

Clean Water, Everywhere

February 9, 2016

To the People of Flint, Michigan,

We are parents, teachers, faith-leaders, students, business owners and residents of West Virginia and we stand with you. These last weeks, we have seen you in the paper and on the news: a mother with her children outside of a community center waiting to receive bottled water; preachers giving comfort in packed emergency rooms filled with scared neighbors; protesters gathering and calling on their government officials to take action.

Two years ago, we stood in those same lines, visited local emergency rooms, and demonstrated in the halls of power because our water, too, had been poisoned. A chemical tank failure contaminated the water of 300,000 people across nine counties surrounding our capital city of Charleston. In the few short months following the West Virginia Water Crisis, we learned that our water company, our Public Service Commission, our legislature, and state, local and federal regulators were failing us at all levels. What's more, no officials were willing to take responsibility for the crisis and each passed the buck to the next, pointing to one another's failings. The truth is, they all failed us.

Today, we stand alongside you as you grieve and rage. We know that no gesture on our part can erase the damage that untold amounts of lead poisoning has wrought on your children's bodies—their growth and development. We know that it's not only your bodies that were damaged, but also any trust you'd placed in your government officials. We remember what it's like to be told that our water was "safe" when our bodies told us it wasn't.

And we know that it was no mistake that this crisis happened in Flint, a predominantly Black community and one of the poorest in the nation. We recognize that communities of color and communities with high poverty rates, such as those counties affected by the West Virginia crisis, are at the greatest risk for water disasters across America. We live in a nation where environmental racism persists.

Working together across race and class in the aftermath of this disaster, we are making real change. We don't have all the answers, but we are gaining ground for safe, reliable water here in West Virginia, as you are in Flint, Michigan.

We are with you.

— The People of West Virginia

Advocates for a Safe Water System

American Friends Service Committee

Appalachian Catholic Worker

Catholic Committee of Appalachia (WV Chapter)

Charleston WV Branch NAACP

Christians For The Mountains

Coal River Mountain Watch

Concerned Citizens of Roane County

Covenant House of West Virginia

Doddridge County Watershed Association

Friends of Water

Greenbrier River Watershed Association

Huntington-Cabell Branch of the NAACP

Kanawha Forest Coalition

Keeper of the Mountains

MelRose Ministries for Positive Transformative Change

Mountain Lakes Preservation Alliance

National Association of Social Workers, WV Chapter

Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition

People Concerned About Chemical Safety

Plateau Action Network

POWHR (Preserve Our Water, Heritage, Rights)

Preserve Greenbrier County

Preserve Monroe

RAMPS (Radical Action for Mountains' and People's

Survival)

Southern Appalachian Labor School

South Central Educational Development, Inc.

Stories From South Central, WV

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of

Charleston, WV's Clean Water Task Force

Upper Potomac Riverkeeper

West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy

West Virginia Chapter NAACP

West Virginia Chapter of Sierra Club

West Virginia Citizen Action Group

West Virginia Clean Water Hub

West Virginia Direct Action Welfare Group

West Virginia Environmental Council

West Virginia Healthy Kids and Families Coalition

West Virginia Interfaith Power and Light

WV FREE (West Virginia Focus: Reproductive Education

and Equality)

West Virginia Rivers Coalition

and

Crystal Good @cgoodwoman Ellen Allen and Sue Julian

Karan Ireland

Mava Nve

Linda Sodaro

Paul Dalzell

Paula Swearengin

Shirley Rosenbaum