

U.S.: Toxic Soup: Water you should not drink

By: Arnaldo Musa / Cubasí
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Perhaps some readers remember that situation experienced in San Juan, Puerto Rico's capital, where water was so bad that it turned undrinkable. This situation lasted for a while and due to the negligence of the local authorities and the U.S. "protector" state, it has resurfaced again.

Within the empire itself, things are not much better though. Local entities have expressed 110 million inhabitants, a third of the U.S. total population, have drunk polluted water due to the state's abandonment, which dates back to the time of uncontrollable mine exploitation.

For some time now, North American films with some

progressive sense, starred indistinctly by John Travolta, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Johnny Depp, among other top artists, dealt in different ways with such a situation, caused by unscrupulous elements, resulting in some compensations to families where children and elderly people had perished, in addition to the fact that some other survivors had diseases such as cancer.

The situation worsens again, when media such as **La Opinion** and **El Diario** and national media of certain credibility such as **The Washington Post** and **The New York Times** have echoed the persistence and increase in the damage to human beings.

This becomes more visible in summer, as the "*strange taste of the water*" cannot be ignored and human rights entities have demanded an explanation that many are aware of, but few dare to say.

Microsoft News and EFE agree that the problem has become so visible that the U.S. Department of Defense reported tests on drinking water near bases in the states of Washington, Pennsylvania, Florida and Michigan, where levels of chemicals were found well above the health threshold set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Those substances regarded as toxic are *perfluoroalkyl* and *polyfluoroalkyl* (PFAS), but the EPA, inexplicably, has not reported that it is unsafe to drink that water, according to a report by KTLA television in California, and it tries to make believe that the taste and even earthy and moldy bad smell are due to the growth of algae in lakes,

rivers and dams.

Authorities claimed that the water is “*safe to drink*” and that there was “*no need to even boil it,*” but many know that PFAS have been linked to health problems, such as kidney and testicular cancer and liver damage.

But the U.S. Department of Defense has done nothing about it, an issue that has raised concern, since the substances mentioned are known as “*permanent chemicals.*” That is, they accumulate in the human body and the environment instead of decomposing over time. The EPA has said that the levels of these substances should not exceed 70 parts per trillion, but in the mentioned states in particular, tests on the liquid showed higher levels, such as the 130 parts per trillion in Washington.

FAR FROM REALITY

And although the United States passed the Clean Water Act 50 years ago with the aim of guaranteeing water “*safe for fishing and swimming*” in the country, the goal is far from being achieved, because many lakes and rivers in the US. are too polluted.

The Associated Press recalls that each year, millions of visitors were attracted by the crystal clear waters near the Adirondack Mountains, or New York's Lake George, nicknamed the Queen of American Lakes, and other emblematic of the United States. They were places where families regularly went to fish, sail, bathe or camp and enjoy nature.

However, a new report from the Environmental Integrity

Project (EIP) - a 20-year-old non-profit organization - has admitted that most anti-pollution laws are not being enforced, showing that places like Lake George and the 51% of waterways are severely damaged by pollution. In other words, the standards for fishing, swimming or aquatic life are not met, and EIP pointed out that much is owed *"to our children and future generations"* and, as an example, pointed out that *"California is the third state in having more kilometers of polluted waters for the consumption of fish."*

Septic tanks are aging and failing, and what's happening is they are leaching contaminants into the groundwater and then into the lakes. Similarly, increasingly heavy storms, as a result of climate change, transport materials such as oil, road salt and fertilizers, until the crystalline waters turn blue-green.

California, Florida, Indiana, Oregon, South Carolina... all of them boast "honorable mentions" regarding the poor quality of the water, either for its deterioration, which makes it undrinkable or swimming and having fun is actually impossible.

One of the problems with this situation is that the EPA does not have standard guidelines for how states should record and report their water pollution data. And the state environmental agencies do not have enough personnel either to operate adequate tests in the periods stipulated by law. The consequence is that 73% of the rivers and streams have not been analyzed during the most recent cycle, along with 49% of the surface of the lakes and

24% of the bay areas.

MAIN POLLUTANTS

According to EIP, the largest source of water pollution comes from animal agriculture. Livestock industry practices include improper disposal of waste, as surplus fertilizer and manure in streams and rivers can cause extreme disease in humans and animals. Needless to say, the pesticides also heavily affect nearby waterways. It is revealing that, according to this organization, it would take up to 700 years to achieve the complete restoration of water bodies.

Moreover, the aforementioned figure of 110 million Americans who are contaminated in one way or another, is estimated to be less than the real number, says Reuters, since it is almost impossible to avoid it, because the chemicals are used in products such as Teflon and in fire-fighting foam and other industrial products and processes, and its substitution also poses risks.

Of tap water samples from 44 locations, in 31 states and in the nation's capital, Washington D.C., only one location, Meridian, Mississippi —with wells 215 meters deep— had no contamination.

Already in Donald Trump's administration, an attempt was made to cover up the truth, an issue that Barack Obama did encourage at the time, while the heart of the matter is still eluded: the legacy of the mining industry, always untouchable.

I say it again: pollution is the legacy of the mining industry as it was allowed to operate in the country for

more than a century. Companies digging for silver, lead, gold and other minerals could abandon them when they became unprofitable, leaving the water still seeping from the mines or being treated with taxpayer funds.

Based on requests from public records and independent investigators, 43 federally supervised mining sites were examined, some of which contain tens or even hundreds of individual mines. Seven chemical compounds were found, but the damage they cause was not mentioned. This indicates the atmosphere of ignorance in this regard that the American people live, a third of which is in danger because of this toxic soup.

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