

Around that time, contrasting perspectives about the safety of the water were being put forth by FACHEP, relative to those of Flintwaterstudy and the relief agencies. Flintwaterstudy was always cautious to avoid any claim of absolute water safety, as illustrated by the following representative statement about bathing:

*It's important to understand that bathing is never completely a "risk free" activity. However, the dangers of not bathing are also significant, ...<Based on all the data>, we support the current U.S. EPA guidance that indicates bathing or showering in unfiltered Flint water is not riskier than in other cities. (4/25/2016)*

Through decades of experience we were humbled to learn that every recommendation carries risks, repercussions and uncertainties. After all, bottled water contains potentially harmful **plasticizers** and **bacteria**, boiling water or **raising the temperature set point of hot water heaters could kill bacteria but create a dangerous scalding hazard**, and **even carrying cases of water from one place to another could cause bodily injury**. We would never claim any water is completely "safe," and always acknowledge that immunocompromised individuals should consult and follow advice of their physician no matter where they live.

In contrast, in late-2016 FACHEP began making absolute statements about water safety (see below), apparently to distinguish their message from Dr. Edwards, and eventually support Dr. Love's emerging new POU filter manifesto boil water "gold standard." Only a team of **Dunning-Kruger** potable water experts like FACHEP would claim it is possible to achieve "**100% confidence that all water in Flint is safe to drink for all people**" or the equivalent of being sure "**that the tap water in Flint is safe in ALL neighborhoods for ALL residents.**" But as Dr. Pauli proudly disclosed, FACHEP would be willing to do that, and much more, to "**arouse activist sympathies.**"

**FACHEP: SET UNREALISTIC GOALS, CHASTIZE OTHERS FOR NOT MEETING THEM**

1. When will the water be safe?

**FACHEP WRITTEN RESPONSE.** We don't know. It very well may be safe now in some parts of the city. We just are not 100% comfortable at this stage making blanket claims and we simply don't know when we can say with 100% confidence that all water in Flint is safe to drink for all people. FACHEP Canned Question and Answer for Flint Public Meeting 12/14/2016

2. The team is not ready to make a blanket statement about the water being safe.

Dr. Ben Pauli (FACHEP) FACEBOOK STATEMENT 12/14/2017

3. Based on our understanding of our data at this time, we <FACHEP> are unable to conclude that all water in Flint is safe. Shawn McElmurry (FACHEP) emailing Edwards and relief agencies 1/16/2017

4. The water is not safe for all residents in all neighborhoods in Flint.... I trust the work of the team known as FACHEP....I intend to work my best to be sure that the tap water in Flint is safe in ALL neighborhoods for ALL residents. Laura Sullivan (FACHEP) 3/23/2017

**VT PRESS CONFERENCE: “FLINT WATER IS IMPROVING”**

The FACHEP master plan kicked into high gear immediately after a December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016 [Virginia Tech press conference that received national coverage and is archived online](#). Our cautiously optimistic message was that 14 months of outstanding relief work by the disaster response team and the investments of hundreds of millions in engineering improvements, were starting to produce expected improvements in the water.

We stated that Flint “***water conditions continue to improve***” ***but “residents should continue to use bottled water and lead filters until otherwise notified by the EPA or the state.”*** The media correctly reported the appropriate content and tone of our carefully crafted press conference message and the need to keep using filters or bottled water. What could go possibly go wrong?

## Flint Hospital 2015 vs. 2016 What a difference a year makes.....



2015: Flint River without Corrosion Control



2016: Detroit Water with Enhanced Corrosion Control

Photographs: Zhu "Joyce" Ni, Min Tang, Pan Ji, Mariah Gnegy

[Dec 2016 Press conference](#) slide comparing tap water at McLaren hospital faucet.

Well, it turned out that there was yet another dimension to FACHEP's plotting; specifically, they had committed themselves to **"winning over the activists"** allied with Mr. Scott Smith (formerly of Water Defense). At that time, Mr. Smith was highly adversarial to Dr. Edwards and Flintwaterstudy, and was supporting claims the water was not improving. Pauli noted that FACHEP wanted to cynically exploit that dynamic to their advantage. Flint activist Melissa Mays was already collaborating with FACHEP's Dr. Laura Sullivan (Kettering), as illustrated by their **"crybully" counterattack** on the agencies "wash your hands" campaign back in October 2016. But FACHEP wanted Smith's public backing.

