

THE LANGUAGE OF LIBERATION AND OPPRESSION: SEX AND GENDER IN
THE NATION OF GODS AND EARTHS

by

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DEDICATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	ix
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
The Language Problem.....	2
The African American Condition	5
Introduction to the Rhetoric of the Nation of Gods and Earths	10
Black Women in the NGE	12
Identification and Position of Women	14
The Woman Problem.....	18
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	21
III. METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	31
Methodology.....	34
Research Site.....	38
Text	42
Self-reflective Learning Experience	43
Theoretical Perspective.....	46
IV. DATA	50
Finding the Woman in the Supreme Mathematics and the Supreme Alphabets	50
Supreme Mathematics.....	51
Supreme Alphabets	54
V. ANALYSIS.....	65
Language Patterns.....	69
NGE in Composition.....	72
VI. CONCLUSION.....	74
The Dynamics of Gender, Position, and Power	74

The Female Voice	74
Power Distribution	76
LITERATURE CITED	85

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Supreme Mathematics.....	51
2. Supreme Alphabets	55

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
I.S.L.A.M.	I Self Lord and Master or I Self Lady and Mother
N.G.E.	Nation of Gods and Earths
N.O.I.	Nation of Islam
S.A.W.S.	Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Salaam (Peace and Blessings Be Upon Him)
U.N.I.A.	United Negro Improvement Association
120	Lessons of the Nation of Gods and Earths

I. INTRODUCTION

The Nation of Gods and Earths (NGE) was founded in 1964 by former member of the Nation of Islam Clarence 13X. While in the Nation of Islam (NOI) he came to the realization that the teachings called the Supreme Wisdom showed that he was god and he started calling himself “Allah.” The NOI did not allow such behavior and told him he couldn’t teach such things at the temple. Dissatisfied with the way the NOI was teaching their lessons, he left the temple and took the Supreme Wisdom with him to the streets to teach the youth that he felt needed them most. In addition to the Supreme Wisdom which eventually became known as 120, he created what is known as the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets. The Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets are a system of numbers and letters, respectively, that represent principles to help understand the meaning of life. It is through studying the teachings of the NGE that a person is supposed to gain knowledge of his or her true self.

I was introduced to the NGE at the age of 18 by a man I eventually started dating. For years I had been questioning my religious upbringing, studied other religions, and tried to figure out the best way of expressing my beliefs when he offered this new knowledge to me. I had never before heard that the Black man was god and that there was no “mystery God” I was used to believing in. He gave me the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets, but after we broke up I was left to find the lessons on my own. It was at this time I joined the NOI because I learned the history of the NGE and thought that they were related. Overtime I began to question the things that I was learning from the NOI and comparing them with what I had learned from the NGE. Even though I am

still a member of the NOI I have been inactive since realizing that I wasn't learning anything productive at that point in my life.

I have come to realize that I took a lot of the teachings at face value and relied on someone else's interpretation of the lessons instead of my own. Now that I am in a graduate program that emphasizes critical thinking and social justice issues like critical race and feminist theory I have become more aware of how the NGE's teachings have become tainted by sexist and misogynistic practices. The patriarchal structure of the NGE leaves it vulnerable to cultural practices that undermine the integrity and ideology that the group was founded upon. The language of the NGE is unique and uses parts of the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets as its foundation. By studying the language of the NGE in its foundational lessons, it can be determined whether or not the actual teachings reflect sexism/misogyny or if it is part of individual/cultural practices that have misinterpreted the true meaning of the NGE's teachings.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Language Problem

The culture of the NGE is just as unique as its language, and can be viewed as both patriarchal and liberating depending on individual interpretation. While looking at the culture of the NGE has been the focus of previous studies, it is language that is considered to be "both a repository of cultural meanings and a medium for the production of meaning in everyday life" (Dyson and Genishi 5). It is through language that the roles of women are collaboratively and socially constructed, and thereby accepted by members of the social group. The NGE is heavily male-dominated, patriarchal, and oriented

towards the uplifting of males of African American descent. The women's roles vary, but are largely relegated to being a supporting role to men within the domestic sphere. The specific language used within the NGE reflects the supporting role of the women to men within this group: women are considered “secondary, but most necessary” in their relation of importance to African American men and the family in particular, and the community in general. In the patriarchal culture of the NGE, this language is considered to promote equality and reflect the NGE’s ideology.

My qualitative research project is an exploration of the rhetorical choices used to describe or define women in the NGE using the Supreme Mathematics, and Supreme Alphabets. I will identify, and analyze, the words that are in the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets that directly, or indirectly references women. By looking at the words that are about women only, I hope to discover patterns of word choices that reflect the position of women within the NGE culture. I will be using a critical, feminist theoretical lens that will allow me to identify the intersection of racial and gendered issues of oppression that can affect the choice of words used about women, as well as their position within a patriarchal culture. I will then compare these findings with my own personal experiences as a woman in dealing with the men of this group through autoethnography.

During this thesis, I will be answering five questions while collecting and analyzing data from the Supreme Mathematics, and Supreme Alphabets:

1. How is the language being used specific to members of the NGE?

2. What is the language being used by members of the NGE that is specific to women?
3. Are there any patterns that develop within the Supreme Mathematics, and Supreme Alphabets?
4. Are these patterns reflective of the language used by members of the NGE?
5. Do these patterns reflect misogyny, or equality according to NGE ideology?

For the purpose of this research, the general working definition of NGE language will be defined as any words used specifically by male and female members of the NGE that are particular to their culture, history, teachings, and shared understanding. The rhetorical choices that will be identified as gendered are any terms, phrases, or titles that have to do with women, or anything with attributed feminine characteristics (i.e. names, descriptors, etc.). The rhetorical choices will be categorized as being either a reflection of the NGE's ideology, or as being misogynistic depending on their context of use. This study should benefit the women who are members of the NGE by providing an examination of the language used towards them to help them understand the terms used to define them as women, and to determine whether or not these terms fully represent them as women. It should also help members of the NGE recognize where their use of language does not accurately represent the ideology of the NGE, and how their culture has instead become an expression of misogyny as a result.

The African American Condition

Ancient African cultures provided a more balanced perspective between the sexes in society and religion. African societies were often matriarchal, and were characterized by their “collaboration and harmonious flowering of both sexes, and by certain preeminence of women in society” (Diop 145). Unlike in Western civilization where power was transmitted by the father, in these societies political power was transmitted by the woman. In certain societies, like the Ovambo and Nuba, the feminine aspect was deified and worshipped as The Mother of creation. In the Dogon religion, the duality of divinity was present in Amma, the Supreme God, that had “both male and female characteristics, reflecting the Dogon concept of binary opposition as the motive force and structure of the universe” (Karenga 235). Creation was connected to the female, but with the invasion of foreign powers, misogynistic ideologies, and monotheistic religion the woman's position in society, and reverence in religion was diminished, if not outright eliminated.

The most well-known monotheistic religion is the expansion of Christianity through Western colonization, and missionary work, but the religion of Islam was also spread through Central and West Africa. By the time the “first Africans were shipped to the New World [during the Transatlantic Slave Trade] Islam was already well established in West Africa...had been introduced to North Africa as early as 660...[and] South of the Sahara it had been known since the eighth century” (Diouf 4). Islam means submission to the will of Allah (God), and its followers are called Muslims. There are about 1.6 billion Muslims in the world with about 3.3 million living in America (Mohamed). African Americans make up 23% of the Muslims in America which is about 1% of the total US

population (Muslim-American Demographics). Even though the acceptance of Islam in America today is due in large part to the historical significance of African American Muslims, and the fact that they make up almost ¼ of the population, African American Muslims, and issues of racial oppression, are grossly underrepresented within the Muslim community despite the fact that racism is not permitted within Islam. The founder of Islam, the Prophet Mohammed (s.a.w.s.), said in one of his final speeches that no man, or woman, was greater than another except in their piety. However, racism in America, and even within the Muslim community, still exists, putting African American Muslims in a unique intersection of oppression.

African American Muslims needed a way to fight racial oppression within the confines of their religion. African Americans, in general, needed to be unified, and liberated, and did so under organizations such as the United Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.) under Marcus Garvey's leadership, but no one really merged the plight of the African American, the need for liberation from white supremacy, and Islam until Noble Drew Ali founded the Moorish Science Temple. Established in 1913, the Moorish Science Temple responded to the racism in America by coming together "to form an Islamic community based on the assertion of nationalism that rejected integration and asserted a distinctive nationality" (McCloud 11). Nationalism is explained as the belief that "the ethnic, religious, or linguistic group to which [someone is] most intimately attached is undervalued and oppressed by 'outsiders'" (Deburg 2). When applied to matters of race, Maulana Karenga further describes black nationalism as a:

social thought and practice centered in the concept and conviction that African Americans are a distinct people with a distinct personality and

they have the right and responsibility to unite in order to gain the structural capacity to define, defend and develop their interests (383).

Noble Drew Ali used the concepts of black nationalism, and combined them with Islam, the teachings of Marcus Garvey, and various other philosophies in order to create a religion that was the key to the salvation, and liberation of African American people. He claimed that this liberation could be achieved through the African American's discovery and the acceptance that their national origin was that of a Moor, that Islam was the only method to advancement, that whites were the opposite, and negative, of black people that would soon be destroyed, and by obeying the law (Karenga 277).

