Commentary

Dysfunction and Democracy from Flint to Washington.
Is Flint a model for the nation?

By Paul Rozycki

For much of the 20th Century Flint was a leader for much of what mattered in the nation. It was home for one of the largest manufacturing corporations in the world. It was the place where one of the most progressive and influential labor unions in the nation stood up to that corporation and negotiated a labor agreement. It was known for its premier public school system. It was where a major foundation built a Cultural Center that rivaled many larger cities. It was where the first Black mayor of a major city was chosen.

Dysfunction nationally

Today that reputation as a leader may still hold true, but in a very different direction. In recent weeks, we watched the U.S. House fumble for four days, in its attempt to pick a speaker, as Kevin McCarthy sold his soul to a handful of Trump loyalists. Yet, the dysfunction we see in the national government has been part of Flint politics for some time.

Will the turmoil over choosing a speaker make it more difficult to for the U.S. House to produce any meaningful policies? At the moment it seems the likely prospect. To win the speakership, McCarthy gave up a lot of power to a small cluster of Republicans who may limit his options for the future. After 15 votes on what normally is a routine process, will they be able to agree on any major policies? The last time the House took this long to pick a speaker was just before the Civil War.

Dysfunction locally

The Flint City Council has become a poster child for governmental dysfunction and conflict as meetings drift into the early morning hours with endless requests for “point of information” as members accuse each other of racism, and some are led out in handcuffs by police.

Perhaps learning from the city council, the Flint Board of Education has shown similar

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A new leadership team was impaneled at the annual organizational meeting of the Flint Board of Education (FBOE) on Jan. 11, 2023.

Newly-elected members of a five-person electoral slate were chosen to fill three of four executive officer positions. Four of five slate members – Melody Relerford, Dylan Luna, Terae King, and Michael Clack – along with non-slate candidate Claudia Perkins, filled a single board vacancy and swept four incumbents from their positions on the panel. New officers:

- Clack was picked to fill the board president position by a 4-3 vote over Relerford. Voting for Clack were Perkins, Clack, and returning board members Laura MacIntyre and Joyce Ellis-McNeal. McNeal, who nominated Clack, and MacIntyre are the only holdovers from the previous iteration of the board; they are not up for reelection until their terms end in December, 2026.
  - Perkins was unanimously chosen as the panel’s new secretary following her nomination by MacIntyre and Relerford’s declination of a nomination made by Luna.

- King will fill the vice-president position during 2023. King nominated himself; Ellis-McNeal was nominated by Perkins who seemed to align herself with Mac-Intyre and McNeal to form a voting bloc during this first meeting of the newly-constituted FBOE (see below).
  - Luna was chosen by a 4-3 vote to fill the position of treasurer; he was nominated by King. McNeal gained three votes following nomination by MacIntyre. Thus, all four of the executive officer positions were filled by
newcomers who were not members of an often-tumultuous panel in recent years. New officers Clack, King, Perkins, and Luna are all serving their first terms on Flint’s education board.

Emerging voting blocs?

It’s early, but Flint board-watchers are paying attention to how the new panel lines up in terms of voting blocs. After only one meeting, it’s too soon to tell. However, during the election process, newcomer Perkins often aligned with incumbents MacIntyre and McNeal during the new board’s first meeting:

- McNeal nominated Perkins to chair the election process. Eventually, Superintendent Kevelin Jones was unanimously chosen to chair the election process until the selection of Clack as board president.
- Perkins nominated McNeal for the vice-president position. Perkins, McNeal, and MacIntyre all voted for McNeal who finished second to King.
- After Rlerford declined the nomination for secretary, Perkins was voted into the position by a 7-0 vote following her nomination by MacIntyre.
- MacIntyre nominated McNeal for the treasurer position – a nomination that received support from MacIntyre, McNeal, and Perkins during the voting process. MacIntyre had declined a nomination by McNeal. Luna won the position with votes from all four of the members who ran as a slate in the Nov. 2022 election.

