

FLINT:
THE POISONING
OF AN AMERICAN CITY

PC(U.S.A.) STORY MINISTRY
**GRASSROOTS
SCREENING
KIT**



**PRESBYTERIAN
DISASTER ASSISTANCE**



FLINT: THE POISONING OF AN AMERICAN CITY



This film gives voice to the current struggle of Flint residents, beginning with the history of the river and how abuse and neglect of city infrastructure and environmental regulations led to the poisoning of an entire community. *Flint* explores the critical questions of "How can this happen in an American city?" and "How can this event serve as a warning for the rest of the country?"

A recent report found 5,300 American cities are also in violation of federal lead rules. Additional research published in USA Today detected excessive lead in nearly 2,000 public water systems across all 50 states.

This documentary is an excellent educational resource to start conversations with communities around systemic water justice issues, how to secure safe access for all, and seeks to radically change how we view and value water.



The filmmakers recommend audiences be guided through discussion following the film as a way to debrief and process what they have learned. For large community screenings we recommend inviting local leaders to sit on a panel to discuss how they interact with the issue in their line of work and to create a local call to action. With smaller audiences, it can be more effective to break into small groups of 2 or 3.

A thoughtful screening serves several purposes:

- To create a learning environment around the factors contributing to the Flint water crisis, including the results of post-industrialization, globalization, economic and racial inequality, and governance over these issues.
- To generate thoughtful discussion on ways to engage policymakers about inequality in water safety and access.
- To inspire participants to continue the conversation in their own communities.

- Select the date and time of your screening in conjunction with the schedules of your panelists and availability of the venue. The date can also coincide with a local or national memorial commemoration relating to topics of the environment, racism, or water.
- Make sure the date of the event does not distract from significant events and issues in the community that may impact attendance, including but not limited to major festivals, a 5k race in the area of the host site, religious holidays of another faith community, previously scheduled city council meetings, etc.
- Think outside the box! See if there are any arts groups with shows or performances focused on the topic addressed by the film.
- Reach out to members of your community that are already working on this issue. Where to look: churches, synagogues and other faith communities, school districts, universities, local government leaders, local water experts, community organizers, public health causes, environmental organizations.

- Create a small support team to pre-screen the film together and to help with the planning process.
- Find an accessible facility or room for screening, large enough to accommodate expected guests.
- You will need a large screen, projection system, sound system (including microphones for panelists), adaptors to connect computer.
- Receive a link & password from the Flint film team to download film directly to laptop. Do **not** use a USB drive.
- Generate a plan for promoting the event through flyers, advertisement, and social media.
- Write out a set of planned discussion questions to follow the film.

- Deliver notices/posters to participating groups & organizations.
- Provide local newspapers & other local media with info about the event.
- Use social media & email blasts to build awareness of the screening.
- Consider boosting the event on Facebook using the hosting organization's account.
- Create a Facebook event page and post the trailer, date and location of the screening.
- Request collaborating organizations share event announcement on their social media, e-blasts, and other newsletters.



- Double check that the venue has everything it needs from you and your planning team. Establish what time you will arrive for set up and will depart after clean up.
- Print multiple copies of a sign-in sheet to collect names and email addresses so people can be informed of future events related to the film.
- Create welcome area that will include sign in sheets, additional information related to the topic, opportunities for action.
- Check all equipment (projector, computer connection, and sound) for film and panel. This should be completed no later than one hour before screening time.
- Before starting the film, provide a brief introduction thanking people for coming, and perhaps recognizing the sponsoring organizations.
- Inform those gathered that there may be content in the film that is upsetting and encourage them to do what they need to do to take care of themselves.



There are many ways to encourage your audience to pursue on-going engagement with the issues explored in the film. Some of these might include:

- Volunteering with local environmental justice organizations.
- Researching local policy measures being taken to protect water sources.
- Encouraging audience to share on social media tagging @FlintPoisoning using #FlintIsEverywhere.
- Visiting the film's Facebook page, Amazon Prime, or Rotten Tomatoes to provide a review.
- Asking audience members to provide feedback about the film and the event.



- Identify and invite a skilled moderator for the panel discussion.
- Set and adhere to a time frame.
- Appoint a time-keeper to sit in front row.
- Include introductions for for each panelist at the beginning of the discussion.
- Consider providing notecards, usher with a microphone, or some other way questions can be asked by the audience.

If you would like to support the production of these types of resources, please track the following and send an email to screenings@barnhartfilms.org

- Which organizations partnered with you to host this event?
- How many people attended this screening?
- Where and when was the screening?
- Do you have suggestions that would improve future screenings?