Some are of the opinion that the Nation of Islam (NOI) "began in 1930 with the splitting into two factions of the Moorish Science Temple, one following a newcomer, W.D, Fard, to Detroit, and the other remaining faithful to Noble Drew Ali" (Karenga 278). Those who chose to follow W.D. Fard eventually came to believe that he was "God in person when he disappeared in 1933 and they became the founding members of the Nation of Islam under the leadership of Messenger Elijah Muhammad" (Karenga 278). However, this is not what is taught as the history within the Nation of Islam. The origins of Master Fard Muhammad (W.D. Fard) are shrouded in mystery, and little information is actually known about him. What is known is that he came to America on July 4, 1930 and taught for three and a half years. One of his students was the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, and it is his transcribed exchange of questions and answers with Master Fard Muhammad that is called the Supreme Wisdom, the lessons that all members of the Nation of Islam study. Whatever the origin, the Moorish Science Temple may have

influenced the teachings and set the stage for people to be more receptive to the Nation of Islam.

The NOI took over the spiritual Reconstruction of Black people where previous movements, such as the Moorish Science Temple and Marcus Garvey's U.N.I.A, had left off, but also incorporated a unique interpretation of the religion of Islam into its Black Nationalist ideology. The religion of Islam provided a new focus of submission from the white man to only being in submission to Allah (God). The focus became the Black man being God, with Master Fard Muhammad being the wisest, Supreme Being. The uniqueness of the African American condition allowed Elijah Muhammad to flip the narrative of slave/master, good/evil/, God/Devil into one that uplifted the Black man into a place of superiority while attempting to humble white society under the premise of rejecting white supremacy.

With slavery abolished, an unsuccessful Reconstruction period, and the ever-looming presence of Jim Crow, the adverse race relations between Blacks and Whites in the early 1930s created an opening for the NOI to position itself as the solution to the problems Black people were facing in America. The problem, specifically being white supremacy, and the violence, discrimination, and inferiority complex that accompanies it. The solution was to raise the Black man up from his position as a former slave and restore him to his rightful place as the leader/ruler of all men. Black men were recruited off of the streets, cleaned up, trained to become soldiers, expected to become independent businessmen, and protectors of their families and communities—in contrast to the Black man who would cross the street or not make eye contact in the presence of White people, partied, was abusive, and relied on assistance for income.

Along with changing the appearance and behavior of the Black man, the NOI was able to change the identity of Black men from a former slave to that of a God. Many Black people who had no knowledge of their history in Africa before slavery and colonialism believed that their existence began with slavery, which made it easier to buy into their inferior status that was being imposed upon them by a white supremacist society. The teachings of the NOI basically flipped white supremacy by placing Black people in the position of the superior being (i.e. God), and making White people inferior (i.e. Devil) while at the same time redefining the concept of what it meant to be God and what it meant to be Devil. The Honorable Elijah Muhammad taught that the Devil was anyone who has been grafted (taken out of its original state) and made weak and wicked; that Black people are the original people of the planet Earth, making them the progenitors of civilization (not savages), and the foundation of all things in existence; and, that the truth of this concept was being manifested in society where overtly racist and violent acts were being committed against Black people on a regular basis.

After he had studied for three and a half years under Master Fard Muhammad, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad was questioned on the knowledge that was given to him, and the conversation was written and put into separate sections, and is collectively called the Supreme Wisdom. The knowledge contained within the Supreme Wisdom is said to be the science of everything in life. It is the Supreme Wisdom that Clarence 13X took with him when he left the NOI Temple No. 7 and founded the NGE in 1964. Dissatisfied with the ways that the teachings of the NOI were being distributed, and the belief that Master Fard Muhammad held the position of The Supreme God while everyone else were gods (the little “g” indicative of a lowered ranking), Clarence 13X decided that the NOI

was not the place for him, and Temple No. 7 was not the place for the Supreme Wisdom. Like the NOI, he understood the teachings of the Supreme Wisdom to mean that there was no “existence of any supernatural ‘mystery god’,” because the Black man “himself is god—a god of his own family, universe, and destiny”; and, that the teachings mean that we are all equal, so since there were no big G’s or little g’s there was no need for a hierarchy (RZA 43). He also thought that the people who truly needed the knowledge that was contained within the Supreme Wisdom were not inside the temple but out on the streets. He renamed himself Allah (known as Father Allah, or the Father), and decided to teach the youth on the streets of Harlem, New York. He condensed the Supreme Wisdom down to a core of 120 lessons (also called degrees), because he “felt that endangered poor black youth required a faster approach to the teachings than the one the Nation [of Islam] was offering” (RZA 44). In addition to the 120, he created a system based on numbers and letters called them Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets, respectively, which are “names, numbers, and principles said to be the keys to understanding man’s relationship to the universe” (RZA 44).

Introduction to the Rhetoric of the Nation of Gods and Earths

Since the NGE came out of the NOI, both groups are similar in some areas, but differ in others. The NOI and the NGE use the same foundational teachings (Supreme Wisdom/120), so both are patriarchal in structure, and both were created to uplift the black community by restoring the black man to his rightful position as the head of the black family. The NGE differs with the NOI on some basic principles of the teachings. There is a rank and file within the NOI, but no hierarchical structure exists within the NGE. The knowledge is free and accessible to anyone willing to take the time to learn

it—and each person is responsible for giving the knowledge to someone else (i.e. each one teach one). One of the biggest debates is in the use of language about women. The NGE teaches that all Black men are Gods, and the Black woman is the Earth. Though they both consider the black man to be god, the NOI sometimes refers to women as goddess while the Nation of Gods and Earths refer to their women with what they consider to be the proper title of Earth.

The majority of the rhetoric of the NGE uses are the words contained within the Supreme Mathematics and the Supreme Alphabets. Despite the fact that the NGE emerged from the NOI, the NGE has created a language and culture separate to that of the NOI that is called mathematics, which is the assignment of key concepts of their ideology (i.e. knowledge, wisdom, understanding, etc.) to a numerical value of 1-9 with 0 being a place holder known as a cipher. The definitions of the terms of the Supreme Mathematics are unique to the individual that is defining them. The chart of the Supreme Mathematics is on page 51, and comes from my personal interpretation of what these terms have come to mean to me.

The language of the NGE is more typically associated with Hip-Hop. Many of the early Hip-Hop artists were in or were influenced by the NGE. For example, words such as Peace, G, Cipher, Dropping Bombs, as well as the b-boy stance (arms crossed with the feet at a forty-five degree angle and head tilted to the side) all originated from the NGE. However, the focus of any coupling of Hip-Hop and NGE tends to center around the misogyny of Hip-Hop and the patriarchy of the NGE. Perhaps because of the patriarchal structure of the NGE, much of the literature not concerning the linguistic contributions to Hip Hop, or the rhetorical influence of its language and culture, is instead centered

around the Nation of Gods and Earths ideology, its patriarchal structure, and its women.

Black Women in the NGE

The NGE is male-dominated, and its patriarchal structure provides the soil for the cultivation of sexism. The language of the NGE does not itself reflect sexism, but can lead to the reinforcement of sexist and misogynist attitudes through its culture. Sometimes people think that because the NGE is a patriarchal system that the men are inherently misogynistic. However, there is equality. In the NGE, equality means that two things while not equal to each other are equal in measure. Thus men and women have separate, clearly defined gender roles, but both are necessary to build a successful family/nation. In the Supreme Mathematics 8 is build, and it is He or Her in the Supreme Alphabets. It takes both He and Her to build a nation. When looking at the numerical symbol of 8, there are two complete ciphers “00” that when joined together form the symbol “8”. He (0) and Her (0) are two separate and complete units that come together (8) to build or add on to each other’s lives. This is balance. Unfortunately, when dealing with any patriarchal system, such as the NGE, misogyny can sometimes permeate the structural vulnerabilities of the organization even though it theoretically strives to create or maintain equality as part of its foundational principles. Teaching about equality is one thing; however, living out the principles of equality is another.

The NGE’s teachings are largely male-centered in order for both Black men and women to come into the knowledge of themselves, and the knowledge of who the true and living God is. With this knowledge, the Black man can take his position as head of the family, or God of the Universe, and the Black woman can take her position as the Earth, the nurturer and bearer of life. In the Supreme Alphabets, 17 is Queen, where 1 is

knowledge, and 7 is God, meaning that a woman who knows that the Black man is God is called a Queen.

There is somewhat of a disconnection between having knowledge of *God* (17), and having knowledge of *self*. It is possible to gain knowledge of self in relation to others (who you are in the role of being a wife, mother, student, teacher, etc.), but one cannot find knowledge of self through someone else, or by allowing someone else to “do the knowledge” for you. In other words, self-knowledge requires self-reflection, self-education, and good sense. Some women get so caught up in “knowledging” God, or having God “do the knowledge” for them, that they lose their sense of who they are, right along with the ability to think for themselves.

For some men, this is acceptable behavior from a woman: her ability to think independently is not necessary to her role as an Earth or a Queen, since she is to rotate (as the Earth rotates around the sun), submit as per her nature, and reflect the light of the sun (the Black man). She also does not need to obtain knowledge for herself, or have knowledge of the same things as a man, because she is to trust in and submit to God’s will. While speaking with a former friend about this very subject, I came to realize that he valued ignorance and dependence from a woman, felt insecure about himself, and was self-conscious in his relationship to me. He was used to being around mentally weak, emotionally unbalanced, passive-aggressive and/or argumentative women, and having to think for them, do for them, and control their actions and words on many occasions. Since these women couldn’t think or do for themselves, he felt a purpose in their dependency on him, and his chaotic relationships with them allowed him to take control of the relationship. I was different. Intelligent, educated, balanced, autonomous, and quiet—I

wasn't a problem he had to find a way to fix. So he created one.