Other less visible positions were also filled during the meet-
speakers referenced the challenges during public comments:

- Flint Mayor Sheldon Neeley proposed a “robust partnership” between the city and the school district by working “together in a more robust way … You have a tremendous responsibility and you need help.”
- Lottie Ferguson, chief resilience officer, City of Flint, asserted, “If we build a net of resilience around our kids … we can ensure that they have exactly what they need to have the potential … that they can grow to.”
- King, new FBOE vice president, said, “Let’s work together to build our district … Let’s move the district forward.”
- Perkins, new FBOE secretary said, “I’m an advocate to help get our community back on the right track … Unity is the key and respect is at the top of the list.”
- Relerford, new FBOE trustee, said, “Sometimes you’ve got to pivot, and I hope everyone’s prepared to pivot at certain times.”
- Luna, new FBOE treasurer, acknowledging the sweep of all FBOE incumbents from office in the November, 2022 election, said, “I think that speaks to the desire for change.”
- Clack, new FBOE president offered a concise goal: “Bring trust … a sense of pride … back into the district.”

“If To teach in Flint can be demoralizing.”

If Flint schools are to restore “a sense of pride” they have some work to do. The public testimony of an FCS graduate and current staff member Nadia Rodríguez indicated the mountainous task ahead for the new board in a short speech she titled “To teach in Flint … a glimpse into a day in the life”:

- “It’s deciding whether to fill my car with gas or if I’m going to buy snacks for my hungry students.”
- “Ants are going to create anthills through the floor tiles overnight while I’m gone.”
- “Mold is going to be growing and it’s going to make me sick after the third burst pipe in my classroom in five years.”
- “It’s the purchase of a fire extinguisher because there aren’t sprinkler systems in our rooms.”
- “It’s keeping baseball bats in your room because the district won’t protect you from parents threatening to or actually assaulting you on school property.”
- “It’s carrying a phone charger because there aren’t working phones in our classrooms for emergencies.”
- “It’s buying and storing extra clothing … for my students for days that go on and on without heat.”
- “To teach in Flint can be demoralizing.”

Future FBOE meetings are scheduled for the following dates: Jan. 18; Feb. 8 (Committee of the Whole or COW); Feb. 15; Mar. 8 (COW); Mar. 15; Apr. 12 (COW); Apr. 19; May 10 (COW); May 17; June 14 (COW); June 21. Meetings are held at Accelerated Learning Academy, 1602 S. Averill St., Flint, MI 48503. Meetings can be attended virtually; interested persons should visit the FCS website to register.

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discord and dysfunction, as members assault each other, and spend endless hours bickering over small issues as the Flint schools crumble and enrollment drops.

At the University of Michigan-Flint it remains to be seen how they will deal with the proposed changes to their curriculum amid protests from faculty, staff, and the local community. Many are worried that, in spite of all the community forums, the University will pursue its own agenda in remaking the campus. Some fear that the survival of the campus is at stake.

What does it mean for government?

What does all this mean for the trust we have in government and its institutions?

On one hand, it may be entertaining to watch members of Congress assault each other, see Kevin McCarthy’s poker face as he endures 15 frustrating ballots, Eric Mays being led out of council chambers in handcuffs, or two school board members punch each other out during a meeting.

Sitting through a meeting that reviews the annual budget line-by-line or examines new zoning regulations is almost certainly less compelling than the conflict and turmoil we’ve seen on both the national and local level. After all, a story about a train wreck is more exciting than one about a train pulling into the station safely and on time.

But that dull meeting over the budget (and similar topics) is the real business of government, and the dysfunction has led to a dramatic distrust in all institutions. That distrust can have profound implications for the future of democracy.

Some of numerous broken chairs in the city council chambers at City Hall
(Photo by Tom Travis)

The threat to democracy

Yes, democracy can be a messy process, but in the end we expect it to deliver the goods. While it may be entertaining, exciting, and interesting to watch all the chaos and conflict at all levels of government, that conflict poses some real dangers. We expect something from a well-run democratic government, and when it can’t deliver, it’s natural to turn elsewhere. That ‘elsewhere’ is often a dictator or an authoritarian ruler who promises “Only I can do it, if you give me the power.” As government grows more dysfunctional and less trusted, the tendency is for the public to drop out and become less involved. As distrust grows, it becomes easier to believe the wildest conspiracy theories floating around social media. And as distrust grows, some turn to violence, as we have seen with the attempt to kidnap Michigan’s governor, and threats against election officials.

Trust in the government has been declining for decades. In the mid-1960s, 77 percent of the public felt that government would do the right thing “just about always or most of the time.” Today that number is about 20 percent. We’ve seen that with the Flint water crisis; local voter turnout has declined, we’ve grown more cynical of what government can do.

