



# East Village Magazine

February 2021

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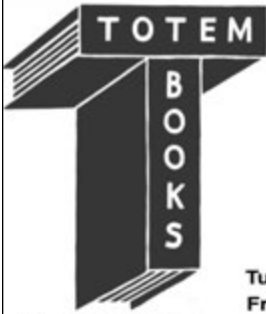
*Edwin D. Lester*

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Vol. LIX No. 2 February 2021

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Layout by Ted Nelson. Printing by Riegle Press Inc., 1282 N. Gale Rd., Davison, Mich. 48423.

East Village Magazine is a program of the Village Information Center Inc., a nonprofit corporation. We welcome material from readers, but all submissions become the property of the publication and if published will be edited to conform to the editorial style and policies of the publication. All inquiries about the publication should be mailed to East Village Magazine, Village Information Center, 720 E. Second St., Flint, Mich. 48503. Distribution is the first Thursday of each month. Display advertising rates are \$34 a column-inch plus any other costs. Unclassified ads are \$2.50 a printed line or part of a printed line. Rates subject to change without notice. The deadline for advertising is 10 days before each publication date.

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Commentary
Fifteen days in January: The nation faces insurrection, impeachment and inauguration

By Paul Rozycki

In the early 1960s, at the height of the cold war, there was a bestselling novel, and a movie, that told a story of a potential military coup in the U.S. and possible nuclear conflict with Soviet Union. The book was "Seven Days in May" by Charles Bailey and Fletcher Knebel, and it described a week of cold war tensions, governmental distrust, and political conspiracies of the time.

"Seven Days in May" was a fictional political thriller, but in the last month, we've lived through 15 days in January, where, on three successive Wednesdays, we've experienced an insurrection, an impeachment, and an inauguration, as the nation faces the deep divisions of our own time.

January 6, 2021, Insurrection

"We're going to walk down to the Capitol, and we're going to cheer on our brave senators, and congressmen and women. We're probably not going to be cheering so much for some of them because you'll never take back our country with weakness. You have to show strength, and you have to be strong .... And we fight. We fight like Hell and if you don't fight like Hell, you're not going to have a country anymore." (President Donald Trump, Jan. 6, 2021, speech to his supporters)

On January 6, the U.S. Congress was handling what is normally a routine bureaucratic activity—the formal counting of electoral votes, which had been certified by the states weeks earlier. But as the counting began, the nation watched in horror as the president fired up a crowd, who then stormed the U.S. Capitol. Over the next several hours they broke windows, smashed furniture, and threat-

ened to hang the vice president, and assault members of Congress. As more details emerged, what appeared to be an angry, out-of-control mob, began to look even more ominous. Rather than being simply an impulsive crowd, those who stormed the Capitol came prepared with weapons, bombs, zip-ties for taking hostages, and they knew exactly who they were looking for. They ransacked offices, stole papers and computers, and trashed the U.S. Capitol building in the process. Evidence suggests that some police and military officials, and members of Congress, may have been working with the rioters. Five people died as a result. The Capitol had not seen that kind of destruction since the War of 1812.

It was a chilling and symbolic bookend to the Trump presidency. In his inaugural address in 2017, Trump spoke of "American carnage," and four years later his presidency ended with the carnage of 400,000 COVID deaths, and a tumultuous riot in the U.S. Capitol.

January 13, 2021, Impeachment

Article One: Incitement of Insurrection.

"Donald John Trump engaged in High Crimes and Misdemeanors by inciting violence against the government of the United States...Donald John Trump thus warrants impeachment and trial, removal from office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any office of honor, trust or profit under the United States." (Article of Impeachment, Jan. 13, 2021)

One week after the attempt to overturn the 2020 election results, the U.S. House impeached Pres. Trump

(Continued on Page 12.)

Cover: Flint snowman



Photo of the Month: Dining out in Flint, 2021: Café Rhema

(Photo by Edwin D. Custer)

## *Flint water crisis led to “anxiety, fear, distrust and anger over past years,” Judge Levy states as she hands down ruling to proceed with settlement*

*By Tom Travis*

Preliminary approval to allow the \$641 million Flint water crisis settlement to move forward was granted Thursday by U.S. Federal Judge Judith Levy. The ruling comes one week after nine state and local officials were indicted, including former Gov. Rick Snyder, on charges stemming from their involvement in the crisis.

In the opening pages of the 72-page federal court ruling, Judge Levy writes: “... There may be no amount of money that would fully recognize the harm the residents of Flint have experienced, including their anxiety, fear, distrust, and anger over the events of last seven years. Litigation has its benefits, but also its limitations, and the preliminary approval of this settlement does not affect or preclude other avenues of redress. This litigation — however it concludes — need not be the final chapter of this remarkable story.”

And indeed, a “remarkable story” it has been, and will continue to be, as the

Flint water crisis weaves itself into the fabric of the historical epic of Flint.

### **Important deadlines for registration and filing a claim**

The final date to register to be a part of the WCS (water crisis settlement) is March 29, 2021. Upon final approval of the settlement by the court, the final date for submitting a claim is August, 26, 2021.

In a phone call on Monday, co-lead counsel Michael Pitt explained residents can get more information on the WCS by going to [www.flintwaterjustice.com](http://www.flintwaterjustice.com) or by calling (866) 536-0717. They may also email questions to [info@flintwaterjustice.com](mailto:info@flintwaterjustice.com) or text keyword “Flint” to the number 47177. If residents need to send documents by fax they may do so at (248) 268-7996.

Pitt explained that notices, a registration form and a packet of information will be mailed out in the coming

weeks. If someone does not receive a notice or packet of information they can contact his office at (866) 536-0717.

The company Epiq will be responsible for distributing the notices and the company Archer will be responsible for administering the claims in the WCS.

As Judge Levy stipulated the deadlines in this settlement she added, “The settlement before the Court is a partial settlement and therefore does not represent the end of the Flint Water Crisis litigation. It would allow recovery of monetary awards for persons (children and adults) exposed to Flint water during a specified exposure period, along with property owners, renters, and business owners,” stated on page two of the ruling by Judge Levy.

In a city council meeting Monday, Jan. 25, defense attorney Rick Berg said he expects the notices to begin to go out to the public in the next couple of weeks.