He had a lot of information that I wanted access to, but he refused to share with me because I did not need to know what he knew—I did not even need to think—I just needed to listen to what he told me, and do it. Needing something to control, he chose to control my access to knowledge, or more specifically the information he had in his possession. He would constantly mention something important from books, videos, or plus degrees (lessons in addition to 120), but would never tell me the name of it, or give me a copy of it so that I could check it out for myself. Eventually, it came to a point where he scolded me for thinking that I was better than a man, and told me that no matter what I did, how many degrees I got, wherever I went, I would never be as good as a man—no woman could be as good as a man, because the Black man is God, the foundation of all things in existence. You can't get any better than that.

Identification and Position of Women

The NGE is structured in such a way that men have their roles and women have theirs, though their roles are typically considered “secondary, but most necessary” to that of men. This comes from the symbolism of the numerical order of the numbers 1 and 2 in the Supreme Mathematics. 1 is knowledge, which is symbolic to the Black man being the foundation of the Black family, and 2 is wisdom, which is symbolic to the Black woman being the nurturer of the Black child. As the position of number 2 is second to that of the number 1, so too is the Black woman's position that of being second to the man. Thought (knowledge) without action (wisdom) manifests nothing. Knowledge needs wisdom in order to physically reproduce itself for others to see it clearly. The Black man needs the Black woman in order to reproduce himself through her, and build a nation. Without

wisdom nothing would exist. Without the Black woman, the Black family would not exist. She is necessary to the future of Black people.

The particular language used to describe women of the NGE also includes titles such as, “Wisdom,” “Queen of the Universe,” “Mother of Civilization,” and the highest title of “Earth.” It is the highest title, because everything and everyone is dependent upon the Earth—without it no life would exist. However, there are less honorable titles such as, “Build (destroy) Power,” “Weak Cipher” (which is also used to describe homosexuals), “Quean” (sexually promiscuous), “Empty/dead/wandering Planet” (having no use, or no God to give her direction), “God Groupie” (only hangs around Gods), “God Hopper” (moves from one God to another for a relationship or education), “Nation Earth” (available to anyone in the NGE), “Devil,” or “Nurse.” While each of these titles is demeaning in their own way, “Devil” and “Nurse” are the two that are the most unacceptable as they have the worst connotations.

A devil is something that has been grafted out of its original state. If the Black man and Black woman are the original people of the planet Earth, how can the Black woman be a devil? This is a clever blending of both the NOI and Christian story of creation of man. In Christianity, God made Adam, then took one of his ribs, and made Eve from it. In this sense, Adam is the origin of Eve, and she is grafted since she was created from man. The NOI teaches that God created himself out of Triple Darkness (essentially the dark matter that existed before the Big Bang), and out of his love for that in which he was created, he fashioned the woman with the intention of recreating himself through her womb. Both claim that man existed first, and the woman was created from

him, but to do so is mixing religious Biblical allegory with the Supreme Wisdom. There is nothing in 120 that supports the self-creation of God, or the concept of a woman being created from a man.

The term “Nurse” is referred to by Michael Muhammad Knight as a name for the girlfriends of some of the early members. These women were called “Nurses,” which is a reference to the teachings that speak of nurses that “were instructed to inject needles into the brains of black babies and feed them to wild beasts” as part of the law of eugenics of Yacub in his creation of the white race (Knight *Five Percenters* 209). Under Yacub’s process of breeding out lighter skinned babies from the darker skinned babies, the nurses were the midwives who helped to deliver the babies, killed the darker skinned babies, but allowed the lighter skinned babies to live. They lied to the mothers about the deaths of their darker babies being angels that they would one day be reunited with, while praising the other mothers about their lighter babies and how they will grow up to become great. Since the nurses were the ones responsible for destruction of Black babies and the creation of the White race it is hard to imagine this title being considered a term of endearment.

The men of the NGE are most commonly referred to as “God (of the universe),” “King,” “Lord,” “Father of Civilization,” and “Seven (7),” with the title of “God” being the highest. Many of the names used for the men do have a female equivalent such as “King/Queen,” “Lord/Lady,” “Seven/Seventeen”; however, the equivalent to “God” is “Earth,” as women are not called “Goddess.” This has to do with the gender-specific roles that men and women have within the NGE. There is much debate about this topic within the NGE, and with people from other groups. There are Earths that have the name

Allat, the female counterpart of Allah, as well as use “Goddess” in their name. It is interesting to note that “Goddess” is a title that the NOI uses freely, because Father Allah was once Clarence 13X, an adherent of the NOI’s teachings; however, he did not advocate it. There are stories that Father Allah knew of women using the title “Goddess,” but he eventually chose to call women Earths instead.

A woman being called “Goddess” implies that women have the same role as men and “implies that the only difference between men and women are our genitals” (Serenity Love Sincere Peace Earth “Peace to the Earth”). The difference of equality lies in the function of the role of the man and woman, and not in the terminology. If someone looks only at the term God, then the female equivalent is a Goddess. Theoretically, when it comes to function, there are qualities of the Earth that are equivalent to that of God. If God is the Black man, then the qualities that the Black man possesses are also the qualities of God. The first degree of the 1-10 (Student Enrollment in the Supreme Wisdom) tells who and what the Black man is:

1. Who is the Original Man?

The Original Man is the Asiatic Blackman, the Maker, Owner, Cream of the Planet Earth, Father of Civilization, and God of the Universe.

According to this degree, there are seven characteristics that make up who the original man is: Asiatic, Black man, Maker, Owner, Cream, Father, and God. Asiatic defines nationality, Black man indicates whose nationality it is, and both represent the Black woman as well. A maker is someone who creates, or builds something. It is through the Black woman that his creation is made manifest, and it is the ability to

receive and be responsible for the life that she bears both physically and mentally that is similar to being an Owner. A Father has the ability to produce seeds, and as a Mother, the woman re-produces seeds. The Cream is what rises to the top, which are the true and living men and women that teach civilization equally and have the power to free (mentally) the original people of the planet Earth—something that is not gender-specific.

The Woman Problem

There are slight differences throughout the NGE regarding women, such as how and if women are taught, and in the ways in which women are treated. In the past, the culture of the NGE was only obtainable through interaction with members. Traditionally, potential members of the NGE had to receive information from a qualified educator, men taught women who were going to be their Earth, and most information was transmitted orally. Now that the Internet is available and easily accessible, many people have been able to get this same information online and without an educator, or face-to-face interaction with members at all. This means that many so-called members of the NGE are not really members since they do not have proper knowledge or history of the information or instruction of how to live the culture properly. Unfortunately, this has led to many people misusing the language of the NGE, abusing women, being overly aggressive or arrogant because they are now “God” and women have to submit to them, and their behavior is left unchecked by them being physically isolated from the rest of the Nation.

It could be that men who are naturally more aggressive or who mask their insecurity with physical dominance are more drawn to the concept of being God. Whatever the reason, I have encountered my fair share of Gods that need to refine, and

restrain their egos—if for no other reason than it being extremely unattractive. I was advised by one such God to rethink wanting to pursue a relationship with someone else because he was such a great catch, so well-known, and such an amazing lover that women all over the country were trying to be with him. I was neglecting the opportunity he was so graciously bestowing upon me, and he was bewildered and decided something must be wrong with me. I was later approached by a more sexually aggressive God that when I didn't give in to his caveman-like charms decided that it was because I was either a lesbian or asexual. He concluded that I must be asexual.

Sometimes the situation can escalate to the point where Gods can become abusive and violent. When I first met my ex, I was five months past my eighteenth birthday, incredibly sheltered to the point where naiveté turned into complete ignorance, and trying to make sense out of the new world of adulthood and college. The teachings of the NGE were enlightening, but I had no real knowledge-base to help me make sense of them. I was totally dependent upon him for an understanding of what the different degrees meant, and at the time I thought that he was smart enough to listen to without question. I soon fell in love and straight into a controlling and destructive relationship. The relationship continued for about four years without a major problem, until the day I refused to go back out in the middle of a storm, and drive on flooded streets to take him across town to a recording session at his friend's studio. I compromised by calling and paying for a taxi, but he got upset that it was getting so late and the taxi still had not arrived. I neglected to realize just how caught up into his emotions he was before I stood in his way. He shoved me. I shoved him back. He punched me in my face. I threw my drink in his face, then tried to break the glass, but it was too thick, so I tried to hit him

with it instead. My mother stepped in between us, trying to push him away from me and towards the front door, ending up getting in the path of a few of his punches. The fight stopped when I saw blood, and realized that I had busted his lip open. I still cared.

I think back on this incident and realize that I was indeed lucky that all I ended up with was a bruised cheek and lost love. Some women lose their lives. I met one such woman on Facebook. We lived in different parts of the country. She never came to my home with her children in the middle of the night to seek refuge after being beaten. We only ever communicated with one another online. She hadn't developed the trust to confide in me that her husband was physically abusing her. One day, I decided to check on her and see how she was coming along in school, but I had waited too long. She had been found dead on the floor of her apartment. Her husband was a few feet away, dead from an apparent suicide. The gun was still in his hand.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The majority of the studies that deal with the NGE and its language focus primarily on Hip-Hop and Hip-Hop culture, while other studies compare the NGE to orthodox Islam. Any language that deals with women is in relation to the misogyny of Hip-Hop, or the subjugation of women in Islam. Yusuf Nuruddin analyzes the ideology of the NGE, looking at the ways the teachings of the NGE conflicts with Sunni Islam. His observations of the language about women support what he notes as unequal power relations in the NGE with regards to the NGE's Supreme Alphabet letter H that stands for He or Her, where "He' however, seems to have more power than 'her'" (Nuruddin 128). He also notes that women have the number of six, and is viewed as a Muslim because she submits to god (Nuruddin 128). Though there is definite debate about the limitation of the number six, it is still widely accepted and taught within the NGE; however, the Black woman being a Muslim is not taught or accepted. While his study does provide some useful information about women and language, it does not focus on women in the NGE.

