

Article 1

Troubling heroes: Reframing the environmental justice contributions of the Flint water crisis

(Carrara & Key, 2021)



Key Points

- **FWC:** Cost-driven switch → lack of corrosion control = lead contamination → government denies community concerns → community-led response → national news and research
- **Flawed narratives:** Flint residents portrayed as passive despite extensive community organizing, literature uses simplified accounts
- **Reframed narrative:** Flint community members/organizations are the heroes of their own story, not rescued by outsiders

Article 1 Discussion

■ Question 1: Framing & Communication

How do academic and media narratives shape public understanding of environmental justice cases, and what are the consequences of erasing community agency?

Article 1 Discussion

■ Question 2: Passivity

Can emphasizing structural oppression (e.g., racial capitalism) unintentionally reinforce narratives of passivity? How should scholars balance these perspectives?

Article 1 Discussion

■ Question 3: Ethics in Research

What does the Flint case reveal about ethical responsibilities of researchers working in crisis-affected communities, particularly regarding representation and collaboration? What lesson can we as future professionals, researchers, etc. take with us from the Flint story?

Article 2

PFAS and the Pollution Trap: Contested Knowledge in Environmental Justice Struggles (van der Donk and Llaveró-Pasquina, 2025)



Key Points

- Examines **25 PFAS-related conflicts** on EJAtlas (US, Australia, and EU)
- PFAS **chemical properties** shape:
 - Corporate deception
 - Community mobilization
 - And the emergence of new kinds of EJ communities
- **Terms: manufactured uncertainty, coerced ignorance, post-normal science (PNS), pollution trap, labour pollution trap**
- “Wins” come in court but rarely stop facilities from operating



Article 2 Discussion

■ Question 1: Emerging Communities

Many PFAS facilities were placed without traditional racial or class zoning. How does the emergence of new EJ communities complicate or expand our definitions of class-based sacrifice zones? **Can environmental racism exist without intent?**



Article 2 Discussion

■ Question 2: Justice?

Most wins against PFAS emitters comes in the form of settlements.

What are the limitations of relying on the court system for justice?



Article 2 Discussion

■ Question 3: Methods

Is 25 conflicts on EJAtlas enough for a thorough global assessment?

Article 3 and Film

The lawyer who became DuPont's worst nightmare (Rich, 2016)

Dark Waters (Haynes, 2019)



■ Key Points

- ❖ **Robert Bilott:** Corporate defense lawyer who normally defended chemical companies.
- 1. The Tennant Farm**
 - Farmer Wilbur Tennant reported cows dying, showing deformities, and acting aggressively
- 2. Discovery of PFOA (C8) at DuPont's Dry Run Landfill**
 - DuPont knew PFOA was toxic for decades
 - Linked to: Organ damage, birth defects, and cancer
 - Dumped into water sources, hid findings from public
- 3. Widespread Environmental Contamination**
 - PFOA polluted drinking water for 100,000+ people.
 - Does not breakdown.
- 4. Legal Strategies**
 - Tennant farm discovery, massive lawsuit
 - Used Medical Monitoring Law: Prove exposure, illness later
- 5. Outcomes:**
 - PFOA linked to several cancers
 - DuPont paid fines and settlements
 - Replaced PFOA with similar, unregulated chemicals

Article 3 Discussion

■ Topic 1: Big Picture

What does this case reveal about relationships between corporations, government regulations, the justice system, and public health. What responsibilities do these entities have when they are presented with evidence of human and environmental harm?

Article 3 Discussion

■ Topic 2: Power

What may have made local institutions, such as other lawyers and government officials, so reluctant to challenge DuPont? Did DuPont's economic influence affect the community's willingness to speak out? How would you describe any power dynamics in the company-dependent town of Parkersburg?

Article 3 Discussion

■ Topic 3: Film vs. Article

How does the film shape your emotional connection to the story compared to the article? Did you notice any details that were omitted or changed for the film? How does the film affect the accessibility of this case? Does focusing of Rob Bilott influence the narrative?