOSED MON

MAY 1-29, 2022



Noon  
Sat & Sun



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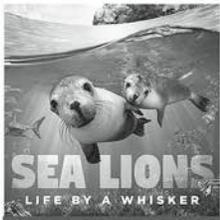
2 p.m.  
Sat & Sun



3 p.m.  
Tues-Sun



4 p.m.\*  
Tues-Sun



7 p.m.  
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8 p.m.  
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Commentary

A critical look for critics of the 1619 Project and Critical Race Theory

By Paul Rozycki

If there is any doubt that race plays a powerful role in American history, one only needs to examine the response to the 1619 Project from around the nation. Pulitzer Prize winning author Nikole Hannah-Jones, the creator of the 1619 Project, which explores American history through the lens of slavery and race, spoke at the Capitol Theater in Flint recently, as part of the Ballenger Eminent Persons Lecture Series.

Nearly all of those in attendance, and those who shared a Zoom workshop a day later, supported the idea that slavery and race were key elements of American history, that the effects were still being felt today, and much work needs to be done to correct it.

Opposition to the 1619 Project

Yet, that view is hardly universal. Nationwide, more than a few school board meetings have been disrupted by parents angry over plans to include the 1619 Project, or anything similar, in the curriculum. A number of states (including Michigan) have proposed legislation that would forbid teaching elements of the 1619 Project or anything labeled, or related to, Critical Race Theory.

It is worth noting that what is correctly called Critical Race Theory is a specific academic framework, used in law schools and graduate schools, not K-12 education. Some states would allow individual civil suits against teachers who might offend someone with a discussion of race, slavery,

or civil rights.

Others would deny federal funds to schools using the project. Just recently, Florida attempted to ban some math books because they were considered racially divisive. Some historians have taken exception to parts of the 1619 Project.

And perhaps that's part of the problem. It's one thing to preach to the choir, but how to reach everyone else?

For those who are inclined to reject the significance of the 1619 Project, take a deep breath and consider a few things.

There can be little doubt that slavery and race have been a major factor in American history as documented in the 1619 Project. Whether it's the writing of the U.S. Constitution, the creation of the U.S. Senate, the compromises over admitting new states, the Civil War, Reconstruction, Jim Crow laws, the Harlem Renaissance, the Brown v Board of Education case, the 1960s civil rights era, or today's Black Lives Matter movement, it's hard to find a decade where race wasn't a major issue.

To fully understand our history it is essential to include it. Yet, the critics who would ban the 1619 Project seem to feel that the project claims that slavery and race are the only threads of history that matter.

Many threads of history

Slavery and race play a central part of our history and an honest history can't ignore it. But

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**Photo of the Month: Crocuses the first sign of spring**

**(Photo by Edwin D. Custer)**

## Education Beat

# ***Critical deadline approaches for Flint Schools; board triad hints Northwestern to be Flint's high school campus; no criminal charges for Green***

*By Harold C. Ford*

In its recent meetings, the Flint Board of Education (FBOE) faced looming critical deadlines about staffing decisions and building closures, suggested Northwestern might become Flint's one high school, and heard that former president Danielle Green, accused of assaulting board treasurer Laura MacIntyre, will not be charged.

"We knew this day was coming," Carol McIntosh, vice president of the Flint Board of Education (FBOE) stated in an April discussion.

"If we don't close schools, it's a drain on our system; our deficit will increase ... Time is of the essence ... We need to take action," Chris DelMorone, FBOE assistant secretary-treasurer, agreed.

FBOE trustee Allen Gilbert weighed in. "Delay ... could be a critical mistake."

### **April 30 deadline on staffing**

That critical deadline is April 30. Per contractual obligation with the labor organization that represents its teachers, the United Teachers of Flint (UTF), the district must notify staff whose contracts will not be renewed.

Before notifying FCS staff of nonrenewed contracts, FCS will need to decide which of its eleven buildings to close and which will stay open for the 2022-23 school year that begins in August. Decisions about use of the buildings will, of course, impact

staffing decisions.

And before the district can wisely utilize its COVID relief funds (ESSER, Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds) –about \$140 million, according to FCS Assistant Superintendent Keiona Murphy, a sum more than that received by the City of Flint – to make desperately needed repairs at any of its school campuses, it needs to know what its building lineup will be for 2022-23.

Thus, decisions on the buildings lineup determine how the district uses ESSER monies for building upgrades and determines its staffing decisions.. All three elements are interrelated.

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# Education ...

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## Enhanced EDEP looming in the background

Looming in the background of the board's recent deliberations is the State of Michigan – particularly the Michigan Department of Treasury (DOT) — that has been monitoring the FCS financial profile for years. FCS has been in financial distress since taking out a \$20 million loan in 2014. At least two amended EDEPs (Enhanced Deficit Elimination Programs) were sent to the DOT in calendar year 2020.

FCS was one of 10 districts in Michigan (out of about 500) that were listed as “Current EDEP Districts” as of Sept. 1, 2020. DOT's forecast was ominous: “the District projects to remain in deficit until FY 2035-36.”

Significant loss of student population has contributed to the district's financial woes. Currently, each student who leaves FCS takes \$8,000-\$9000 in state aid. Recent counts of FCS student population hover near 3,000, less than one-third of school-age children who live in Flint.



**FCS Superintendant Kevelin Jones**  
(Photo by Tom Travis)

“We just have to keep moving,” said Kevelin Jones, FCS superintendent at the FBOE's Feb. 9, 2022 meeting. “But we have to determine what we're going to do with the buildings.”