There are at least two studies that do address women within the NGE. One study is "Receiving, Embodying, and Sharing Divine Wisdom in the Nation of Gods and Earths" by Felicia M. Miyakawa. In this article, Miyakawa primarily focuses on the cultural aspect of the NGE with regards to the ways that Earths are taught, their family dynamics, relationships, and what qualities an Earth must have. The one area in which she does consider language is in their choosing their own names. She provides personal accountings for why these women chose the name they did, as well as the significance of it. However, Miyakawa's discussion of the Earths and their language stops there.

A second study is Ahmon J. Keiler-Bradshaw's dissertation "Voices of the Earth: A Phenomenological Study of Women in the Nation of Gods and Earths." In this phenomenological study, Keiler-Bradshaw relates the roles of women within the NGE to the concept of womanism as a way to possibly help revolutionize its existing patriarchal structure. Though it does focus on sexism, this study is limited to the scope of understanding the black woman's leadership roles within the NGE, and how womanism can benefit all members without seeking to make women replace men. While both of these previous studies deal with women in the NGE, they focus more on the roles of women within the NGE's culture. Neither one of these studies deals primarily with the language used towards women, nor the evolution of language used over time.

In Michael Muhammad Knight's *The Five Percenters: Islam, Hip Hop and the Gods of New York*, the evolution of the language used to describe women from the formation of the NGE to present time is briefly addressed in Chapter Fifteen. Initially, there were no women involved, but eventually the male members started to bring their girlfriends around. These women were called "Nurses," which is a reference to the teachings that speak of nurses that "were instructed to inject needles into the brains of black babies and feed them to wild beasts" as part of the law of eugenics of Yacub in his creation of the white race (Knight *Five Percenters* 209). Knight emphasizes the patriarchal foundational structure of NGE members who contradictively argue that "there is nothing chauvinistic about this" (*Five Percenters* 215). He notes the misogyny that is sometimes expressed, most notably through Hip Hop music, which is contradictive to the level of respect that members claim to have for the black woman as Earth or the Mother of Civilization. He also tackles the goddess debate, and points out certain instances in the

NGE history where it has been accepted and even supported as the proper title for a black woman.

In *Why I am a Five Percenter*, Knight devotes another chapter to the women of the NGE. In this chapter, he compares feminism to the teachings of the NGE and its cultural patriarchy. Though he does address many of the same issues from the previous book—the black women being “secondary but most necessary,” the role of the black woman, the goddess debate, whether or not the black woman is a devil, etc.—he also highlights the blatant sexism that NGE members display in their ease of acceptance of his presence as a white man than they would a black woman simply because he is a man (Knight *Why I Am* 135).

Knight references bell hooks and her theories on black male patriarchy, which she explains in her book *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. This book provides an in-depth examination of racism and sexism and its effect on black women from slavery to the civil rights and women's movement of the 1980s. Of particular importance is her analysis of the “pimp’s misogynistic treatment of women” as an imitation of the “role patriarchs expect their wives and daughters to play” (hooks 109). This idea of the pimp is reinforced in the article “Pimps up, Hoes Down” by Supreme Understanding. In this article “pimpology,” is defined as “the study of understanding the female psyche to the point of being able to control and manipulate a woman” (Supreme Understanding 147). In this sense, a pimp is equated with the notion of god of the NGE. As Iceberg Slim puts it, “He’s gotta be God all the way” (Supreme Understanding 148). Supreme Understanding’s brother Sincere puts a spin on it, and suggests a way to apply pimpology to a God and Earth relationship:

As far as relationships, the average "square" has a shameful sense of inferiority and has a tendency to put the wisdom (woman) over knowledge (man) A pimp, on the other hand, knows that he is the "catch" and he always puts himself (knowledge) over the woman (wisdom). In a proper relationship, the man (knowledge) is number one, (wisdom) is always number two. However, you can't get to three (understanding) without the two. (151)

Clearly, Sincere is using the language of the NGE (mathematics) to show how pimping can be properly applied to a relationship with a woman, regardless of whether or not she is a prostitute.

hooks further illustrates her point by looking at the relationships of black Muslims in the NOI and their sexist role patterns. She challenges Malcolm X's teachings of women in much the same way that Farah Jasmine Griffin does in her article. Where hooks does not excuse the sexism in Malcolm's teachings Griffin posits whether or not Malcolm X would have changed his position on women had he not been assassinated, citing his regret for teaching brothers to "spit acid at the sisters" in a letter he sent to his cousin-in-law (225). She agrees with the Griffin position about the patriarchy of the NOI being disguised as protection of women. According to Griffin, in the NOI, women are viewed as being "fragile and weak... manipulative, but [men are encouraged] to protect and respect [women] instead of abuse them" (218). hooks claims that through their patriarchal teachings members of the NOI have "idealized" black women in much the same way that white men idealized white women, elevating the status of black women "by labeling white women she-devils and whores" (111).

Akil seems to agree with hooks as he argues that white women stepped down so that the black man could place the black woman on the same pedestal the white man used to keep a white woman (*Niggas to Gods* 111). Akil claims that a real black man doesn't want a woman who is "weak, watered-down, overly-submissive, non--opinionated, non-intelligent, non-thinking, over-emotional..." because that is who the white woman was made to become by white men who wanted to "control and dominate over her just to appear strong" (*Niggas to Gods* 128). While this seems contrary to the idea of submission being a woman's nature, he stipulates that a real man doesn't have to behave in such a way to be a leader, and that a real woman will follow his leadership without force (Akil *Niggas to Gods* 130). He claims that black men engage in "male chauvinism talk" because they are afraid they cannot mentally dominate the black woman the same way they can physically (Akil *Niggas to Gods* 127).

The language of sexism Knight refers to is discussed more thoroughly by Akil and Pen Black in their books. In *From Niggas to Gods Part 1*, Akil discusses the ignorance of sexism and its destruction of the black community. Whereas some have made the argument that the problem of sexism is secondary, if they admit to its existence at all, he recognizes that sexism "ain't no different than this damn 'Racism'," but in a less formal way than Black Feminists like bell hooks acknowledge the dual oppression of black women (Akil *Niggas to Gods* 127). C'BS Alife Allah uses the science of gender and sex as a basis for challenging the definition of sexism and its position on gender roles. He argues that anyone who "[recognizes] that there are male and female sexes" is really a sexist, because sex is the root word of sexism (C'BS Alife Allah 201). He defines sexism in much less oppressive terms than Akil, hooks, or Knight, as "seeing that there is

a most beneficial norm for civilization that is measured from the qualities of gender" (C'BS Alife Allah 202). He goes on to explain the evolution of sex, the evolution of gender, and the formation of gender roles in which he clearly distinguishes non-biological and biological gender in order to differentiate the social construction of gender from gender determined through sexual reproduction.

Akil also criticizes the use of the word "bitch" to address black women. He claims that not only is the use of the word wrong, it is an imitation of the way that slave masters treated black women, and black men use it because they have been metaphorically made into bitches by their slave master. He urges black men to rethink their use of language in regards to black women, and also to "respect yourself, and respect your origin, because if the black woman is a bitch, that makes you a son of a bitch" (Akil *Niggas to Gods* 30). Pen Black delves a little deeper into the use of the word. He examines the connection between black women and bitches, but where Akil simply denies any truth to black women being bitches or outright dismissing the use of the word altogether, Black takes a more analytical approach. He does not claim that black women are bitches, but does say that some black women are "very ignorant, spiteful, uncivilized and uncaring" (Black *Consequences* 3). He places more blame for the way black men and black women treat each other on the white man's attempt to destroy the black family, claiming that white men have a sort of oedipal complex towards black women (being Mothers of Civilization) and are somehow trying to replace the black man's position in the black family with himself (Black *Consequences* 8).

Both Akil and Black agree that "bitch" is not an appropriate term for the black woman, but do not agree on the proper title for her. Akil defines the black woman as a

“QUEEN-MOTHER-GODDESS of the planet Earth and therefore the Universe,” with her womb being a “direct reflection and microcosm to the expanse of the universe where the whole of creation was created” (*Niggas to Gods* 141). Black, though he does not object to the use of the term “goddess,” he feels that Earth is a more appropriate title for the black woman because like the earth she:

receives procreation and brings forth life...is made of three-fourths water... her menstrual cycle is similar to the moon’s cycle...her role as child-bearer made her originally revolve around Man, like earth revolves around the sun...[and she] can only sustain...one pregnancy from one male every nine months, similar to how the earth can only survive one sun. (*Black Gods Earths* 35)

Akil also attributes the term “goddess” to the black woman’s being a co-creator. The idea of the womb being a reflection of the universe is in reference to the concept of triple stages of darkness that is a part of the teachings of the NOI of man’s self-creation out of darkness and subsequent creation of the woman out of his love for that in which he was created. This is contrary to the teachings of the NGE that man and woman have always existed in the physical form, and a man cannot reproduce himself without a woman.

Further into the discussion of language and women, Akil outlines some of the proper ways for a black woman to speak. In *The Goddess Blackwoman*, Akil provides his twelve-step instructions for the restoration of the “image, the character, and the responsibility” of the black woman as a goddess and the “recivilizing of the Mother of Civilization” (Introduction). In chapter four, Akil discusses the proper way for a black woman to speak, and the importance of using words productively. He explains that a

goddess black woman only speaks when necessary, and suggests “verbal-fasting...until you master the control of your mouth” in order to rid the self of any bad behaviors (Akil *Goddess* 72). Chapter ten deals with being mindful of the effect words can have, and whether or not you were able to get your point across. Akil claims that a goddess is “The Word and The Wisdom of The God, animated through a material being in person” (*Goddess* 123). It is important for a goddess to use her words to uplift, motivate, and be polite while not being overly emotional (i.e. neck rolling and finger wagging). Although he is not referring to the black woman as Earth, Akil still expresses the same sentiment of the NGE in regards to the black woman being symbolic to wisdom, and the importance of using words wisely.

