

“What they did to this city is criminal”

Flint residents march on third anniversary of lead poisoning

Larry Porter
26 April 2017

Hundreds of Flint residents and their supporters marched to City Hall Tuesday to mark the third anniversary of the lead poisoning of the Michigan city. On April 25, 2014 Flint’s unelected emergency manager implemented his calamitous decision to switch the city’s water supply to the polluted Flint River to cut costs, divert money to private contractors and further the state’s plan to undermine the publicly owned Detroit water system, which had long supplied Flint.

Resident protests and complaints about the vile-smelling, discolored water coming into their homes were met with a wall of lies from city and state officials alike—from Republican Governor Rick Snyder to Flint’s Democratic mayor and city council—who all claimed the poison water was safe to drink and complied with federal standards.

As a result, the largest outbreak of Legionnaires disease in recent years sickened many scores and killed at least 12 in the city of 100,000. Countless numbers of children and adults were lead poisoned and it is still unclear the extent to which pathogenic microorganisms are being transmitted through the city’s aged and crippled water infrastructure.

Only the determined opposition of working-class residents in the former General Motors manufacturing center, however, brought this issue to national and international attention, highlighting the advanced decay of America’s infrastructure due to decades of diverting public resources to fund corporate tax cuts, privatization schemes and endless wars.

Three years have passed, and this social crime continues. At a Town Hall meeting on April 20 ostensibly called to allow residents to air their “feedback, questions and concerns,” about the 30-year

plan Mayor Karen Weaver announced for the future of the city’s water system, a police provocation unfolded, resulting in the arrest of six vocal opponents of the longstanding official cover-up of the crime against the population.

Tuesday’s march and rally, which involved 200 people, expressed the continued widespread anger over intolerable conditions. It also revealed the continued effort by Democratic Party officials and their supporters to contain and dissipate that anger.

To the disgust of many protesters, the march organizers welcomed Mayor Weaver, who made a few vacuous comments before quickly leaving. Weaver, a Democrat, oversaw the legal travesty last week where six residents were dragged away by police for exercising their constitutional rights. She is currently facing three petition campaigns to recall her from office.

Several residents declared that nothing had fundamentally changed in the last three years despite the official pledges to help from President Obama and Governor Snyder down to the local level. Resident Dorothy Batchelder asked: “Where is [Democratic State] Senator [Jim] Ananich? Where is [US Congressman Dan] Kildee? What have they done to help Flint at this point?”

“This is a biochemical government-made problem. I am sick and tired of it. People have been poisoned. It is still a disaster.” She denounced the state takeover of the city as “a steal from the get-go” and a “land grab” to “force the poor and blacks out of this city. We need to stand together, black and white, as one.”

Gladys Williamson, a retired GM worker and longtime opponent of the political conspirators who

poisoned the city, also spoke to the crowd. “This is the second bottle of water that came out of my sink—this one is from last February. Here is also a bag of my hair that came out after I took a shower. This doesn’t include the hair that comes out during the day, on the carpet, on my furniture or anywhere else.

“If anyone can say that this water’s on the road to being fixed, what city do they live in because they do not live in Flint, Michigan. This water is nowhere near being fixed.”

One of those arrested last week was Tony Palladeno, Jr., a long-time Flint resident and vocal opponent of the poisoning of the city’s workers and children. He spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* after the rally. “It’s three years and I’m standing on the lawn of the municipal building and nothing has changed. The players are still playing and the people are still dying. Our eyes are still burning and we are still crying. This is crazy stuff here. There is no way this should be going on.”

“We are suffering at the hands of the big man, the state. Let’s be honest, this was caused by the state. They brought that emergency manager in and he should have never been here.”

Aleisha Carter, 24, a Flint resident, told the WSWS, “I had to move out of the city in 2015 so that my skin wouldn’t deteriorate. I was getting rashes. It was horrible.

“I looked at Trump spending \$54 billion more for weapons for the military, for more war. Why can’t we have clean water? You can die without clean water. You can see that here. You don’t know how many people died since this has happened.

“If this is happening in America it doesn’t fit. That’s why I come out and show love toward the city. What they’ve done to it is criminal.”



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