We are learning that the events of Jan. 6, where an organized mob tried to overturn the 2020 election were hardly unique. The recent events in Brazil and several European nations have seen a similar rise in right-wing actions and distrust of democracy.

There were many reasons for the rise of Hitler in Germany in the 1930s, but the dysfunctional Weimar Republic of the 1920s, and the Great Depression, helped set the stage.

Any signs of optimism?

For as divided as the nation is today, there are some glimmering hopes that the partisan divisions are wearing thin, and the nation just might be willing to move in a more positive direction. Increasingly some candidates are promising to work across the aisle and the word “bipartisan” is showing up more frequently as they make their pitch for votes. Words are one thing. Action is something else. We’ll see if the words lead to real cooperation.

On the local level, the Flint Board of Education has just elected five new members, defeating all the incumbent candidates. Melody Relerford, Claudia Perkins, Dylan Luna, Terae King, and Michael Clack were elected, and they have pledged to work together. All of the new officers of the board are

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newly elected members. They are: President Michael Clack, Vice President Terae King Jr., Secretary Claudia Perkins, and Treasurer Dylan Luna.

With his recent reelection and State of the City address, Mayor Sheldon Neeley has made an attempt to reach out to those on the council that he may have offended, and has indicated his desire to work with them in a more productive way.

While the Flint City Council and the Flint Board of Education often divide along racial lines, Genesee County Sheriff Chris Swanson stepped out of his riot gear and walked with the “Black Lives Matter” protesters as Flint avoided much of the turmoil of that summer two years ago.

The University of Michigan – Flint is at least holding focus groups and town halls to listen to community concerns about the changes planned for the Flint university, and an independent group of faculty, staff, students, and alumni also have been sponsoring town halls. We’ll see how well university officials listen and what actions are finally taken.

On the state level, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has a Democratic majority in the legislature for the first time in 40 years. But it is a narrow majority and she will often need to work with Republicans to get things done. With a potential budget surplus this year, there seems to be some real conversation between the parties over the budget and taxes in Michigan.

The federal level may be the most challenging. Already the Republicans in the U.S. House have begun to prepare investigations of Hunter Biden, the Jan. 6. committee, the FBI, and Pres. Biden’s classified documents. In that atmosphere, bipartisan cooperation may be difficult to achieve. One critical decision is the need to extend the debt limit, to avoid a serious economic crisis. Maybe, just maybe, that threat may bring some bipartisan cooperation.

If Flint’s local governments can begin to work together and rebuild trust, could Flint again be a model for the nation? It’s at least something to hope for.

EVM political commentator and board president Paul Rozycki can be reached at paul.rozycki@mcc.edu.
The University of Michigan – Flint’s top executive, Chancellor Debasish Dutta, received a 15% pay raise for the 2022-23 fiscal year, bringing his yearly salary to $469,000, according to publicly available sources.

On average, the rest of the university faculty and staff received raises of about 3-5%. The overall University of Michigan pay raise for 2022-23, was 4.1%.

Asked for a response from UMF administration about Dutta’s salary increase, Robb King, UM – Flint director of marketing and communications, confirmed the amount is correct.

He said the increase was related to Dutta’s action to eliminate one of the UM – Flint’s executive positions, vice chancellor for business and finance, in Fall, 2021, as Dutta described in a December interview with EVM.

“Now in the second year, his fall 2022 salary includes the 4%-5% annual raise (for administrators) and an adjustment for the substantial increase in his workload.”

Dutta’s pay compares to UM – Dearborn Chancellor Domenico Grasso, who is receiving $468,400 for 2022-23. UM President Santa Ono was hired last year at a base pay of $975,000.

What UM – Flint employees get paid is one of many factors under scrutiny as the downtown campus studies itself in a major effort underway since September, 2022, aimed at addressing a series of serious challenges, a process the university is calling “Strategic Transformation.”

As detailed in earlier EVM stories, those challenges include a 30 percent drop in enrollment since 2014, an “unacceptable” six-year graduation rate of 35 percent, a deficit of $7.3 million in the last fiscal year, and losses or declines in demand for programs in liberals arts.

The campus is a major downtown employer.