The black woman is not simply defined as Earth or goddess. She also carries the title of Queen, a title which Emblem of Justice illustrates in his article “The Power of the Queen in Chess.” Emblem takes a different approach to the concept of what the role of a Queen is by comparing the black woman to the chess piece and the power that it has on the board. He also stresses the importance of having and using a Queen when he says, “God direct her movements both at home and abroad. It is a grave mistake in chess to be careless with the movement of your Queen. Losing heart can be potentially disastrous” (Emblem of Justice 220). Yusuf Nuruddin describes two lesser known terms for black women: E-Quality and Zelda Zee. E-Quality (equality) stands for the Earth qualities a woman manifests that can be bad depending on how she uses her “magnetism or power of sexual attraction” (Nuruddin 128). In 1966, Zelda Zee stood for the letter Z in the Supreme Alphabet, which was “a woman who is weak and wicked for she had not the

knowledge, wisdom or understanding of self” though it has changed its meaning since then (Nuruddin 127).

However, for many members of the NGE the earth is still the best representation of the black woman. In her article, Sci-Honor Devotion provides an in-depth description and definition of what it means to be an earth. She explains the symbolism of the number 6 to black women in various ways, including relating it to the element of carbon. She outlines the proper dress, conduct, and manner of the earth, and stresses the importance of upholding all the positive aspects of the title Earth, “not just with in the Nation of Gods and Earths, but within all that exists” (Sci-Honor Devotion 107). Eboni Joy Asiatic Earth continues the discussion of the importance of the earth, though she adds her personal narrative about how she became an Earth herself. She uses narration to accentuate her belief that to be a "True and Living one" means to actually "live my culture as an earth" (Eboni Joy Asiatic Earth 198). It is not enough to know what an earth is and how the black woman is symbolic to it, but one has to actually live out the principles of what an earth is. Earth Izayaa Allat also narrates her journey to becoming an Earth. She composed her narrative in ten sections in accordance with the NGE lessons called the Supreme Mathematics. She demonstrates both an understanding of the language of the NGE (mathematics), and an understanding of how each principle relates to an aspect of her life. What is of most interest is her discussion under the number seven that according to Supreme Mathematics represents god, in which she explains why she chose to include Allat (a pre-Islamic goddess thought to be either the daughter or female counterpart of Allah) in her name since referencing a title of goddess, or equating a woman to god is not something that is generally accepted within the NGE.

True Wise Allah provides a scientific approach that analyzes six aspects of the black woman's nature--again the number six being equated with the black woman in the NGE. The six aspects that relate to the black woman's nature are: 1. The energy cycle, which represents resilience, 2. The carbon cycle, which represents physical birth, 3. The nitrogen cycle, which represents mental fertility, 4. The oxygen cycle, which represents nurturing, 5. The mineral cycle, which represents naturally gifted communication, and 6. The water cycle, which represents equilibrium (258-267). Though his article is insightful, and more detailed than Sci-Honor Devotion's, True Wise Allah cannot give a personal accounting of what it means to be Earth.

Although there are studies that deal with women in the NGE, none of the literature addresses the use of language as it is directed towards women, and how that language is reflective of women's roles within the culture. Sexism that is present in the NGE can be taught to other members, but is it an accurate reflection of the teachings? The ideological foundation of the NGE is based on the principles of freedom, justice, and equality. Freedom means to free your mind from lies, deception, and negativity. Justice means to have power, or control, over yourself. Equality means to be equal in all things. All three of these principles apply to both men and women, and it is both of their reward, or punishment, for living out the culture correctly.

III. METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This is a qualitative research project that will collect data on the language use of members of the Nation of Gods and Earths (NGE) about women using ethnography and narrative inquiry with both critical and feminist theory as lenses. The reason I chose to do a qualitative research study is due to its flexible structure, inductive style, and the exploratory nature of finding meaning through people's own understandings of their world through their social interactions.

One definition of qualitative research is given by Denzin and Lincoln who state that it is a "situated activity that locates the observer in the world...consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible...[and that] researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in the terms of the meanings people bring to them" (qtd. in Tisdell and Merriam 14-15). Van Maanen offers an older, yet more concise definition of qualitative research as being "an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (qtd. in Tisdell and Merriam 15). In other words, qualitative research is concerned with understanding the meanings in the ways that people make sense of their worlds, and the experiences they have within that world that creates meaning for them.

For Tisdell and Merriam, qualitative research has four key characteristics:

1. Focus is on process, understanding, and meaning (15). In other words, the focus is on the understanding of the participants' perspectives in that

particular setting, and not on “attempting to predict what may happen in the future” (15).

2. The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (15). Despite shortcomings, and biases, the researcher is capable of being “immediately responsive and adaptive...can expand through nonverbal and verbal communication, process information immediately, clarify and summarize material, check on respondents for accuracy of interpretation, and explore unusual or unanticipated responses” (16).
3. The process is inductive (15). The researcher gathers data to build towards a theory, or hypotheses by combining information gathered from observations, documents, interviews, and personal understanding into larger themes as they work from the particular to the general (17).
4. The product is richly descriptive (15). The researcher uses data in the form of words (quotes and excerpts) and pictures in order to convey what they have learned about the phenomenon (17).

Alan Bryman more succinctly describes the characteristics of qualitative research as the “inductive view of the relationship between theory and research, [...] epistemological position which sees knowledge as obtained through understanding how the social world is interpreted by its participants, [...] and an ontological position which see social phenomena as outcomes of the interactions of people” (qtd. in Brewer *Qualitative* 1).

Qualitative research is different from quantitative research that focuses on the measurable parts of a phenomenon because it instead focuses on “looking at all aspects of

the same phenomenon to see their inter-relationships and establish how they come together to form a whole” within a specific context (Daly 1). Martyn Hammersley also notes qualitative research traits as being different from quantitative research in that

[...] data come[s] in the form of words and images rather than numbers; these are naturally occurring data rather than artificial experimental data; the focus is on meanings that document the world from the point of view of those under study; natural science models of social research are rejected; and induction is used in data analysis and theory generation. (qtd. in Brewer *Qualitative 1*)

The ways that data are collected are also different in qualitative research, and can come from a variety of methods, including ethnography, interviews, and literature analysis. The types of data collected can be in different forms, such as interview transcripts, documents, observation notes, music, and videos. Qualitative research involves developing “questions and procedures [...] and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell 4). One of the distinguishing characteristics of qualitative research is its flexibility. Over time, as the research is being conducted, the research questions will likely change to reflect whatever direction the researcher takes. The researcher is also an important part of the research because his or her past experiences shape his or her understanding, what questions to develop, and the people to work with.

For the purposes of my research, qualitative research is the most effective way to examine the complex ways that the NGE’s language about women is being used, and

how meaning is being created involving women in the NGE through the use of such language. Qualitative research will allow me to “combine close analysis of fine details of [language] and meaning in everyday social interaction with analysis of the wider societal context” of critical consciousness and gender equality (Dyson and Genishi 9). Other researchers have studied the cultural practices of the NGE in an attempt to understand the roles of women within the group, but have not included an analysis of the language with respect to identity, position, and relationships. Since language and culture are so closely related, it makes sense to look at the context that language is being used within the NGE in order to get a better understanding of its culture and the role that women have within.

METHODOLOGY

The method that will be used in this qualitative research is autoethnography. Autoethnography is defined as “a style of autobiographical writing and qualitative research that explores an individual’s unique life experiences in relationship to social and cultural institutions” (Custer 1). According to Chang the conceptual framework of autoethnography is based on four assumptions:

- (1) culture is a group oriented concept by which self is always connected with others;
- (2) the reading and writing of self-narratives provides a window through which self and others can be examined and understood;
- (3) telling one’s story does not automatically result in the cultural understanding of self and others, which only grows out of in-depth cultural analysis and interpretation; and
- (4) autoethnography is an excellent instructional tool to help not only social scientists but also practitioners . . .

gain profound understanding of self and others and function more effectively with others from diverse cultural backgrounds (qtd. in Hamdan 587)

Autoethnography has the potential to not only transform the writer, but contribute to the lives of others by making them “reflect on and empathise with the narrative presented...[and] become aware of realities that have not been thought of before” (Mendez 282). While “writing accounts of research should always have the goal of informing and educating others,” autoethnography has the unique ability to accomplish this goal by allowing the reader to connect with the researcher’s thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Mendez 282). In this sense autoethnography has a truly transformative power which Custer claims can be seen through seven lenses in which autoethnography changes time, requires vulnerability, fosters empathy, embodies creativity and innovation, eliminates boundaries, invites and honors subjectivity, and provides therapeutic benefits (2-9).

Autoethnography is used to describe a genre of autobiography that according to Françoise Linnet, “opens up a space of resistance between the individual (auto-) and the collective (ethno-) where the writing (-graphy) of singularity cannot be foreclosed” (qtd. in Brodkey 28). Autobiography is the writing of the self, but it is not the same as autoethnography because “while auto-ethnography contains elements of auto-biography, auto-ethnography goes beyond the writing of selves” (Denshire 833). Brodkey argues that “writing that crosses personal and professional life spaces goes further than auto-biography whenever writers critique the depersonalizing tendencies that can come into play in social and cultural spaces that have asymmetrical power relations” (qtd. in

Denshire 833). While autoethnography has its origins in autobiography it is the combination of autobiography and ethnography that characterizes autoethnography.