On Dec. 15, 2021, Plante Moran Cresa (PMC), an auditing firm spe-

cializing in in real estate, reported that FCS is facing a 10-year capital need of \$174 million to properly maintain the 11 school buildings that currently house students. PMC told the FBOE it only needed four elementary schools; FCS currently has eight.

Any decisions about building closures will most likely lead to public outcry and controversy as they have in the past.

However, the FBOE does not appear to have determined what buildings to close, if any. “We have not really come up with what buildings are going to close, which ones we're going to keep open,” declared Carol McIntosh, board vice president. She also said decisions have not been made about renovations or costs.

Also, at the Feb. 9 meeting, the FBOE gave preliminary approval to a long-awaited strategic plan, its first since 2017. One week later, on Feb. 16, the plan was tabled. Details of the plan have yet to be released to the public. Formulation of the plan followed several public meetings where input was sought from stakeholders.



**FBOE member Chris DelMorone**  
(Photo by Tom Travis)

## “Kicking the can down the road”

“I believe that what we're doing as a district is kicking the can down the road,” Chris DelMorone, FBOE assistant secretary/treasurer, charged. “If you're not cutting personnel, if you're not closing buildings, I don't know where you cut.”

“We have some hard decisions to make,” DelMorone said. He reminded board members that employees are

entitled to 90 days' notice before the end of contracts in August, 2022.

McIntosh agreed. “We're not doing our due diligence,” she said. “We do just enough to make it and then the district is falling apart ...because the hard decisions and the heavy lifting, we just seem to abandon that.”

“We've got ESSER dollars and the sun's about to set on ESSER dollars,” warned Joyce Ellis-McNeal, board president.

## Significant state of disrepair

At most FBOE meetings in recent years, the dire state of infrastructure at Flint school buildings has been a topic. On Feb. 9, 2022, Dan Mack, account executive at Johnson Controls, reported on his company's efforts to address the infrastructure challenges in the past two years. “The state of disrepair was significant at most of the buildings,” Mack said.

Infrastructure topics that have been regular FBOE agenda topics have included: HVAC systems (heating, ventilation, air conditioning); electrical grids; plumbing and water quality; roofs; parking lots; technology needs; and athletic facilities.

At present, Doyle/Ryder Elementary students attend Potter Elementary while the district attempts to remediate black mold problems and bat infestations caused by a roof in disrepair at 121-year-old Doyle/Ryder built in 1901.

Collectively, Flint's buildings have 792 years of wear and tear; their average age is now 71. The average age of 84,000 school buildings in the U.S. is 49 years, based on a Nov. 2017 *Education Week* report.

## Mott Foundation buildings proposal yet to appear on FBOE agenda

Still, the Flint-based Mott Foundation's proposal to renovate or rebuild FCS school buildings at a cost of several hundred million dollars – first reported

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## Critical Look ...

(Continued from Page 3.)

it's not the only thread of American history. No history is.

Military history tells us who won or lost the battles and wars, and that's important. But it doesn't explain everything.

Political history tells us who won or lost an election and the policies that followed, and that matters a lot. But it doesn't explain everything.

Economic history tells us of stock market booms and busts, the rise of new businesses and the collapse of old ones, and the conflict between capital and labor, and that has a huge impact on the nation. But it doesn't explain everything.

Art history tells us who were the great painters and sculptors, and what inspired them, but no one thinks that explains all of American history.

You get the idea. There are many threads to American history, some are more important than others. But they are all part of the larger picture and they all are connected to the whole.

### Facing our history honestly

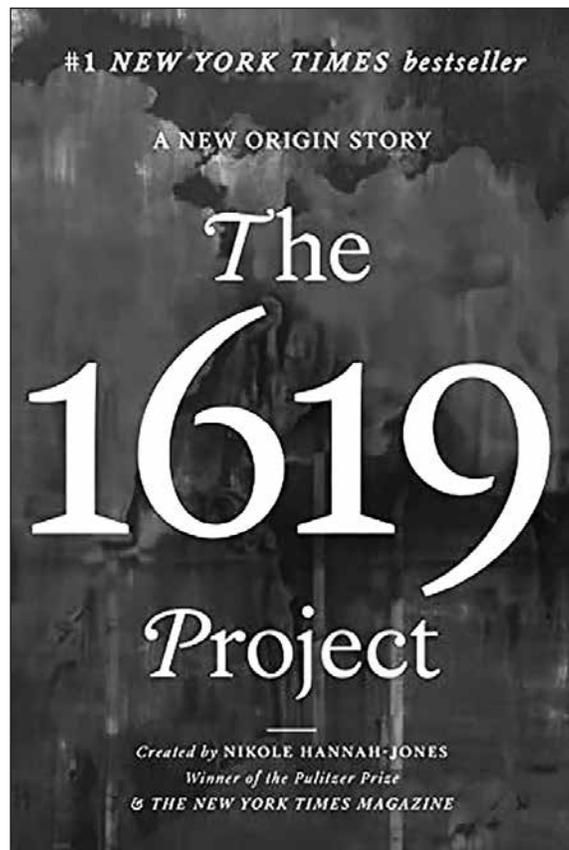
But a nation should be able to face its history honestly, and take pride in its great accomplishments, but also face up to its great failures and flaws. For the United States, slavery and race are one of our great flaws. Admitting to those doesn't erase a long list of admirable accomplishments over the centuries.

Indeed, facing those flaws honestly may, in itself, be a very admirable accomplishment. Not all nations can do that. Germany seems to have made a serious attempt to face up to its role in the evils of the Holocaust in the 1930s and 1940s, and is better for it. Other Eastern European nations have been less

forthcoming.

To be sure, the *1619 Project* isn't perfect. Some serious historians have taken exception to parts of it, particularly its view that the American Revolution was fought primarily to preserve slavery.

