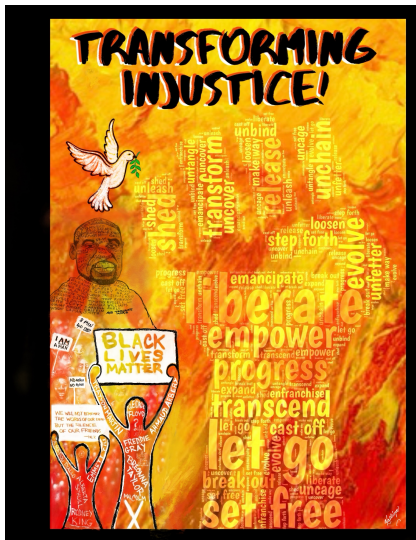


## LEADER'S GUIDE



### *Transforming Injustice! Watercolor #2*

“Riot Gear, Projectiles, Tear Gas and Tears.”



"Transforming Injustice!" A Watercolor Series

Watercolor #2: "Riot Gear, Projectiles, Tear Gas and Tears!"

 *Display Painting:* (Image in resource section at the end of this document.)

The painting is inspired by a photo of a Minneapolis check-cashing business burning to the ground as a man stands in front of the fire raising his fist. (Photographer: John Minchillo / AP)

This watercolor is almost completely filled with fire — raging, out of control, consuming fire.

 *Art Dialogue:*

What else do you see in this painting?

How would you interpret what you see?

What is your emotional response to the scene?

 *General Dialogue:*

In the center, a man stands in the embers unafraid, raising a clenched fist.

Think about why he is raising his fist. In protest of racial injustice?

Or perhaps to welcome the refiner's fire, the kind of fire it will require for America to dismantle racial injustice!

*(Encourage response and discussion.)*



### *Spiritual Reflection:*

Think with me for a moment about the powerful words of the Prophet Zechariah:

*And I will put this third into the fire,  
and refine them as one refines silver,  
and test them as gold is tested.  
They will call upon my name,  
and I will answer them.  
I will say, 'They are my people';  
and they will say, 'The Lord is my God.'"  
(Zechariah 13:9 ESV)*

We can only guess at the reason the man in the painting is standing before the fire, fist raised.

Most would consider his stance to be defiant or angry.

Perhaps he welcomes the destruction he is witnessing.

Perhaps he has had enough of racial injustice and is ready to fight in the movement to dismantle it.

*(Encourage response and discussion.)*

I would suggest a different reason: that the unnamed man is declaring that he is ready to offer his life in the quest for justice.

Maybe he has already been in the Refiner's fire, purified!

Maybe he is giving himself to the cause of justice, knowing that the Refining God desires justice even more fervently than *he* does, and remembering in his soul the words of the Prophet . . . Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5:24, New Revised Standard Version NRSV)



### *Reflections on Commitment:*

The time has come for us to transform injustice, to watch as justice rolls down like waters throughout our nation and to see righteousness flow into every heart with transforming grace.

But to see the advent of true transformation, we must be willing to plunge ourselves into the Refiner's Holy Fire, so that every one of us willing to protest and to work will do so with purified, righteous hearts.

God stands ready to use holy fire to refine us and purge our sins, for God is a God of justice,

When we can honestly declare, "The Lord is my God," we will be ready to invite God's refining fire to burn away the dross of our collective and personal sin of racism, leaving a "refined" people — a precious metal purified and standing ready to transform injustice! May God make it so!

As a people who have invited God's refining fire to purge our sin, we move forward in the slightest measure of hope.

For my black and brown brothers and sisters, my prayer is that they are able to hold on to hope as their ancestors did so courageously.

I pray that they will see this moment in America as a transformative moment that will finally bring about systemic change.

Most of all, I pray that this moment truly is transformative and that positive changes will last.

What is your prayer?

*(Encourage response.)*

 Put up Lament Image: *(Image in resource section at the end of this document.)*

## MEDITATION

How do we lament?

As you consider racial injustice, do you believe personal lament is necessary? Why or why not?

*(Encourage response.)*

Lament may bring us through the Refiner's fire.

Consider our lamentations as a spiritual discipline that must be the rock upon which we stand in working to transform injustice. Indeed, lament is the foundation for our prayer and meditation.

Spend a moment lamenting the current fires of protest in our nation.

Meditate on the reasons for a refining fire for individuals and for collective groups of people.

 Questions for Reflection: *(Find larger image for display at the end of document.)*

Are you courageous enough to ask God for the "refiner's fire" you need? The burning of the soul's dross that will empower you to confront injustice?

Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt the suffering of a refining fire in your soul? Were you frightened?

Did you consider it a part of God's preparation for your calling?

Could your soul's suffering move you to deeper concern for those among us who are in a fire of suffering caused by those who would harm them because of the color of their skin?



Will your advocacy for justice include your conviction that all persons deserve justice and your unwavering intention to join them in the struggle?

*(Encourage response to the reflection questions.)*



*The Reading of Scripture:*

*Listen to me, my people,  
and give heed to me, my nation;  
for a teaching will go out from me,  
and my justice for a light to the peoples.  
(Isaiah 51:4 NRSV)*



*Prayer:*

*O God, who knows the fires of the soul we have endured,  
Give us the strength to lament as we languish.*

*Create pure hearts in us and help us to tenderly touch the hearts  
of those who suffer the oppression of racial injustice.*

*Grant us the courage to abide in your refining fire  
until the dross in our souls becomes as pure as fine gold.*

*When deep suffering causes us to lament,  
grant us Spirit comfort and healing.*

*If we resist your call for justice,  
nudge us into holy action.*

*May our soul's lament stir us to transform injustice,  
in every place, for every person, whenever racism threatens,  
for this is your will and our holy mission. Amen.*





Resources: (Images may be photocopied to enlarge for in-person sessions.)



**"Transforming Injustice!" A Watercolor Series**  
**Watercolor #2: "Riot Gear, Projectiles, Tear Gas and Tears!"**



# L A M E N T



# Questions for Reflection



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