Councilperson Eric Mays (1st

*(Continued on Page 5.)*

## ... Settlement

(Continued from Page 4.)

Ward) asked if someone could first register then later choose to 'opt-out.' Berg said he did not know. Berg did clarify that someone must register to make an objection to the court.

Other lawsuits pending in the water crisis settlement target Veolia Water North America Operating Services, LLC; Veolia North America, LLC; Veolia North America, Inc.; Veolia Environment, S.A.; Lockwood Andrews & Newnam, P.C.; Lockwood Andrews & Newnam, Inc.; Leo A. Daly Company; United States of America; and United States Environmental Protection Agency and their affiliates.

Judge Levy's ruling stated, "... even if the proposed settlement receives final approval, the litigation against these defendants [listed above] continues."

### Michigan United to hold Town Hall Webinar with co-lead counsel in WCS

Michigan United, a social justice organization that describes itself as organizing "to build the power our communities need to win the justice they deserve" will host a town hall webinar with the co-lead counsel in the water crisis settlement at 6 p.m. Jan. 28. Those wishing to participate can register at [www.flintwaterjustice.com](http://www.flintwaterjustice.com).



### Water Warrior Pastor Monica Villareal helps to explain the court's ruling

In a Friday, Jan. 23 Zoom video presentation by Michigan United, moderator Pastor Monica Villareal presented a 34-page PowerPoint analysis of the court's preliminary approval ruling. She explained how Flint residents can pro-

ceed over the next few weeks and months in the water crisis settlement process.

"Flint residents need to decide



**The U.S. Federal Court room from which Judge Levy spoke during the Dec. 21 preliminary hearing.**  
(Photo from [mied.uscourts.gov](http://mied.uscourts.gov) website)

whether to participate in the settlement.

If a Flint resident chooses to register as a participant, they may then formally object to aspects of the settlement and set forth any reasons why it should not be afforded final approval.

Participants move forward with litigation against defendants who chose not to settle. June 4th trial."

### What residents need to present for compensation

Judge Levy's ruling states that, "Plaintiffs are not required to prove legal liability or causation, though certain adult claimants may need to present a medical record linking their condition to exposure to lead or other contaminants in the water. They need only submit the prescribed documents and forms to receive an award."

Forms and all water crisis settlement documents can be found at a website set up by the court: [mied.uscourts.gov](http://mied.uscourts.gov).

This settlement focuses primarily on compensation for minors in the Flint water crisis, but adults and businesses will be able to be compensated through it as well.

Minors who claim an award that exceeds \$5,000 will have a trust fund and/or structured settlement set up for them. The settlement provides for legal counsel but clarifies legal counsel is not necessary to file a

claim. In addition, \$35 million is set aside for minors who "do not immediately file for a claim." Minors will continue to be able to file a claim until their 19th birthday.

### Requirements for adults to receive compensation

The court's ruling laid out requirement guidelines for adult's in the settlement:

- Owned or lived in a residence that received water from the Flint Water Treatment Plant or were legally liable for the payment of such water

- Owned or operated a business including income-earning real property and any other businesses that received water from the Flint Water Treatment Plant or were legally liable for the payment for such water

- Were an adult during the exposure period and who ingested or came into contact with water received from the Flint Water Treatment Plant.

- Between the dates of April 25, 2014, through December 31, 2018, they were both exposed to water received from the Flint Water Treatment Plant and diagnosed with Legionnaires' disease.

### Legionella cases monetary award limits

For those who have Legionella cases filed in the water crisis settlement, the ruling stated, "Legionella death cases — ranges of compensation are known and range between \$300,000 to \$1,500,000, no matter how many claims are made in this category."

*EVM* reported in 2018 about the discovery of the connection between Flint's water crisis and Legionnaires' disease. McLaren Hospital executives deny claims that they were a source of the outbreak of Legionnaires disease which sickened



# Education Beat

## *Flint Community Schools board approves plan for return to buildings in unsteady start of new era*

*By Harold C. Ford*

“I’m sure looking forward to great things from the board.” –David Guinn, Judge, 67th District Court, Genesee County, comment at start of Jan. 20 meeting

“This meeting has been very, very confusing ... If you’re confused, then you know the general public is confused.” –A.C. Dumas, vice president, NAACP Flint Branch, comment at end of Jan. 20 meeting

Parliamentary unsteadiness marked the beginning for a new Flint Community Schools (FCS) board of education at its Jan. 13 and 20 meetings. Despite the confusion, a plan to reopen Flint’s school buildings to staff and students was ultimately approved by a 5-1 vote.

### **Students can return Feb. 22**

Anita Steward, FCS superintendent, laid out a plan to begin returning some students to FCS buildings for face-to-face instruction on Feb. 22 on a hybrid basis. She indicated that staff had already begun to return to buildings on Jan. 19.

Steward said a recent poll of FCS families indicated that 58.9 percent prefer to continue online/remote instruction while 41.1 percent of FCS families favor a return to face-to-face instruction.

“We can do that safely, with social distancing in our classrooms,” Steward said. “Our scholars have not been in school at all since March (2020),” she noted.

Steward said students having last names that begin with letters A through L would attend classes in the school buildings on Mondays and Tuesdays. Those having last names that begin with letters M through Z would attend classes in the school buildings on Thursdays and Fridays.

“This is for those families (41.1 percent) that have opted for face-to-face instruction,” Steward explained. She said that decisions about opening or closing

buildings were guided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer’s administration and a team of local health professionals.

All students would participate in online/remote instruction on Wednesdays, allowing time for the buildings to be cleaned and sanitized.

The hybrid plan for reopening schools was approved by a 5-1 vote of the FCS board at its Jan. 20 meeting. Voting to approve the plan were: Carol McIntosh, president; Vera Perry, vice-president; Danielle Green, treasurer; Joyce Ellis-McNeal (newly elected secretary/treasurer); and newest board member Adrian Walker, trustee.



**Vera Perry, Flint Board of Education vice president**  
(Photo source FCS website)

Laura MacIntyre, treasurer, voted against the plan. Diana Wright, trustee, was absent from the meeting by the time of the vote.