At the recommendation of Melissa Mays and a few other residents, Mr. Smith engaged with Dr. Pauli in a 3-hour conversation on or about November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016. [As we have since reconciled with Mr. Smith](#), we

asked what they discussed. According to Smith, Pauli stated that FACHEP faculty were soon going to inform the public that Dr. Edwards had been “bought,” filtered Flint water was dangerous, and the State of MI was manipulating Edwards’ test data, press releases and conclusions. At the time, Mr. Smith was rightly skeptical, but he was very pleased to have new FACHEP allies in his confrontation with Dr. Edwards.

In the book chapter, Mr. Pauli does not provide specifics of that conversation with Smith, but did write that obtaining Smith’s endorsement was “***premised largely on his perception of my <Pauli’s> trustworthiness,***” and acknowledged that Smith somehow believed “***our team <FACHEP> was picking up where he <Smith> was leaving off.***” Ultimately, FACHEP did indeed, pick up where Mr. Smith left off, but with millions in State research funding and involvement of over 20 PhD faculty, they would destroy public trust on much grander scale than Mr. Smith—without any significant repercussions or apology for doing so to the present day.

## ROLLING OUT THE FACHEP NARRATIVE ABOUT DR. EDWARDS

Still scarred by damage from Dr. Love’s allegations [in his D.C. lead crisis battle \(i.e., writing EPA that Edwards paying for humanitarian research out of his own pocket was a financial “conflict of interest”\)](#), Edwards took unusual steps to ensure there was also no valid basis for such assertions in his Flint work. Specifically, [VT was reimbursed for the months of time Dr. Edwards spent on the relief effort \(because he could not teach or conduct other research\), but Edwards did not receive any extra salary for that work.](#)

But for individuals like Dr. Love and her conniving FACHEP collaborators, such facts were no impediment to a rumor campaign. Edwards first starting hearing whispers FACHEP claimed he was “bought” and untruthful around the time Love and McElmurry’s were first visiting Flint homes in summer 2016. The first public written comment suggesting FACHEP might be originating that type of rumor came in [an October 19, 2016 social media post from Dr. Laura Sullivan:](#)

I'm so relieved to work with someone who isn't afraid to tell the truth, in spite of great pressures not to. Shawn, Ben Pauli, Paul, Nancy, Susan, and so many other talented faculty from Wayne State, UofM, MSU, Henry Ford Hospital, and Kettering **demonstrate that we can't be manipulated and we can't be bought.**

On October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016, [Dr. Sullivan's FACHEP hero narrative went further:](#)

***The agencies that should have been attending to this <recovery effort> have epically failed. But hard-headed, tough-hearted researchers from Michigan universities are, I can tell you first hand, setting aside everything including their own families to dig deeply into the concerns raised by activists ...<and these heroic> scientists push hard against attempts to minimize issues of importance***

We can't help but agree with a characterization of FACHEP faculty as "hard-headed" and "tough-hearted," especially in the context of being "[stubborn](#)" and "[insensitive](#)."

Then, on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, in the aftermath of Dr. Pauli's meeting with Mr. Smith and immediately after the VT press conference reporting data on "improving" water in Flint, Dr. Sullivan [finally lashed out](#) against "a man" who could only be Dr. Edwards:

A man can't carry the whole truth ***while his are hands are clenched around money, nor can he deliver the whole truth while his eyes are fixed on fame.*** Let the debate continue ***regarding whether or not the water in flint is safe.***  
(12/2)

Notice how Dr. Sullivan's statement perfectly captured FACHEP's strategy described in Pauli's book chapter and in the conversation recalled by Mr. Smith. It not only falsely distinguished FACHEP's message about water safety from that of Dr. Edwards—he said the water was improving and never claimed it was "safe." But it also characterized Edwards as "bought" and "fixed on fame."

A bizarre irony here is that the FACHEP faculty were liberally accepting extra salary from the State of Michigan and others for their Flint work, and at this point, we feel obligated to painfully remind everyone, that they never lifted a finger to productively help Flint residents until such funding was available. [And it was public knowledge that Dr. Edwards was scrupulously avoiding such financial conflicts of interest](#) and had once again paid for much of the Flint work from his own discretionary funds and pocket.

In other words, [Dr. Love's words that damaged Edwards back in 2011](#), were once again employed to discredit Edwards with Flint residents in 2016. Needless to say, the FACHEP rumors were highly effective, successfully instigating outrage amongst some residents, who naively assumed that PhD FACHEP faculty would not lie so blatantly. Such "New Anarchist" FACHEP tactics were be deployed over and over again, first against the agencies, and from this point forward against Flintwaterstudy.