*The New York Times*, and Hannah-Jones have issued several corrections and clarifications, and she doesn't claim to be an historian or an educator. It's hardly a full history of race and slavery in the United States. Rather, it is a collection of essays and literary interpretations of America's racial history.



Cover of Nickole Hannah-Jones' book, *The 1619 Project*

(Photo by Paul Rozycki)

Because of that, some critics have misrepresented it, claiming that its goal is to divide Americans along racial lines, making whites feel guilty for being white, or that somehow it's all a Marxist plot. As a result, a number of state and local governments are considering laws that would dramatically limit

any critical discussion of race.

### The issues raised by the *1619 Project*

Yet, whatever its flaws, the *1619 Project* raises important questions and issues about race that have often been overlooked and brushed aside. Is it the last word on this part of American history? I doubt it. History is always an ongoing debate.

I can recall a history class where historians were still arguing over what caused the fall of the Roman Empire. Was it corruption of the emperors, overexpansion, military decline, the rise of Christianity, or lead pipes, among other possibilities? But if the *1619 Project* stimulates serious and honest discussion over the impact of race and slavery in our nation, then it has proven itself to be an important document.

But one thing it shouldn't do is shut off all discussion and debate over race, or portray American history as nothing but happy talk, with stories about how George Washington couldn't tell a lie when he cut down the cherry tree, or insist that the founding fathers were all flawless human beings, who designed a perfect government. We shouldn't pretend that once Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, or Martin Luther King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech, that all our racial problems were behind us.

Realizing that this may be the main message of the *1619 Project*, and working to resolve those problems should be a major responsibility of all Americans.

You might even say it was critical.

EVM Political Columnist Paul Rozycki can be reached at [paul.rozycki@mcc.edu](mailto:paul.rozycki@mcc.edu).

## Education ...

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by *East Village Magazine (EVM)* nearly a year ago in April and May of 2021 – has yet to appear on an FBOE agenda.



(Photo source: C.S. Mott Foundation)

At the center of the proposal was a plan to rebuild or renovate all of Flint’s 11 school buildings at a cost of \$20 million to \$25 million each.

Ridgway White, fourth-generation leader of the Mott Foundation, appeared at the board’s June 28, 2021 meeting and said, “My goal at the Mott Foundation is to ensure that every child in Flint has an equal opportunity for success ... Allow us to partner with you.”

On Sept. 8, 2021 McIntosh, then-FBOE president, signaled a resumption of talks with Flint’s largest foundation.

At the end of an Oct. 20, 2021 meeting, Laura MacIntyre, FBOE treasurer, introduced a motion to invite White to begin talks even though she is a frequent critic of foundation support for public schools. MacIntyre’s motion was approved by a unanimous 6-0 vote of those board members present.

### Short-term stability, long-term challenges

FBOE members have been warned by FCS central administrators not to equate the recent infusion of ESSER funds with financial solvency.

“This (ESSER funding) gives us the appearance that we are not operating in a deficit,” cautioned Ayunna

Dompfeh, then-FCS director of finances on Feb. 9. “I want to stress ... we are still in a deficit.”

Without Federal ESSER funds, Dompfeh warned, FCS would currently be operating at a \$21.5 million

annual deficit.

Dompfeh resigned her finance position, effective April 22, for a “personal” reason. She was one of two central administrators who filed



Northwestern High School sign

(Photo by Tom Travis)

“hostile work environment” charges against MacIntyre in August, 2021.

### Northwestern as Flint’s high school?

In something of a surprise at its April 20 meeting, some members of the Board of Education (FBOE) hinted that the next high school for Flint students will be the Northwestern campus located at G-2138 West Carpenter Road.

Three FBOE members – MacIntyre, McIntosh, and McNeal – suggested the Northwestern building on Carpenter Road is destined to be

reopened as a high school, perhaps replacing Southwestern.

Their comments emerged in response to a request and a motion by DelMorone to provide documentation to confirm the board’s vote to reopen Northwestern as the future site for Flint’s high school students.

[Discussions and votes by the FBOE to upgrade the kitchen, running track, and HVAC systems are on the public record. But, not so a vote to reopen Northwestern as a high school based on this reporter’s notes, recollections, and public records for the past nearly six years.]

“How soon can we get to Northwestern?” McNeal asked at the end of a report by Kevelin Jones, FCS superintendent. Jones said discussions with architects would be the next step about “the renovations that need to happen in Northwestern.”

“Regarding the renovations to Northwestern,” DelMorone said, “I do not believe the board has decided at this point what those renovations should be, let alone what the short-term and long-term use of Northwestern will be, if it will be used at all. So, I think we’re taking a little bit of a jump forward.”

“There are some who believe we need two high schools in Flint,” DelMorone continued, “and others who believe, one currently (Southwestern), two eventually.”

“Correct,” Jones said.

“Does anyone believe that we need Northwestern as a high school and a new high school at the Central-Whittier campus, to have two high schools?” DelMorone asked.

MacNeal interrupted DelMorone by declaring: “Point of order, point of information. We’re not having that discussion.”

Then MacIntyre immediately continued the discussion. “We did take action and vote,” she said “before the

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## Education ...

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three of you (DelMorone, Secretary Linda Boose, and Trustee Allen Gilbert) were on the board ... We are moving on Northwestern.”

DelMorone then asked for documents that would prove the FBOE voted to reopen Northwestern as a high school.

DelMorone’s initial request for information was eventually turned back by a 3-3 tie vote (a majority is needed for approval) of the six board members present. His request sparked “no” votes and a flurry of intense responses by MacIntyre, McIntosh, and McNeal that, at times, became emotional and angry as evidenced by raised voices. [This portion of the Apr. 20 meeting can be viewed on youtube.com starting at about the 1:30 mark. The discussion continues for about 30 minutes.]