### **Swift, critical responses**

“The dearth of information is really troubling to me,” MacIntyre declared.

“Having explained (the reopening plan) tonight for the first time is a little upsetting,” stated Karen Christian, United Teachers of Flint president. “We

don’t really know what the plan looks like and we get it delivered to us at a board meeting.”

Christian further expressed concern about how a hybrid schedule would work for high school students who switch classes several times each school day and how the plan would accommodate students with special needs.

FCS teacher Debra Rinoldo-Hopkins said she was not informed how teaching staff would instruct students online and face-to-face at the same time. “Will I be expected to do dual teaching at the same time?” she asked.

Christian said her members were unhappy about the cleanliness of the buildings. “Teachers are coming back and cleaning their own classrooms (after being) out for several months,” she said. “If we’re going back to a hybrid system, how can we guarantee ... that these classrooms are going to be cleaned?”

Christian questioned the availability of vaccines for FCS staff. She said teachers were apprehensive about coming back for face-to-face instruction without being vaccinated: “I can only think of a handful of teachers that have been able to get an appointment for a vaccine.”

### **Steward responds**

Steward said she was “taken aback” by the criticisms, particularly those that implied a lack of planning. She conceded a survey of FCS staff by the district’s human resources department had yielded, thus far, “a mixed review” about returning to the buildings.

Steward said the return of staff to buildings, a month in advance of any students, would allow sufficient time to offer professional development and fine tune systems of both face-to-face and online instruction.

Steward also explained that FCS

*(Continued on Page 8.)*

# THIS MONTH IN THE VILLAGE

*"This Month" highlights a selection of events available to our readers — beginning after our publication date of Feb. 4. 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 March issue, email your event to [pisenber@gmail.com](mailto:pisenber@gmail.com) by Feb. 20.*

## Vaccine Information

Currently, this is not easy. Some people may be contacted by their hospitals advising them to submit forms and make appointments. Essential workers, people over the age of 65, and those with "at-risk" conditions are currently receiving the vaccine. Also, pharmacies such as Walgreens and Meijer are starting to provide the shots to the public.

Here are websites where further information might be available:

[michigan.gov/coronavirus/](http://michigan.gov/coronavirus/)  
and [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](http://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html).

## Black History Month Virtual Film Series

The Communities First Inc. has partnered with the FIA to offer this monthly film series coinciding with Black History Month.

"Fast Color" is a film about a young, black woman whose superhuman abilities are discovered, forcing her to go on the run.

In March, the film is "The Banker," a film about two African American businessmen with "an audacious and risky plan to take on the racist establishment of the 1960s by helping other African Americans pursue the American Dream." This film is available Mar. 19-21.

To see the films go to:

[comfirst.eventive.org/films](http://comfirst.eventive.org/films).

## 20th Anniversary Black History Month Celebration

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and safety, the annual brunch will not take place this year. But the Genesee District Library and ABC12 have partnered to bring this hour-long televised event. Past honorees will be featured as well as music. Tune in to ABC12 Feb. 11 at 7 p.m.

For information go to :

[thegd.org/about-the-black-history-month-brunch](http://thegd.org/about-the-black-history-month-brunch).

## Chess

On this site, games can be played between people at the same level or played against the computer. There are chess lessons and puzzles to solve. Chess news and championship games can also be watched.

The basic membership is free but there are premium memberships available.

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



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

## ... Schools

(Continued from Page 6.)

administration began reaching out to staff as soon as they were informed the vaccines would be available to educators. “The appointments went quickly (such that) some of our staff did not have an opportunity to get an appointment,” she said.

“I’m still working on it,” she said of continuing plans to provide vaccinations to all staffers who wish them. “We’re going to be offering our staff COVID pay,” she added.

### Unsteady start

The appointment of officers new to their positions, along with the replacement of three veteran board members with nearly three decades of experience by three newcomers with no stated education board experience, may help to explain the unsteady start of Flint’s new board at its January meetings.

The business of the board at its Jan. 20 regular meeting was constantly interrupted by technology glitches, errant parliamentary procedure, and missteps in following the printed agenda.



**FCS Superintendent Anita Steward**  
(Photo source FCS website)

The confusion led board veteran Perry to declare a point of order at the 23-minute mark. “We are jumping all over the place,” Perry observed. “Now I’m totally confused of what’s even going on.”

“This meeting has been very, very confusing,” declared A. C. Dumas, a longtime official of the National

Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Flint branch. “If you’re confused, then you know the general public is confused.”



**A. C. Dumas with former Flint mayor Karen Weaver**  
(Source: Getty Images)

Just some of the dozens of missteps at the Jan. 20 board meeting are bulleted below:

- Monaca Elston, FCS executive assistant who records the board’s meeting minutes, interjected herself into the meeting 19 times to redirect the board and untangle missteps.

- Despite nearly a year of virtual meetings, technology glitches interfered with the flow of the meeting and derailed it at times. A nearly 10-minute gap (from 42:00 to 52:00) passed while waiting for a required report (COVID-19 Learning Plan Update) to be made available.

- Unwanted background noises and echoes, likely caused by some board members who still operate additional electronic devices during online board meetings, unnerved others.

- Following a lengthy discussion of the board’s most important topic — returning to buildings for instruction — three board members, an administrator, and a staffer — launched into discussions of other unrelated topics for 13 minutes before the actual roll call vote began on returning to buildings. Apparently lost, the board’s president asked, “Ms. Monaca (Elston), can you get us back on track?”

- There was confusion about when the public would be allowed to make comments about the plan to return to buildings.

- Prior to a roll call vote, one board member asked, “What am I vot-

ing on?” An incorrect tally was announced after another roll call vote.

- At least one board member was confused because the numbering in his/her board packet did not match that on the agenda.

- Names of board members were mispronounced.

- An opportunity for discussion on motions that were seconded was neglected more than once.

- An end-of-meeting announcement was made before the end of the meeting.

- Board members disagreed about whether or not an agenda item had been voted on.

- Complaints were lodged about missing information and inaccessibility to virtual meetings.

- Board members were uncertain about whether or not they could address agenda items out of order.

The meeting ended the way it began. When given the opportunity to make closing comments, some board members launched into commentary about items that had appeared earlier on the agenda. Questions were asked of administration that would obviously require further research. And one board member attempted, inappropriately, to introduce a brand-new motion.

