Article

A Great Camp Meeting: Meditating on the Black Faiths of Our Children

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Abstract: The antiblack violences of this world are harsh and unrelenting, and the assaults are gratuitous. It remains a difficult task for many Black adults to get out of bed every day and to face both the expected and the unforeseen horrors of the day. How much more might this be true for *our* children? And how might they already be leaning into their own formations of spiritual action in response? Taking seriously, then, how Black children utilize imagination, creativity, and play, I use this meditation to think alongside children as epistemological sources for Black faith, and I turn to questions about how these spiritual technologies might be read as practices of conjure.

Keywords: black religion; childhood studies; practical theology; arts; care

1. Introduction

I am deeply fortunate to be an uncle to two nieces and to one nephew, all of whom are the offspring of my older sister. I never knew the full extent of the phrase "kids say the darndest things" until they came into my life, and until I began to observe them more fully through their development. Their curiosities in playing, their comments about the natural world, and even their remarks about the Divine lead me to believe that perhaps they are not saying the "darndest things", but instead might be unearthing for me insights and discernments. I began to wonder whether, or to what extent, I was tasked in their lives to "instruct them in the faith", and to what extent they might be instructing me. As a practical theologian in training, I remain curious about the ways in which many people "come to the faith" through the prayers, rituals, and practices of their elders, which is particularly true for Black folk whose faith is always already in conversation with pervasive antiblackness and gratuitous violence/s and death. Or, as Christina Sharpe articulates, "Across time and space, the languages and apparatus of the hold and its violences multiply; so, too, the languages of beholding" (Sharpe 2016, pp. 100–1). I join with Sharpe, then, in furthering the inquiry of the different ways in which we are witnesses of each other, even spiritually, across different times and spaces and generations, but also in inherited ways that remain. What I query here, however, is what are possible ways in which transmission and futurity are not within the linear progressive line to which we have been conditioned, and instead might be more cyclical or nonlinear than we imagine. Or, how might children be taken more seriously within Black faith traditions as witnesses, too?

It is for this reason, among others, that I turn to our children. I am curious about the ways in which those marginalized, both within the broader social order and within religious institutions, namely, Black children, make meaning themselves and grapple internally and externally with inherited spiritual traditions. In many African diasporic religious traditions, children are believed to have a distinctive, and arguably unmediated, connection to the otherworldly and to the divine. But for children, who are often considered non-citizens—or perhaps more accurately as "not-yet citizens"—of the religious communities in which they find themselves, how do they cultivate and sustain their own interior spiritual lives? How are children in Black faith traditions connected to, or disconnected from, those who came before? (Manigault-Bryant 2014). What are the sources of spiritual fortitude and endurance

that lead many children and youth to participate in various struggles against the state and against political powers as we have seen via protests and direct actions in recent years? What type of conjure is at work in and across various religious traditions here?

In short, this article seeks to imagine and to theorize about the spiritual technologies and tools through which Black children both explore and identify faith and its practices. I rely, methodologically, on both theorists and artists to offer this exploration; avoiding the delineations between "real" theory and practice, I turn throughout this meditation to literature and to fiction to unearth those *truths* that might not be *fact*. Furthermore, through meditating on the spiritual technologies of imagination, creativity, and play, this article explores not only themes of futurity and transmission, but also strategies of resistance and re/thinking. In some ways, this is not only an exploration of the future of our children, and even the unborn, but also an invocation to take more seriously our "blackfull nows" (Allen 2022, p. 307) and the type of inheritance that our Black faith is constructing, and to what extent it leaves room for new constructions. I offer this not as an ethnography of Black children, and not even as a firm stance of theological doctrine, but rather as a meditation, a querying, an exercise of exploration and curiosity, in the same vein as the children about whom I write.

2. Practical Theology from Children

As a matter of prolegomena, I want to offer some remarks about the use of practical theology in these inquiries, and to name my own disposition as a practical theologian. And I intend to muse on the roles that practical theology might offer as an investigation into the spiritual lives of Black children and their concomitant faiths. Whereas systematic theology, to use the language of the academy, often begins with professed beliefs and moves into action, or a top-down approach, practical theology finds its resonances in the actions themselves. Practical theology tends to function as, for lack of a better analogy, a bottom-up approach wherein lived experience is mined for the sacred, and where theologies are crafted from practices that are already living in the world. The examination of practices, rituals, creative expressions, and even behaviors is the source material for the discipline of practical theology. As noteworthy practical theologian Bonnie Miller-McLemore offers, practical theology is an investigative theology that attends to, and is powerfully shaped by, "what people do, feel, and say in everyday life and practice." She continues to name that one way of referring to the discipline of practical theology is as a "*hermeneutic of lived theology*" (Miller-McLemore 2019, p. 2). Practical theology, then, is broadly understood as the area of theological study that is committed to understanding and analyzing the everyday, the quotidian, particularly as that quotidian intersects with notions of the sacred.