• McIntosh: “We voted to reopen Northwestern ... about five times because all the bulk of the kids are on the north side and it’s going to take several years to build a new high school and Southwestern is dilapidated and it’s no students over there ... Southwestern is almost destitute ... We don’t have a new school. So, where we sending our kids? ... Every time it looks like this district is going to break out, survive, and get independent ... we stalemated.”

• MacIntyre: MacIntyre found DelMorone’s comments “dispiriting and disheartening” and judged his request for information as “taskwork dumped on Mrs. Elston (Monaca Elston, FCS executive assistant) “for things board members should do due diligence about on a personal basis ... (by) paying attention at meetings ... We have forces in the district and outside of the district (“partners” and “some nonprofit corporation”) ... that have been blocking some of the actions and decisions we have had to take ... We’re tired of our colonial overseers.”

• McNeal: “We did have that discussion and stuff before Chris DelMorone and Pastor Gilbert came on board ... Northwestern always been a high

school ... Nobody can stop this board ... Every time we get to just about this, here comes some interruption ... The enemy is these outside forces.”

“I just get angry,” MacIntyre said.



**School board member Allen Gilbert**  
(Photo by Tom Travis)

“I done got upset,” McNeal added.

DelMorone responded, in part, “There are ... board members and



**FBOE President Joyce Ellis-McNeal**  
(Photo provided by Ellis-McNeal.)

others who do not want to close a school this year, who do not want to lay anyone off, who do not want to cut pay ... How do you eliminate a deficit? ... We will be in the same position next year as we are now.”

### **MacIntyre: no criminal charges for Green**

At the very end of the meeting, DelMorone stirred the FBOE pot once again when he asked FCS to request a legal judgement from Michigan’s attorney general about the PPO (personal protection order), requested by MacIntyre, against former board president Danielle Green,

that prevents Green from attending board meetings. Morone said that, in effect, the PPO has removed Green as a board member.

DelMorone said there were only four legitimate ways to remove an elected board member: recall; felony conviction; resignation; or removal by Michigan’s governor.

MacIntyre opposed DelMorone’s motion arguing there has been



**FBOE member, Laura MacIntyre**  
(Photo provided by Laura MacIntyre)

no remorse shown or acceptance of responsibility for the alleged misdeed. DelMorone’s motion failed on a 5-1 vote. Only DelMorone voted in favor of the request for a legal opinion.

MacIntyre said Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton, after a review of the case, does not plan to press criminal charges against Green. Green allegedly assaulted MacIntyre at a board committee of the whole meeting March 23.

The next meetings of the FBOE will start at 6:30 p.m. May 11 (Committee of the Whole) and May 18 (regular meeting) at Accelerated Learning Academy, 1602 S. Averill Ave., Flint, MI 48503. Meetings can be seen remotely; register at the district’s website. Recordings of meetings can be viewed on YouTube.

*EVM Reporter Harold C. Ford can be reached at [hcford1185@gmail.com](mailto:hcford1185@gmail.com).*

# Public speakers plead with council to approve updated zoning ordinance

By Tom Travis

A passel of young people from across Flint attended the last city council committee meeting to show their support and rally the council to approve the new proposed zoning ordinance. The new ordinance is expected to be on the council's agenda the first week of May.

In a nearly unanimous council response each council member chimed in agreeing that the city needs updated zoning codes.

One of the many public speakers, Travis Gilbert declared, "One of the most effective ways we can move our city forward would be to pass the new zoning ordinance."

If approved by the council, the City of Flint indeed will soon have a new zoning ordinance. The present zoning ordinance was adopted in 1963 and hasn't been updated since 1974.

## One public speaker described how zoning laws personally affected his life

**Cade Surface**, a Fifth Ward resident, described his past living situations: renting a duplex, renting an apartment, sharing a house with others and renting a room in a large house. Before that, he said, "I lived in my car." Surface now owns a home in the historic Carriage Town Neighborhood.

"I needed this neighborhood in order to build the kind of life I have now. And I truly give credit to the supportive nature of Carriage Town to be able to have a life that I didn't know I could have 10, 15 years ago.

"But beyond just places to live I have also had a neighborhood that



Public speakers waiting to call for support of a new zoning ordinance at Wednesday's council committee meeting

(Photo by Tom Travis)

allows me to walk to a park, to walk to work. I've been able to walk to school, to get groceries, to get coffee and see my neighbors, to go to the hospital, to vote. I've only been able to do this because the laws that govern the use of the land allow for the diversity of uses and allow for a place that really nourishes a person," Surface said.



Director of Planning and Development, Suzanne Wilcox, speaking to city council, from a 2019 meeting

(Photo by Tom Travis)

Surface said that he considers himself "lucky" that he can live in the kind of neighborhood he described. "You all know that there used to be dozens of neighborhoods in Flint that allowed for the type of life I just described. But unfortunately a lot of those neighborhoods were wiped out based

on the 1974 zoning codes that currently rule the land.

"We know that those codes are based off the prejudices and trends of the 1950s and 1960s — trends that certainly were not considering everybody in our community. And were not considering the realities of our communities today. The draft code that is before us is not perfect, but it is far better than what we're living with now."

## Wilcox outlines proposed zoning ordinance

In last Wednesday's city council committee meeting Planning and Development Director, Suzanne Wilcox, along with several of her staff, presented to the city council the key components to the new zoning law and the importance of up-to-date zoning laws.

"The zoning ordinance is the last piece of the master plan that has not yet been implemented," Wilcox said.