And so, it went.

“I’ve never seen a meeting that’s been ran like this meeting,” Dumas observed.

### Next meeting(s)

The next scheduled meeting of the FCS board is a Committee of the Whole meeting on Feb. 10. It is followed Feb. 17 by a regular board meeting. Meetings begin at 6:30 p.m. Virtual attendance at board meetings can be gained by visiting the FCS website in the days prior to the meeting and submitting requested information.

Submitting questions: [fboe@flintschools.org](mailto:fboe@flintschools.org). Also, the email addresses of several members of the FCS administration are available at its website.

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



# Book Review

## Edward McClelland's "Midnight in Vehicle City, General Motors, Flint, and the Strike that Created the Middle Class"

By Harold C. Ford

*"You are a scoundrel and a skunk ...  
You'll go to hell when you die if  
you do things like that."*

—Frances Perkins, U.S. Secretary of Labor, to Alfred Sloan, CEO, General Motors, Jan. 1937

*"You can't talk to me like that ... I've  
got seventy million and I made  
it all myself!"*

—General Motors CEO Alfred Sloan's response to Frances Perkins, U.S. Secretary of Labor, Jan. 1937

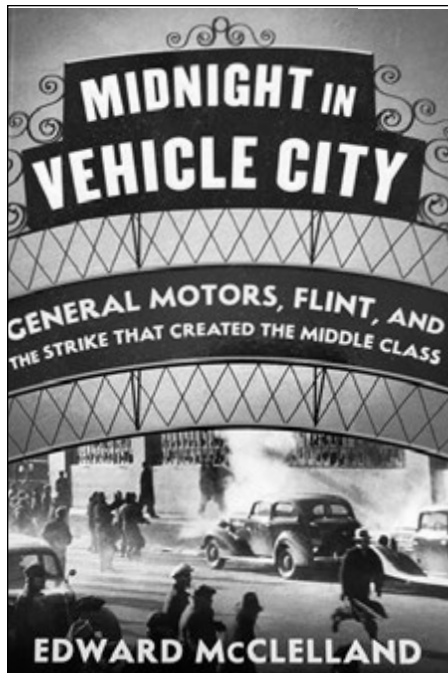
Edward McClelland's "Midnight in Vehicle City, General Motors, Flint, and the Strike that Created the Middle Class" brings a fresh look to the seminal moment in Flint's contribution to American history: the 44-day sit-down strike by autoworkers from Dec. 30, 1936, to Feb. 11, 1937. The strike ended with an agreement in which General Motors (GM), the world's largest company, recognized the fledgling United Automobile Workers of America (UAWA) as the exclusive bargaining agent for GM's approximate half-million laborers.

McClelland writes that "historians have credited (the sit-down strike) as the natal event of the modern American labor movement. The British Broadcasting Corporation dubbed it 'the strike heard round the world.'"

### Simultaneous boom and bust

Flint was at once the most likely and unlikely of places for the great showdown between industry and labor. In the beginning decades of the 20th century, it was the fastest-growing industrial city in the nation. The birthplace of General Motors in 1908, Flint made more cars than any other city in the world, save Detroit.

Tens of thousands were drawn to the Vehicle City by the promise of employ-



ment in one of its dozen or so auto factories and multiple supplier businesses. More than 75 percent of Flint's workforce drew their paychecks from GM or its suppliers.

Nonetheless, GM jobs paid poverty-level wages and were unaccompanied by fringe benefits. Working conditions

"Not only is the work exhausting, it's dirty and dangerous," McClelland writes. "Workers dare not step off the assembly lines, even to use the toilet. There are no fans, no ventilation, no dust masks, no safety glasses." The conditions were ripe for worker revolt.

The prospects for a successful worker revolt in Flint, however, were unlikely. "In Flint, General Motors was all-powerful and paternalistic," he writes. GM held sway over state and local politicians, the local press, the police, and the courts. Further, the corporation spent \$1 million for Pinkerton detectives to infiltrate and, if necessary, suppress the nascent labor movement with brute force.

"Flint was a GM town to the bone," observed Victor Reuther, one of three legendary, labor-organizing brothers.

### Historical familiarity

The events that unfolded from Dec. 30, 1936, to Feb. 11, 1937, are familiar to many. Flint sit-downers, fed up with



Sit-Down strikers, 1936-37

(Photo source: History.com; Bettman Archive/Getty Images)

were often deplorable, unsafe, and unhealthy. Worker rights were nonexistent.

the apparent unwillingness of GM to negotiate a contract, took over the Fisher

(Continued on Page 13.)

# Small, spirit-filled MLK celebration led by local Baha'i group sheds light on Peace Garden and new mural

By Harold C. Ford



**"I Have a Dream" mural, MLK Avenue, Flint; mural marchers (l-r) Ralph Abernathy; James Forman; M. L. King, Jr. ; Jesse Douglas; John Lewis.**

(Photo by Harold C. Ford)

*"The quality, not the longevity, of one's life is what is important."*

reads a quote on the banner hung at the entrance to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Peace Garden, MLK Day event, Jan. 18, 2021.

On Jan. 18, a small but spirited group, led by local members of the Davison-based Louhelen Baha'i Center of Learning, celebrated Martin Luther King Jr. Day at a garden and new mural dedicated to King on Flint's north side.

"We wanted to participate with the community and community members in celebrating his legacy," explained Cam Herth, administrator at the Louhelen center.

Celebrants gathered for prayer, song, and amplified speeches of King at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Peace Garden located on M. L. King Ave. between McClellan and Genesee Streets. The entourage then walked one block

north to the new I Have a Dream mural that blankets the two-story exterior wall of

the old Gill-Roy's Hardware Store on King Ave. at W. Dewey St.

"I wanted to do prayers with our Baha'i community and also to celebrate Martin Luther King Day with Milo," Louhelen member Jessica Dean explained. Milo is Dean's three-year-old son. Dean said the event provided an opportunity to pay homage to the values of "unity, equality, love and acceptance, and race amity."

lives on," said Fred Kester, a Baha'i member since 1975. "God willing, it'll live on for generations to come until the time when we can all march together as brothers and sisters."

