I believe that every living creature has a right to existence in this world. The birds, the bees, and the flies that creep in through the crack in my window. Though incredibly annoying to hear their buzzing by my bed, ultimately, I catch the fly in an incense cup and carry it outside, because I realized it is not my responsibility to decide how and when a creature dies. This distinction seems important, that it's not for me to decide, and my decision has lasting impacts on the lives of creatures.

Similar to Aldo Leopold, I “have at least drawn nearer the point of admitting that [flies] should continue as a matter of biotic right, regardless of the presence or absence of [...] advantage to” me.

For who gets to choose the end of a biotic existence? And why should this fly, who was born just outside my house, fall ill because of that circumstance. This leads us to ask a similar question, why should people fall ill because of where and how they were born?

In frontline communities, we must ask that question, because the answer is there in big bold letters read on the sign *Welcome, to Flint, MI*. Simply enough, their water was taken away, such an environmental and biological necessity. Clean, clear, healthy water that we expect so abundantly from the tap, evaporated. Coincidence can’t be overlooked here, the low-income communities of color taking on the brunt of these impacts, especially when they’ve been made by governments not representative of their people. Flint, for reference, has a black majority population, and it isn’t a coincidence, it's a big red flag reading systemic racism. And it's again why we ask, why should people fall ill because of their circumstance, especially when they’re avoidable?

Why should people fall ill due to less generational wealth, access to healthcare, and uneven resources. And when is this fair? And when is this acceptable? Somewhere in our society we set a threshold for inequality that keeps receding like the tide of a tsunami. How is it fair when water runs grey, when health care drains lifetime savings, and flames encapsulating families are unable to escape. These impacts are symptoms of people not thinking to the ends of their means, and in the words of Dejardins: “It holds that in the face of uncertainty, if an action has a possibility of causing great harm, it is only rational to demand a strong justification before proceeding.”

In Flint, perhaps the justification was a cost-saving shift from Detroit sourced to local water, but the real, unthought of cost was lead poisoning, cancer, and disease. And perhaps the only flaw at work, was the failure to treat the water first, but there was little consideration for the lives it would affect.

But it’s interesting, at least, the ones in the seat, they’ve never really had to live with lead in their cup to drink.

Because the floods don’t touch high ground, the flames don’t consume marble houses, and the thing in their cup is the champagne they drink to celebrate their winnings. We’re not the ones making decisions, it’s as if an unstoppable force is causing us to swat the fly, kindness and compassion is a privilege we’re not afforded here. Because I know, unequivocally, that if we were in charge, a decision about if a city deserves clean water to drink, would not be that hard.

I believe these truths are necessary to say, because the people at the table, the people making decisions, are not going to be affected. I am not even affected, the water in my cup runs clear, yet, here

now, my voice is being heard on this issue. I can make the distinction that all people should have equal opportunity, all people should have equal access to quality healthcare, and it feels unnecessary to even think, but apparently this is a point to make, that all people should have water to drink. Ultimately, this is not my decision to make, the decision should be in the hands of those affected, however in the way our government is structured, this is hardly ever the case. Indigineous communities, black communities, and low-income communities are living with the symptoms of environments in which they have no power to change.