
From: Benjamin Pauli <bpauli@kettering.edu>

Sent: Thursday, June 7, 2018 4:53 PM

To: Taylor, Cedric Andrew

Subject: Confidential appeal for help

Hello Cedric,

You may recall that we met at the screening of *Nor Any Drop to Drink* at UM-Flint recently. I am an assistant professor at Kettering University who has been involved in activism and science around the water crisis. I'm also finishing up an academic book on the subject. At the urging of Jennifer Carrera, I would like to apprise you of an appeal for solidarity and help I recently sent to a variety of academics who have done work in and around Flint. I have pasted below the original appeal as well as two follow-up emails (I apologize for the length!).

Thank you, and I hope to hear back from you,
Ben Pauli

EMAIL #1

Academic friends,

I'm writing to you in an appeal for solidarity as people who work in and around Flint. All of you are, I believe, familiar up to a point with some of the drama that has gone on with Marc Edwards over the past two-plus years. It would take more space than I have here to fill in all the details but the basic facts are these:

After the original collaboration between the Virginia Tech team and Flint activists in 2015, Edwards developed a reputation in the media and academia as the leading authority on all things having to do with the "science" of Flint's water. Not long thereafter, he began using his incredible influence to promulgate a narrative of the crisis that directly contradicted the activists' own views, not to mention the views of many other Flint residents. He also began to take money from the very agencies he came to Flint criticizing. The relationship between the activists and Edwards began to deteriorate.

In May 2016, Edwards launched the first of what would be a series of scathing attacks on flintwaterstudy.org on individuals that the activists (and other residents) considered to be allies and that posed a threat to his position as the "chosen" expert and the most trusted spokesperson for the people of Flint. His stated intention was to destroy the reputations of these individuals (principally, Scott Smith of Water Defense and Jordan Chariton, formerly of The Young Turks) so that no one would ever take them seriously again. This only produced an even sharper backlash against Edwards, whose message about the water continued to diverge from that of activists and other residents.

His views were also at odds with those of other scientists studying the water in Flint, including the members of the Flint Area Community Health and Environment Partnership (FACHEP), of which I have been a member since April 2016. Skipping many of the details, from late 2016 forward Edwards became increasingly aggressive toward the team, sending bullying emails, filing FOIAs, trying to get a published paper retracted, and publicly ridiculing the team in keynote addresses (<https://youtu.be/r99jyuzFY5U?t=727>). FACHEP's work has been instrumental in supporting charges against officials Nick Lyon and Eden Wells of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, and just as Edwards was brought in by the defense to testify on Lyon and Wells' behalf, he launched his most aggressive attack on FACHEP yet, posting a full-length (and totally misinformed) "takedown" of team leader Shawn McElmurry on his website:

<http://flintwaterstudy.org/2018/03/fachep-vs-the-people-of-the-state-of-michigan-part-i-dr-shawn-mcelmurry/>

He also promised similar takedowns of environmental engineer Nancy Love (UM-Ann Arbor) and my colleague Laura Sullivan (Kettering University). In a follow up post, in the midst of another completely bogus "analysis," he accused McElmurry as well as other members of the team, including me, of "gorging at the FACHEP funding trough," exploiting the water crisis for our own personal and professional gain:

<http://flintwaterstudy.org/2018/03/considering-the-unimaginable-did-mcelmurry-completely-fabricate-his-story-of-work-in-flint-from-2010-2014/>

Edwards also filed a complaint against McElmurry in an effort to get his professional engineer's license revoked:

<http://michiganradio.org/post/one-flint-water-researcher-files-complaint-against-another>

Edwards and his former graduate student Siddhartha Roy continue to go around the country giving talks at which they disparage the members of our team (which includes many Flint residents, not only Laura Sullivan and myself) as well as our work, which has now been published in top scientific journals.

At the same time, his behavior toward others he considers enemies has become extremely aggressive. One especially egregious case is that of Donna Riley, Dean of Engineering Education at Purdue, who did no more than post a few tweets about remarks made by someone else at a conference:

<http://flintwaterstudy.org/2018/01/bizarre-attack-on-flintwaterstudy-rigor-and-purdue-slide-rules-an-epic-failure-to-measure-up/>

Edwards tried to get one of Riley's papers (which has nothing to do with Flint, lead in water, or Edwards) retracted and went out of his way to discredit her at Purdue, where she is now in a very vulnerable situation.

Those of us who have been trying to research and communicate to the public the science of the water here have had to work in Edwards' increasingly hostile shadow now for a year-and-a-half and it has compromised--in more ways than I can properly express in this format--our ability to do work we think is critical to the well-being of Flint residents. It has also fostered in us a mindset of constant anxiety about what Edwards is going to do next. For someone like myself, a junior faculty member with a pending book on the crisis that Edwards could very possibly try to sabotage, it is a very vulnerable position to be in.

But this email is only indirectly about Edwards' attacks on FACHEP. It is really about Flint residents and activists. Some of the activists who have been involved with this issue recently put together a letter that has been sent to a variety of professional scientific and engineering organizations, asking for "protection from Mr. Edwards" and an "immediate investigation" of his behavior that includes "academics, professionals, and Environmental Justice leaders." As I write this email, it has been signed by about 50 residents and a number of non-resident supporters. The number of signatures continues to climb. (Incidentally, I have submitted my own signature, but the document has not yet been updated to include it.)