## Peace Garden

The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Peace Garden consists of 10 vacant lots owned by the Genesee County Land Bank and private owners that has been redeveloped and maintained, according to information provided by its sponsor, King Avenue PLUS, a Flint neighborhood association.

Led by PLUS member Barbara Culp, development of the project began in 2017 with design and horticultural assistance from the Ruth Mott Foundation and its Applewood Estate staff. Culp was inspired by visits to other peace gar-

dens and monuments.

According to local publication



**Baha'i Louhelen members at MLK Peace Garden, (l-r) Cam Herth; Fred Kester; Milo & Jessica Dean; Elizabeth Herth**  
(Photo by Harold C. Ford)

"What moved me ... (was) that dream of Martin Luther King (which

## ... MLK

(Continued from Page 10.)

Flintside, “Charles Stewart Mott foundation funded a BRAND grant from Habitat for Humanity to make the Garden happen, Genesee County Land Bank arranged the lease, and Neighborhood Engagement Hub gave the project support, including the know-how to work the equipment.” Assistance was also provided by the Community Foundation of Greater Flint.

### I Have a Dream mural

The I Have a Dream mural, a 2020 creation of artist Kevin Burdick, is based on a photo of the 1965 Selma

to Montgomery March. It features King, Ralph Abernathy, James Forman, Jesse Douglas, and John Lewis locked arm-in-arm at the front

street from the Neighborhood Engagement Hub at 3216 M. L. King Ave. in Flint.

“It (the mural) probably speaks to us in very different ways ... perhaps a memory, perhaps a wish, perhaps a fear, perhaps a dream ... perhaps a commitment to lifting up Flint and the United States to a place that is strong and always inclusive,” Jane Richardson writes in the Jan. 2021 issue of *Flint Our Community Our Voice*.



**MLK Peace Garden, (l-r) Elizabeth Herth; Fred Kester; Cam Herth; Milo & Jessica Dean (Photo by Harold C. Ford)**

of that march.

Burdick completed the mural in Oct. 2020. It is located across the

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

## ... Settlement

(Continued from Page 5.)

90 and took at least 11 lives in 2014 and 2015 and was linked by some sources to the tainted Flint water.

### City Council objections are considered in court’s ruling

In mid-December 2020, Flint City Council (FCC) presented a “companion resolution” that raised their concerns in the WCS. Judge Levy responded to those concerns from the FCC.

1. That the State of Michigan is contributing insufficient funds.

*The Court’s response:* The court cannot order defendants to contribute more funds than was negotiated between parties.

2. That the proof of injury requirements may be unduly burdensome on some residents of the City of Flint.

*The Court’s response:* The Court investigated this concern: the settlement provides that claimants must

complete short registration and claim forms to obtain a payment. There are certain documentation requirements — and where the documents or infor-



**Councilpersons (l to r) Eric Mays (1st Ward), Maurice Davis (2nd Ward), Santino Guerra (3rd Ward), and Kate Fields (4th Ward) in a 2019 City Council meeting. (Photo by Tom Travis)**

mation can be obtained by the Claims Administrator, the individual claimant need not submit the information.

3&4. That the proposed Settlement Agreement should more explicitly cover payment of water bills by the residents of the City of Flint; That the proposed settlement agreement should allocate Settlement Funds to cover claims for payment of water bills in an amount not less than 2%.

*The Court’s response:* The funds allo-

cated for the ‘property’ claims will be distributed to those who owned a residence, rented a residence, or were obligated to pay water bills for a residence. That is, the property fund covers any type of economic-loss claim related to the property — whether it be damage to pipes or payment of bills for water. The amount received will be based on the number of eligible claims in this category.

5. Council requests more time.

*The Court’s response:*

Moot, as council voted to join the Settlement.

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

**Happy Valentine’s Day!**

## ... History

(Continued from Page 3.)

for “Incitement of Insurrection.” It was the first time in history that an American president had been impeached twice. Though the vote followed partisan lines, it was the most bipartisan impeachment vote in history. In response to the riots in the Capitol, 10 Republicans voted to impeach, along with the Democrats. It remains to be seen how the Senate trial will play out for Trump, and what the results might be, now that he is out of office. However, several leading Republican senators have said they might consider a vote to convict Trump for his actions, and he could become the first president to be impeached, and convicted by a Senate vote.

### January 20, 2021, Inauguration

*“I, Joseph Robinette Biden Jr., do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. So help me God.”* (Biden’s presidential oath of office, Jan. 20, 2021)

*“And here we stand, just days after a riotous mob thought they could use violence to silence the will of the people, to stop the work of our democracy, and to drive us from this sacred ground. That did not happen ... To all those who supported our campaign I am humbled by the faith you have placed in us. To all those who did not support us, let me say this: Hear me out as we move forward. Take a measure of me and my heart. And if you still disagree, so be it. That’s democracy. That’s America. The right to dissent peaceably, within the guardrails of our Republic, is perhaps our nation’s greatest strength. Yet hear me clearly: Disagreement must not lead to disunion. And I pledge this to you: I will be a President for all Americans.”* (President Biden’s Inaugural address,

Jan. 20, 2021)

Just two weeks after the attempted insurrection, and one week after the impeachment, Joe Biden was sworn in as the 46th president of the United States. Like the previous Wednesdays, it was an unprecedented and unique event. Unlike all previous inaugurations, Biden addressed a virtual audience, because of the COVID pandemic, and spoke in a city occupied by massive military forces, because of the insurrection. For the first time in over a century and a half, the outgoing president refused to attend.

Biden’s inaugural address was a first step to heal the partisan conflict that has divided the nation, not only during the Trump presidency, but for years before. Biden attempted to reach out to his opponents, and find common ground we could all share. By most accounts, the speech touched a nerve in a nation exhausted by divisive and angry rhetoric, and the overheated partisan temperature seemed to cool. Yet, in the end, it will take more than good words and grand speeches to heal the nation. It will take action that will produce results that matter to all Americans. Biden’s decisions on the pandemic, on his first day, may be a solid start.

### A warning from Ken Burns

In one of the many interviews following the inaugural celebration, documentary filmmaker Ken Burns offered an interesting observation. He said that with the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Americans lost the enemy that held us together, and in the years that followed, we turned on each other.

