

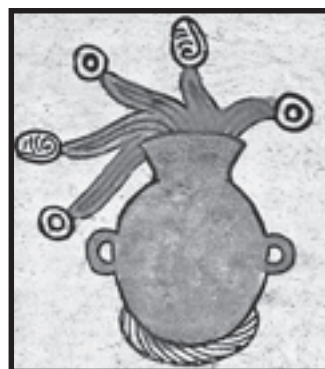
# AN ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE:

## How San Antonio, Texas resembles Detroit and Flint, Michigan

by Rachel Hanes

Almost all have heard of the ongoing water crisis in Flint, Michigan – how a rash of bad decisions has led to the people of Flint drinking highly contaminated water for over a year, leading to lead poisoning in many residents. While San Antonio is not dealing with such a severe crisis, the parallels between the two cities are remarkable and highly concerning:

- Both cities' problems arose from water privatization: Using a public-private partnership to build the Vista Ridge Pipeline in San Antonio and Flint switching to the Flint River after water privatization in Detroit.
- Both have high levels of the population below the poverty line: 20% in San Antonio and 40% in Flint.
- Both are majority non-white: a 60% Hispanic population in San Antonio and a 50% black population in Flint.
- Both lacked a democratic process in deciding the city's water future: a unanimous City Council vote in San Antonio and a near unanimous vote in Flint.



Water symbol: Codex Borbonicus

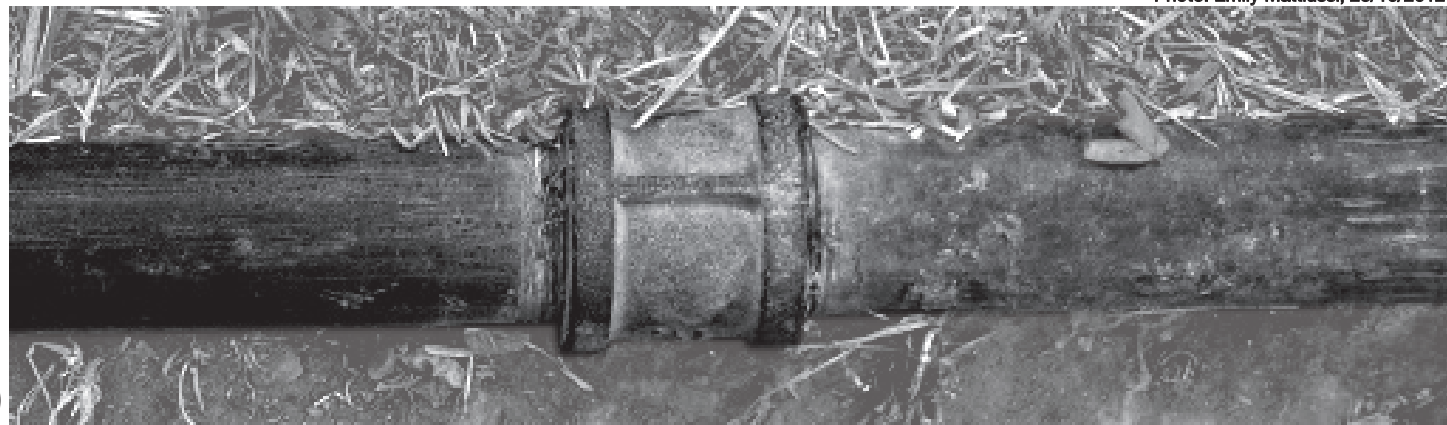
decision to privatize water prompted Flint's switch to a different water source, San Antonio is contracting with a private company, Abengoa BlueWater, to build the pipeline. Like Detroit, the privatization process is jacking up the price of water for residents at an unsustainable rate. Like Detroit and Flint, the increased rates are disproportionately affecting the economically disadvantaged, people of color, single-parent households, large families and the elderly. In Flint the switch to a new water supply was meant to save the city \$5 million but has ended up costing \$1.5 billion. In San Antonio the pipeline is meant to provide abundant water for future development and growth but due to climate change and current predictions there is no guarantee the water will be there when we need it.

The lead crisis in Flint was discovered quickly but with the Vista Ridge Pipeline the negative effects may not be visible for years. This will make it easier for San Antonio, SAWS, and Abengoa BlueWater to deny issues and cast aside concerns. For example, in December 2015 Abengoa declared bankruptcy and started to pull many projects in the United States while still claiming to be able to build the pipeline. Even though the project is now financially unstable, San Antonio is continuing to back it and has already begun to increase water rates for ratepayers starting in January 2016. They deny that there is any risk associated with the pipeline even though numerous sources and studies have shown otherwise. In this denial, they risk unnecessarily raising rates and thus endangering the future of many ratepayers in San Antonio, all for a venture that may never reap the benefits they expect.

In continuing to show blatant disregard for citizens' well-being, San Antonio is getting ever closer to being the next Flint and the next city in a water crisis. It is high time San Antonio and those associated with the pipeline listen to the voices of those they claim to speak for – the residents and ratepayers of San Antonio. It is high time San Antonio breaks the cycle of environmental injustice and be an example to the rest of the United States.

Bio: Rachel Hanes is a student at Trinity University.

Photo: Emily Mattiussi, 23/10/2012



## FOR AYLAN KURDI

(and all the Syrian refugees that are starving, some to death.)

The littlest boy  
cradle of sand  
waves gently  
erasing the  
possibility  
of who he could  
have been as he felt  
the terror of slipping  
from mother's grasp  
siblings disappearing  
their crying washed  
out of their mouths  
not even old enough  
to know of, to call upon  
their Creator for rescue  
dying alone in the dark  
for no one cared  
about the stranger  
in their midst

Heads of state  
argue that they  
can allow no more  
of "those people"  
for fear that they  
will taint their pristine  
language, their Jesus,  
their bloodlines  
their precious votes  
they are sorry but  
there's just not enough  
to take care of their own

And Neptune yawns  
and stretches his arms  
leaving behind another  
little boy whose breath  
fled before the sea  
the stars above his face

the last thing he ever saw  
before he became  
grist for the media mill  
a CNN loop of the day  
a FaceBook "like"  
a casualty of the  
incivility of civil war  
and the beams that  
are lodged in their eyes  
splintered by tongues,  
hues and shrines

—R. Romo © 9/2015



Photo: Associated Press

## Emma Tenayuca by Esther Cantú

*Emma Tenayuca's involvement in bringing justice to the labor movement at such an early age exemplifies strong commitment and courage. Emma was a true trailblazer whose efforts were regrettably not acknowledged until after her death. We remember her as we celebrate Women's History Month.*

I, Emma at 16, made history in 1933.

I spoke out. It was forbidden.

I fought for people in low paying jobs  
people who shelled pecans, made clothes,  
rolled cigars.  
people who needed better pay and working  
conditions

I walked in protest. I shouted, "Huelga, Huelga!"

I was arrested many times.

I never thought in terms of fear. I thought in terms of  
justice.

I was a well-known Red!



Black listed; I lived through unemployment and  
poverty.

In my fight for social justice; I sacrificed everything.

They called me "la pasionera"; but my passion faded.

Threatened; forced to leave my home,

I remained committed to the end.

In time I made my way back to the city that had

shunned me.

Years later they valued my work. It was not in vain

My life was complicated; my simple tombstone reads,

"Thy Will Be Done."