As a facilitator it is important to be aware of your internal reaction to content within the film. There are physiological reactions to trauma like rapid heart rate, shallow breathing, dry mouth, sweating, and or tightened muscles that can develop. It's worth noting that for many people narrative brings the impacts of trauma into fuller consciousness.

Some parts of the film may be difficult to watch if you have trauma history or you are exposed to trauma through listening and interacting with traumatized clients/patients/co-workers/congregants anybody can be impacted.

- **In preparing for the screening learn how to relax your body.**
This will enable you to reduce the impacts of trauma and allow you to function more effectively. Diaphragmatic breathing is an established method to decrease your physiological reactions. There are other methods that are also effective such as progressive muscle relaxation. See Breathe2Relax, (free on iTunes App store) and YouTube videos like Dr. Andrew Weil's 4-7-8 Breathing Exercise (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRPh_GaiL8s) for examples.
- **Be mindful of others who are viewing this film.**
Consider going through a brief breathing exercise with the audience *before the viewing begins*. It may help your audience to be less anxious and more open to the content and the conversation which follows. It's always good to breathe.
- **Set the basic conversational guidelines at the beginning of the screening and adhere to them. Some suggested guidelines:**
 - Listen respectfully, without interrupting.
 - Listen actively and work to understanding the views of others.
 - Be critical of ideas, not individual people.
 - Avoid assumptions about people present: Do not ask individuals to speak for their *perceived* social group.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT TRAUMA

- **Be aware that for some viewing this film may produce an intense emotional and or physiological reaction.**

They may need to abruptly leave the room, which no doubt, will be disruptive. We recommend having someone positioned in the back of the room to follow the person out. This person does not need to be a professional but simply someone who can be a caring presence and help them catch their breath. If appropriate, it may be helpful to encourage those affected to seek additional support via local resources or through the Disaster Distress Helpline (1-800-985-5990).

- **Don't be surprised that during the discussion someone may become angry and challenge the views of those on the panel or in the audience.**

In experiencing past trauma the fight response is plausible. The conversation might be interrupted and feel sabotaged. It may become very uncomfortable for all who are present. *Story telling or narrative is a key component to healing trauma* and being prepared for pain points to surface is key in moderating a generative discussion.

- **As the facilitator you can ask the audience to pause and invite people to breathe.**

Redirect the conversation by asking another person on the panel to share their views. Remember to be gentle and kind to yourself and to others so that this discussion can lead to continued engagement in the future.



Flint: The Poisoning of an American City film reveals the scope of the realities of the Flint water crisis on [date and location]

The first feature-length documentary of its kind, the film reveals the scope of Flint's on-going water crisis through interviews with environmental experts and over two dozen local residents.

[City, State]: Flint: The Poisoning of an American City, the first feature-length film about the ongoing Flint water crisis, will be screened at [Event or Location] on [Day and Date] at [Time]. The film, produced and shot in Flint, MI, follows the more than five-year saga of the water crisis beginning when the state-appointed emergency manager of Flint switched the city's water source from the city of Detroit to the Flint River. The toxicity of the water and insufficient treatment quickly eroded the pipes and introduced lead into the drinking water of the city of 100,000.

The film traces the timeline of the city's interaction with the Flint River - from the continued abuse and neglect of both city infrastructure and environmental regulations, to subsequent population decline, through today's on-going crisis. After the film, [Organization/church] is hosting a Q&A with [insert panelists and their organizational affiliations].

The film will become available for national release for digital streaming through iTunes, Amazon and across major on demand cable platforms Comcast, Cox and Crawford, reaching more than 60 million homes starting January 31, 2020. Information about the Flint: The Poisoning of an American City can be found at www.flintpoisoning.org

About "Flint: The Poisoning of an American City"

Against the backdrop of a post-WW2 bustling Flint, full of hope and promise of the good life from GM, we learn of the suffering of residents. The film intersperses interviews with area residents (including parents, social workers, educators, pastors, and experts on water and health) with testimony at congressional and other oversight committee hearings illuminating how 100,000 people have been poisoned by lead, and the impact of lead in the water on the city. No definitive timeline exists for the remediation of the crisis and many residents fear that this reality has become a way of life for people in Flint. Flint: The Poisoning of an American City explores the critical question of how this could happen in the United States and how this event should serve as a warning for the rest of the country.

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**PRESBYTERIAN
DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

This film was funded by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA), the emergency and refugee program of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) PDA recognizes the value and importance of “Story” as a means to connect and cultivate wider circles of community engagement and action.

pcusa.org/pda