The Soviet Union fell for many reasons, but their failure to trust and believe in their own institutions was a major cause.

### Democracy is precious and fragile

We need to avoid the same fate, and be confident that our 15 days in January will lead us to a better place

than the “Seven Days in May” of decades past. Let’s hope the Biden/Harris inauguration is a step in the right direction, and that Pres. Biden’s words are a sign of things to come: “We’ve learned again that democracy is precious. Democracy is fragile. And at this hour, my friends, democracy has prevailed.”

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

### Lead/galvanized tainted pipes replaced so far in Flint: 9,912

**Because of the governor’s order, no pipeline replacements were conducted in April or May, but work has resumed. Totals as of late January were still 9,912 lead or galvanized pipes replaced, 26,750 pipes excavated.**

**A total of 16,240 pipes have been discovered to be copper service lines.**

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ccnaflint@sbcglobal.net

**Stay home, stay safe!**

Watch for meeting updates at  
[www.eastvillagemagazine.org](http://www.eastvillagemagazine.org)

### Volunteer Distributors Wanted

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](mailto:ecuster@sbcglobal.net) or write to 720 E. Second St. Flint, MI

**Flint Northern Vikings’ Class of 1972 is looking for schoolmates to inform and invite them to the upcoming 50th Class Reunion in August 2022. Please contact a member of the Planning Committee with your information:**

**Eleanor Wicker —**  
[mamawicker@yahoo.com](mailto:mamawicker@yahoo.com) (810)577-3341;  
**Samuel Green —**  
[sgreen4u@aol.com](mailto:sgreen4u@aol.com), (615)630-4183;  
**or Pat Hamer —**  
[patriciahamer1@gmail.com](mailto:patriciahamer1@gmail.com),  
(810) 964-0030;  
[flintnorthernvikings@gmail.com](mailto:flintnorthernvikings@gmail.com)

## ... Book

(Continued from Page 9.)

One and Fisher Two plants that made critical components for other factories.

The sit-down fever in Flint spread throughout GM's industrial kingdom. Work stoppages shut plants in Detroit, Toledo, St. Louis, Oakland, Cleveland, Atlanta, Kansas City, Harrison, N.J., Anderson, Ind., and Janesville, Wis. Half the company's plants were closed.

Yet, GM and law enforcement were determined to retake the factories in Flint and crush the strike.

Subsequently, a ferocious battle between strikers and Flint policemen — dubbed “The Battle of the Running Bulls” — climaxed when officers wheeled and fired into the crowd of unionists. Fourteen strikers and two picketers were wounded by the spray of gunfire. That no one died is something of a miracle.

“This was a war zone,” New Republic journalist Mary Heaton Vorse reported.

Michigan Governor Frank Murphy summoned the Michigan National Guard to the streets of Flint. From that time forward, the Guard effectively served as a buffer between



**Michigan National Guardsmen, Sit-Down Strike, 1936-37**  
Photo source: History.com; Bettman Archive/Getty Images

the unionists and those who opposed them. Murphy was determined to keep the peace and remain neutral for the duration of the strike.

Unionists forced GM's bargaining hand when they occupied Chevrolet Four after staging a diversionary battle at Chevrolet Nine.

With Murphy serving as de facto

mediator, the warring parties inked a one-page agreement which recognized the UAW as the exclusive bargaining representative for GM employees.

### Aftermath

“The Flint sit-down strike is the beginning of the United Auto Workers of America's rise to become the nation's preeminent labor union—the union that sets the standard for wages, benefits, and working conditions for industrial laborers,” McClelland asserts.

“The militancy that inspired the Flint sit-down strike was passed down to the next generation of Flint autoworkers, and to the generation after that,” McClelland writes. “The sons and grandsons of the sit-downers believed that their labor had built GM, and that the company owed them good wages and benefits in return.”

“Flint (once) boasted the highest median wage for workers under 35 in the country, thanks to union contracts that allowed new employees to start at the same wage as their more experienced line mates,” McClelland continues. “The city's overall income was higher than San Francisco's.”

### Historical voyeurism

McClelland's “Midnight” tears back curtains and opens doors onto scenes of great consequence as when Frances Perkins, the first woman to occupy an Executive Branch cabinet position as Secretary of Labor (1933-45), berates GM CEO Alfred Sloan for his unwillingness to bargain with UAW representatives (excerpted from beginning of article).

Thus, what distinguishes McClelland's account of Flint's sit-down strike from many other sit-down narratives is the intimacy of the experience. The author escorts the reader into an office on G Street in Washington DC for a meeting between auto executives and Perkins. Perkins has departed FDR's first inauguration parade early for the meet up, only after whispering details of the clandestine meeting into the president's ear.

At a small room in Flint's Dresden Hotel, fly-on-the-wall readers

will witness strike leaders hatch the plot to take over Chevrolet Four by using diversionary tactics at Chevrolet Nine. During the violent takeover of Chevrolet Four, striker Gib Rose “grabs ahold of (his old foreman's) belt and collar, marches him to the loading dock, and (safely) pushes him off... ‘Now, go before you get hurt!’ Rose commands. ‘I'm your friend, dammit! Run!’”

### A large cast of characters, well-known, and not so much

McClelland's “Midnight” fleshes out familiar characters in government (Roosevelt and Murphy), labor (Lewis and the Reuther brothers), and industry (GM's Sloan and William Knudsen). And the importance of Perkins cannot be overstated.

But lesser-knowns, like two locals, the Perkins brothers — Bill, 27, and Frank, 29 — Fisher One workers from nearby small-town Columbiaville, fed up with their working conditions, stage an independent, unannounced, two-person sit-down weeks before the main event. They lose their jobs but are eventually rehired. More important, they plant seeds of revolt.

The reader will learn that



**Frances Perkins behind Roosevelt**  
(Source: Time Magazine)

Lawrence Fisher, one of Fisher Body's founding brothers, doesn't want the strikers expelled from the factories by violent means. “If the Fisher Brothers never make another nickel, we don't want bloodshed in that plant,” Fisher told Murphy.

Wyndham Mortimer and Michigan Governor Frank Murphy shake hands after the signing of the contract to end the Flint sit-down strike, Detroit, Mich.; Feb. 11, 1937.