"The Master Plan is a community vision in a 20-year period," she said. "It was adopted unanimously in 2013 by the city council. State law requires municipalities to have a Master Plan. It lays the ground work for future development. It sets land use guides too; the planning commission is responsible for developing it and the city council adopts it,

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# Tendaji Talk tackles Critical Race Theory

By Harold C. Ford

**“Any anti-racist effort is being labeled as critical race theory.”**

—Jonathan Chism, assistant professor of history, University of Houston-Downtown,  
co-editor of *Critical Race Studies Across Disciplines*, 2021, Lexington Books

The most recent Tendaji Talk tackled the tough, divisive topic of critical race theory (CRT) during a 90-minute, virtual meeting of 15 Flint-area persons. Joyce Piert, formerly an instructor at Beecher Schools and the University of Michigan-Flint, and Thomn Bell, currently director of diversity and inclusion at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, facilitated the free-flowing discussion.



**Joyce Piert**

(A screenshot from the virtual meeting.)

The March 8 Tendaji Talk served as an appropriate preview for the appearance of Nikole Hannah-Jones at Flint’s Capitol Theatre held April 13. Hannah-Jones is the Pulitzer Prize-winning creator of the *1619 Project*. It began in 2019 at the *New York Times Magazine* upon the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Africans on American shores. She discussed the issues raised at the March Tendaji Talk.

## Five tenets of CRT

Piert, who now resides in Minnesota, began the discussion by presenting five tenets that undergird

CRT:

1. Race is embedded in American society beginning with the U.S. Constitution;
2. Race is a social, not a biological, construct;
3. Oral story-telling by African Americans is an alternative way of telling our nation’s history;
4. Religion, gender, race, and other human characteristics – and understanding how they intersect with one another – is essential to understanding our nation’s story;
5. “Whiteness is property,” Piert concluded. “There is some benefit to whiteness.”



**Thomm Bell**

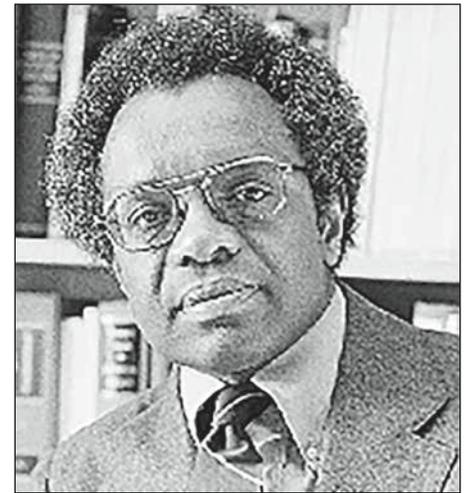
(Photo source:

*Whiteness In America* podcast website:  
[www.whitenessinamerica.com](http://www.whitenessinamerica.com))

Bell added a sixth tenet that he titled “interest convergence.” He used the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1954 decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education* as an example.

Bell explained that the *Brown* decision only happened because

whites finally felt comfortable with the eventual outcome of the case. Though seemingly counterintuitive, the movement toward integration, as modeled in the *Brown* decision, actually helped to maintain systems of white supremacy.



**Derrick Bell**

(Photo source: *New Yorker Magazine*)

“It was not altruistic,” Piert agreed, about the *Brown* decision. “It was not a moral act.” She explained the pre-*Brown* image of a segregated nation was not helpful in promoting the U.S. model of a capitalist democracy around the globe.

## CRT’s historical roots

Piert credited the work of Derrick Bell, an attorney, scholar, and civil rights activist, for formulating the initial theoretical framework of CRT. “He was the catalyst for this study,” she said.

According to a May 18, 2021 piece in *Education Week* titled “What is Critical Race Theory, and Why Is It Under Attack?” by Stephen Saw-

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## Tendaji ...

(Continued from Page 10.)

chuck, CRT emerged from scholarship and legal analysis in the late 1970s and early 1980s:

“The basic tenets of critical race theory, or CRT, emerged out of a framework for legal analysis in the late 1970s and early 1980s created by legal scholars Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Richard Delgado, among others ... CRT also has ties to other intellectual currents, including the work of sociologists and literary theorists who studied links between political power, social organization, and language. And its ideas have since informed other fields, like the humanities, the social sciences, and teacher education”

### “Political bastardization”



Kimberle Crenshaw

(Photo source: *Vanity Fair* magazine)

*Vanity Fair* magazine suggested the attacks on Crenshaw and other CRT advocates are a “political bastardization” of their work. “This is about a weapon they’re (critics) using to hold on to power,” Crenshaw told *Vanity Fair*. “You cannot fix a problem you cannot name.”

Name-calling and catchphrases by CRT opponents – “political correctness”, “cultural Marxism”, “woke”, among others – appear to

galvanize the political right. Such charged terms, used by any political faction, serve to energize political bases but oversimplify complex issues and dismiss concepts and movements that deserve deeper, more careful consideration.

“We have successfully frozen their brand ... into the public conversation and are steadily driving up negative perceptions,” said one conservative, anti-CRT activist. “We will eventually turn it toxic.”

Patricia Williams, a key CRT scholar, labeled such mischaracterization as “definitional theft.”

### “We want truth telling”

Piert, now a resident of Minnesota, has heard the criticism. “This idea that children are being made to feel guilty ... that’s not what critical race theory does,” she said. “We do want history told (but) we want truth-telling.”

Bell, creator of a “Whiteness in America” podcast, said CRT is but one tool “to disentangle, challenge, uproot, and understand from both an academic and a lived experience .. on how to disrupt and dismantle systemic white supremacy

“When you say you’re banning critical race theory,” Bell said, “you’re continuing to perpetuate that dehumanization ... allowing dominant identity culture to run the gamut on how things are portrayed in the culture.”