<http://www.flintcomplaints.com/>

The reason why I'm writing to you is that the residents who have been brave enough to sign this letter really need support from allies in academia. Melissa Mays, one of the signees, has already started receiving aggressive emails from Edwards in response to the letter. Surely, there is more to come. Furthermore, the press release sent out a few days ago to announce the letter failed to get any traction. In order for their voices to be heard, residents need a boost--as they did in the summer of 2015--from people who are more likely than they are to be taken seriously. Contesting someone of Edwards' "heroic" stature, who has exercised almost unchallenged control over perceptions of Flint within the scientific community and the media for almost three years, is no small matter.

So here is what I am suggesting. I am hoping you will consider signing a very simple letter that expresses your support of residents' request for help. You do not necessarily have to agree with every aspect of their (or my) analysis of the situation. You need only believe that they are entitled to be heard by the people they are petitioning. I imagine the letter being sent to the media and to the organizations already petitioned by residents. Here is a draft of the kind of statement I had in mind (feel free to make suggestions):

It has come to our attention that Flint residents are seeking to file a formal complaint against Professor Marc Edwards of Virginia Tech and requesting that members of the scientific and engineering communities conduct an

investigation into Professor Edwards' actions relating to his work in Flint. As academics who have done work in and around Flint, we wish to affirm Flint residents' right to be heard on this matter. We hope that members of the scientific and engineering communities will take immediate and appropriate action to investigate residents' concerns.

Given the ugliness of the situation, I can imagine that you may not be enthusiastic about lending your name to this cause. What I will say, without getting into details, is that the tide is starting to turn against Edwards' unethical behavior in some very significant ways. There are people in high places listening right now and a statement like this could make a very big impact on them. It would also be a huge boon to the many residents who feel like their voices have been stolen, or who have been subjected to active abuse.

So while I do not wish to pressure you (and I appreciate that some of you are in a more secure position than others), I do wish to invite you to lend your voice to what I believe has become a critical part of the struggle for justice in Flint. Serious blowback from Edwards is coming, and I believe we have a responsibility to fortify Flint residents and activists against it as much as we are able.

Thank you, and my apologies for the long message,
Ben

P.S. Please keep this communication confidential for the time being, given the sensitivity of the situation. If there are others you believe should be invited to participate, however, please let me know (it's very possible that in my haste I forgot people).

P.P.S. Please feel free to add your own signature to other letter as well.

EMAIL #2

Hi again everyone,

I am writing with a quick, and important, update. Marc Edwards has now indicated that he intends to contact individual signatories to the residents' letter, as described in the following just-posted article:

"Edwards said he is reaching out to the signatories to see if they actually agree, word-for-word, with all of the letter's contentions."

<http://www.eastvillagemagazine.org/2018/06/02/flintcomplaints-com-attacks-marc-edwards-edwards-calls-it-science-anarchy/>

As I suspect you'll agree, even under the best of circumstances, those who sign their names to a consensual document should not be expected to agree with, or even know about, much less defend, every little last detail (much less every "word"). Now imagine being a Flint resident held to that standard by an aggressive, bullying, powerful "hero" figure who has singled you out and is forcing you to defend yourself. Imagine also that this person already has a history of using residents' words against them on his website and in public presentations, so anything you say in less than full agreement with him can and will be used against you.

This is the terrifying position that the residents who signed this letter now find themselves in. In my earlier email, I tried my best to convey the seriousness of the situation, but perhaps I did not adequately convey its urgency. If Edwards is indeed targeting individual residents as we speak (and I'm still waiting on confirmation that it's actually happening), it is imperative that anyone with the power to protect them act with haste to help even the odds.

I know this is all a lot to process, especially if you haven't been following the details up to this point. I'm happy to discuss any or all of it further (cell: 253-219-4514) if need be.

Thank you,
Ben

EMAIL #3

Hi all,

I have been following up with many of you individually and I just want to say how deeply appreciative I am of the support. This situation has been a bit of a nightmare for those of us in the middle of it--it has made people fearful for their careers and even their personal safety, and it has sucked up a massive amount of time that could have been spent on a great many other things. It has also been deeply damaging to the community. At the same time, the pushback we are seeing at multiple levels has the makings of something truly historic and inspiring. If you haven't checked Flintcomplaints.com lately, about 60 residents and about 30 outside supporters have signed on to the letter of complaint, and I don't think it's been updated in a couple of days.

At this point, nine of you have expressed a willingness to sign a short letter affirming the right of residents to have their concerns taken seriously, and I need to have follow-up conversations with a few more. In my next email, I will include a formal draft letter that the folks who have responded can collectively revise as they see fit. For those I have not heard back from yet, I just want to assure you that I won't bother you with any more emails about this matter, unless I hear otherwise in the next couple days. Again, in no way do I wish to pressure anyone to get involved if they do not wish to do so, and I understand why some might prefer to keep their distance.

More to come soon!
Ben

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