

Preface

Dr. Kamilah Majied, Editor

Behold This Balm, This Banquet, This Blessing of Blackness

Welcome to the Special Issue of the *Journal of Contemplative Inquiry, Transcendent Wisdom and Transformative Action: Reflections from Black Contemplatives*.

I invite you to celebrate, to joyously engage with the insights in this volume as an actual contemplative practice. More than simply reading this Special Issue as an intellectual exercise, perhaps you might pause and notice that this is an opportunity to commune with Black brilliance.

Before you read and perhaps during and after reading, may you offer gratitude to the ancestors who fought for our minds, our rights to think and read and write; who fought for our bodies, our rights to dance and run, to sleep and drum; who fought for our hearts, our rights to love and rage and hope and heal; who fought for our very souls, our freedom to free, to be, to enlighten and be enlightened at our deepest core. Let your engagement with the ideas and words here connect you to ancestral knowledge, earthly knowledge, universal knowledge which has always abided within us. As you read and reflect, may you know that both our capacity to take in these wisdoms and the authors capacity to articulate them exist as part of a continuum of call and response that our ancestors enjoin us towards eternally. Notice that this never-ending dialogue with ourselves and with one another is both a hard-won blessing and an easeful joy.

In many ways, the authors in this volume offer prayers in these writings. Buddhist philosopher and educator Daisaku Ikeda (2006) says

Prayer is not a feeble consolation; it is a powerful, unyielding conviction. Prayer is the courage to persevere. It is the struggle to overcome our own weakness and lack of confidence in ourselves. It is the act of im-

pressing in the very depths of our being the conviction that we can change the situation without fail. When we pray, we embrace the universe with our lives and our determination.

In this volume, you will bear witness to the determination, conviction, and acted-upon prayers of these authors.

You will meet educators at prayer in these pages. You will sense their deep practice and know that they are practicing for the well-being of their students, all people, and the edification of education itself. They are teaching us how to educate towards the end of racism. Marisela Gomez is teaching us how to stay present and nature-engaged as we teach about racism. Ericka Echavarria and Ovita Williams teach how to practice self-care when guiding people through racial equity work. Kathy J. Brown shows us her protest artwork and describes Gullah Geechee visuality as a contemplative practice in anti-racist pedagogy. Juan Rios offers a model of contemplative practice to guide ethical use of technology in education and social work. Steven Thurston Oliver elucidates how Zen Buddhist practice helps build and sustain Black queer joy in the academy. Son, Diaz-Mendoza, Alford, Cuesta, King-Toler and Hayman write love letters as a practice of affirming one another and invite us into this beautiful practice of supporting everyone in the academy.

And there is more.

This feast of faith also offers relational guidance for Black people on how to heal and strengthen our connections with one another. Taking a deep dive into empowering and empowered parenting, Kimberly Nao speaks of her son teaching her to swim as part of the embodied practice that transforms the pains of parenting into beautiful growth and bonding for both. Tricia Elam Walker manifests enlightened parenting through decades of Buddhist practice and describes teaching her children to do their human revolution.

And there is more.

Black women's wisdom abounds in this volume, artfully and heartfully offered. Brandon Hutchinson's poetry and prose reflect the artist's heart that lives in all of us and beckons us toward truth and

healing. Ericka Echavarria's essay calls us to learn from the harm we inflict on one another as we overcome internalized oppression through practice.

This volume contains wisdom from across the human life span. Young contemplatives like Rashid Hughes guide us to vitality through a restorative non-striving practice. Sará King brings neuroscience to the fight for justice and reunites it with our overall wellness. Pioneer Buddhist scholar and educator Jan Willis brings integrated guidance from the Buddha and Dr. King to help us excavate wisdom from living through ongoing racial violence alongside the COVID-19 pandemic.

And there is more.

Veta Goler dips into her own sacred basket of wisdom to help us create a strong inner core "basket" that releases what is not needed while holding fast what is vital. Shelly Harrell offers a triparted practice for us to elevate ourselves as we stay grounded. Dominique Malbranche charts our way home to embodied resilience and resistance. Feisal Kirumira articulates the connection between anthropocentricity and anti-Blackness and helps us reconnect with our nature-based eco-centric Black identities.

Oh yes, there is new language being spoken here. These tongues are untied and talking liberation in new terms. Dominique Brown reminds us that we are ascendants, and to allow somatic practices to buoy our ascendance.

And there is song and dance.

LaCriscia Fowlkes incorporates music into breathwork revealing breath as coalesced with the music that moves us. Anthony Cruz Pantojas guides us through the Afro-Caribbean Barril de Bomba, Bomba, and Flamboyán as contemplative conduits to our rhythmic roots.

There is journeying and there is returning home in this volume. Phyllis Jeffers-Coly shares insights from her experience guiding Black Americans through the contemplative practice of physically returning to Africa.

There are practices in this Special Issue that help us align with our ancestral lineage when we feel disconnected. Kaira Jewel Lingo has us touch the earth to touch our ancestors. M'Balía Thomas has us open the

gift of writings by Lorde, Anzaldúa, Hersey, and Lee so that we may be in constant dialogue with them.

There are so many forms of prayer, practice, wisdom, and action represented, discussed, and offered in this Special Edition. Allow yourself to feast and know that you will find more flavors in each meal—more richness in each article—than you expect. May your journey with the minds and hearts of these magnificent Black contemplatives open you wide to new ways to pray, be, love, resist, and joy. May this reading be a coming home to yourself and to your expansive, brilliant Black family.

References

Ikeda, D. (2006). *Prayer* (pp. 2-3). Middleway Press.

Acknowledgments

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