

LENT

in the **Black Church Tradition:**
A 40-Day Justice Journey

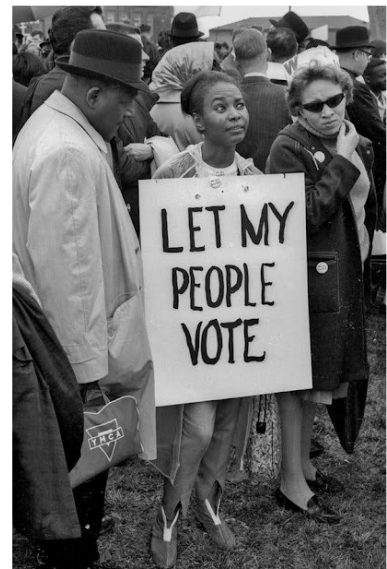
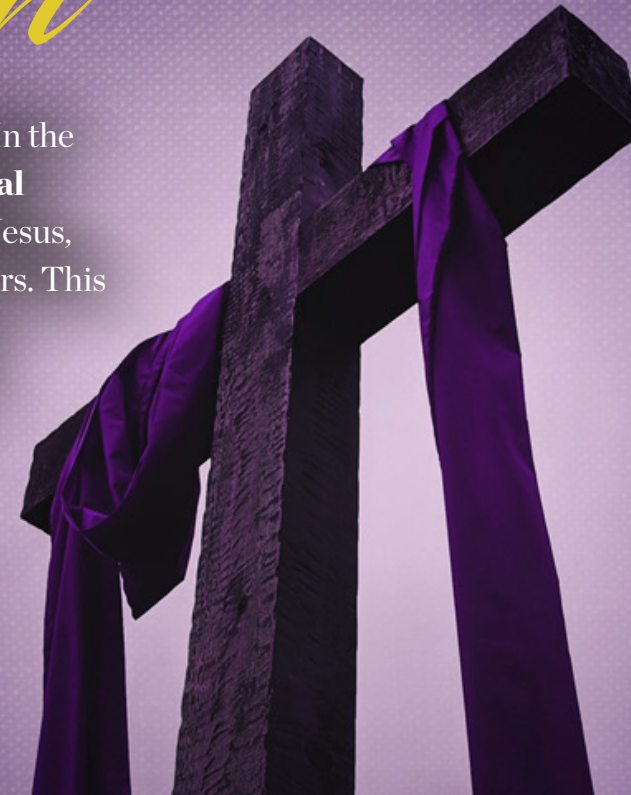
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Introduction

Lent is a sacred season of reflection, repentance, and renewal. In the Black Church tradition, it has also been a time of **deep spiritual resistance and liberation**, echoing the prophetic witness of Jesus, the Hebrew prophets, and the freedom struggles of our ancestors. This 40-day devotional is designed to ground faith communities in **scriptural reflection, prayer, and direct action**, equipping us to confront racism, economic injustice, and the rise of white nationalism.

Each day includes a **full scripture passage, prayer, reflection question, and action step**, guiding us to embody justice as an act of faith.



Action Items for Community



Action Items for Leadership



Week 4

When the Empire Strikes Back...

Theme: When we confront power with truth, empire retaliates. From Egypt to Calvary, oppressive systems have always struck back at liberation movements. Today, the backlash is clear: executive orders attacking D.E.I. programs, the call to dismantle the Department of Education, rollbacks of voting rights, and increased surveillance of activists. These are not isolated acts—they are coordinated efforts to reassert control over who is seen, heard, and free.

This week, we reflect on what it means to be the “Other” in a nation rewriting its laws to erase our stories and silence our freedom dreams.

Day 22 – Isaiah 10:1-2

“Ah, you who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes, to turn aside the needy from justice...”

🗨️ **Reflection:** The law is not neutral. It can be a tool for oppression or liberation. When political leaders write policies that target vulnerable communities, they codify sin.

Questions to Consider:

- What laws in my city, state, or nation are designed to punish the poor or erase the marginalized?
- How might I, my congregation, or my community be complicit in these systems—or resist them?

🙏 **Prayer:** God of justice, open our eyes to unjust decrees and stir our hands to undo them.

