

Petroleum-238: Big Oil's Dangerous Secret and the Grassroots Fight to Stop It **By Justin Nobel**

Petroleum-238: Big Oil's Dangerous Secret and the Grassroots Fight to Stop It began as an investigation with *Rolling Stone* magazine that examined the radioactivity brought to the surface in oil and gas production and the various pathways of contamination posed to the industry's workers, the public and communities, and the environment. The magazine story was published in January 2020 and won an award for longform writing with the National Association of Science Writers, the book will be published April 24, 2024. (ISBN-13: 979-8989546237)

Why it Matters for Ohio

The journey into this topic started in 2017, when science journalist Justin Nobel learned of the extraordinary amounts of oilfield waste being carelessly disposed of in Ohio, and that one company had made a liquid deicer out of radioactive oilfield waste for home driveways and patios that was supposedly "Safe for Pets" and had been selling the product at local hardware stores. Eventually, Ohio community and environmental organizers linked Justin into the oil and gas industry's shadow network of radioactive waste workers, and the startling extent of this problem became clear—it went far beyond Ohio, across the nation, and back in time to the earliest days of the industry. To this day, radioactive oilfield waste, masked as nonhazardous by exemptions, is being processed and treated at facilities across Ohio, in a misguided effort to lower radioactivity levels. As *Petroleum-238* conveys, the real result is contaminated workers, and emissions and discharges—sometimes illegal, often legal—into the environment, communities, and the same rivers America's towns and cities draw their drinking water from.

About the Book

An acclaimed science journalist's extraordinary seven-year investigation into how the U.S. oil and gas industry has avoided environmental regulations and created a dangerous and radioactive public health crisis.

As Justin Nobel traveled the United States reporting on the oil and gas industry he learned a disturbing and little-considered fact: a lot more comes to the surface at a well than just the oil and gas. Each year the industry produces billions of tons of waste, much of it toxic and radioactive. The fracking boom has only worsened the problem. So where does it all go?

Petroleum-238 provides the shocking answer. Shielded by a system of lax regulations and legal loopholes, this waste has been spilled, spread, injected, dumped, and freely emitted across America. Nobel relies on oilfield workers, community activists, a century of academic research, and a trove of never-before released industry and government documents to lay out a series of game-changing reveals into the world's most powerful industry. None have been more deceived than the industry's own workers, who are suffering mysterious health maladies and dying from unexplainable cancers.

This book is an impressive work of investigative science journalism with surprising moments of literary beauty, and a welcome breakdown of the false wall corporations and politicians often set between industry workers and environmentalists. In the tradition of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, *Petroleum-238* is both a landmark work of environmental writing and an urgent call to action.

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About the Author

Justin Nobel writes on science and environment for US magazines, investigative sites, and literary journals. His work has been published in *Best American Science and Nature Writing* and *Best American Travel Writing*. A book he co-wrote with a death row exonoree, *The Story of Dan Bright*, was published in 2016 by University of New Orleans Press. His 2020 *Rolling Stone* magazine story, "America's Radioactive Secret," won an award for longform writing with the National Association of Science Writers and inspired this book. Justin's writing has helped lead to lawsuits, public dialogue and been taught at Harvard's School of Public Health.

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