

# *Nor Any Drop to Drink* previewed to Flint audience

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An audience composed largely of Flint residents gave a warm reception to a showing March 29 of *Nor Any Drop to Drink*, a new documentary on the ongoing water crisis in Flint, Michigan. The film covers a broader timeline than other productions on the water crisis, spanning the period from the lead-up to the decision by the state to sever the city from its longstanding water source to the present. It has been more than four years since the disastrous decision to begin drawing water from the polluted Flint River.

Central Michigan University sociology professor Cedrick Taylor was moved to create the film by his concern and anger over the crime perpetrated on the 100,000 residents of Flint. His documentary gives voice to residents who continue to suffer health issues, have been deprived of the basic necessity of safe water, and are fearful that the agencies that have repeatedly lied to them are now washing their hands of any responsibility for the catastrophe.

The film includes an interview with Nakiya Wakes, who miscarried twin babies in 2015 because of the lead-laced water she was drinking. She expresses the feelings of most residents when she says she will likely never again trust or drink tap water, even outside of Flint.

Taylor's documentary is being released in the wake of other recent productions about Flint, including Lifetime Television's tepid *Flint* and Jeff Daniels' play, also called *Flint*.

Taylor's film attempts to present the views and the plight of the working class citizens of the city. *Nor Any Drop to Drink* shows the unthinkable lengths to which people must go to cope with the situation where they can't trust the water—performing basic daily hygiene, like bathing and brushing teeth, with bottled water. These scenes are painful to watch because the process

is so tedious.

Streaming giant Netflix recently released a filthy eight-part series, *Flint Town*, which warrants special mention as a pro-police, pro-establishment propaganda piece. The water crisis is merely a backdrop for the reality TV series, in which embedded camera crews follow police on their patrols and in their briefing sessions and home lives. The production turns the narrative upside down, making the victims the criminals.

In contrast, in *Nor Any Drop to Drink*, Flint educators speak eloquently about the damage done to children by the water crisis. When the water was finally tested at school facilities, extremely high levels of lead were revealed, forcing drastic changes in lunch services in addition to the shutoff of all water fountains. Of course, the children were emotionally scarred, as it is impossible to shield them from the news that they have been poisoned with a neurological toxin.

The film falls down in its approach to politics. While Taylor presents a generally left-leaning view that is sympathetic to the residents, he is uncritical of the Democratic Party. A segment shows Republican Presidential candidate Donald Trump campaigning at a local church in 2016, where he is interrupted by the pastor and told to stop discussing politics. Yet nothing is said about the Democrats' attempt to politically exploit the water crisis by choosing Flint as the site of the first candidate debate between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders.

Obama's infamous visit to Flint in May of 2016, where he told residents to stop their complaining and drink the water, is not mentioned in *Nor Any Drop to Drink*. Filmmaker Michael Moore's 2016 photo-op visit is given uncritical prominence. Hearing Democratic Congressman Dan Kildee speak about Flint

in the film, an uninformed viewer could be forgiven for thinking that he was a fighter for the working class and quasi-socialist.

Democratic Mayor Karen Weaver, who, due to her handling of the water crisis, has become so unpopular that she was the subject of a recall ballot last November, is given a pass.

Along with many other Flint residents, *Nor Any Drop to Drink* includes interviews with LeeAnne Walters, the Flint mother who fought to expose the lies by state officials that the water was safe and who contacted and subsequently worked with Virginia Tech's Dr. Marc Edwards to carry out an extensive sampling of the water. Edwards is also interviewed.

The film touches on the dispute over showering and other toxins that may be in the water. Edwards denounces as unscientific the sampling methods employed by a group called Water Defense, which began working in Flint after the water crisis made the national news.

Taylor's film was well received by the audience and the discussion after the film was revealing. While most agreed that the film deserved a wider viewing, several residents expressed concern that the unity that was manifested among the people of Flint in the early period of the fight to expose the lies of the state was threatened. The tension became palpable in the room when the question of local politics was raised.

There was also a justifiable sense that now that the city was not in headlines, the establishment was preparing to walk away from any responsibility to address the disaster it had inflicted on the population.

The water crisis in Flint is only one result of the disastrous policies that have been carried out by both capitalist parties over decades. The most basic elements of social infrastructure, including water systems, have been neglected and targeted for profit-making, as the corporate oligarchy deepens its plunder of society to add to its already staggering levels of wealth.



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