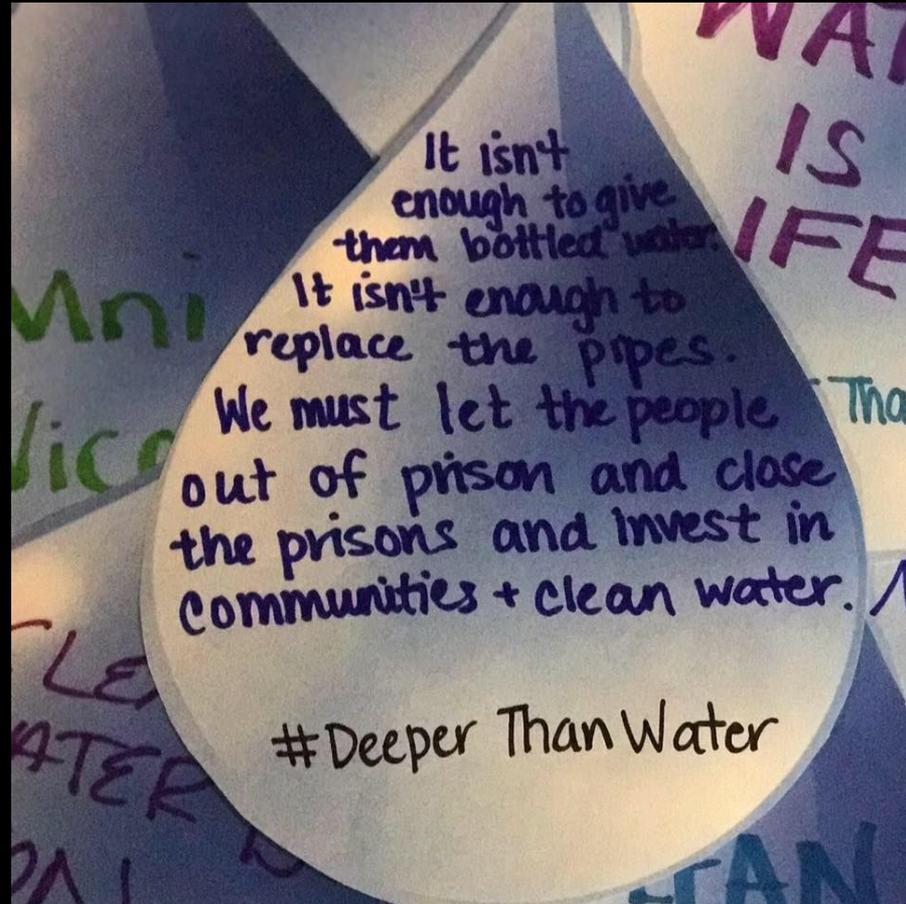


# #DeeperThanWater: Confronting Systemic Racism and Mass Incarceration Through the Lens of Water Justice



# Agenda

- Introduction to #DeeperThanWater
- Untangling prisons: why we organize for abolition
- Overview of the toxic water crisis
- Perspective from a former prisoner
- Question and Answer
- How can you get involved?



# #DeeperThanWater Coalition

**We are a multi-generational, multi-racial coalition of currently and formerly incarcerated organizers, abolitionists, and allies. Our steering committee includes: the Emancipation Initiative, Black and Pink, Young Abolitionists, Black Lives Matter Boston, Showing Up for Racial Justice Boston, Party for Socialism and Liberation, Jericho Boston, ANSWER Coalition, Toxics Action Center, and the City School.**

**We work to uplift the stories of incarceration in the US, hold the state accountable for the toxic water crisis, and provide all prisoners in Massachusetts with safe, clean, sufficient, and healthy water.**

# Why We Organize for Prison Abolition

## Questions to think about:

- what did you notice about the story?
- what were differences in the kinds of solutions we proposed?

**We believe that following incarcerated and formerly incarcerated folks' lead (majority of whom are Black and brown) will move us all closer to ending the systems that result in mass incarceration and other kinds of oppression.**

# #DeeperThanWater Timeline

- **1930s: MCI Norfolk was built**
  - designed as the “crown jewel” of the Massachusetts Dept. of Correction (DOC)
  - planned to look like a college campus and house up to 600 people
- **2011: water shutoff at MCI Norfolk**
  - plumbing infrastructure is never updated- system is overloaded with sediment containing manganese and iron
  - water shutoff leads to activism for clean water by prisoners
- **2012: Dept. of Environmental Protection fines the DOC and orders them to install a new water filtration system**
  - 6 years and four amended consent orders later, the system is still being constructed

# #DeeperThanWater Timeline

## - **2016-17: coalition forms**

- Prisoners alert steering committee members about MCI Norfolk's toxic water
- Inmate council, led by Wayland and William, publishes health report
  - almost two--thirds of prisoners reported rashes and other skin problems
  - about 50% reported intestinal issues
  - others had respiratory and vision complaints
- Boston Globe story breaks in June
- Tim is released, coalition forms

We have heard from prisoners in other locations that the water tastes bad and has caused health problems. MCI Norfolk is the most well-documented case and prisoners have been organizing for many years to address the problem there. We call on the state to address the toxic water problem at all facilities.

Skin rash  
Urinary Tract infection  
Skin cancer  
Headache, fever  
Intestinal issues, dizziness, headaches  
Chronic extreme, dandruff

Unit 2-3

Digestive, cough throat.  
Digestive  
G.I. conditions  
Skin condition  
Skin condition  
Skin conditions  
Skin conditions  
Skin conditions

Unit 3-1

Unit 3-2

(Note: This unit only documented the number of inmates with conditions, not names.)

33 Clothing sent to the laundry. It is returning with the appearance of being stained, soiled, or worse, than when submitted.

02 With symptoms of G.E.R.D. (heartburn etc...)

30 Men with fears about the quality of of water drink purchased bottled water or filtered water when available.

03 With chronic kidney stones

# Water Crisis at MCI Norfolk

- **High levels of manganese, copper, and other heavy metals have been found in water samples tested by the DEP**
  - **43%** of samples have high levels of manganese- this is an average, it doesn't capture the toxicity of each well
  - Testing for manganese and is done at the well, not the tap, so this does not account for water quality issues due to corrosion in the almost 90 year old pipes
- **Health impacts of manganese:**
  - **Linked to tremors, slowed speech, and other neurological disorders similar to Parkinson's disease**
  - **Particularly problematic for people exposed over long periods of time**
  - **Likely that studies will reveal other health impacts as studies are ongoing**

# How You Can Get Involved

- **Participate in our photo petition**
- **Become a pen pal with a prisoner through Black & Pink**
- **Take part in our call in campaigns**
  - **DOC Commissioner Tom Turco**
  - **Governor Baker**
- **Sign up for updates from the coalition- more events and actions are coming soon!**