According to data from the UMF’s Officer of Institutional Analysis and the UM Human Resources Information System, as of Nov, 1, 2022, UM – Flint employs 1,013 people, with 717 (71 percent) full time and 296 part time (29 percent).

Of those 494 are Faculty, in the following categories:
- 195 Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty (which includes 23 Academic/Administrators who are tenured faculty members and 1 Emeritus Faculty who is actively working)
- 228 Lecturers
- 8 LEO-GLAM (Librarians, Curators and Archivists)
- 63 Clinical and Adjunct Clinical Faculty"

In addition, there are 445 staff, including “all nonbargained-for staff, and supplemental, 74 graduate student research assistants.”

In the 2022-23 UM – Flint annual operating budget of $116.5 million approved last June, salary, wages, and benefits account for almost half,
at $56 million. That operating budget
total is down from $154 million in
2021-2022.

The revenue picture for the
campus includes $25 million from
state appropriations for 2022-2023, up
about 784K from last year.

Who gets paid what varies
widely.

The average UM - Flint full-time
salary, according to 2021-2022 num-
bers from umsalary.info, was $69.8K,
with Dutta exceeding the next-closest
employee. Provost and Vice Chancellor
Sonja Price by more than $100K; 13
others had pay of $200K or more in
2021-2022. Among that
group are two former chancellors, Ruth
Person and Sue Borrego, who stayed
at UM - Flint after their departures
from the chancellor’s suite. They took
“retreat rights” as would have been
negotiated in their original hiring terms,
into their professional departments —
Person as professor of management,
and Borrego as professor of education.

In an update on request from
EVM, a university official clarified Jan.
27 that both Borrego and Person were
faculty members in 2021-2022. Bor-
rego’s salary that year was $274,308.
Borrego left the University in summer
2022 and thus was not on the 2022-23
salary list. He said Person is still a
faculty member, with a current salary of
$236,085.

Close to 100 more UM - Flint
employees are pulling in between
$100K and $200K, as of 2021.

The lowest full-time UM - Flint
pay recorded for 2021-2022 was
$31,200.

The salary distributions —
even among faculty and among the
UM - Flint’s six colleges, are radically
diverse, with some non-tenure-track
faculty getting $100,000, while some
full professors in liberal arts arenas
make thousands less.

The amounts paid
have created an eco-
nomic class structure,
some in-house com-
mentators say, and also
point to competitive
hiring demands, where
faculty in management,
health sciences, and
technology get paid
much more than those
in the liberal arts.

For some segments of
the staff and non-ten-
ure-track faculty, sal-
aries are negotiated by their respective
unions. In the case of the non-tenure-
track faculty, for example, the Lecturer
Employees Oganization (LEO) struck
a deal in the last contract for 3 percent
yearly pay increases starting from a
full-time minimum base of $18,000.

Proposal to cap administrative
pay ignored so far

One group concerned with
economic equity, among other issues
at UM, is One University (1U); it has
participants from all three cam-
puses.

Paticipants in that group in
December presented a proposal to the
Regents for capping all administrative
salaries at UM at $150,000. So far the
Regents appear to have ignored it, 1U
participants report.

The 1U proposal states,
“In the last few years, the Re-
gents and Central Administration have
not provided sufficient resources to
UM - Flint and UM - Dearborn to stem
the tide of cuts, layoffs, and program
reductions. UM - Flint recently put the
Africana Studies program on morato-
rion. Dearborn has slashed Applied
Music.

“This proposal seeks to remedy
the financial distress causing these cuts
by setting a $150,000 cap on adminis-
trative salaries and saving UM - Flint
$1.29M per year and UM - Dearborn
$1.66M. These funds can be repur-
posed toward the central educational
mission of these campuses.”

“On the Flint campus, rough-
ly 14 administrators earn more than
$150,000. We estimate their total
salaries, excluding benefits, to be
$3.5M. The marginal earnings above
$150,000 is roughly 1M. The fringe
benefits, calculated at 20% of salary,
was determined only on the marginal
income above $150,000, resulting in
roughly $1.3M in savings per year.”