### “Backlash”

“This is backlash,” Piert said about myriad efforts to ban anything that resembles an examination of America’s racial history.

On April 6, the legislature of South Dakota became the latest state to consider restrictions on critical race theory in K-12 classrooms as Kristi Noem, the state’s governor, issued an executive order instructing the state’s Department of Education to review teacher trainings, content standards,

and other educational materials to ensure they are free of “divisive concepts” of race. This action came after the South Dakota legislature failed to pass a law banning CRT from K-12 classrooms.

*Chalkbeat*, an American non-profit news organization, is tracking efforts in 36 states “to restrict education on racism, bias, the contributions of specific racial or ethnic groups to U.S. history, or related topics.”

Both Piert and Bell said that an effort is underway in the local Republican Party to formulate and introduce resolutions that contain anti-CRT language. A link to the Republican National Committee at the local party’s website takes the reader to a resolution that, in part, declares: “Critical race theory is built on ... Marxism ... is divisive and separates Americans.”

The political avalanche of anti-CRT laws and executive orders may have been unleashed on Sept. 22, 2020 when then-President Donald Trump signed such an executive order. “Students in our universities are inundated with critical race theory,” he said. “This is a Marxist doctrine holding that America is a wicked and racist nation.” Joe Biden vacated the order on his first day in office.

### “Battleground”

“The education system is the real battleground for all of this,” said Tendaji Talk organizer Robert Brown, an educator at Michigan State University. “If you control education, then you control the minds and perpetuate what is occurring ... constricting education.”

The opposition of right-wingers to CRT is, according to Bell, “a call to action to folks ... that are interested in activism, in antiracism work.”

EVM Reporter Harold C. Ford can be reached at [hcford1185@gmail.com](mailto:hcford1185@gmail.com).

## Zoning Meeting ... (Continued from Page 9.)

explained Wilcox.

“Getting a zoning code adopted will give the city a land use plan that reflects the Master Plan,” she said. “Right now they are not in congruence, so right now we are operating under a Master Plan with a completely different zoning code that does not reflect the city of Flint,” Wilcox told the council.

### What is a Zoning Code?

Zoning ordinances are regulations that determine how a parcel of land can be used and what it can be used for. The primary purpose for zoning codes is to protect the health, safety and welfare of residents, Wilcox explained.

It is meant to create stability within the districts, so that each district allows for a predictable range of uses and building types. Zoning Ordinances are the primary method by which the

Master Plan is implemented, according to the city’s planning and development website.



**A north end Flint neighborhood off Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd**

(Photo by Tom Travis)

### Updated zoning ordinance comes from planning sessions held in 2013

Wilcox explained, “In the planning sessions held in 2013, what was overwhelmingly heard from residents is they want ‘a sense of place’ in their neighborhoods. For each neighborhood in the city of Flint there will be a place to shop, to work, live, enjoy recreation — that was

the basis used to design the new place based map. The new zoning ordinance puts into place what the residents have said they want to see in their neighborhoods.”

### Entrepreneurs, real estate developers, young business owners and housing professionals appear before council

A group of young adults filled the public speaking time during a recent city council committee meeting. They all called for the council to approve the newly proposed zoning ordinance.

**Joel Arnold**, a Seventh Ward resident, said, “It’s been five years since the planning commission sent it to council and today we’re still working under land use laws from 1974. A lot of times what happens is that when people want to come and invest in our city and invest in our neighborhoods and they request zoning changes they have to come before you [the city council] which takes time

(Continued on Page 13)



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This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

## Zoning Meeting ...

(Continued from Page 12.)

and resources and often those folks will just go somewhere else. We want those investments in our city.

“This zoning ordinance is an opportunity for us to see investments whether it’s new homes, green neighborhoods, traditional neighborhoods, mixed neighborhoods, new businesses on each side of our city. This is a real opportunity for us to update our laws get a zoning ordinance that reflects with the residents of today.”



**The Flint River running out of downtown Flint past the historic Carriage Town Neighborhood and Water Street walking bridge**

(Photo by Tom Travis)

**Sarah Scheitler**, a Seventh Ward resident employed by the Flint River Watershed Coalition, said, “The FRWC was involved in the proposed zoning code especially in regard to water quality content. Prior developments in our city have caused significant pollution in our waterways, in air quality and contamination in our soils.

“All of these have negatively impacted our public health. This was allowed to happen, in part, because of a lack of environmental protections in our current zoning code,” Scheitler contended. “If implemented, the updated code will ensure our waterways, soils and air experience no further degradation from new development or industry. This code will bring Flint into the twenty-first century and build a healthier, more sustainable city.

**Moses Timlin**, a Seventh ward resident said, “No zoning code is ever perfect. But what good zoning codes do is that they allow housing and buildings of all types and they make the development process shorter and more transparent. And I believe the update to the zoning code

will accomplish those things.

“When you look at zoning it can become very ambiguous,” Timlin said. “Sometimes people don’t even know what you’re talking about. But what zoning does do is that it dictates how land can be developed or redeveloped.

“In looking at zoning and how it can effect cost and quality of housing this is a very critical time to look at zoning and how it can help shorten development processes, how it can empower staff that are already at low-capacity to do things administratively.

“COVID has seen cost increases across the board making new development very difficult. Zoning can actually be a part of helping eliminate some of those costs that developers face,” Timlin concluded.

**Kristin Stevenson**, a Fourth Ward resident, reading her comments from her phone, explained to the council that a zoning code is, “meant to help keep a city’s character as it changes or grows and to be updated as time goes on. The character of this city is much different than the character of 1974, when the current code was adopted. We need a code that fits the character of Flint of the twenty-first century.”



