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Opinion

The Water Crisis in Flint is a Man-made Disaster

Something is definitely rotten in the state of Michigan — and it's not just the lead-poisoned water coming from the corroded pipes undergirding Flint's public water system. The rottenness goes to the very core of an attitude of managerial expediency unfettered by moral leadership.

Contrary to widespread belief, Flint Michigan's water woes are not the result of decades' long neglect of critical infrastructure investments — although that is certainly a contributing factor. The blame for Flint's water problems lay squarely with a legacy policy choices dating back decades.

The fact that towns like Flint, Mich., are currently facing critical fiscal crises is the result of successive generations of corrupt and incompetent local elected leadership. But the immediate cause of the water crisis in particular stems from current Michigan Governor's attempt to rectify fiscal mismanagement through authoritarian, anti-democratic governance policies.

Under Snyder's dubious management-oriented philosophy, principle-centered leadership often takes a backseat to expedient tactics.

In Flint this policy regime has tragically backfired. The

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Columnist

absence of moral discernment has caused a crisis from which the citizens of Flint as well as Michigan taxpayers are unlikely to escape any time soon.

Let's be clear. The situation in Flint was not an act of nature, or an accident, or a

“The Flint catastrophe could likely have been prevented by treating the water for a mere \$100 per day

mistake. It is a man-made environmental disaster. It was entirely foreseeable and entirely preventable.

When Marc Edwards — a Virginia Tech professor, MacArthur Genius grant-recipient, and world-renowned expert on water quality — declared the brown sludge coming from faucets in Flint to be toxic waste, the Snyder administration dismissed him as a quack. When local pediatrician Dr. Mona Hannah-Attisha — alarmed that children were showing up at her practice with skin rashes

and thinning hair — alerted political leaders that blood lead concentrations in children were 2 to 3 times normal levels, Snyder called her findings inconclusive, and vigorously denied that the elevated lead levels were caused by the city's drinking water.

When an EPA memo describing dangerously high levels of lead in Flint's drinking water was leaked to the media, the Snyder administration lambasted the memo's author as a 'rogue employee.'

The level of official misconduct here is beyond ludicrous.

In fact, if it weren't staring us right in the face, we would have difficulty conceiving of such ribald villainy on the part of our elected officials.

It is unavoidably apparent that the Snyder administration's policies have had profligate social and financial costs. The Flint catastrophe could likely have been prevented by treating the water for a mere \$100 per day (a small price to pay for precaution), but some estimates now place the long term cost of remediation at \$1.5 billion or more, as pipes corroded by river water con-

tinued to leach lead into the Flint water supply. In the full light of day, Snyder's policies seem to be motivated more by a desire to usurp the political power of the electorate, than by a genuine desire to help economically depressed localities manage their finances.

The toxic ideology that governments should be run like businesses needs to be challenged vigorously and soon, because the policy regime that led to the crisis in Michigan is far from an isolated case. Governors in Wisconsin, Kansas, Maine and Florida are implementing similar neo-liberal policies in efforts to enforce fiscal discipline on localities within their states.

In the case of Flint, Mich., the villains are easy to spot. They are the politicians who caused the fiscal crisis in the first place, and the politicians who caused a humanitarian crisis in a badly-conceived attempt to alleviate the fiscal challenge. The major lesson here is that suspending the democratic process in the interests of managerial expediency usually turns out badly. The fanciful notion that a strong dictator is more effective at governing than a 'weak' democratic process is a theory that was considered and discarded at the founding of our nation.

Americans Must Stand Up to Disrespect of the Presidency

Recently, retired Lt. Col Ralph Peters and Stacey Dash, both contributors on Fox News shows, blatantly disrespected President Obama on different news shows on national television using vulgar language.

Bill Slieve, senior vice president of programming for both networks, announced, "Earlier today, Fox contributors Lt. Col. Ralph Peters and Stacey Dash made comments on different programs that were completely inappropriate and unacceptable for our air."

The damage has been done, and for me, it wasn't enough that the contributors were suspended for two weeks. They should have been fired permanently.

First, it was bumper stickers, then road signs and memorabilia disrespecting President Obama. Now it's lawmakers, news commentators, and even candidates seeking the Republican nomination for president being discourteous to my president, your president and our president on national television and radio.

America, when will we stand up to those who disrespect Barack Obama, the first African American President of the United States? Freedom

Louis C.
WardNNPA
Guest
Columnist

of speech is a constitutional right in America, but defamation of character and disrespect is not. We must speak out against impertinence to the United States presidency.

“When the presidency is disrespected at home, it sows seeds for foreign countries to disrespect our president as well

When the presidency is disrespected at home, it sows seeds for foreign countries to disrespect our president as well. Look at what China and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel said to and about our president.

When he was first elected in 2008 on the platform for "Change in America," television screens across the nation showed people, representing different ethnic groups, crying because an African American had been elected President.

Most anticipated a new day with a better life for African Americans in the most powerful country in the world.

A new time for all people of America to come together to make America, not only the most powerful country in the world, but the greatest country in the world, where people will be able to live in harmony and, hopefully, achieve prosperity on economic and social levels.

As soon as Barack Obama

addressed Congress. Why does it happen now, and why to President Obama? Can it be because he's an African America?

My take on it is yes. At the end of the day, America, you may not like the man, but you have to respect the Office of the President of the United States.

It deserves our respect, our loyalty and our support. We must stand up America and demand that it receives as much.

What actions can I truly expect from writing this column? My prerogative as a writer is to raise the consciousness.

Prayerfully, many will step up and hold anyone accountable who chooses to disrespect the United States presidency. If one person stands up, and agrees to say something or do something about the disrespect of our president, I have made a difference.

We must not accept the disrespect against our president any longer. Stand up, say something and do something about it, now!

Stand up America! Demand respect for President Barack Obama, and the Office of the President of the United States of America.