Michigan National Guard

(Continued on Page 15.)



## ... Game

*(Continued from Page 16.)*

italist system that has created staggering inequality on the Imposters' ship and unlivable conditions for the poor Imposter masses.

Perhaps the Imposters have handed over their families and life savings to intergalactic pirates to take them across the vast reaches of space to arrive on the Crewmates' ship, utilizing illegal means of migration because they're the only means available to them (the Crewmates being ever so stingy about giving out visas).

What if there are simply no jobs in Imposter-land, and the Imposters have to figure out a way to feed their aging parents without the help of food assistance programs or affordable elder care because their social safety net has been gutted?

The kind of anti-immigrant, anti-foreign, anti-difference, anti-ecumenical mindset that this game represents and reproduces has been around a long time in this country. Beginning in the first half of the 19th century, Chinese men were recruited to come to the U.S. to build the railroads that made possible western expansion and American industrial prowess.

They did the jobs that white workers would not do — dangerous ones, like setting dynamite in the mines, and “wom-anly” ones, like cooking and cleaning. When the depression of 1876 hit, they were targeted as foreigners who were taking away much-needed American jobs and subjected to violence and hatred.

In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which prohibited Chinese immigration to the U.S. for the next 60 years. With the Chinese excluded, a labor shortage opened the way for a wave of Japanese immigrants to come and take their places on the railroads, on farms, and in the fishing industry, until there were too many of them as well, and they were excluded.

Koreans then took their turn, and then South Asian Indians; both

groups were likewise subsequently excluded. By 1924, all Asians were excluded from immigrating to the U.S. (except for Filipinos, who were technically Americans by colonial annexation), and if they were already here, they were denied citizenship or naturalization and prevented from owning land and marrying white people.

Even those who happened to be born in the U.S. were trespassers in their own country: among us, but not us. Aliens. Saboteurs. Imposter-Americans.

I have lived in shadow of this exclusion my whole life. As a kindergarten in Houston, Texas, kids on the bus would make chinky eyes at me. I started missing the bus on purpose. After my parents and I moved to rural Washington state, a group of young, white men speeding past our house in a very loud, very large truck yelled at my mother to “Go home, Chink!” while she was out for a walk. My uncle, who was with her, ran inside the house and grabbed the cordless phone, ready to call 911 if they returned. He was afraid they'd come back and do more than yell.

I've lost count of the number of times I've been asked if I speak English or received the obligatory “So, what are you?” question. Going to restaurants, the bank, or anywhere they felt their accents would be judged was so stressful for my parents that I learned to speak on their behalf by the time I was as old as my son is now. My mother was told to her face by her supervisor at the accounting firm where she worked that she should be grateful he hired her because “no one else would hire a Chinese.” She was grateful. She took me to work with her on Sundays when she worked overtime, by herself, while her colleagues spent time with their real American families.

My parents lived here 30 years and never felt at home. Among Americans, but never American. They stuck it out, in part, because they had nowhere else to go. Their own parents fled China for Taiwan during the communist revolution in 1949 but never felt at ease on an island where they were seen as imperialists.

They also stuck it out, I think, because they thought it would be different for me. In many ways, it has been. The opportunities I have been afforded in this country have far exceeded anything available to, or even imagined by, my parents.

But a year ago, when COVID was still seen as a Chinese problem, when it was called “the Chinese coronavirus” and the “kung flu,” and people who looked like me were spat on in subway cars, openly harassed in the streets, and shunned as carriers of the virus by virtue of our birth and heritage — as if we bred it in our bodies, our blood, our genes — I felt what it was to be among us, but not us. When a significant segment of the American population believed that Asians brought the plague to its shores, we became not just imposter-Americans, but traitors out to sabotage the health of the nation.

Last February, when the stylist at Supercuts asked me, mid-snip, if I was born in America, I got mad, and then I panicked. Was this the beginning of another wave of Asian exclusion? Would I be interned, as Japanese- and other Asian-Americans were, during World War II? These things are not far-fetched fictions for me. They've happened in this country in my parents' lifetimes. They've happened many times, to many Asian-American communities, and they could easily happen again.

Plus, she was pointing scissors at me, half an inch from my ear. If I had said no, what would she have used those scissors to do? I said yes, that I was born in Texas, which happens to be true; but also, it doesn't get more American than Texas. I entertained a fleeting thought of getting an image of my birth certificate silk-screened onto a T-shirt. And what if I had? What if I had gone around with an “I was born in Texas” sign taped to my forehead? It wouldn't have mattered.

Among us, but not us. Never us.

I live “Among Us,” and I perpetually play only one of the two roles. With my eyes, my face, my hair, and my skin; with my ancestors and their stinky tofu, and bok choy, and chicken feet, and 5000-year-old culture that will

*(Continued on Page 15.)*

## ... Game

(Continued from Page 14.)

never really be mine, but which others will never allow me to forget I've inherited — what other role is there for me to inhabit in this country than that of Imposter-American?

The thing that breaks me, though, is that my son has yet to learn that this is his role, too. He thinks that once in a while, when it's his turn, he will be accepted as a Crewmate. And maybe he will, sometimes, depending on where he is and how the light hits him, depending on what his hair looks like that day, or who he resembles more — me, or his white, American dad — according to the person looking at him.

But he has already been asked if he's Chinese or Japanese. He has already been outed as “that Chinese kid” when his mom came to pick him up from school for the first time. He has seen his mom gawked at by his classmates and listened while one of them asked her if her people rode on dragons. He has asked his mom not to pick him up from school anymore.

I suppose I shouldn't be surprised that “Among Us” is the game he wants to play, a fantasy universe where he gets to roam around as someone who belongs. But xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment, nativism and ethnocentrism, racial and cultural supremacy and willed ignorance of others, and the notion that any of us has the right to determine who is beneficial and who is harmful, who is worthy and who is expendable — these ideas are not fun and games. Crewmates and Imposters are locked in a battle that is deeply rooted in this country's history.

If we can't even pretend not to think this way in our virtual worlds, there is little reason to believe we will ever view each other differently.