**EVM file photo from the east side of Flint**

(Photo by Tom Travis)

**Emily Doerr**, a Fifth Ward resident said, “I’m not a planner but I am in real estate development, an entrepreneur, and opening a business in Flint. I’m here to say zoning matters. It makes it harder to open a business when you want the business to operate in a building that is but this current zoning code requires 10 or 15 parking spots and you know that the nine parking spots that will fit is enough but that would actually add so much more cost. And we need to have entrepreneurs open businesses in our city and I know all

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## Village Life ...

(Continued from Page 16.)

### Genesee County lacks programs for first responder suicide prevention

Barton had to leave to attend a Genesee County Fire Chief’s meeting where chiefs from 16 area fire departments gather for a monthly meeting.

As he left, Barton said, “It’s ironic but on the meeting’s agenda is a presentation by a group to help departments deal with and prevent officer suicide.” Barton said the agenda was



**Fire Chief Ray Barton speaks to city council**

(Photo by Tom Travis)

published a week ago, just before Stenger’s suicide.

Presently Genesee County does not have special support programs in place to assist first responder departments for

preventing suicide, Barton said.

According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention it is one of the top 10 causes of death in most age groups. In 2016, 75 fire-fighters died in the line of duty, per National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF) statistics. The Firefighter Behavioral Health Alliance reports that 139 were reported to have died from suicide in the same time period, and these numbers are likely under-reported due to the stigma surrounding suicide and because of the different ways in which deaths are categorized and reported. This means that firefighters were nearly one and a half times more likely to die from suicide than they were to die in the line of duty.

If someone you know is struggling and need to talk, call the National Suicide Prevention line, 1-800-273-8255 It’s confidential and available 24/7.

EVM Managing Editor Tom Travis can be reached at [tomntravis@gmail.com](mailto:tomntravis@gmail.com).

# THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

A selection of events available to our readers is highlighted — beginning after our publication date of May 4. It's a sampling of opportunities in the city. To submit events for our June issue, email info about your event to [pisenber@gmail.com](mailto:pisenber@gmail.com) by May 26.

## Applewood Estate

Season opens Thurs., May 5.

Thurs. through Sat. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sun. 1-4 p.m.

Estate is operated by the Ruth Mott Foundation and offers self-guided tours of the gardens and inside the house and planned fun, educational outings for students of all grade levels.

Applewood Estate

1400 E. Kearsley St., Flint

Call 810-233-3835 or visit

[ruthmottfoundation.org/applewood](http://ruthmottfoundation.org/applewood)

for more info.

## The New McCree Theatre

May 5-21, Thurs. and Fri. at 7 p.m.,

Sat. at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

“Sanctified” is a comical yet compelling glimpse into the heart of a small, southern, black Baptist church and its congregants.

Tickets: \$10

The New McCree Theatre

4601 Clio Rd., Flint

Call 810-787-2200 or visit

[TheNewMcCreeTheatre.com](http://TheNewMcCreeTheatre.com) for more info.

## Flint United Basketball Club

Home games in May are Fri., Sat. and Sun.,

May 13-15 and 20-22.

Fri. and Sat. games are at 7 p.m.,

Sun. games are at 3 p.m.

Dort Financial Center

3501 Lapeer Rd., Flint

810-744-0580

Tickets: \$16-\$40

For more info visit

[exploreflintandgenesee.org](http://exploreflintandgenesee.org)

or [facebook.com/flintunitedbasketball](https://www.facebook.com/flintunitedbasketball).

## Capitol Theatre

Sat., May 21, 7:30 p.m.

**Classic Rock City with Mick Adams & The**

**Stones** was voted among top ten tribute bands

in the world by *Backstage Magazine*.

This band presents a tribute to the Rolling Stones.

Tickets: \$23 to \$60

Fri., May 20, 7 p.m.

**Walt Disney's "Mary Poppins" will be shown.**

Tickets: Adults \$10, Children \$3

(50% discount for Genesee County residents)

The Capitol Theatre

140 E. 2nd St., Flint

Call 810-237-7333 or visit

[capitoltheatreflint.com](http://capitoltheatreflint.com).

## Genesee County

### Recycle Day

Sat. May 14,

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Household hazardous waste, electronics and paint can be dropped off at Carman-Ainsworth Middle School. More dates to come.

Call 810-762-7744, email

[recycle@co.genesee.mi.us](mailto:recycle@co.genesee.mi.us), or

visit [gcmpc.org/environmental](http://gcmpc.org/environmental)

## MW Gallery

Now through Aug. 20

Thurs. and Fri. 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Sat. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

During 2nd Fri. Artwalk 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

“Whatever Gets You Through the Night”

This collection consists of figurative and abstract artworks that convey both sources of worry and the ways people find relief from it. Numerous artists are featured in this exhibit.

MW Gallery

815 S. Saginaw St., Flint

Call 810-835-4900 or visit

[m-wc.org/mwgallery](http://m-wc.org/mwgallery).



Ed Custer's *East Village Magazine* logo is reimaged for each issue by Patsy Isenberg.

**I GOT THE SHOT**  
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(Photo by Mike Naddeo)

Visit the Genesee County Health Department website at: [www.gchd.us/coronavirus](http://www.gchd.us/coronavirus) for information on COVID testing, COVID vaccination and COVID information and statistics.

## Zoning Meeting ...

(Continued from Page 13.)

of you want that.” Doerr added, “Across the city, not just downtown.”

