

Presbyterian-sponsored film traces water crisis in the city of Flint

by [Rich Copley](#) in the [September 25, 2019](#) issue

The movie *Flint: The Poisoning of an American City*, a production of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance's Story Productions, was slated to have its world premiere September 12 in the heart of the city whose story it tells.

J. Herbert Nelson II, stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), along with community leaders and experts on lead poisoning, were scheduled to attend the first showing of the film at the Capitol Theatre in Flint.

*Flint* poses the question, How could a tragic situation such as the water crisis that poisoned thousands of residents happen in an American city? It starts in the early 20th century, tracing the rise of the auto industry in Flint, which made it a prosperous city, and then the city's decline after a massive General Motors plant left town. Water issues began to plague the city and aging lead pipes led to a health disaster, exacerbated by government mismanagement.

The movie by director David Barnhart and editor Scott Lansing makes it clear that Flint is merely a harbinger of similar tragedies festering in municipalities around the country and offers potential solutions to avoid the lead poisoning that thousands of Flint residents, particularly children, experienced.

"We are facing an urgent drinking water crisis in the US that is systemic and widespread, but it does not get the headlines or attention from the wider public," Barnhart said. "Access to safe clean drinking water is one of those essential and basic human rights and the question becomes, how can we allow for some to have access and others to be denied? The poisoning in Flint is a warning of what happens when we deny and ignore the voice of citizens and the tragic reality that this is actually happening in our cities across the country."

Newark, New Jersey, recently made headlines for its own water issues, and *Flint* producers are making plans to take the film there and to other cities.

"We are hoping to build momentum and a national conversation through each of these premieres," Barnhart said. "The Comcast iNDEMAND release alone can reach up to 60 million homes and is a wonderful opportunity to reach and engage a much

wider audience with these important issues.” —Presbyterian News Service