

Dear Denver Public Library,

My response concerns the web page at

<https://history.denverlibrary.org/colorado-biographies/dr-carl-j-johnson-1929-1988>

I enclose a separate document which I propose as an **addition** to the existing document above.

**Remarks:** there are a couple of serious problems with the web page above:

- (i) overt bias and factual errors
- (ii) confusion about the target audience

The most urgent issue for the Library is to understand how such a compromised document made its way into the collection. It is plausibly attributed to people affiliated with the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, known for a long-standing anti-nuclear stance especially as it concerns Rocky Flats. But it is the Library's task to identify its origins and author.

Suggested omission:

The following are 'leading questions' which have no business in an article

Get Thinking!

What do you think motivated Carl Johnson to study medicine and work on public health issues?

Why do you think he kept working even when the government and many around him wanted him to stop?

Have you ever done something you thought was right, but your friends didn't like? Why did you do it anyway?

*'Word Bank'*

How this entry could be perceived as a plausible subject for "Word Bank" entries targeting children is mystifying. For God's sake, don't let a partisan write these--at least use Google!

**Poor:** radioactive: having or producing a powerful and dangerous form of energy called radiation

The word *radiation* applies as well to harmless radio waves as it does to 'ionizing' radiation such as gamma rays, alpha, and beta particles. All three have medical applications and danger depends entirely on dose.

**Corrected:** radioactive: emitting very high energy particles from unstable natural or artificial atomic nuclei

**REMOVE** vindicated:

Vindicated: one is either vindicated or not. There is no such thing as greatly vindicated.

Insofar as the scientific literature rejected Johnson's claims as early as 1982 and *no* following study

*supported* his findings, *vindicated* does not even belong in this Word Bank targeting children or naive adults.

As Denver Library staff know, the subject of Rocky Flats safety might appear to be an ongoing topic of debate based on popular media. In fact, there are two camps. In one are physical scientists and epidemiologists, some of whom published on the subject in the 1980s through about 2005, together with credentialed experts at the Department of Energy and (to a lesser extent), the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. In the second camp are 'downwinders' and anti-nuclear groups who reject claims of safety from the Department of Energy and CDPHE based (not surprisingly) on the claims of Carl Johnson himself.

The Library owes to those who use its physical and online collections at least acknowledgement of both sides, and a statement under all circumstances about the provenance of library documents.

My credentials for urging the Library to correct its entry on Dr. Carl Johnson are attached as a PDF. (I maintain the website rockyflatsneighbors.org, which is firmly in the science camp.)


Downwinders resemble anti-vaxxers in several key respects: (i) they generally reject findings of the peer-reviewed scientific literature; (ii) their sources of information are a hermetic system; (iii) their spokesmen generally lack scientific credentials of any sort. To publish an overview of the life of Carl Johnson written with their existing bias is roughly equivalent to a review of the life of Andrew Wakefield, M.D. (author of the theory that vaccination causes autism) written by an anti-vaxxer. I'm sure this is not the intent of a public institution.

I perceive the Library as having two choices:

(1) Correct the obvious errors already specified in the Word Bank and leave the existing document intact (but explicitly specify the authorship and the date of the original entry) with a prominent link to an alternative view of his career (attached) within the Library's online holdings.

(2) Determine the validity of claims made in each document and reject the one which is contrary to the published peer-reviewed scientific literature.

Naturally the first choice requires the least intervention on the part of very busy Library staff.

Should questions arise, please feel to contact me at  or dmwood@mines.edu

Sincerely yours,

DMW.

[Entry submitted by D. M. Wood, Ph.D (physics), emeritus physics professor (Colorado School of Mines), June 2026]