*Contributing writer: Vivian Kao teaches English at Lawrence Technological University. Her book, “Postcolonial Screen Adaptation and the British Novel,” was published by Palgrave in 2020. She lives in Flint with her husband Ben Pauli and two small humans, Julian and Flynn.*

## ... Book

(Continued from Page 13.)

Captain Brice C.W. Custer, grand-nephew of the ill-starred general killed at Little Bighorn, arrives in Flint at the head of a 65-member howitzer company from Monroe, Mich.

A host of other unionists — Wyndham Mortimer, “Bud” Simons, Homer Martin, Bob Travis, Genora Dollinger, Kermit Johnson, Henry Kraus, Henry Clark, Prince Combs, Ed Kronk, Howard Foster, Bill Roy, Carl Bibber, Joe Sayen, Henry Lorenz, Roscoe Van Zandt, and others — find their way into McClelland's narrative, as do those who oppose the union.

### Ephemeral victory

“America's greatest twentieth-century invention was not the airplane, nor the atomic bomb, nor the lunar lander,” McClelland concludes. “It was the middle class.” If so, the catalyst for that middle class unfolded right here in Flint from Dec. 30, 1936, to Feb. 11, 1937.

Labor unions and the middle class, however, are shrinking from the American scene. “Today, GM's Flint-area workforce is down to 6,500 — less than a tenth of what it was in the 1970s,” McClelland writes. “That's consistent with the overall decline of GM's hourly employment, which has fallen from 511,00 to 50,000, as a result of automation and the loss of market share.”

The average CEO earned 20 times as much as his employees in 1950; that has ballooned to a factor of 300.

McClelland posits in the final pages of “Midnight”: “The shrinking of the middle class is not a failure of capitalism. It's a failure of government. Capitalism has been doing exactly what it was designed to do: concentrating wealth in the ownership class, while providing the mass of workers with just enough wages to feed, house, and clothe themselves ... and it can only be arrested by an activist govern-

ment that chooses to step in as a referee — as Frank Murphy, Frances Perkins, and Franklin D. Roosevelt did in 1937.”

McClelland concludes, “The blueprint for better working conditions, and for a revival of the middle class is in this book.”

McClelland's “Midnight in Vehicle City,” published by Beacon Press, is on sale beginning Feb. 2, 2021.


*EVM Staff Writer Harold C. Ford is the son of an auto mechanic and a lifelong Flintstone. He belonged to four unions during his years of full-time employment: Laborers' Local 1075 (thrice); AFS-CME; UAW (thrice); BEA-MEA-NEA (30 years, 3 strikes).*

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# Village Life

## “Among Us,” but Not Us — video game brings up painful American truths

By Vivian Kao

My older son is 8 years old, and like most 8-year-olds, he goes through phases in which he gets obsessed with certain things.

About a year ago, it was professional wrestling. He had a group of friends at school who watched WWE, and through them, he learned the names of all the wrestlers, their signature moves, their costumes, their backstories. He checked out biographies of wrestlers from the library and created an impressive mental catalogue of WWE information. Most notably, he tried out all the moves on his 2-year-old brother. To this day, the little one will pull down the front collar of his shirt and yell, “Big Shooooow!”

He finally outgrew that phase about six months ago, with no broken bones suffered by the toddler and most of our furniture still intact, so we considered ourselves lucky.

Then there was a soccer phase, a Disney phase, a magic phase and a shoe phase. Currently, he’s into video games. We allow him to play a handful of select games — MarioKart, Minecraft, 2K- something-or-other that allows you to play with real NBA players — no blood, gore, language, violence or weapons. Lately, he’s been asking to play Fortnite, which, after a little research, I’ve vetoed until he hits double digits in age.

But there’s also this game called “Among Us” that he really, really, really wants to play. He nags and begs, begs and nags, reminding us constantly that he’s the only kid in his class who doesn’t play it — even his teacher’s kids play it — it couldn’t be that bad.

In December, “Among Us Day” was part of his school’s pre-winter-break spirit week. I’m not kidding. It was a day devoted to the video game.

All the kids were invited to dress up as one of the game’s characters. He told me that his teacher showed them how to play the game on Zoom during their virtual class meeting, though I did not witness this myself. I believe him, though.

It’s an incredibly popular game. Its Wikipedia page says that YouTube videos featuring “About Us” were viewed 4 billion times and downloaded 100 million times in September 2020 alone, and TikTok videos about the game had over 13 billion views in October 2020.

After hearing about this game nonstop for two months, I decided to find out more about it. It’s a multiplayer game that takes place on a spaceship. Players take on one of two roles: Crewmates or Imposters. The Crewmates need to

Imposters can either be killed outright or ejected from the ship by being voted off by the Crewmates, which, I imagine, amounts to being killed as well, but with less on-screen homicide.

The object of the game, then, if you’re a Crewmate, is to figure out who really is like you, and who truly belongs in your group. Those who aren’t really like you, and are just pretending to be like you, need to be at least banished, if not outright murdered.

I don’t think it’s outrageous of me to find the concept of this game objectionable. Is this not xenophobia, transphobia, racism, sexism, ableism, and plenty of other types of exclusionism, packaged in non-bloody graphics for pre-tweens? The object of the game is to figure out who belongs and who doesn’t, and then to get rid of those who don’t.

Haven’t we lived through four years of just this kind of us-versus-them mentality? Build a wall between the Crewmates and the Imposters, once you figure out which Imposters are coming into your country, taking your jobs, violating your women, leading your children astray, and living off the fat of your land. Keep them out and lock them up! Root out the traitors and fire them! It’s them, or it’s us: of course their intentions are nefarious and their presence is harmful.

Is there any other interpretation of who they are and what they mean to do to us?

I don’t know, maybe the Imposters had to leave their own spaceship because of climate change, political persecution, sectarian violence, or religious extremism. Or perhaps the Crewmates are part of a universal cap-

(Continued on Page 14.)

LIX: 2 (694 issues, 7,184 pages)



**Vivian Kao with her two sons, Flynn and Julian**  
(Photo by Vivian Kao)

identify the Imposters and eliminate them while also managing to accomplish various mundane tasks aboard the ship. Imposters, meanwhile, try to pass as Crewmates in order to sabotage their tasks and eventually kill them.