What Miller-McLemore also helps to clarify is the multiple functions of practical theology; she articulates that the field is, at once, an activity that is practiced, a method that is used for study, a curricular area used in education, and a discipline that is invested in all the above. (Miller-McLemore 2019, p. 3) This helps to further the nuances of the more specialized disciplines within the broader field of practical theology, such as homiletics, Christian education, and pastoral theology. Each of these sub-disciplines is committed to their own unique way of getting at the same queries: how are people of faith traditions living out those beliefs? And, as Emmanuel Lartey writes, practical and pastoral theologies are theology, "not simply rationale for technique, nor again merely 'application' of theory: pastoral theology *is* theology in essence and not merely derivative of or parasitic upon 'real' theology" (Lartey 2006, p. 13). The tasks and objectives of practical theology are merely distinctive from that of theological studies. Namely, practical theology focuses on human praxis and, as the late Dale Andrews notes, "the mutual interlocutory relationship between practices and theory and their sources" (Andrews and Smith 2015, p. 4). It is this commitment to practices as distinct sources that signifies practical/pastoral theology as a discipline.

To further specify the significance of practical theology in this meditation on the Black faiths of our children, I turn to the late Dale Andrews' framing of practical theology as an

inbreaking. Practical theology takes as its starting point the experiences, practices, and ideologies of people and communities, specifically in moments of conflict or crisis. And, as Andrews argues, these investigations occur not as "a concrete beginning; instead, it is a 'breaking-in' point, to borrow a more eschatological concept" (Andrews and Smith 2015, p. 11). It is the task of the practical theologian to investigate and to theorize about when and where life-giving actions are performed, or are withheld, and death-dealing actions are performed, and how they happen (a) to/from bodies, (b) in a specific time/place context, and (c) often within communities. The methods of practical theology analyze these actions, particularly in moments of crisis and conflict, as they unfold within the quotidian. And in this pursuit, the field of practical theology is made richer and more inclusive by interventions of various persons, diversifying the guild in terms of its content on age, race, gender, sexuality, and geopolitical realities. When one considers the most marginalized and silenced people groups among us, even within the intramural of Black faith traditions, a turn to the children is essential.

Within various African diasporic traditions of spirituality or faith, the markers of normativity are still present, and they produce and construct, through various technologies of power, markers of identity, of rights, of privileges, and of protection. I have questions, then, about how the processes of normativity and identity might be analyzed in relation to children, for instance. Even the types of identity production that one can witness here, many assume to be the conscious experience of adults as they relate to structures and institutions. However, characters like Pecola from Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* remind us that even in childhood, these messages of "normal"—white skin, blue eyes—and "abnormal"—black skin, brown eyes—are deciphered and internalized during adolescence. Understanding identity, both individual and collective, as a process of normativity is perhaps as *anagrammatical* (Sharpe 2016) as its formulation. And (how) can one, especially a child, dis-identify from normativity, truly?

Furthermore, these sites of sociality function to reify the social relations of power, and in that legacy, to reify its forms of domination and violence. This, I argue, also functions to obfuscate the inherent power differentials that are present within kinship structures that are based upon other forms of normative identity markers, such as age, class, gender, and sexuality. In regard to children, then, even within Black faith traditions that proclaim liberation and promote equity, there is still often a lack of evenhanded thoughtfulness offered to the youngest among us. Considered by many communities to be *not-yet-full-citizens*, forms of dominance and terror are wielded against children unequivocally because of the relations of power on the macro and micro-terrains. For many, it is not given a second thought that children are beaten and whipped regularly by those adults who would also *claim* that they themselves have no power and that they are always on the receiving end of external oppression. Notwithstanding the external forces and power relations, these reflections ignore the social relations of power at work intra-communally, wherein there is an unchallenged violence against children because they, too, are produced as not-yet-citizens, non-normative, they do not belong in "grown folks' business". In other words, since many do not view children as full participants of the social order, then, they are, by extension, also not viewed as full participants of the spiritual community.

