Environmental Racism: Task Force Action on Flint Water Crisis

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A concept which is defined as environmental injustice which takes place as an action or in the form of the biased policy framework was recognized in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It identifies racial discrimination which takes place in policymaking and the enforcement of laws and regulations in environment-related issues??. Flint Water crisis, which took place in 2014 is a resounding example of environmental injustice. The ignorance of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), when they were already warned for dangerous levels of lead in water, instigated corrosion to change the condition of water (Ruckart, Ettinger Hanna-Attisha et al., 2019). It was later proved by a leaked memo that EPA was aware of the fact that there was a dangerous level of lead in the water. The inception of the Flint water crisis was seen as a threat by GM motors as the water started impacting their machines. The official statement from GM motors stated the fact high chlorine in water may cause further corrosion in their machines. The crisis which was not deemed as a state emergency, when residents complained about water, turned out to be labelled statewide emergency when GM motors acted. It further adds to the argument that the Flint water crisis was caused by due negligence and because of environmental racism (Chavez, Perez, Tunney, & NúñeZ, 2017).

The environmental racism infers that opinion and health-related impacts of residents when ignored, it is disrespectful. Such practices are carried out quite cleverly and, in a manner, that racial discrimination is justified by associating factors. In case of Flint water crisis, it is quite evident that authorities and officials which also included EPA committed several types of environmental injustices. Distributive justice, procedural justice, corrective justice and social justice can be identified as types of injustices which took place along with environmental injustice in Flint water crisis (Campbell, Greenberg, Mankikar, & Ross, 2016). In this regard, the state of Michigan which managed Flint’s finances defined Flint water crisis as an economic problem as their deficit of $25 million (Pauli, 2019).

With GM motors stopping the inflow of Flint river water, it took only 6 months for them to get access to clean water. Flint with a population of over 100,000 was left to face a crisis which was later resolved in 2017. Lack of intent, not recognizing the extent of the problem and with the majority of the population belonging to low-income household, Flint water crisis was an obvious example of environmental racism.

Provided the fact, the water supply was a problem and revenue collected in Flint didn’t allow authorities to repair damaged pipes as most of the population moved away from the city, the state of Michigan had to choose Flint river as an alternative source of water. However, a dangerous level of lead which was caused by corrosion in pipes was a known fact as leaked memos identify. In this regard, the literature present does not provide conclusive evidence which could label this as environmental racism. The gap between reports published by EPA and associating departments do not signify any relation with negligence on behalf of EPA.

The great level of discourse among theories identifies gap which can be associated with lack of knowledge and information. The political theory was solely based on the fact that demographic set up of Flint encouraged EPA to ignore the problem of corrosion in pipelines (Ruckart, et al., 2019). Whereas water supply problem was associated with fiscal deficit Flint had to face, authorities landed in hot water. The knowledge gap between all the theories presents a complicated situation.

Environmental racism is chosen as a casual theory which would provide a framework for the task force. It is part of structural theory and with many theorists and critical analysts citing Flint water crisis as an obvious example of environmental racism, it would be ideal to formulate a task action report on this particular crisis (Butler, Scammell, & Benson, 2016). With dangerous levels of lead present in water, it was a serious threat to the health of residence, which is one of the characteristics of environmental injustice. When policymakers ignore the opinion of residents and decide without analyzing any negative impacts it can have on the health of the population is deemed as environmental injustice.

Furthermore, a lawsuit which stated that the state wasn’t treating water with an anti-corrosion agent, and it insinuated that lead which was in the pipelines was further leached into the water. It was a clear violation of federal laws, hence, an act of environmental injustice. The water supplied to homes was infected and contained bacteria which was also confirmed by city officials. Furthermore, many clergymen filed several lawsuits against Flint city council which were turned own in a court proceeding, with judiciary citing them as baseless. It was an obvious judicial injustice towards the population of Flint. The state and the federal government were very slow to respond to the issue of Flint water crisis and when it did, it took ages to reach a decision. It is a clear example of environmental injustice which took place in this particular crisis. Having this theory as a foundation, the task force would be able to analyze all the elements which were part of this crisis. Also, the negligence of concerned departments and EPA would be part of the task force action report.

Shuning – this is a great start! A couple comments:

1. You have very good contents here, but I would recommend you re-organize them more clearly. First, you want to clearly define what environmental racism is and describe concepts and assumptions of environment racism. Then, second, you can talked about different aspects of environmental racism, including distributive justice, procedural justice, corrective justice and social justice aspects can explain why and how the water crisis happened – you already have all of these in your draft. Also, it would make it easy to follow if you use subheading when you make transition to other aspects of environmental racism.
2. Please cite the information you used. There is almost no citation toward the end of the paper. Make sure to cite all the information you used.
3. There are parts that are unclear and that do not follow well. Please clarify those and also make sure to proofread before submitting of your paper – there are some awkward sentence structures here and there.
4. Also in a conclusive paragraph, it would be helpful if you could describe a bit more clearly (and concisely) how the theory you used here will guide approaches to policy alternatives.

# References

Butler, L. J., Scammell, M. K., & Benson, E. B. (2016). The Flint, Michigan Water Crisis: A Case Study in Regulatory Failure and Environmental Injustice. *Enviornmental Justice*, 93-97.

Campbell, C., Greenberg, R., Mankikar, D., & Ross, R. D. (2016). A Case Study of Environmental Injustice: The Failure in Flint. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*, 1-11.

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Ruckart, P. Z., Ettinger, A. S., Hanna-Attisha, M., Jones, N., Davis, S. I., & Breysse, P. N. (2019). The Flint Water Crisis: A Coordinated Public Health Emergency Response and Recovery Initiative. *J Public Health Manag Pract*, 84-90.