



# Liberation through Lament

A SACRED TIME OF GRIEF

*“The hurt that a person feels in the midst of this modern culture should be taken as a language spoken by the body. Our soul communicates things to us that the body translates as need, or want, or absence. So, we enter into the ritual in order to respond to the call of the soul.”*

- Malidome Somé

# *A word before we begin...*

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this ritual is to help create a sacred space to express embodied grief. In this space, grief may manifest in silent tears, wailing, keening, holding oneself and rocking, holding the person next to you and crying, or you might go still and feel the weight of all you have been carrying. No matter what happens, the most important thing to know is that your grief is sacred and needs to be honored.

## **DEFINITIONS FOR CONTEXT**

**Liberation:** Release. Freedom from limits

**Lament:** Passionate expression of grief and/or sorrow

**Sacred:** Connected to God

**Grief:** Deep sorrow. It is most often associated with experiencing loss through death but there are many ways that we experience loss outside of death.

**Ritual:** Is a rite, practice, or observance. Ritual is commonly associated with religion but can be practiced in other areas of a person's life.

## **ITEMS NEEDED**

Empty bowl (medium to large)

Pitcher of water

## **A WORD ON GRIEF**

Grief must be acknowledged; it is sacred; it is connected to God. Grief is connected to God because God is love, and we are rooted in this love. It is the kind of love that endures. We would not be capable of grief if we were not capable of love. It is further proof of our humanity. When we deny our grief, we inadvertently dehumanize ourselves and others. Having a space to honor grief can make grieving more bearable. This ritual can be done in community with others or by oneself. Please feel free to adapt any part of it as seems right for you or the community that you choose to share it with.

# Grief Ritual

## INVOCATION (name whoever you believe in)

Heavenly Father, Holy Mother, Mystery we name God, Cloud of Witnesses, without and within, we invite your presence into this space to be with us and walk with us as we reckon with our grief. We have internalized too much for too long, trying to be strong. Hold us in your loving arms as we let ourselves feel all the things. We are not afraid because we know you are here. May your peace engulf us as we grieve our losses and reclaim our humanity.

## CENTERING

We enter into solemn dialogue with whom we believe in. Those who we have invoked are present and listening. Through solemn dialogue, we set our intention. *(do so silently or out loud.)*

## LITANY OF LOSS

We grieve the people we have lost along the way, whether by death from natural causes or unnatural causes such as unjust systems. We grieve those who have died bodily and we grieve those who's bodies still live, but their minds do not.

**We name them now** *(do so silently or out loud)*

**We pour out our grief as an offering, as we reclaim our humanity**  
*(water is poured into bowl as these words are spoken)*

We grieve wishes and dreams that never came true. We grieve hopes that were dashed and promises left unfulfilled. The things that sounded great in the beginning but didn't work out in the end.

**We name them now** *(do so silently or out loud)*

**We pour out our grief as an offering, as we reclaim our humanity**  
*(water is poured into bowl as these words are spoken)*

We grieve the ideas that never fully developed. The ideas we thought would change everything if we could just make them work. The ideas we thought our worth was tied to, that when it didn't work out, changed how we saw ourselves and others.

**We name them now** *(do so silently or out loud)*

**We pour out our grief as an offering, as we reclaim our humanity**  
*(water is poured into bowl as these words are spoken)*

## LITANY OF LOSS (continued)

We grieve relationships that we lost along the way. Some were lost through death, some by divorce, some for self-preservation, and some without explanation.

**We name them now** *(do so silently or out loud)*

**We pour out our grief as an offering, as we reclaim our humanity**  
*(water is poured into bowl as these words are spoken)*

We grieve the loss of spontaneous physical contact. There are some many people we long to hug. So many cheeks we long to kiss. So many loved ones we long to break bread with.

**We name them now** *(do so silently or out loud)*

**We pour out our grief as an offering, as we reclaim our humanity**  
*(water is poured into bowl as these words are spoken)*

We grieve words that were left unspoken. The “I love you”, “I apologize”, and “I forgive you” that were never said or never heard because we thought we had time, but time ran out.

**We say them now** *(do so silently or out loud)*

**We pour out our grief as an offering, as we reclaim our humanity**  
*(water is poured into bowl as these words are spoken)*

We grieve the loss of stability in its many forms such as housing, job security, health benefits, even faith communities, and many more. This pandemic has shaken us to the core.

**We name them now** *(do so silently or out loud)*

**We pour out our grief as an offering, as we reclaim our humanity**  
*(water is poured into bowl as these words are spoken)*

We grieve the loss of who we used to be. We were less vigilant in some cases and a lot more carefree. There is no going back and there are precious things that were a part of us that we can't get back.

**We name them now** *(do so silently or out loud)*

**We pour out our grief as an offering, as we reclaim our humanity**  
*(water is poured into bowl as these words are spoken)*

We grieve the loss of things that we cannot name. Things we cannot name because the sorrow runs too deep for words. We trust that you know what they are because you know us.

**We name them now** *(do so silently or out loud)*

**We pour out our grief as an offering, as we reclaim our humanity**  
*(water is poured into bowl as these words are spoken)*

## A RECLAIMING

We grieve with the understanding that some of what we loss cannot be replaced. There is no substitute for the people we've lost and the relationships we had. Some dreams will not come to fruition and some hopes will languish. We honor that this is a part of the journey. By acknowledging our loss and the sorrow we feel, we resurrect our humanity.

**We declare this now**

**We have poured out our grief as an offering**

**We have claimed our humanity**

## CLOSING (name whoever you believe in)

Heavenly Father, Holy Mother, Mystery we name God, Cloud of Witnesses, without and within, thank you for your presence in this space. Thank you for walking with us as we reckoned with our grief. Thank you for holding us in your loving arms as we felt all the things. We are not afraid as we leave this space because you go with us. Just as you have received our grief, receive our gratitude. May the work done here continue in our daily lives. Asé, amen, may it be so.



**Teña Nock-Hope** is originally from Washington, DC and currently resides in Tampa, FL. She has lived all over the US from the East Coast to the Mid-West because of having served in the United States Navy for 8 ½ years. Teña holds a B.A. in Psychology from USF (GO BULLS!). Teña is also a graduate of PATHWAYS Theological Education Inc. Teña is currently a member of First United Church of Tampa, UCC where she is a Member in Discernment. She also chairs the Congregational Care Committee and is expanding the ways in which the committee can meet the congregations needs as they navigate the current pandemic. She formerly chaired the Communications Committee and was instrumental in helping the church expand its social media presence. Teña is currently pursuing the path to ordination as she believes she is called to be a Pastor in the UCC. Teña has a passion for God's people and God's creation. Teña is a current member of ARM which is the Anti-Racism Ministry team of the Florida Conference of the UCC. Teña is also currently in training to become a certified facilitator of Sacred Conversations to End Racial Injustice, for the UCC. Additionally, Teña is active in the African American Women in Ministry (AAWIM) Conference of the UCC. Teña is married to the beautiful Laurie Nock-Hope, who is accomplished in her own right and has been in marital bliss since September 2015.