

## Let Suffering Speak: A Litany

by Sharon R. Fennema, Join the Movement Curator

“The failure to wonder is the beginning of violence. Once people stop wondering about others, once they no longer see others as part of them, they disable their instinct for empathy. And once they lose empathy, they can do anything to [others], or allow anything to be done to [others]. Entire institutions and systems built to preserve the interests of one group of people over another depend on this failure of imagination.”

- Valerie Kaur, *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love*

Leader 1: Listen, people of God,  
the blood of our kindred is crying out to us from the ground<sup>1</sup>  
in Laguna Woods, California.

Leader 2: We must let suffering speak if we want to hear the truth.<sup>2</sup>

**Assembly: Am I my brother's keeper?**

Leader 1: This is the sound of one voice crying out  
from the blood-soaked carpet of a church fellowship hall  
stolen by the wounds of a colonizing past and conflicted present.<sup>3</sup>

Leader 2: With sighs too deep for words, we say his name as prayer:  
John Cheng, age 52

**Assembly: Open our hearts to this voice of truth, O God,  
so that we will be changed,  
and work to heal the wounds of our world.**

Leader 1: Listen, Body of Christ,  
the blood of our kindred is crying out to us from the ground  
in Buffalo, New York.

Leader 2: We must let suffering speak if we want to hear the truth.

**Assembly: Are we our siblings' keepers?**

Leader 1: This is the sound of 10 voices crying out  
from the blood-soaked aisles and parking lot of a grocery store  
stolen by the legacies of fear-mongering lies and racist hate.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 4:10

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from a quotation in a speech by Dr. Cornel West. <https://medium.com/@harvardeducation/let-suffering-speak-d2503d599f26>

<sup>3</sup> For more on the historical and cultural context of this shooting, see: <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/laguna-woods-church-shooting-david-chou-taiwan-history-hate-rcna29935>

Leader 2: With sighs too deep for words, we say their names as prayer:  
Roberta A. Drury, age 32  
Margus D. Morrison, age 52  
Andre Mackneil, age 53  
Aaron Salter, age 55  
Geraldine Talley, age 62  
Celestine Chaney, age 65  
Heyward Patterson, age 67  
Katherine Massey, age 72  
Pearl Young, age 77  
Ruth Whitfield, age 86

**Assembly: Open our hearts to these voices of truth, O God,  
so that we will be changed,  
and work to counter the hate in our world.**

Leader 1: Listen, Beloved Community,  
the blood of our kindred is crying out to us from the ground  
in Uvalde, Texas.

Leader 2: We must let suffering speak if we want to hear the truth.

**Assembly: Are we our children's keepers?**

Leader 1: This is the sound of 21 voices crying out  
from the blood-soaked tiles of a classroom  
stolen by a troubled soul with access to the deadly force  
of a weaponized world.

Leader 2: With sighs too deep for words, we say their names as prayer:  
Eva Mireles, age 44  
Irma Garcia, age 46  
Uziyah Garcia, age 8  
Eliana "Ellie" Lugo-Garcia, age 9  
Amerie Jo Garza, age 10  
Makenna Lee Elrod, age 10  
Xavier James Lopez, age 10  
Jose Flores, age 10  
Navaeh Bravo, age 10  
Alithia Ramirez, age 10  
Alexandria "Lexi" Rubio, age 10  
Eliahana "Elijah" Cruz Torres, age 10

Tess Marie Mata, age 10  
Rogelio Torres, age 10  
Layla Salazar, age 10  
Maite Rodriguez, age 10  
Jailah Nicole Silguero, age 10  
Jayce Carmelo Luevanos, age 10  
Jackie Jaylen Cazares, age 10  
Annabelle Guadalupe Rodriguez, age 10  
Miranda Mathis, age 11

**Assembly:** **Open our hearts to these voices of truth, O God  
so that we will be changed,  
and work to transform the violence of our world.**

Leader 1: Listen, followers of Jesus,  
the blood of our kindred is crying out to us from the ground.

Leader 2: We must let suffering speak if we want to hear the truth.

**Assembly:** **Will we be each other's keepers?**

Leader 1: What will be the sound of all of us crying out  
in solidarity, in action, in lament, in protest  
for our blood-soaked world?

Leader 2: With sighs too deep for words we pray:

Leader 1: Ever-Present God of the Forsaken, whose heart is always tuned to the  
cries of those who suffer, we lift to you our prayers of "why" and "how  
long." Surround the families, communities and cities indelibly marked by  
this violence with your love and care, as we surround them with our  
prayers and protests. Holy Comforter, send your healing Spirit to dwell  
with all those who rage and mourn these losses, and all the losses from  
gun violence, racism and colonization that they echo.

Leader 2: Almighty God of the Prophetic, whose love is always calling us to action  
in solidarity, we lift to you our prayers of "never again" and "no more."  
Turn our aching and broken hearts into committed and courageous  
spirits, that we might become ones who speak justice on behalf of stolen  
voices.

**Assembly:** Help us to know in our bones that we are each other's keepers:  
in our joys and in our tears,  
in our celebrations and in our lamentations,  
in our compassion and in our violence,  
we belong to one another.  
Keep us accountable for our complicity  
in creating a culture of hostility and fear  
so that we might learn to become agents of your justice:  
your love made public in the world.  
Amen.

For more information contact:

Rev. Dr. Velda Love, Minister for Racial Justice [Lovev@ucc.org](mailto:Lovev@ucc.org)  
Dr. Sharon R. Fennema, Join the Movement Curator [fennemas@ucc.org](mailto:fennemas@ucc.org)

Join the Movement toward Racial Justice today!

<https://jointhemovementucc.org/>

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