According to Hayano the first published autoethnography is *Facing Mount Kenya* written in 1962 by Kenyatta, the first president of independent Kenya, and was heavily criticized as being too subjective and uncritical (qtd. in Denshire 833). Chang claims that the term autoethnography was first introduced by anthropologist Karl Heider in 1975 in the context of the Dani people that were part of his doctoral research (qtd. in Denshire 833). While Hayano says that the term was first coined in 1966 by Raymond Firth in his seminar on structuralism (qtd. in Marak 2). Hayano himself used the term a few years later in a different way by referring to the study of an ethnographer's own people with he himself as the insider (qtd. in Denshire). Although mentioned in previous years, Queenbala Marak asserts that autoethnography didn't start until in the 1980s as a "protest to the existing social science methodologies of how the stories of the 'Other' were not accurately represented, how a universal narrative was impossible, how researching the 'Other' led to a juxtaposition of the 'Self', and how stories made meaningful sense of the 'Self' and the 'Other'" (1). This was a challenge to the colonialist approach of "authoritatively entering a culture, exploiting cultural members, and then recklessly leaving to write about the culture for monetary and/or professional gain, while disregarding relational ties to cultural members" (qtd. in Marak 1). Hayano argued that as new forms of research were emerging researchers would come to study culture more closely "in contrast to the detached-outsider characteristic of colonial anthropologists, [and] contemporary anthropologists would frequently be full members of the cultures they studied" (qtd. in Marak 2). Autoethnography rejects the idea that "lived experience

can only be represented indirectly, through quotations from field notes, observations or interviews,” but are able to be re-presented through the experiences of the researcher and their interpretations of the culture inscribed upon them (qtd. in Spry 711).

Autoethnography ties the individual “self” to culture. It is the thoughts, actions, and experiences of the researcher in relation to others in their own society and the discourse that is produced that are emphasized in autoethnography. Instead of impersonal, non-emotional, academic language that is typically used in research findings autoethnography provides a way for people of a particular society to “tell their truth as experienced without waiting for others to express what they really want to be known and understood” (Mendez 282). It is transformative research that requires the researcher to become vulnerable and have courage in sharing their personal lives. At the same time autoethnography is not “simply a confessional tale of self-renewal; it is a provocative weave of story and theory” (Spry 713). Autoethnography is a “felt-text that does not occur without rhetorical and literary discipline, as well as the courage needed to be vulnerable in rendering scholarship” (Spry 714). In addition to telling a good story autoethnography must include “literary craft, persuasive logic, and personal/cultural thick description” in order to move the reader emotionally and critically (Spry 714).

Richardson suggests that autoethnography be evaluated as both a science and as art as both are lenses through which we see the world, and proposes five criteria to evaluate autoethnography: substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, the impact the narrative causes the reader, and how much the narrative expresses a reality (qtd. in Mendez 285). While the field of autoethnographic research is still changing, it is still the

merging of scientific research and creative writing (art) that makes autoethnography so successful.

Research Site

The Nation of Gods and Earths originated in Harlem, New York in 1964. In the Early 1960's, a young man named Clarence Smith who would later become known as Allah, or the Father returned home from the Korean War to find a change in the atmosphere of the consciousness of black people as a whole. His wife Dora had joined the Nation of Islam while he was away and he decided to follow her into the NOI after finding a resonance in their message of Black empowerment and Black independence. He registered and was officially known as Clarence 13X. He became a part of the militarized male security faction of the NOI known as the Fruit of Islam (FOI) and quickly rose through the ranks. He studied the same lessons known as the Supreme Wisdom that are given to all members of the NOI, but eventually developed a unique understanding that made him begin to question some of the more orthodox teachings concerning the founder of the NOI Master Fard Muhammad. Master Fard Muhammad was believed to be a fair skinned man of half white half black origin that came to North America in 1930 to teach Black people about the knowledge of who they were and where they came from. He taught for three and a half years and disappeared in 1934 without a trace. He is believed to be God in the person and was considered to be the Mahdi or the Islamic messiah that returns to rule before the Day of Judgment. He taught Elijah Muhammad the founder of the NOI who had met him before he disappeared. Clarence 13X began to compare Master Fard Muhammad to being a "mystery god" which he realized was no different than what was being taught in the religion of Christianity about God being omnipresent yet unseen.

While quoting the first degree from the lessons of the Student Enrollment of the Supreme Wisdom

1. Who is the Original Man?

The Original Man is the Asiatic Blackman, the Maker, Owner, Cream of the Planet Earth, Father of Civilization, and God of the Universe.

Clarence 13X came to the understanding that this degree was in fact referring to himself. He came to the realization that every Black man by nature was a divine being (i.e. god), that there was no god greater than another, and that Black men should no longer wait for a savior outside of themselves to rescue them. This new belief caused controversy amongst the rank and file NOI Muslims who were under the strict leadership of the messenger Elijah Muhammad and were limited in understanding due to living under the prescribed laws of Islam as laid out by the NOI. Clarence 13X started to move farther away from the mosque until one day it became clear to him that his mission was to take the lessons he had learned in the NOI to the streets of Harlem and spread them amongst the youth. His friend and fellow NOI member Abu Shaheed left the temple with a few other members to teach in the streets laying the foundation for what would become the Nation of Gods and Earths.

When he left the temple, he changed his name to Allah. Due to the age of the youth he was teaching as well as being the originator of the Nation of Gods and Earths he also was known as Father Allah or simply the Father. He taught his first student, named him Kareem (who would later become known as Black Messiah), and attracted eight more youth: Al Salaam, Prince Allah, Bismillah, Akbar, Kihiem, A.B.G., Al Jamel, and Uhuru-Freedom. These nine young men became known collectively as the first born and

could be seen teaching what they had learned from him all over New York. Even in the Father's absence due to run ins with the authorities and later commitment to mental institutions the first born still carried on his teaching of the Black man being divine and that they were Suns of Allah. Through these young men teaching others and those students teaching other people the numbers of members of the NGE eventually increased into the thousands even finding its way into public schools and institutions of higher learning. Since everyone was so spread out the need for a collective gathering place lead to the creation of the Universal Parliament. The Universal Parliament is held once a month where everyone comes together to discuss nation business, upcoming events, general education, and any issues that people may have. The first Universal Parliament was held on April 30, 1967 in Manhattan's Mount Morris Park. Hundreds of young men and women attended the parliament to welcome Father Allah home from Matteawan State Hospital for the Criminally Insane.

With tensions rising after the assassinations of president John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X the local government decided to make an effort to reach out to different people they saw as leaders who could influence the youth. Eventually Barry Goldwater who was Mayor Lindsay's aide was sent to contact the Father and eventually a relationship between the mayor's office and the NGE was established. Various programs for the youth were established with the help of the Father and he was offered a building in Harlem to use as a headquarters for the NGE called a street academy so that they could have a place to meet and teach in peace. The building still stands to there to this day and is known as the Allah School in Mecca. It is still considered the headquarters of the NGE.

The teachings spread across the nation as members of the NGE left New York and traveled to other cities and states. Eventually the teachings made it to Texas through many different people. One such person was a young man named Kason who taught the lessons to his younger cousins who taught other people until it took root amongst the youth in Sudan (Dallas, Texas). In particular, two young men named Rallah and Talib who met through a mutual acquaintance. They became like brothers and would build for hours over the lessons. They became the first two people to knowledge 120 respectively and attracted other like-minded young men in much the same way that the Father's first born did. The first nine people to knowledge 120 in Sudan are Rallah Universal Self Allah, IGod BeAllah, Lord Hashim Master God Allah, Hakim Be God Allah, True Born Shatiek Allah, Lord Supreme 7 Allah, Infinite Mathematics Kajun Allah, Lord Shyhiem Justice Allah, and Sun Born Allah. Together they came to the same understanding that the Father did many years before that something had to be established for the youth. They began to hold ciphers, classes, and parliaments in Glendale Park. In 1996 it was decided that there needed to be a school for the youth in the streets of South Dallas. The University of Allah in Sudan was established with the purpose of teaching the masses of lost and disenfranchised youth while giving them a chance for higher learning. The school has since been closed, and there is no official local headquarters in Sudan.

Shyhiem Justice Allah was living in Arlington, TX at the time everyone in Sudan was building. He attended the classes being held in Sudan and eventually became one of the first born of Sudan even though he lived in Arlington. He took the lessons he got from Sudan back to Arlington and Fort Worth and along with a man named Lord Jamel taught many different students. Eventually the lessons reached a young man named God

Himself Allah who I met when I was 18 years old and he exposed me to the teachings becoming my first teacher.

Text

Traditionally lessons were passed down through one-on-one interaction. They were given face-to-face and by word of mouth. Generally, degrees were given one at a time for the student to study in depth. Students then committed each degree to memory to make it easier to draw upon in conversation. Each student would later write down each degree themselves in order to study them and kept them in what is called a book of life (notebook). No official set of lessons were written down that was collectively recognized as 120. Each student had their own book of life with degrees that were given to them by their own educator. One of the reasons there was no set of recorded lessons was that members didn't want people to not think for themselves and merely quote lessons that are from someone else's understanding. One of the key principles in studying the lessons of the NGE is that every individual has a different perspective that gives them a unique understanding. There are no right or wrong answers. It is all in the way you see (understand) something and your ability to show and prove your way of thinking through Mathematics.

