

Shortlisted Book for the 2021-22 Book in Common

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Mona Hanna-Attisha

What the Eyes Don't See: A Story of Crisis, Resistance and Hope in an American City

Date: 2018

List price: \$18 paperback

Author website: <https://monahannaattisha.com/>

Book website: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/550935/what-the-eyes-dont-see-by-mona-hanna-attisha/>

Publisher description:

Here is the inspiring story of how Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, alongside a team of researchers, parents, friends, and community leaders, discovered that the children of Flint, Michigan, were being exposed to lead in their tap water—and then battled her own government and a brutal backlash to expose that truth to the world. Paced like a scientific thriller, *What the Eyes Don't See* reveals how misguided austerity policies, broken democracy, and callous bureaucratic indifference placed an entire city at risk. And at the center of the story is Dr. Mona herself—an immigrant, doctor, scientist, and mother whose family's activist roots inspired her pursuit of justice. *What the Eyes Don't See* is a riveting account of a shameful disaster that became a tale of hope, the story of a city on the ropes that came together to fight for justice, self-determination, and the right to build a better world for their—and all of our—children.

This book is shortlisted for the 2021-22 Book in Common because

- *It is engaging to students and to a broad audience.* This classic David v. Goliath struggle offers an engaging and accessible narrative of environmental justice, which nicely blends autobiography and science to give a complete idea of what happened in Flint, why, and how. The integration of science and social issues makes the book more readable, and will draw a broader variety of readers with diverse experiences. This book demonstrates the importance and efficacy of community members coming together to advocate for themselves in systematically collecting evidence for the need for change and the power of our voices in demanding that change.
- *It has broad appeal across disciplines.* Environmental/social justice is the prevailing theme, which integrates the natural sciences, data science, and social sciences, and which has become a focus of campus sustainability efforts in recent years. This book showcases the value of science and its impactful connection to the health of our communities.
- *It is relevant and timely.* Unfortunately, the theme of environmental justice (or lack thereof) is a very timely theme. Also unfortunate is that the Flint water crisis is more than five years old but still not resolved for the residents there, and will never be “resolved” for the children with elevated lead levels (and their families). The book focuses on Michigan, but there are clear parallels to the contamination of Paradise's water after the Camp Fire, and also to water equity issues throughout California.
- *It relates to the university mission.* Environmental justice directly relates to the campus strategic priorities of Resilient & Sustainable Systems, and Civic & Global Engagement.
- *It is conducive to year-long programming.* Programming could be oriented towards practicing environmental justice and to campus sustainability and equity conversations.