Asked about the silence from
the Regents, 1U participants jointly
responded, with requests for ano-
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nymity, “This isn’t exactly news but [we] think it’s relevant…that it genuinely spoke to the culture on our campus. [We’re] guessing that the proposal could come across as snarky but [we] don’t think that was the intention. Many of us truly believe that we need mission-driven leadership from ITAC, the Huron Group is engaged in conversations with additional members of the Flint community and school district superintendents. They are providing us with valuable insights about how they interact and would like to work with the university now and in the future,” Dutta stated.

Coordination of the Strategic Transformation process has been in the hands of the Huron Group, a national consulting firm hired by UM last year which has been a source of controversy because of its work at other institutions, where “slash and burn” decisions in some cases decimated liberal arts and humanities programs and led to major faculty layoffs.

So far, specifics about what is to come at UM – Flint are unclear, and many involved in the process are complaining about a lack of transparency by the Huron Group and doubts that their feedback and ideas actually are being incorporated into the findings.

Two appointed groups have been ostensible in-house channels between the consultants, Dutta’s administration, and the rest of the campus — to pass along information, audit progress reports, and most of all provide input. The two groups are a Steering Committee made of up UMF’s top executives, and the Innovation and Transformation Advisory Council (ITAC), comprised of 13 representatives drawn from the UMF’s six colleges, staff council, and student government.

ITAC group received “synthesis,” expresses concerns

On Jan, 19, the Huron group presented a draft to ITAC, a “synthesis of findings” of the market analysis, program economics, and stakeholder feedback they have collected. “At the same time, our schools and colleges have begun to develop academic transformation plans with the data available to them to date,” Dutta predicted.

Participants who received the ITAC presentation, including Associate Professor of English James Schirmer who represents the College of Arts and Science (CAS) in the group, expressed concerns about what they heard, where the process is heading and about whether ITAC’s input is making a difference.

“ITAC is no closer to understanding its role since this process began,” Schirmer said. “Charts and charts have shifted in unhelpful ways, and so have timelines and expectations of effort. Council members are disappointed with the lack of clarity and guidance from the chancellor and frustrated by Huron consistently ignoring our concerns and questions.

“Still, ITAC wants to be constructive and so intends to put together its own ‘deliverable’ (despite the chancellor and Huron stating that is not necessary or wanted),” Schirmer said.
Three exhibits honoring and celebrating work by African-American artists will be featured at the Flint Institute of Arts (FIA) over the next few months.

The FIA’s Contemporary wing will exhibit works from the FIA’s permanent collection of African-American artists and art of the African diaspora.

In the Graphics gallery, the exhibit Expressions will be on display until April 16. Expressions presents a selection of works on paper by African-American artists acquired by FIA over the last decade.

And finally, in the Hodge and Henry galleries, an exhibit titled Ways of Seeing – The Paul R. Jones Collection of American Art at the University of Alabama opens Jan. 29 and will continue until April 23.

EVM toured the exhibits with the FIA’s associate curator Rachael Holstege, who’s been at the FIA for five years following an 2017 art history degree from Grand Valley State and an arts administration degree from the University of Michigan – Flint.

Young (1943-2010) called Overtown Street Concert, (1980) a piece described as mixed media on found wood. The artist, Young, was incarcerated for three years and during that time he studied art books.

“It was during this period that he experienced a shift in consciousness in which he realized that he could use his art to express himself and his grievances with the world, depicting accurate and honest observations of the fissures in society,” according to the provided description of the piece.

It goes on to describe a time, after his incarceration, when he would ride around the neighborhoods gathering materials and inspiration for his artwork, i.e., scraps of paper, restaurant menus, discarded doors, wood and metal to be used as his canvases.

“Young’s paintings and drawings became his voice of protest…Although he was considered the unofficial historian of Overtown, the themes in his work are universal to the Black experience.” [Overtown is a suburb of Miami where the artist lived.]

“The artist is not only using the artwork to say something, but also the materials used say something as well,” Holstege explained.

The FIA has been collecting artwork by artists of color since 1969 and today the collection includes more than 320 artworks. The gallery highlights some of the most important artists from the mid-twentieth century to present through paintings, sculpture and mixed media. Working in styles ranging from realism to abstraction, these artists tackle issues both personal and shared, including themes related to history.

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and place, identity and representation, social justice and self-expression, according to an FIA brochure.

The first installation of this gallery will feature new works to the collection, including Keith Duncan’s Funeral Repass purchased with funds raised by the Community Gala in 2022.