The individualistic nature of the NGE leaves many things open to personal interpretation. Each person defines the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets on their own. The purpose is for each person to come to their own understanding of what each term means. The rest of the degrees of 120 are part of a set of specific lessons that come from the Supreme Wisdom of the NOI. The Supreme Wisdom is a conversation between Master Fard Muhammad and Elijah Muhammad in the form of a series of

question and answers along with a set of restrictive laws, the problem book, and some other lessons. The lessons that the Father took out of the temple are the series of questions and answers that are what became known as 120. These lessons are more in depth and generally require someone that already has knowledge of 120 to help walk the student through them. Some students are taught to look for answers through reading certain books, watching documentaries, listening to certain lectures, and doing various research on requested topics. Other students may simply take their educator's word at face value and never gain any deeper insight.

Once the lessons are given to them each individual is held responsible for them. The NGE teaches freedom, justice, and equality as a form of personal accountability. You are free to do what you want, but it has to be balanced by justice and equality. Justice is a reward or penalty based on one's actions. Equality means to deal equally with all things. You are free to use or misuse the knowledge you gain, but you there will be consequences be it positive or negative depending on one's actions. However, no one can judge you if you can show and prove your purpose or reason for doing it.

Self-reflective Learning Experience

I was born into the church. The first baby born to a pastor at Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church in Kansas City, Kansas. Church was a major factor in my upbringing and I enjoyed attending children's services as a youth. It wasn't until I became a teenager and attended regular church that I became bored and disillusioned with church. I started questioning why I needed to go to church. I started questioning Christianity. It always ended with the answer, "you can't question God," even though I didn't think I was. I was trying to find the best path to Him.

I was beginning to feel that Christianity wasn't going to fit my changing beliefs. I started studying other religions, such as Buddhism and Hinduism, and found things in each that I really liked but nothing that seemed to fit me. It was on this path to self-discovery at the age of 18 that I met a man named Himself. He told me that the Black man was god and that there was no "mystery God." What he did was change the nature of my relationship with God and introduced me to a unique perspective of Islam as being a way of life instead of a religion.

He gave me the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets and had me define them for myself. I had no reference base for this new knowledge that he was giving me and I had some trouble grasping the concepts. Growing up Southern Baptist I had never heard anything like this before and I was struggling to make sense of the most basic things. I asked questions of him too, but was generally told to just memorize the degree and the understanding would come later. I think part of the problem was that I was his first student and he had not yet finished studying 120 himself. His teaching ability was limited and my ability to learn from him was limited to his level of knowledge.

Being in a relationship made studying together complicated. When the relationship was good we studied well. When it was rocky there was no communication which meant no studying. Frustrated with the level of education I was receiving I went online and found different NGE groups and members to build with. I was able to get different perspectives and even talked to some women as there were none around in person at the time. After a while I learned that the lessons came out of the NOI and I decided to join in order to get the teaching I wasn't getting from Himself.

Being in the NOI gave me a different perspective on the lessons. As a member of

the NOI I was given access to other lessons that were not included in 120 and I was given the entire set of lessons at one time without being expected to memorize the entire thing. I was able to learn more background information about the lessons and learn from different women. Unfortunately, the NOI became just as monotonous and boring as church had been for me. I decided to take a break and focus on going to school. It wasn't until towards the end of my undergraduate school program that I decided to pick the lessons back up and look at them from a different perspective.

Focusing on school allowed me to learn new concepts such as rhetorical theory and feminism. I was able to look at the lessons from a much more mature and experienced point of view as well. I had found a new teacher that had a balanced view of 120 and a unique approach to teaching. One of the main things was that he encouraged me to look for myself in the degrees and find meaning in them as a woman. This fit right into my learning about feminism. When I entered my graduate school program I became interested in social justice, feminist theory, and critical race theory. I then married Rallah, the aforementioned first born of Sudan and have gained insight into the male perspective of 120 as well as having the opportunity to build about women's issues in the NGE with a man that understands the intersectionality of race and gender. I was able to incorporate what I was learning in school with what I was learning from my relationship and apply it to what I was learning in 120.

Learning about marginalization in the classroom made me realize the ways in which women were being "othered" in the NGE. Feminist theory helped me recognize the patriarchal structure of the NGE and the toxic masculinity in different expressions of the culture. Critical race theory helped me to understand that the ways in which

oppressed people oppress people and how important intersectionality is to understanding and combatting oppression. I am now able to view the NGE's teachings and culture through a very different lens. I hope that viewing the lessons through a critical race and feminist lens will help to bring awareness to the sexism that exists within the culture and bring the NGE back to its more balanced ideology of equality.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

While personal experience is essential to autoethnography, it is not the foundation for the development of theory. According to Charlotte Bunch, theory

enables us to see immediate needs in terms of long range goals and an overall perspective on the world. It thus gives us a framework for evaluating various strategies in both the long and the short run and for seeing the types of changes that they are likely to produce. Theory is not just a body of facts or a set of personal opinions. It involves explanations and hypotheses that are based on available knowledge and experience. It is also dependent on conjecture and insight about how to interpret those facts and experiences and their significance. (32-33)

A theoretical framework in which to structure the narrative and view the data collected is necessary to this research project. Without both a critical and feminist theoretical lens, the various systems of oppression at work within the patriarchal structure of the NGE cannot accurately be compared with its cultural practices and ideology.

The cultural ideology of the NGE is unique in the sense that its patriarchal design can be considered to be in opposition to traditional feminist ideology based on its socially

constructed meaning of gender equality and well defined gender roles. Critical theory, defined by James A. Herrick, is the “systematic means of analyzing discourse for its hidden assumptions and implications” (239), and is a way to liberate a social consciousness from the limitations that an ideology imposes through the “analysis of ways we talk and think” (239). This social consciousness, or “critical consciousness [...] is at the heart of critical theorizing” (Willis et al. 3). Critical consciousness is the “challenging [of] the underlying assumptions [of race, class, and gender] that work in the internal and external worlds to privilege some while disprivileging others” (Willis et al. 5).

The definition of feminist theory has changed as the movement has evolved to encompass other forms of oppression. In the beginning, the feminist movement focused on the autonomy of the woman and her ability to become independent from a man, primarily through replacing patriarchal, male domination with socioeconomic and political equality. However, bell hooks redefines what feminism means by claiming it is

a struggle to end sexist oppression [...] to eradicate the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels, as well as a commitment to reorganizing society so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion, and material desires. (26)

This change in definition also changes feminism from being an idealistic philosophy centered around male domination into a more sociopolitical ideology that concerns the intersectionality of various systems of oppression that affect not only women, but men as

well. The shift to a more sociopolitical ideology also reshaped feminist theory, and caused marginalized women to focus on the development of theory in what had been a “hegemonic dominance of white academic women [...] that functions only to reinforce the power of the elite group” (hooks 32). With the realization of discrimination, marginalization, and issues of race still being overlooked within the feminist movement, many women of color branched out to different forms of feminism, such as Black Feminism, and Womanism.

For this qualitative research, I am using both a critical and feminist theoretical lens. Critical and feminist theory overlap, and because of the intersectionality of oppression within my research topic, there is no clear way to separate them from one another. There needs to be a way to “bring together understandings of epistemologies and pedagogies to imagine how race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality are braided with cultural knowledge, practices, spirituality, formal education, and the law” (Willis et al. 41). Combining these two theories is in a sense illustrative of standpoint theory, the idea that “social discriminations are best understood from the viewpoint of a person who is directly, and experientially affected” (Chancer and Watkins 44).

Black feminism attempts to address the intersectionality of oppression that nonwhite women face, but does not allow for a balanced critical examination of the “marginal masculinity [...] felt when men who are alienated by a sense of class and racial disadvantages exert power over women [...] as a way of compensating for feelings of resentment and disrespect they experience in other social arenas” (Chancer and Watkins 72), that underlies the NGE’s patriarchal ideologies and structure of its culture. Likewise, critical theory must focus on the oppression of women in order to fully explain the

rhetorical choices the NGE members make when it comes to women, and the ways that misogyny is able to be propagated within its culture.

Through analyzing the rhetorical choices in the use of language about women, I will be able to explore the ways in which this language interrelates with misogyny, and is subsequently incorporated into the NGE's culture. Through autoethnography, I will explore the different patterns of language that is used by members of the NGE, and the various ways in which they are assimilated into their daily lives. Since language is my primary focus, I will be able to provide a different cultural perspective of the NGE that solely reflects word use and word choice, instead of behaviors that can and often do conflict with the championed concept of equality and reverence to the Black woman. Hopefully, I will be able to show where the use of language conflicts with ideology, and provide a starting point for discussion of change.

IV. DATA

FINDING THE WOMAN IN THE SUPREME MATHEMATICS AND THE SUPREME ALPHABETS

The foundation of the NGE is its lessons, called 120. Every member of the NGE is required to memorize them. The 120 consists of the 1-10, 1-36, 1-14, 1-40, Actual Facts, and Solar Facts, and the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets are the tools to unlock the understanding of the lessons. The numbers represent the number of questions and answers in each section and do not require definitions. The numbered lessons use the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets to help gain a better understanding of them by being able to break down each degree according to its number or the words and numbers contained within each degree. The Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets are important to 120 because knowing them becomes the foundation for additional lessons.

The Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets can vary somewhat depending on the teacher, and generally the student is expected to come up with his or her own definitions of the words. I was first given the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets by Himself and as my understanding was limited so were my definitions. Reading back over them I have come to realize that I have grown in knowledge and understanding of what these terms mean to me. Instead of having a generalized and basic answer I can now elaborate and build upon each term in a way that I hadn't been able to before. Having a clear understanding of the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets is most important as everything a member will build on in further lessons, or in

the analysis of life experiences, can be taken back to the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets.

