

**Excerpt from Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha (the Flint, Michigan pediatrician)'s
commencement address at BU School of Public Health
on Saturday, May 18, 2019**

"In some ways, the Flint story is a really a playbook of **resistance** and **hope**. And that is a story we all need right now and why I am here today sharing it...

Because the story of Flint is not isolated — there are kids everywhere — from the rust belt, to rural America, to coal country and beyond; black, brown and white — too many of our nation's children are waking up to the same nightmares — the nightmares of poverty, injustice, lost democracy and stolen opportunity.

This is all happening now. And this all impacts the health of our communities. Filling our hospital beds, dropping life expectancies, and deteriorating our public's health.

And this is where we need you.

Your work is about standing on the front lines every single day, holding those lines against **sickness and disease** and also holding those lines against **inaction and apathy**.

Today, this is especially critical because our work is unfinished — and, quite possibly, more important than ever before... because...

Vaccine denial is a public health issue.
Racism and hate and nationalism are public health issues.
Guns are a public health issue.
Controlling women's bodies is a public health issue.

So is... Inequality
Paying people a living wage
Attacks on immigration and putting children in cages
Climate change
Poverty
And Lead, still, unfortunately, is a public health issue.

Perhaps one of these issues drew you to this field in the first place.

These public health issues are huge and global, but they are also right outside our front door if we choose to see them.

Even here in Boston, today, a large toxin-emitting and explosion-prone gas compressor station is being proposed in North Weymouth — just 9 miles away from here — it's another example of an economic, racial, and environmental injustice that will impact our health.

We need you.
The integrity, vision, science, and activism of the public health workforce is imperative to fix these critical problems of today."