## FRIENDS OF FACHEP PILE ON

[The campaign to win over Smith and his activist supporters, began paying off with brutal FACEBOOK postings by FACHEP friends Melissa Mays and Mr. Smith](#) on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, immediately after the VT press conference:

Mays: "Edwards thinks Flint is full of dumb, scared, dirty people..... They need to stop funneling money to paid off experts who will push their lie...The VT studies are funded by the state and the EPA so they are going with a narrative that our water is so much better....***They didn't even talk about Wayne State.... <Wayne State = FACHEP feels> Just like we do, lied about and pushed to the side. Because they <FACHEP> have evidence that goes against what the state is trying to sell people.***"

Scott Smith: ***Karma, Truth, and Justice will prevail for the residents of Flint as we have facts that are Irrefutable and cannot be comprised by Gov Snyder and his taxpayer funded minions.***

Tellingly, Pauli emailed Mr. Smith, just 30 minutes before the above posting on FACEBOOK about “*taxpayer funded minions*” in reference to Flintwaterstudy, and Pauli also emailed Smith once again a few hours after the posting in relation to a phone call between Mr. Smith and Dr. McElmurry. It certainly seems Dr. Pauli was so pleased with Mr. Smith, that he was arranging a direct call with the big boss man of FACHEP. Pauli elsewhere wrote that about his satisfaction that Smith “praised our <FACHEP’s> work effusively on social media” (text to be presented in a future blog).

After the FACHEP-instigated backlash, Edwards then received an email from a FOXNEWS reporter, claiming FACHEP friend Melissa Mays was asserting Flint water ***was actually getting worse every day***. Now that was a message about water safety that differed from Dr. Edwards data.

Imagine, all the relief agencies work for 14 months, the expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars in improvements, and things were actually getting worse every day! Brilliant. Analogous to **fire-fighter arson**, thank god the crackerjack FACHEP team was on the scene, to heroically douse the flames they had created themselves.

To support her claim, Ms. Mays distributed a letter from VT, **for sampling results that we later learned Mays had falsified by improperly sampling** a basement hose bib (i.e., Mays claimed termed it was “sampling her water meter”). Samples collected from hose bibs are improper because they have notoriously high water lead, and doing so violates written EPA and VT instructions to sample only a bathroom or kitchen tap .

But FOX did not know that, and ran a story December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016, **with the title “Is the Flint Water Crisis Getting Worse?”** citing Mays and foreshadowing FACHEP’s counter-narrative. Edwards subsequently shared several conversations with dejected agency relief workers, who realized that with such unscientific messaging, Flint residents would never know who to trust. Our reading of Dr. Pauli’s book and FACHEP’s actions, suggests that was the clear intent, as did what occurred next.

## DR. MCELMURRY: I WILL NOT AGREE FLINT WATER IS MUCH IMPROVED

Dr. Edwards was completely unaware that FACHEP was suddenly courting Mr. Smith and his allies, or that their “**message about the safety of the water was going to be different from that of Edwards,**” or that they were in the midst of executing an attack against him. In fact, up to that point, Edwards had numerous conversations with FACHEP’s McElmurry, Sullivan and Pauli, in which they had characterized both Mr. Smith and Ms. Mays as misguided and dangerous.

For instance, in a June 30, 2018, [Dr. Pauli privately emailed a number of university faculty](#), that “**it is perfectly legitimate for residents to have criticisms of Melissa. I myself have criticisms of her. I wish she wouldn’t be so reckless about posting things... and I wish that she would admit a mistake once in a while rather than giving her critics even more ammunition by aggressively defending everything she does.**”

Both Dr. Sullivan and Dr. McElmurry had encouraged Flintwaterstudy to publicly confront Mr. Smith in May 2016. Dr. Sullivan even wrote encouraging and thankful comments on the webpage of our blogs doing so, such as “**Thank you for your consistent and accurate information**” and “**Thank you for setting the record straight, Marc (see below).**”



FACEHP's Dr. Sullivan thanking us for correcting Mr. Smith in our blogs, as captured in comments Sullivan wrote on blogs that she and McElmurry had helped instigate.

[flintwaterstudy.org/2016/05/are-there-dangerous-levels-of-chloroform-in-flint-water/](http://flintwaterstudy.org/2016/05/are-there-dangerous-levels-of-chloroform-in-flint-water/)

**Laura Sullivan**

May 10, 2016 at 6:25 pm

Thank you for your consistent and accurate information, Marc and Sid.