Graphics Gallery – features works on paper

FIA’s Graphics Gallery will feature “Expressions” featuring a selection of works on paper by African-American artists from the Flint and Detroit area. The artwork in the exhibit have been acquired by the Flint Institute of Arts over the last decade.

Several of these artworks were created through traditional techniques such as drawing, woodcut, lithography, screen printing, and etching. Despite their differences in method, all of these works can be seen as personal expressions of the artists who created them, according to the FIA brochure.

Ways of Seeing – The Paul R. Jones Collection of American Art at the University of Alabama

The Hodge and Henry galleries will exhibit Ways of Seeing – The Paul R. Jones Collection of American Art at the University of Alabama beginning Jan. 29 until April 23. The Paul R. Jones (1928-2010) collection includes one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of twentieth century African American art in the world. The collection includes art in a variety of media from more than 600 artists, including Emma Amos, Jack Whitten, Sam Gilliam, Howardena Pindell, Romare Bearden, and Jacob Lawrence, all of whom are represented in this exhibition. These selections display the breadth and depth of the collection, showcasing artists working in a variety

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This Month in the Village

A selection of events available to our readers is highlighted — beginning after our publication date of Feb. 6. It’s a sampling of opportunities in the city. To submit events for our Mar. issue, email info about your event to pisenber@gmail.com by Feb. 26.

Flint Institute of Arts
African-American artwork is being displayed featuring two special exhibits and the permanent collection (contemporary wing) in the next few months. The Graphics gallery’s exhibit is featuring “Expressions,” works on paper. In the Hodge and Henry galleries “Ways of Seeing... The Paul R. Jones Collection of American Art at the University of Alabama.”
The FOMA film series continues with “Triangle of Sadness” Feb. 13-15 and 18. Then Feb. 20-22 “Peaceful” will be shown. Free glass demonstrations can also be seen on Saturdays and Sundays.
Flint Institute of Arts
1120 E. Kearsley St., Flint
For more info visit flintarts.org or call 810-234-1695.

MW Gallery (MW) Guided Tours
Weekly on Thurs., Fri., and Sat., 12:00 p.m.
These are led by knowledgeable gallery staff. Discuss and learn general themes related to current works on display. The Mott-Wash Collection, a private collection of fine art created by artists of the African diaspora and others who reflect on it.
Guided tours are limited to 10 people.
MW Gallery
111 E. Court St., Flint
For more info call 810-835-4900.

Firebirds OHL Hockey at Dort Financial Center
Feb. 8, 18, and 25 are games at home.
Games are Wed., Fri., and Sat. at 7 p.m., Sun. at 4 p.m.
Come cheer the Flint Firebirds on.
Cost $15, $18, $21 and $26 per person.
Dort Financial Center
3501 Lapeer Rd., Flint
For more info visit ticketsmarter.com/flint-firebirds-tickets or call 810-744-0580.

Where Did All the Birds Go?
Sat., Feb. 22, 10 - 11:30 a.m. and 1 - 2:30 p.m.
Learn why birds are so quiet. Many leave in winter, but, for many, For-Mar is their home all year. Dress to be outside and even make a bird feeder. For ages 7-12. Pre-registration required by Feb. 21.
Cost $5 per student.
For-Mar Nature Preserve & Arboretum
2142 N. Genesee Rd., Burton
For more info visit exploreflintandgenesee.org/event or call 810-736-7100 for more info.

St. Cecilia Society of Flint Concert
Sun., Feb. 12, 2 p.m.
Cynthia Butcher, soprano
Lateema Martin, soprano
Dilek Engin Stolarchuk, violin and viola
Tom Travis, tenor
Sun., Feb. 26, 2 p.m.
St. Cecilia Student Awards – Winners Program, featuring young musicians, ages 6 to 18
MacArthur Recital Hall at the FIM
2025 E. Kearsley St., Flint
For more info call 810-767-0418 or email larmacd@yahoo.com.

The Rep presents “The Future Is Female”
February 3 - 19, 2023.
This comedy was developed in The Rep’s New Works Festival. Set in the not-too-distant future and, once there, they discover that freedom may not mean the same thing to all of them. This timely satire explores a possible reaction to the rolling back of reproductive rights. Contains strong language and adult themes.
Flint Repertory Theatre
1220 E. Kearsley St., Flint
For more info visit flintrep.org or call 810-237-1530.
For tickets visit tickets.thewhiting.com.

