

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

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September 28, 2016

Michigan Department of Civil Rights  
Attn: Flint Water Crisis Testimony  
110 West Michigan Avenue, Suite 900  
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Michigan Civil Rights Commission:

Race, class, wealth and discrimination are without a doubt contributors to the Flint, MI water contamination crisis. I am fortunate to have an education and upbringing that grants me the awareness of modern day racism, which is deeply rooted in America's 240 year old history. I **choose** to believe Flint residents are victims of the water crisis not due to hatred and malicious intent, but a true lack of understanding of modern day social issues.



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The decisions administrators and politicians make can be blinded by a heavy focus on financial well-being. Simultaneously, what is brushed under the rug is the fact African Americans do not have equal opportunities. While white Americans were building their fortune and fame in 1776, African Americans only had the legal right to attempt that path in 1876.

Fast forward to 1937 when redlining allowed banks to deny African Americans the right to build their "American Dream." This informal discrimination continued into 1968 until the Civil Rights Act passed, only giving many present day African Americans less than 50 years to "build their dream." These are brief facts; now take into consideration the biased emotions and discriminatory beliefs about African Americans that have been passed on through the generations. We do not live in a culture of equal opportunity. America has created these present day social issues. It is up to us, with a new frame of mind, to eradicate them.

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If enough Flint residents had education in how to navigate the administrative and political world, they may have been able to prevent an Emergency Manager. They tried, but their voices were ignored. If enough Flint residents had the financial means and power to leverage their need for clean drinking water back in 2013, they may have been able to prevent this water crisis. If enough Flint residents were white and wealthy, maybe those 10 individuals who died from legionella may still be walking this earth. Flint residents are fighting for their lives, and they need their country to help them.

My personal health has not been impacted by the Flint water crisis. However, I am compelled to support and advocate for those who have been caught in harm's way. The injustice is brutal, the consequences dire, and the governments' attempt at aiding our fellow Americans is vain. Thank you for your time and I appreciate you hearing my concerns.

Sincerely,



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