Referring to her “day job” as a real estate developer, Doerr said, “We need to make sure that people that want to buy homes here but maybe don’t want a single family home but they want row home, a town home, maybe a ‘tiny home.’ Maybe they want to be a home owner.

“Flint is a city of builders,” Doerr asserted. “We’ve always allowed for people in Flint to build things. That’s actually our strength. My parents were raised here. I grew up here. We build things here. We need to let our home owners build accessory dwelling units above their garages if they want to rent to a tenant to be able to make money.”

**Travis Gilbert**, a Fifth Ward resident said, “I’m here to show my support for the new zoning ordinance. [The 1974 zoning ordinance] was made at a time when Flint and the United States looked very different than from

what it does today and today we have different needs.” Gilbert said he believes the zoning code no longer serves the community.

“I think one of the most effective ways we can move our city forward would be to pass the new zoning ordinance,” Gilbert added. “A lot of new business, a lot of new start-ups that would like to move into neighborhoods have to jump through hoops in order to have to actually start their business. This discourages people from actually making investments in Flint and further slows down our economy.”

**Derek Dorhman**, a Fifth Ward resident, said, “I’m here to support the new zoning ordinance and it’s my hope that you will too. It’s long over due and it will help set Flint on a path for success. It will allow for more flexibility and growth. It will also help remove barriers for those who want to invest in their city.”

*EVM Managing Editor Tom Travis can be reached at [tomntravis@gmail.com](mailto:tomntravis@gmail.com).*

## Unclassified Ads

### Apartment for Lease

Two-bedroom second story apartment for lease on Avon near Kearsley St. Available in July. Can be partially furnished. Has a large upper deck, off-street parking, washer, dryer, storage. Walk three blocks or less to U of M-Flint, MCC, Cultural Center, library, downtown, Farmers’Market, three parks, and bike paths. Easy freeway access. References and credit check requested. \$650 per month plus utilities.

E-mail [ecuster@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ecuster@sbcglobal.net) or write:

Apartment  
Box.11  
720 E. Second St.  
Flint MI 48503.

### Large Two-Bedroom Apartment for Lease

(1,100 sq. ft.) On the second floor, there is a basement laundry, off street parking. On cul-de-sac Avon St. near Kearsley St, walk four blocks or less to UM-Flint, MCC, Farmers Market, downtown, Cultural Center, historic Applewood horticulture estate and four parks. Easy freeway access. Quiet, mature tenant(s) sought, on site management, references and credit check requested. \$775 per month plus electricity. Heat and water/sewer included.

E-mail [ecuster@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ecuster@sbcglobal.net) or write:

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# Artwalk



**May 13, 6-8:30p**

**ERNEST CARTER**  
photography

**GILDA TUCKER**  
violin

---



**June 10, 6-8:30p**

**CARLA HARDEN**  
mixed media

**TERRENCE STEWARD**  
baritone bass

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## Village Life

# Fire Chief Ray Barton and Flint Fire Department grieve the loss of fellow firefighter John Stenger

By Tom Travis

In a somber and poignant moment during last week's city council meeting, Flint Fire Chief Ray Barton shared, at the request of council, news of a recent untimely death of one of Flint's long-time firefighters, John Stenger.

In a hushed voice, Chief Barton explained, "Our firefighter lost his life to suicide." He said more first responders around the country die by suicide than in the line of duty.

Stenger, 50, died by suicide on Sunday, April 17. He was a decades-long Flint firefighter and a player on the Flint Rouges Rugby Football team. A brief online memorial stated that Stenger's family will release an obituary at a later date.

Barton explained Flint's first responders come face to face with many traumatic and tragic situations. Barton said that in one recent week, Flint's Fire Station 6 responded to two different calls where infants died. One infant was lost to SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) and the other died by a grandmother rolling over onto the infant.

Barton said he had been talking with Stenger every day for three weeks before he died. The Chief said he even talked with Stenger the day before he died by suicide.

### Council members express condolences and care

Councilperson Judy Priestley (Ward 4) told Chief Barton, "As someone who has suffered from depression in the past there is nothing you could have done.

"It's not something I talk about often. I had it planned and I knew what I was going to do but God stopped me. When you're in those depths of despair there's not much you can do."



Firefighter John Stenger

Chief Barton responded that he understood that too. He went on to explain, "John walked around like he didn't care about anything but really he cared about everything. John Stenger took care of the Frost Street neighborhood. Those people will miss him."

Chief Barton recalled that Stenger would come to him and want to pay for dumpsters to be placed in

neighborhoods so neighbors could clean up. But he never wanted anyone to know that he had paid for the dumpsters. Barton said, "He didn't just do this one time. He did it every year. His mom was in Kith Haven and even after she died he still went there and donated and did things."

Councilperson Ladel Lewis (Ward 2) said, "Thank you for being transparent and talking about suicide. Talking about suicide is a very difficult discussion."

"It's a very tough job. Going to homes, like just seeing infants, just seeing people at their worst, and they're dependent on you to make it better ... You take home a lot of trauma. So I understand. And I also would like to thank you for being transparent about suicide because suicide is a very hard discussion that we don't have."

Councilperson Lewis offered as a resource St. Marks Baptist Church at McClellan and Dupont streets. Lewis said the church has "a strong suicide prevention program with counselors and therapists on call. So if you are not okay or have a family member that's not okay this is a resource."

Councilperson Eric Mays (Ward 1) offered prayers for Stenger's family and the fire department.

Mays added, "Let's lean on each other because you got some terrible people out here. The people will put pressure on you, the job will put pressure on you, and then you have family instances, and so I appreciate you telling this city ... that it was suicide."

*(Continued on Page 13.)*

**LIX: 4 (708 issues, 8,020 pages)**