Further, I want to parse out a distinction between visibility and legibility. Visibility, or even representation, does not guarantee that an individual or community has a better chance of being humanized or normalized. We *see* children every day, but that does not offer to them a sense of legibility as citizens within our religious or spiritual traditions. On the contrary, legibility is also about readability, or the ability of the social or cultural order to perceive one as a normative citizen, produced and contributing to the benefit of said social order. To be seen is not to be legible, and by extension, is not to mean a guarantee of rights or protections from the community or from the state. As Jafari Allen posits in his work on Black gay lifeworlds, visibility is not survival, only survival is survival. And while visibility might work to prevent erasure, "visibility also does not necessarily require legibility. To be seen does not automatically conjure positive relationality or solidarity"

(Allen 2022, pp. 63–64). And to further Allen's analysis, visibility—even survival—does not offer any elaborated vision of what happens on the other side of survival, what some more popularly might refer to as hopes of "thriving". Again, so long as Black faith traditions insist that children are not-yet-participants, or somehow incomplete participants, in the spiritual collectives, then there is no true equity.

I am interested here in meditating on what a practical theology *from* children, and not exclusively a practical theology *of* children, might offer to theorizations of Black faith. Insofar as scholars and practitioners look toward emerging modes of Black flourishing and futurity, renewed attention must be offered to the theologies and cosmologies that our Black children are already living into and living out. This is even more important in these moments of global crisis and cultural disruptions; since various religious traditions have always seen children as invaluable to the common good, reclaiming religion's "importance in the public square involves reclaiming children's public value" (Miller-McLemore 2003, p. xxv). Recognizing that children are not incomplete or unfinished participants of our spiritual traditions also demands that we recognize them as equally as spiritual and faithful as adults. In fact, some African diasporic traditions would argue that children have an even greater access to the other realms, possess a more unmediated connection to the Divine, and see things that adults have been conditioned out of seeing in the liminal spaces between *this* and *the other* world.

Research across children's spirituality and Christian education, too, substantiates this argument: children are profoundly spiritual beings. Developmentally, children's sense of spirituality often emerges alongside their abstract cognitive development, such as meta-cognition and meaning-making. As Lisa Miller posits, "that 'children are so spiritual' is not merely anecdote or opinion, be it mine or anyone else's. It is an established scientific fact" (Miller 2015, p. 2). Children's spirituality, or the ways in which they understand or theorize themselves about the world/s, precedes the religious language that faith traditions offer to them. It comes "as naturally to children as their fascination with a butterfly or a twinkling star-filled night sky" (Miller 2015, p. 25), in ways that precede and arguably supersede language and culture. The traits of children's character as innocent and innocuous need not stand in contrast to them as also discerning and insightful. As Bonnie Miller-McLemore suggests in her work on children's spirituality, children see otherwise:

> They see what adults have ceased to notice. They are prone to say what they see, at least early on. [...] They greet the world's creations—moon, water, sand, fireflies, thunderstorms—with a certain respect, intrigue, and religious wonder. They also ask fundamental religious and philosophical questions. [...] People seem genuinely surprised to discover that children actually think provocatively.
>
> (Miller-McLemore 2003, p. 151)

Miller-McLemore continues to write how even though some philosophers believe that the reason in which children engage cannot be recognized as philosophical, other thinkers invite us to take seriously children *as* philosophers.

I take this invitation and extend it: How can the Black faiths of our children not only demonstrate to us them as philosophers, but also as theologians? In thinking about strategies of resistance in Black faith, how can we resist the Western and colonial hegemonic theories that subjugate children and relegate them to second-class citizenship, if not relegate them to property? What is the responsibility of faith leaders of various traditions in practices of futurity and transmission to take seriously the theological contributions of Black children, who also live and move and see in this realm and the other, no less than adults do? How can meditating on the Black faiths of children assist thinkers and theorists to tease out "what children make known, and even what God might make known through them"? (Miller-McLemore 2003, p. 150). How do Black children witness themselves? How do they witness each other, and the world around them? And is it possible that reimagining notions of identity and humanity might also demand reimagining our authoritative sources?

3. Let the Children Come

Meditating on the value and the role of children in Black faith requires not only a renewed invitation of epistemology, but also a commitment to move across disciplines and schools of thought. Even to meditate on children theologically, specifically, invites movement across historical and biblical and theological and psychological explorations. I turn in this section, primarily, to the wisdom of feminist and womanist practical theologians and thinkers whose work often serves as a girding force for reflection about the most marginalized intracommunally, and, in this case, children. Feminist and womanist practical theologians promote two major tasks, which I take up in this section, namely: "reflection on daily life as central to theology, and respect for the voices of the marginalized as a guiding norm" (Miller-McLemore 2003, p. xxvii). A practical theology of Black faith that emerges *from* children not only begins with a substantive reflection on the lifeworld/s of Black children, and the quotidian nature thereof, but it also includes a genuine belief that the seemingly mundane or everyday within their purview is also a source of theological conviction and insight.