Ed Custer’s East Village Magazine logo is reimagined for each issue by Patsy Isenberg.
Village Life ...
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ty is in places you keep returning to.”

Love, true, meaningful love can elude us. The dating world seems to be designed with “smoke
and mirrors.”

Yes, I’m blissfully single, unhitched and uncuffed (yuck,
I hate that word) yet there are many places I feel loved in different com-
munities I’m a part of around town. For instance, I’m not so much ad-
dicted to my daily espresso but I find love, acceptance and camaraderie
in the people I drink coffee with or have a shot of whiskey with -- regul-
ars at a local watering-hole where I find community.

So rather than wishing you all a Happy Valentines Day I
challenge you to find true love, find your people, find a place or
multiple places where you’re loved, accepted....that’s a love that keeps
on giving.

Village Life ...
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of materials and styles from the 1930s to
the present day, according to the Paul R.
Jones website.

FIA ...

What is a curator?

Holstege explained that “The cu-
rator is responsible for taking works that
are in our collection and creates shows
or makes changes with the different
works already displayed in the galleries.
Once the works to be displayed are cho-
sen, I’m responsible for doing research and writing labels that our visitors will
read as they tour the gallery.”

Visiting the FIA

The FIA is open 10 a.m to 5 p.m.
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and
Saturday, and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on
Thursday, and 1 to 5 p.m. on Sunday.
Admission is free for children 12 years
and younger and for Genesee County
residents and FIA members. For all oth-
ers the cost is $10 for adults and $8 for
senior citizens. Every Saturday is free
admission for all through a grant from
Huntington Bank.

More info about the FIA can be found
at their website at flintarts.org

EVM Managing Editor Tom Travis can
be reached at tomntravis@gmail.com.
It’s called “cuffing season.” I quite hate that term. The term “cuffing” refers to the restrictive and restraining purpose of handcuffs. If you don’t know about “cuffing season” it begins sometime in October and culminates on the egregiously named Valentine’s Day.

The intention of “cuffing” happens when single, unhitched people begin to prowl around for a partner, a lover or someone to date. Their hope is to find a person to “be with” “to date” during the profusion of holidays that are celebrated between Halloween and Valentine’s Day.

The hoped-for outcome in getting “cuffed” is to have someone to cuddle with during the bleak and shadowy winter months. Also, having that special person, your “date,” to accompany each other to those sometimes abhorrent and dreaded family holiday gatherings. And to have a person’s hand to hold while wandering through a barrage of parties, events and celebrations.

If this all sounds rather objectifying up this point...it is (at least to me it is).

I describe myself as being “blissfully single.” Meaning I’m enjoying being single. I have a freedom that I’ve never really enjoyed so much as when I’m single. To say or think of being “cuffed” into a dating relationship seems oppressive and honestly a big turn off.

What are all of us looking for?....love. That word is one of those words that is overused and misunderstood like nice, great, cool...what do those words actually mean? Love-shmove, what does love mean?

Lyricists and song-smiths have attempted to describe what love is. William Shakespeare tried in his famous Sonnet 116 with these words:

“Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no! It is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken...”

“An ever-fixed mark”? Well, I don’t know about that.

The musical “Love Is a Many Splendored Thing,” with its theme song of the same name offers this description of love:

“Love is a many splendored thing
It’s the April rose that only grows in
the early Spring
Love is nature’s way of giving
a reason to be living...

Once on a high and windy hill
In the morning mist
Two lovers kissed and the
world stood still
Then your fingers touched my
silent heart and taught it how
to sing
Yes, true love’s a many splen-
dored thing.”

Okay, there is something there about true love. Being with that special someone, a soul-mate, a lover, it does seem that at times the crashing world around us seems to disappear and our hearts are lifted by the love created in those wistful moments. While I and millions of others are “blissfully single” I think each of us are always looking for love. The kind of love where “the world stood still” or the kind that “looks on tempests and is never shaken.” What an alluring discovery, finding a love where tempests and our sad world are no match for a heart enraptured in love.

The truth is that millions of single people find love in some wonderful ways - deep friendships, a community of love at social gathering places like bars, places of worship, cultural group gatherings. Someone once said, “Your community