Water, as a natural resource, has been weaponized or made treacherous against people seeking safety and security. Some have been tortured or killed through waterboarding, others have been forced into oceans to die or disappear. Refugees across world regions have drowned crossing bodies of water in hopes for a better life.

Millions of people all over the world are being tortured, disappeared, and forcibly displaced by repressive regimes and wars while governments of other countries are denying them a safe place to live. There are now as many as 1.3 million survivors of politically motivated torture survivors living in the U.S. And over 70 million refugees in the world according to the United Nations Refugee Agency, the highest number in the almost 70 years since the refugee agency was founded.

During this time of rapid political change worldwide, the Blood Underwater Workshop and Exhibition offers an opportunity for students, activists, members of civil society organizations, and NGOs to come together as change agents to protect human rights, freedom and dignity, and to spread peace, justice and love.

Blood Underwater is a collaborative work, which encourages deep thinking and creative expression. It provides a voice for community members and activists, especially from political, national, racial, religious and other minorities, to express their concerns about global suffering through art. Participants gather around a large canvas with paints and music and are guided through a series of artistic expressions by “artivist” Elshafei Dafalla. The purpose is to use art to protest against violence, torture, enforced disappearances and other forms of brutality.

Blood Underwater is a demand for “freedom, peace and justice” -- from San Salvador to Khartoum to Sindh -- and throughout the world. This visual narrative will recognize men and women who have been murdered because they wanted to live in freedom, political prisoners, people forced from their homes, and those who have been tortured for standing up to dictatorships.

The Blood Underwater artwork narrative will connect participants to one another, and to refugees, asylum seekers, political prisoners and others who have already died or are currently suffering in their own countries or in new lands. This collaboration and new knowledge will enable participants to reflect together about global suffering, and what can be done about it.