The invitation to "let the children come" is not to reinscribe the second-class nature of their participation; or, to "let the children come" is to ensure that they are just as much a part of Black religious thought and practice, and just as much stakeholders and theorists in the work of transmission and futurity. Toni Morrison demonstrates, through her character Baby Suggs' invitations in the Clearing, how children in these spaces are not ancillary, but are central figures:

> After situating herself on a huge flatsided rock, Baby Suggs bowed her head and prayed silently. The company watched her from the trees. They knew she was ready when she put her stick down. Then she shouted, "Let the children come!" and they ran from the trees toward her. "Let your mothers hear you laugh," she told them, and the woods rang. The adults looked on and could not help smiling. [...] It started that way: laughing children, dancing men, crying women and then it got mixed up. Women stopped crying and danced; men sat down and cried; children danced, women laughed, children cried until, exhausted and riven, all and each lay about the Clearing damp and gasping for breath.
>
> (Morrison 1987, pp. 87–88)

What is the significance of it all getting "mixed up" in the Clearing? How might we view this fluid nature of the roles of those engaged in Black faith or spiritual practice here? Could it be that the children of Black faith beckon for a new role in the practice thereof?

Even within the Christian biblical tradition, there exists a similar refrain and invitation to "let the children come." As the Gospel writer suggests, little children were being brought to Jesus so that he might lay hands on them and pray, and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But the Gospel of Matthew records that Jesus said to them, "'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.' And he laid his hands on them and went on his way" (NRSV, Matt. 19:13–15). It is recorded earlier in Matthew's gospel that Jesus also says, "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea" (NRSV, Matt. 18:6). In this reading, Jesus is not only devoted to the care of the children, but Jesus is actually proactive in the defense of the children. Jesus does not just permit the children to be present, but Jesus invites the children to be an equal part of the religious practice, not relegated to observers or bystanders. By taking the examples of Baby Suggs and Jesus seriously, there is a way in which to view children as partners in the work, not as interferences. It is akin to what Almeda Wright argues for in her practical theological method, which "makes young African American equal conversation partners with theologians and scholars, such that their narratives push us toward a better understanding and articulation of theological truths (instead of attempting to simply apply theology to the lives of youth)" (Wright 2017, p. 10). Rather than simply telling children

how Black faith is most operative in a religious tradition, what might children have to say to teach adults?

I want to shift now more directly to investigate and theorize about the spiritual technologies and tools through which Black children both explore and identify faith and its practices. What are the ways in which Black faith can be constructed and thought when viewed through the lens of childhood? Furthermore, how might the theologies and practices of Black childhood serve as enhancements to strategies of resistance and endurance? I meditate briefly here on three specific strategies, and what I want to name as theologies, of Black childhood: imagination, creativity, and play. Through these three spiritual technologies, Black faith has always—and, with renewed attention, may continue—to re/think its practices and its mores. I end this section, too, by thinking about how these spiritual technologies might also serve as a medium of conjure, as practices that call forth and create and summon up something else that is both quotidian and spectacular.

3.1. Imagination

Why is it that children can often see that which adults cannot? How is it that the youngest among us are often the most perceptive, sometimes the most astute, when it concerns the world around us? As Lisa Miller suggests, when we listen to children, we will hear important spiritual questions: "When we follow them to new places, whether in conversation or literally into a church, on the way to the market or a graveyard, or viewing the backyard gutted by a hurricane, the world is far more vast and alive than before" (Miller 2015, p. 131). Children follow their curiosities even if those curiosities lead to imagining something that might not be *visibly* present to see. When children see a bug, they envision its life story and how it ended up on the windowsill. When children hear a half story, they imagine the preceding chapters and make sure to share it widely with others. When children feel a new sensation in their body, some of them will even concoct the cause and the solution to what they are experiencing—as my niece has once before determined that she was hot because she had not had enough candy yet. Children maintain and, when given the space, develop a robust imagination to see and hear and feel the world in new and exciting ways.

