

**August 17, 2022**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

play†prey

Leila Weefur

CO-CURATED WITH AFRIKANA INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL

AUGUST 26 – OCTOBER 9, 2022

Opening Reception: Friday, August 26, 6 – 8 pm

Artist Conversation: Saturday, September 17



RICHMOND — 1708 Gallery is pleased to announce **PLAY†PREY**, an exhibition by artist Leila Weefur. **PLAY†PREY** is a gospel presented as a multi-channel film experience, that recounts a relationship between God, the Church, and a queer Black child. The four-part film, and its accompanying architectural display, explore the playful impulses, innocence, and underlying violence implicated in the experience of queer Black children in the Christian Church. Beginning with an overture to the story of queer Biblical reclamation, this film builds a spiritual narrative that contemplates the structures and rules imposed on pleasure, play, and sexuality under the rigidity of Black Christianity. In the shadow of colonial book burning, the tableaux operates as punctuation to a deeply fraught history where religion is mired in political power. This meditation awakens the narrative space to the underlying violence implicated in the experience of queer life in the Christian Church. The narrative takes inspiration from four lyrical sermons in James Weldon Johnson's *God's Trombone: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*. The film features an original soundtrack in collaboration with KYN (Josh Casey & Yari Bundy) and Vocals from Sandra Lawson-Ndu.

**Leila Weefur** (He/They/She) is an artist, writer, and curator based in Oakland, CA. Through video and installation, their interdisciplinary practice examines the performativity intrinsic to systems of belonging. The work brings together concepts of sensorial memory, abject Blackness, hyper surveillance, and the erotic. Weefur has worked with local and national institutions including Locust Projects, The Wattis Institute, McEvoy Foundation, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Museum of the African Diaspora, and Smack Mellon. Weefur is a lecturer at Stanford University.

**PLAY†PREY** is co-curated by Afrikana Independent Film Festival, which will take place September 15 - 18.

Special thanks to Enjoli Moon, Nigel Richardson, Chani Bockwinkel, Sam Genovese, Minnesota Street Foundation, and Jake Urbanski.

Image: Leila Weefur, still image from PLAY†PREY, multi-channel film installation, 2022. Courtesy of the artist.

For more information, please visit [1708GALLERY.ORG](http://1708GALLERY.ORG).

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