Day 23 – Matthew 2:16

“When Herod saw that he had been tricked... he sent and killed all the children...”

🗨️ **Reflection:** Political leaders, like Herod, weaponize fear when their power is threatened. Today’s fear-based policies—banning Black history, defunding education, and scapegoating immigrants—are violent acts.

Questions to Consider:

- How does fear shape political rhetoric and policy in our time?
- Whose lives are being sacrificed to maintain power?

🙏 **Prayer:** God, protect our children from the Herods of our age.

Day 24– Exodus 1:12

“But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread...”

🗨️ **Reflection:** Empire cannot stop the Spirit’s movement. Even under surveillance, erasure, and criminalization, our stories grow and our people rise.

Questions to Consider:

- How has our history taught us to multiply resistance under oppression?
- What spaces can I help create where our truth can be told and preserved?

🙌 **Prayer:** God of deliverance, grow our resolve and multiply our impact in the face of oppression.

Day 25– Luke 23:1-2

“Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate...”

🗨️ **Reflection:** Jesus was criminalized by political elites, not because he broke laws, but because he threatened unjust systems. We must remember: justice is not always legal, and legality is not always just.

Questions to Consider:

- Who today is being brought before modern-day Pilates for telling inconvenient truths?
- How do we respond when righteousness is criminalized?

🙌 **Prayer:** “O God, help us never to confuse what is quite legal with what is just and right in Your sight,” urging action for children’s rights and social justice. -From Marian Edelman Wright’s “Prayer for a More Just Nation”

Day 26 – Acts 16:22-23

“The crowd joined in attacking them... and threw them into prison.”

🗨️ **Reflection:** Crowd mentality is easily manipulated by political power. When narratives are controlled—when truth is criminalized—mass incarceration follows.

Questions to Consider:

- How are dominant narratives shaping how people view justice movements?
- Where can I challenge these false narratives?

🙌 **Prayer:** Spirit of Truth, give us clarity to resist lies and compassion to challenge collective silence.

Day 27 – Jeremiah 22:3

“Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless, or the widow...”

🗨️ **Reflection:** The call of justice is to protect those at the margins. Policies that defund schools, target diverse curricula, and disenfranchise voters attack the heart of God’s vision.

Questions to Consider:

- Are our churches defending the marginalized—or avoiding discomfort?
- What does it mean to be a sanctuary for truth?

🙌 **Prayer:** Lord, may your church become a refuge for the rejected.

Day 28 – Revelation 13:7

“It was given power to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them.”

☞ **Reflection:** Empire always seeks to “conquer” those who live prophetically. But resurrection reminds us that the cross is not the end.

Questions to Consider:

- What are we willing to risk for the sake of truth and justice?
- Do our churches resist empire—or cooperate with it?

✎ **Prayer:** Lamb of God, empower us to withstand empire with resurrection hope.

Weekly Action Steps: For Individuals:

DEFEND EDUCATION AS A TOOL OF LIBERATION

The Center for American Progress and our sojourners at The Children’s Defense Fund ask us speak up about President Trump’s executive orders by:

- Contacting elected officials to **oppose any efforts to defund or dismantle the U.S. Department of Education.**
- Speaking out publicly against executive orders that **demonize diversity, equity, and inclusion in public schools and universities.**

Weekly Action Steps: For Clergy Leaders

Host a virtual or in-person forum in your church or community to **educate congregants about these policy threats.**

Remember the historic role of Black church by reclaiming church space as “EDUCATIONAL SANCTUARIES”

Encourage your house of worship to become a sanctuary for truth by:

- Offering **community education programs** that center Black history, global liberation movements, and culturally responsive pedagogy.
- Creating safe spaces for **teachers, parents, and students** affected by harmful state laws targeting inclusive curricula.
- Collaborating with Black educators, historians, and local activists to **reclaim our collective story** and resist historical erasure.

USE THE PULPIT TO TEACH THE TRUTH

- Preach and teach about the relationship between **truth-telling and empire**—how Jesus’ ministry of truth brought him into conflict with state power.
- Share sermons and liturgies that lift up **education as a form of resistance and redemption** for oppressed people.

