

At E3, game makers introduce more diverse heroes

By **Derrick J. Lang**
AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES — After introducing the world to several new female heroes at last year's Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), story-driven game makers at June's gathering of the interactive industry are uncharacteristically putting more racially diverse protagonists front and center in their games.

From an Indian-American space dweller in *Tacoma* to a biracial Vietnam War veteran in *Mafia III*, the heroes and anti-heroes appearing on the massive posters and screens across the Los Angeles Convention Center represented more ethnicities than have been showcased in the past.

"We wanted to tell a very different *Mafia* story this time," said Christoph Hartmann, president of *Mafia* publisher 2K Games. "That meant getting away from classic *Godfather* fare with a bunch of Italian characters. Once we decided to set the game in New Orleans in 1968, it just made sense for the character to be an African-American war vet."

For decades, when players weren't able to pick their own protagonist's skin color or background, the interactive medium has mostly focused on telling stories of white leading men and women, relegating characters of other ethnicities to villainous or supporting roles. That's changing.

"At the end of the day, this is the group that we're interested in seeing on screen," said Karla Zimonja, co-founder of *Tacoma* developer Fullbright. "It's always more interesting to pay attention to things that don't get a lot of attention in media. This is a direction that hasn't really been explored in video games, so we wanted to explore it."

A look at E3's newest stars:

Lincoln Clay, *Mafia III*

Mafia III is heading South to a locale inspired by New Orleans in the '60s following installments centered on Italian-American gangsters in open-world versions of New York, Chicago, and San Francisco spanning the '30s to the '50s. The unflinching crime world saga focuses on Lincoln Clay, a biracial orphan and Vietnam War vet, as he battles for control of the city's black mafia. He'll face off against the police, Italian mobsters, and



GAMING GAINS. A display for *Watch Dogs 2*, an upcoming open world action-adventure video game developed by Ubisoft, is seen at the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles. After introducing the world to several new female heroes at last year's Electronic Entertainment Expo, story-driven game makers at a gathering of the interactive industry are uncharacteristically putting more racially diverse protagonists front and center in their games. (AP Photo/Nick Ut)

family drama *Gone Home* casts players as Indian-American space-faring free agent Amy Ferrier. She arrives at her new assignment on the space station *Tacoma* to discover its diverse six-person crew has disappeared. Ferrier, who originally hails from California, must rely on *Tacoma*'s augmented reality system to retrace their steps and find out what happened.

Marcus Holloway, *Watch Dogs 2*

Aiden Pierce, the gruff vengeance-seeking Chicagoan from the original *Watch Dogs*, has been replaced with Marcus Holloway, a more upbeat African-American vigilante hacker in the San Francisco-set sequel. During a demo of the Ubisoft game, the Oakland-born anti-hero breaks into a crooked politician's penthouse all while jamming to Eric B. and Rakim's *Don't Sweat The Technique*.

the Ku Klux Klan along the way.

Alex Hunter, *FIFA 17*

A real — not virtual — black man stepped on stage at Electronic Arts' E3 presentation and introduced himself as Alex Hunter, a humble English chap with dreams of bending it like David Beckham.

FIFA 17 players will guide a computer-generated version of Hunter in the soccer series' first-ever story mode. From picking a team to conducting post-game interviews, Hunter's future is in players' hands.

Amy Ferrier, *Tacoma*

The follow-up to Fullbright's voyeuristic

Minority population growth strongest in Minnesota

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — New data from the U.S. Census Bureau shows most of the recent population growth in Minnesota comes from people of color.

While 4.4 million of Minnesota's 5.2 million residents are white, figures show 87 percent of population growth last year came from people who are African American, Asian, American Indian, or Hispanic.

Andi Egbert, the assistant director of the Minnesota State Demographic Center, told Minnesota Public Radio News that the growth comes from a combination of immigration and higher birth rates in those population segments.

The figures also show the median age in Minnesota is 37.9 years.

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Springfield health system to hire 100 nurses from overseas

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. (AP) — Health system CoxHealth says it plans to hire about 100 nurses from overseas in the next year.

The Springfield-based nonprofit announced in a news release that most of the nurses will come from the Philippines, with the first hires expected to arrive in the fall. The hires are in response to "tremendous growth" in the health system.

CoxHealth says the international nurses will be carefully screened and will not replace the health system's efforts to recruit local nurses.

Candidates must have a bachelor's degree in nursing and a minimum of two years of nursing experience. They must pass the same tests and have the same certification as local nurses, as well as pass an English proficiency exam.

China city holds dog-meat-eating festival despite protests

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forced to take the festival indoors and large-scale open air dog-meat consumption is no longer seen.

Along with the question of animal cruelty, dog meat also poses a risk to human health by spreading diseases such as trichinellosis, rabies, and cholera, the Humane Society says.

Guangxi is already one of China's five worst areas affected by human rabies, and Yulin ranks as one of the top 10 Chinese cities in terms of cases, the organization says.

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