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\(^1\) in Laguna Woods, California.
Leader 2: We must let suffering speak if we want to hear the truth.\(^2\)
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.\(^3\)
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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\(^1\) Genesis 4:10
\(^2\) Adapted from a quotation in a speech by Dr. Cornel West. https://medium.com/@harvardeducation/let-suffering-speak-d2503d599f26
\(^3\) 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
Dr. Sharon R. Fennema, Join the Movement Curator fennemas@ucc.org

Join the Movement toward Racial Justice today!
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