[flintwaterstudy.org/2016/05/a-list-actor-but-f-list-scientist-mark-ruffalo-brings-fear-and-misinformation-to-flint/](http://flintwaterstudy.org/2016/05/a-list-actor-but-f-list-scientist-mark-ruffalo-brings-fear-and-misinformation-to-flint/)

## 8 thoughts on “**A-List Actor But F-List Scientist: Mark Ruffalo Brings Fear And Misinformation To Flint**”

**Laura Sullivan**

May 16, 2016 at 9:50 am

Thank you for setting the record straight, Marc.

And let's not forget that McElmurry, enthusiastically agreed to help refute unfounded allegations about dangerous levels of chloroform reported by Water Defense, at a May 2016 press conference hosted by VT in Flint (Watch McElmurry [from 24:10-25:10](#)).

However, that was all back in May when McElmurry and Sullivan wanted to present themselves as responsible researchers to get FACHEP funded. Now that the millions of dollars of grants were secured, in Dr. Pauli's own written words, they needed to prove “**<FACHEP> could accept money from the state while retaining its independence,**” and win over a group of “**people who saw the state as their number-one enemy.**”

On December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Dr. Edwards emailed McElmurry, asking if he would publicly agree, that Flint water was “much improved” after the switch back to Detroit water and 14 months of relief efforts. Shockingly, McElmurry wrote that he would not agree to endorse that

statement; furthermore, he did not answer a request by Dr. Edwards to discuss FACHEP data that might support his reasoning. Of course, we now see that McElmurry's refusal had little to do with either data or truth, and everything to do with politics, strategy and creating a counternarrative.

## THE EMAIL EXCHANGE AS DESCRIBED IN PAULI'S BOOK CHAPTER

According to Dr. Pauli's draft book chapter, FACHEP immediately began to misrepresent the substance of the written email exchange with Edwards. We [reproduce a remarkable section of Pauli's book in the bold text below](#), along with our comments unpacking each gem of anarchist tactical writing:

**...<FACHEP> certainly did not want to oversell the <bacteria> risks and cause unnecessary anxiety in people who had plenty of it to deal with already.**

*Our Comment: Then why did FACHEP repeatedly do so?*

**As we debated the finer nuances of risk communication internally,**

*Our Comment: Is that how FACHEP viewed their false public rumors about Shigella and fights with the relief agencies?*

**Marc Edwards contacted McElmurry in early December with a request. Based on VT's latest findings, he was prepared to declare Flint water as safe as municipal water in other cities and wanted the FACHEP team to sign off on a statement to that effect.**

*Our Comment: The emails unambiguously prove Dr. Edwards only asked McElmurry for a truthful statement that Flint water was "much improved," in response to the baseless claims that Flint water was getting worse every day (probably with FACHEP's blessing)*

**McElmurry told Edwards that a sweeping statement about Flint's water quality would be premature and declined to**


***endorse the proposed statement. Although Edwards was clearly already positioning his narrative about the water to undercut FACHEP's work...***

*Our Comment: Edwards presented scientific data at the press conference showing Flint water was improving, in support of that of the relief agencies, and had no "narrative" beyond that data. As Pauli reveals in his book, it was actually FACHEP who was positioning a narrative to undercut Edwards. And when asked for actual scientific data point blank in an email, characteristically, McElmurry could not provide it. To this day we cannot find data supporting FACHEP's position.*

***It was plain that all of the business about bacteria, just like Smith's warnings about DBPs, was starting to interfere with his <Edwards> attempts to bring the story of his intervention in Flint to a triumphant conclusion.***

*Our Comment: What triumphant conclusion? Edwards stated that Flint water was improving as expected, and he reminded residents to keep using filters/bottled water. Is that the story of triumph that so threatened FACHEP?*

And if there was any doubt amongst readers that the above malicious FACHEP rumors might not have been circulated, the very day after McElmurry responded to Edwards' email, FACHEP's Dr. Sullivan posted a picture on FACEBOOK (December 9, 2016) with text written on a pipe full of holes that stated "***He says Flint pipes are healed and Flint water is safe...but there are holes in his evidence.***" We can again see in all its glory, what we were starting to believe was FACHEP's guiding motto in action: "Our rumor, your problem."



He says Flint pipes  
are healed and Flint  
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