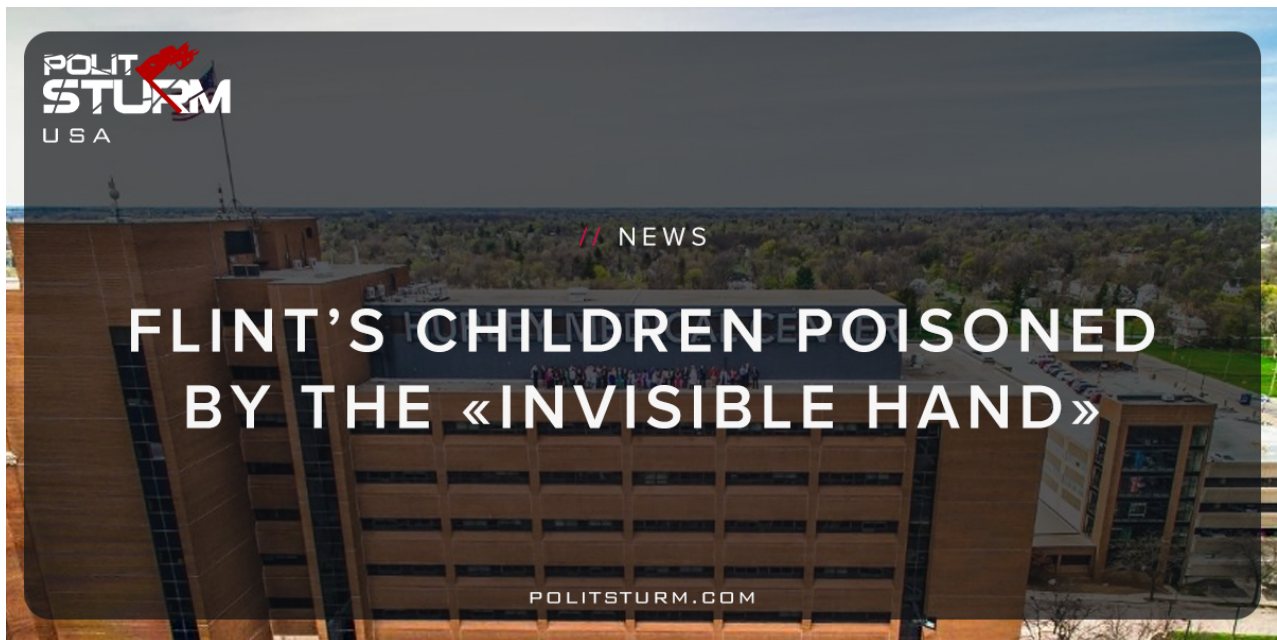


# Flint's Children Poisoned by the Invisible Hand



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FLINT'S CHILDREN POISONED  
BY THE «INVISIBLE HAND»

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Governor Rick Snyder has announced the end of the distribution of free bottled water for the residents of Flint, claiming the water quality had been restored. He claims that tests over the past two years show the water to be back to normal levels. Many residents, though, refuse to drink from the tap regardless of what government officials report. Debra Coleman, a Flint resident has stated her distrust of the Governor's announcement.

"I don't trust the water. Period. It could be five years from now and I'll still never drink this water."

A study released by the Hurley Medical Center in 2015 confirmed what city officials had earlier denied, that the number of infants and children in Flint, Michigan with levels of lead in their bloodstream above the average level has doubled since the city government decided to switch to the Flint River for its water source in April 2014. Mayor Karen Weaver subsequently declared a state of emergency December, calling the crisis a "man-made disaster."

Lead poisoning leads to the shortening of attention spans, behavioral problems, crime, and antisocial behavior as well as anemia, hypertension, renal impairment, and damage to the reproductive organs. The water in Flint has been described as cloudy with a foul odor. Drinking fountains could be found marked with signs stating "Do Not Drink Until Further Notice."

The water crisis was not caused by simple human error, but from the economic problems resulting from the flight of capital, outsourcing, offshoring, and automation; i.e. the internal logic of capitalism. Flint, once a union town known for its strong manufacturing base, is reeling from the process of deindustrialization being felt throughout the country. Since GM, the city's main employer, packed up and left for cheaper labor pools after the 1980s recession, the inhabitants have struggled to keep their economy afloat. The current economic crisis is not the first; the city was also under a state of financial emergency from 2002-2004. Flint is consistently ranked as one of the highest in the country for violent crime and the population rate halved by the new millennium. After declaring a financial emergency in late 2011, Governor Snyder appointed Michael Brown to be the city's Executive Manager to take the place of the Mayor. A new water pipeline was built from the Flint River to save on the water imported from Detroit, however, the water was heavily polluted with lead and Legionella bacteria.

The Marxist conception of violence is one that dates back to the era of industrialization, yet it reverberates in today's post-industrial society. After describing the mutilating effects of factory labor in 19th century England, in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* Engels writes:

"When one individual inflicts bodily injury upon another such that death results, we call the deed manslaughter; when the assailant knew in advance that the injury would be fatal, we call his deed murder. But when society places hundreds of proletarians in such a position that they inevitably meet a too early and an unnatural death, one which is quite as much a death by violence as that by the sword or bullet; when it deprives thousands of the necessities of life, places them under conditions in which they cannot live - forces them, through the strong arm of the law, to remain in such conditions until that death ensues which is the inevitable consequence - knows that these thousands of victims must perish, and yet permits these conditions

to remain, its deed is murder just as surely as the deed of the single individual; disguised, malicious murder, murder against which none can defend himself, which does not seem what it is, because no man sees the murderer, because the death of the victim seems a natural one, since the offence is more one of omission than of commission. But murder it remains.”

Like the brutal conditions in the 19th-century factory system, the preventable and unnecessary poisonings of poor Flint citizens is nothing short of systemic violence, and yes, I mean “violence” in the full meaning of the word. Despite the objective possibility to change this hellish existence plaguing the inhabitants, the pitiful insistence that “nothing can be done” because that’s the “way the market works” demonstrates that American society would rather sacrifice these individuals then question a system that benefits them so much. Even in inaction, we are still determining what will happen in our society; The most politically apathetic individual who goes about his daily life, purchasing his daily necessities and fulfilling his duties in the workplace, is still contributing to the domination of the market over society that coerces the disenfranchised of our society. These atrocities can and should be prevented, but only a radical transformation of society from what Martin Luther King called a “thing-oriented society” to a “person-oriented society”, or socialism, can make them fully disappear.

## Sources

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Original article