I want to query whether we can easily dismiss their knowing/s, or even their attempts at knowing through their imaginative practices. Particularly for those children of the African diaspora, M. Jacqui Alexander reminds us that in spite of the pervasive effects of the slave trade and of colonization, there is a prior knowing that animates our spiritual lives. She writes how there is a "different placement in the human idiom of constructed time", and that while the body serves as a "mediator between the world of the living and the world of the dead", the spiritual *is* epistemological (Alexander 2005, p. 293). If we take seriously the spiritual as epistemology, then that includes the spiritual imaginations of children. In fact, since many of our Black faith traditions emerge from cosmologies that believe children to have a different unmediated access to the other realm, then those spiritual imaginations might be even more fodder for practice and theory. It is perhaps not our task to push youth "to embrace a 'neat' cosmological schema" (Wright 2017, p. 97) that matches the ones into which we have been conditioned. Instead, children's imaginations might help us to re/think our own.

3.2. Creativity

It is no secret that the Western philosophical and educational and religious foundation for thought, and for intellectual rigor, is logocentric in its formulation. There is an emphasis on dense texts, complicated language, and confounding prose, which often "proves" one's skills as a thinker and a trusted authority on a subject or discipline. Some Black religious traditions, particularly in their efforts to appeal to wider legibility and in a desire to be seen as rigorous and sophisticated, have taken up this framework in the transmission of their own practices. And to be clear, I am convicted of this—clearly, as I am writing this article for an academic journal. I wonder, however, the ways in which the creativity of children might

be instructive for religious and theological thought and its future. Children's inherent proclivity for creativity and ingenuity is remarkable at times to watch, and it is also a source of philosophical and theological wondering. Religion and the arts are a longstanding tradition that helps give voice to what is happening here, as those scholars demonstrate how the arts help people live into and make meaning out of experiences such as horror, tragedy, and loss (Miller-McLemore 1999, p. 177). A honed sense of creativity, arguably a refined skill, is in many ways living out the adage to which we often try to explain to children, of how to "make something out of nothing".

Children, perhaps, might have their own version of the practice, since so much of their lifeworld consists of making something out of that which adults might discard or find useless. On one hand, creativity is its own spiritual technology, serving the end of a cosmological turn. Particularly for those in the African diaspora, as M. Jacqui Alexander notes:

> There is no dimension of the Sacred that does not yearn for the making of beauty, an outer social aesthetic of expression whether in written or spoken word, the rhythm of the drum, the fashioning of an altar, or any of the visual arts. The Sacred is inconceivable without an aesthetic.
>
> (Alexander 2005, p. 323)

If it is true that the Sacred yearns for the making of beauty, then that would suggest that that yearning is not limited to persons of a certain age. And when one observes children—whether directly engaged in a Black spiritual tradition or not—it seems that many live into these practices of the arts and of creativity naturally. Children will take the noises they hear from the copy machine or the beeping from the microwave and make it into a song with unique lyrics for that occasion. Children paint and color on whatever medium renders itself available to them, from the side of a cardboard box to their bedroom walls. The first altars many children encounter are not only the ones they experience in a church or mosque, but rather the ones they construct themselves while contemplating with the sticks and rocks and leaves they curate in the backyard.

3.3. Play

Both of the preceding childhood practices—imagination and creativity—make their home in the world of play. The artistic world, according to Pamela Couture, opens up the place of play to children. She notes how it is that space of play that "creates a transitional, imaginative space between realities" (Miller-McLemore 1999, p. 178). I am struck by Couture's use of "between realities" here, especially as I read it alongside more cosmological notions of the distinctions between this realm and the other. It seems, as she and others posit, that imagination, creativity, and play really create a transitional space, one in which the veil is a bit thinner between realms, and where new ideas and thoughts and practices have the freedom to emerge. It is a space of transformation as much as it is also the residence of epistemologies; the creativity of the arts and of play causes us to think. And not just to think in the ways to which we have become accustomed, but "to think beyond the realm of the logical, measurable, and quantifiable. Art blurs the boundary between the real and the unreal. It blurs, in some respects, the line between the conscious and the subconscious, between walking and dreaming" (Miller-McLemore 1999, p. 178). In other words, play invites us to reconsider what reality is, and where we are in it.

It is not shocking to me that we often dismiss children's play as nothing more than mere fabrications or misrepresentations. The language we use to describe their play is often rife with incredulity: "playing make-believe", "imaginary friend", or "fantasy world". Perhaps there is something that Black faith can receive from play, from leaning into that liminal space between the worlds, from sharpening the skills of "make believe" until we believe what we make. The material conditions of play are what seem as limitations to us, but a different cosmological reading suggests otherwise. Play just might be a further medium of Spirit, a "repository of consciousness that derives from a source elsewhere, another ceremonial ritual marking" (Alexander 2005, p. 298). How might the tools of play,

as a spiritual technology, enable Black faith practitioners to see and enact and live into that beyond the dominant expressions of religion? What might be waiting, in terms of both thought and practice, on the other side of a playful approach to religious futurity? What strategies of resistance, what sources of identity, what cultural ingenuity awaits us in the "make believe"?

4. Conjuring a Great Camp Meeting

> *Walk together, children, don't you get weary,*
> *walk together, children, don't you get weary,*
> *walk together, children, don't you get weary,*
> *there's a great camp meeting in the promised land.*

Throughout this meditation, and even in the title, I have used the phrase "our" children. I use this language intentionally here, even as I have no "biological" children, nor is it my intent to exclude those for whom childbearing is a complicated and sensitive topic. Rather, I use this language to denote the "our" that more specifically might be connected to the villages that are required to nurture and protect children. I use "our" children to invoke a responsibility: the care and consideration of the most marginalized among us is a task that requires all of our attention and our energy. As aforementioned in the introduction, the antiblack violences of this world are harsh and unrelenting, and the assaults are gratuitous. It remains a difficult task for many Black adults to get out of bed every day and to face both the expected and the unforeseen horrors of the day. How much more might this be true for our children? And how might they already be leaning into their own formations of spiritual action? Taking seriously, then, how Black children utilize imagination, creativity, and play, I end these thoughts with questions about how these spiritual technologies might be read as practices of conjure. The collective task of our children might not be to wholesale receive what we transmit to them, but instead to continue the ongoing work of conjuring and crafting something for themselves.

I turn to conjure as another exercise in curiosity and exploration. The practice of "conjure", recalling here the archaic meaning of the word "con-jure: to 'conspire'" (Smith 1994, p. 126) is a centuries-enduring way in which Blacks throughout the diaspora have sought to orient themselves toward the world surrounding them. Conjure, arguably its own mystical tradition, is one in which "spiritual power is invoked for various purposes, such as healing, protection, and self-defense" (Chireau 2006, p. 12). And given the aforementioned compounding forces of gratuitous violence and antiblackness, one can imagine the need for healing and protection. It is significant to note, however, that conjure involves all three purposes—healing, protection, and self-defense, or harming. For those who practice conjure, harming is most often considered a response to evil. And when in an antiblack world, evil has an identifiable source; embedded within the understandings of harming is the notion that evil is not theoretical, "but situational, immediate, and located in the domain of human actions and relationships" (Chireau 2006, p. 75). That is to say, conjure serves as a Black mystical response to, and confrontation with, the social symbolic order.

I wonder, then, how reading children's spiritual work might be its own form of conjure, its own conspiring. If we look at the spiritual technologies of imagination, creativity, and play, how might they direct our attention away from theologies that are fixated upon the social symbolic order and upon political liberation, and instead toward this other economy, this other exchange that is nonmaterial? How might these forms of witnessing and beholding offer to us a "lexical imagination that aims to take us outside of political ontology and into the metaphysical (or the spiritual)"? (Warren 2017, p. 3). How do Black children witness themselves, and each other, and the world? How might *their* rituals of meaning-making prove efficacious for those of us who are witnessing them? Whatever the great camp meeting might be—whether it looks more like Baby Suggs in the Clearing or more like the make believe of children's theater—I am eager to see how the Black faiths of our children will imagine it, and maybe enact it. After all, children are not merely the future of Black faith, nor its far-distanced lineage, they are its present and its gift.

The theological and ethical work that children beckon us toward is one that takes seriously their contribution as members of our sociality, and not as aberrations thereof. Admittedly, this naming is uncomfortable for some, and perhaps incites indignation in others, and this is precisely why it is an area of Black faith and religiosity toward which one must attend. How have we imbibed the same colonialist frameworks that seek to oppress and marginalize the most vulnerable within our own intramural? What is it about children possessing and experimenting with curiosity and play that causes Black faith practices to resort to the same disciplinary and normative practices of the other? I argue that perhaps giving way to our own imagination, and play, and creativity might help us to realize that which Black faith requires for its continuance. The spiritual technologies that children possess might be what is required for non-children to also conjure, to conspire, something else to be. "Walk together, children," is a call to leave no one behind in the pursuit of the Great Camp Meeting. And our children might just lead the way.

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