Supreme Mathematics

For the purposes of this research, I am using the definitions I was given by my educators over the years, and/or have come up with on my own over time. Below is a chart of the Supreme Mathematics:

1	Knowledge	To look, listen, observe; the foundation of all things in existence; also the Black man, because he is the foundation of the Black family.
2	Wisdom	To act/speak upon what you know wisely; life experience; the Black woman, because she is the receiver and nurturer of the Black child, and is second to the man.
3	Understanding	To comprehend, or see clearly; the Black child, because the man (1) and woman (2) together manifest/produce the child (3).
4	Culture/Freedom	The way of life (I.S.L.A.M.); to be free mentally and physically.
5	Power/Refinement	The truth, or a force; to be made clean or purified.
6	Equality	To be equal in all things in existence; balance.
7	God	The Black man that has knowledge of himself (as God), understands, and lives out the culture of I.S.L.A.M; person of supreme quality; also the creator and ruler of the universe.
8	Build/Destroy	To add on to a foundation; to take away, or bring to an end.
9	Born	To bring into existence mentally as well as physically; to make complete.
10	Cipher (0)	360 degree circle; any person, place, or thing within your environment that is complete within itself; also represents the woman in the acronym C-I-Power-Her where God has power over her by mastering her with his mind.

At first, it appears that the woman is only mentioned directly in one degree, 2) Wisdom, and indirectly in a second, 3) Understanding. The number 2) Wisdom is universally known as the woman, the secondary, but most necessary counterpart to 1) Knowledge (the man), that is needed to bring forth 3) Understanding (the child). Wisdom

is also considered the way that knowledge is manifested into reality. In other words, the woman is the way that a man reproduces himself through his child, but also as the way of showing his ability to master his cipher. His woman is a direct reflection of who he is, what he has taught her, and how capable he is of ruling effectively. Her words, ways, and actions, show, and prove, to others what type of God he is. What I have learned from my current relationship with Rallah is how heavy being a reflection is for the woman. At times I mirror his actions and he is able to not only see himself in me in a positive way, but he is able to see the things that he needs to correct within himself that I reflect back to him.

Within the culture of the NGE, women are said to not be able to rise above 6, or equality, because of their emotional nature, and the fact that, as a woman, her brain only weighs six ounces. This is used as proof that a woman can never be God as he is represented by the number 7. The first time I was told this it didn't make sense to me. It was in the context of someone trying to reclaim their sense of power by trying to let me know that they were and always would be greater than I was. However, I couldn't see the purpose in limiting a woman's elevation simply because she is not a man. I couldn't reconcile the concept of equality as I knew it with such an oppressive belief. When it comes solely to the exact definition of what equality is, there is typically no mention of woman at all, but culturally it is considered a way of speaking about, or labeling women. Equality is typically seen as feminine characteristic, and not considered appropriate to use in the label/name of a God.

Another reference to women is the term "Build Power" that is considered an insult to a woman that is supposed to have knowledge of self. The number 8)

Build/Destroy, and the number 5) Power/Refinement, can relate to a later lesson in 120, where the breakdown of 5%, 10%, and 85% is explained, and someone who has knowledge of self is considered to be of the 5%, or those who know, and teach, who the true and living God is, while the 85% are those that are uncivilized, easily led in the wrong direction, and slaves to the 10%. By calling a woman a Build Power, you are saying that she is a savage, an uncivilized person without knowledge of who she is or where she came from. I've really only ever seen this online in regards to so-called gods belittling an Earth. One of my friends was being told by someone that lived in a different state and had little to no personal interaction with her that she wasn't studying her lessons because she was too busy jumping in and out of relationships with different Gods. Although it wasn't true she was still called a "Build Power" in order to make her appear unrighteous. The anonymity of the Internet allows people to say things online that they would not typically say to a person's face.

It is also possible to see a woman as 9) Born, because she is the one who births a child physically, and in general is the student of a God that would be able to mentally produce using the knowledge he has given her as well. A woman's ability to (re)produce is an essential quality of the title Earth. I am the Earth because of my relationship to the Sun (Black man). I am in the perfect position to receive and reflect light (knowledge) to other people through teaching and through my ways and actions. By taking in his seed I am able to produce life both mentally and physically. While "Earth" is not in the Supreme Mathematics, or Supreme Alphabets, it is generally understood that the woman is considered to be an Earth within this culture, hence the name "Nation of Gods and Earths." It is important to note that while Earth is not used in the foundational lessons

despite the fact that her qualities are mentioned in the Supreme Mathematics, and Supreme Alphabets, God is found in both lessons under the same number of 7.

Cipher is used as an acronym for C-I-Power-Her, where the man understands the powers (i.e. emotional manipulation, or her sexuality) that a woman will use to control a man in order to get what she wants from him. As God is considered to be the sole controller, he is supposed to be capable of recognizing these powers, and if he is mentally strong enough, have the ability to control her instead. However, I have recognized my own powers and have chosen to focus on the positive and not the negative. I choose to add value to my cipher by not allowing chaos or confusion to enter it. Man, woman, and child is also a complete cipher, the foundation of the Black family, and the familial structure advocated by the NGE. In this sense, a woman would be considered an important part of a cipher, as she is needed to complete it.

Supreme Alphabets

The Supreme Alphabets uses the numbers from the Supreme Mathematics, but combines them with letters, and words that represent those letters according to the culture. Each student is required to come up with their own definitions for those words. I came up with these definitions at first by simply using the dictionary. Over time my understanding of these terms especially in relation to the Supreme Mathematics has evolved and my definitions have grown in meaning as well. Everyone is expected to be able to synthesize both Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets to gain a greater understanding of the degrees. Everyday members of the NGE build on the day's mathematics (i.e. the date), and a student may not receive the next degrees if they are not

able to build successfully based solely on these first two parts of 120. The Supreme Alphabets, according to my definitions, are listed in the chart below:

1	A	Allah	The supreme being; the foundation of all things in existence; the Black man with knowledge of self; also, an acronym that stands for Arm-Leg-Leg-Arm-Head.
2	B	Be or Born	Be is to have a physical existence. Born is to bring forth mentally, and physically; also, to be complete.
3	C	See	To perceive, detect, or regard by the eye (or mind); to understand; also, a clear mental picture.
4	D	Divine	Of supreme character; the nature of the Black man and woman.
5	E	Equality	To be equal in all things in existence; balance.
6	F	Father	The source, or origin of something, or someone; a person that gives life mentally, and physically; also, to Fat-Her, or impregnate a woman either physically, or mentally.
7	G	God	The Black man that has knowledge of himself (as God), understands, and lives out the culture of I.S.L.A.M; person of supreme quality; also the creator and ruler of the universe.
8	H	He or Her	Man and woman; both have the power to build or destroy upon their level of awareness (i.e. intelligence).
9	I	I or Islam	The Black man, woman, and child's true culture, and way of life; also, an acronym that stands for I-Self-Lord-And-Master, or I-Self-Love-Allah's-Mathematics.
10	J	Justice	A reward, or penalty, depending on He or Her ways and actions after being given knowledge on a particular Cipher; also an acronym meaning as a reward Just-I-See-Equality, or as a penalty Just-ICE (frozen; unable to understand).
11	K	King or Kingdom	God shows and proves that he is King by building with himself, and others; the Earth is the Kingdom over which he rules.
12	L	Love, Hell, or Right	Going through the trials and tribulations of dealing with your culture (I.S.L.A.M.), in order to come out right in the end; Love is the highest form of understanding, Hell is a misunderstanding, or putting wisdom (action) before knowledge (thought).
13	M	Master	One who knows, and understands, all things within his circumference; Allah is the Master of the known, and unknown.
14	N	Now, Nation, or End	Now is the time to knowledge the culture, and put an end to all weak and wicked ways, existing within one's self, or cipher; if the Black nation doesn't have knowledge of their culture, then it will be their end now.
15	O	Cipher	360-degree circle; any person, place, or thing within your environment that is complete within itself; also represents the woman in the acronym C-I-Power-Her where God has power over her by mastering her with his mind.

16	P	Power	The truth; a force, or energy that has the ability to produce an effect; the light that shows, and lets you see the truth of who the true and living God is.
17	Q	Queen	A refined Black woman that knowledges God in order to build alongside of God; the female companion, or counterpart, of the King.
18	R	Rule or Ruler	God is the only Ruler there is by knowledging his building powers, and making them born
19	S	Self or Savior	By having knowledge of self (as God), the Black man is able to be the savior of himself by making his true self/nature born.
20	T	Truth or Square	Truth is the light that sheds on the darkness of ignorance, and is able to square off unrighteous behavior within a cipher.
21	U	You or Universe	Celestial bodies represented as Sun (Black man), Moon (Black woman), and Stars (Black child); also the acronym You (U)-N-I-VERSE to brings about a complete understanding.
22	V	Victory	Living one's true culture and teaching civilization to those without knowledge of self is the way to be victorious over the devil that tries to keep people deaf, dumb, and blind to their true nature.
23	W	Wisdom	To act/speak upon what you know wisely; life experience; the Black woman, because she is the receiver and nurturer of the Black child, and is second to the man.
24	X	Unknown	Those that are deaf, dumb, and blind to their culture are unknown to their true selves; it is God's duty to make that which is unknown known by teaching civilization to those without knowledge of self.
25	Y	Why	The question only God is capable of answering that is constantly asked by those who lack knowledge of self.
26	Z	Zig Zag Zig	The path of gaining knowledge of self is not a straight line, and has many twists, and turns; the Black man, woman, and child building together to destroy unrighteousness.

In the Supreme Alphabets, the terms attributed to women are much more explicit, but all of these terms are directly related to the woman's relationship to a man as his counterpart, and to a lesser extent a co-creator (i.e. the roles of wife, and mother).

Be or Born indirectly relates to the woman as it is through the mother that one's physical existence is generated, since no one can be born physically without passing through a woman first. Be also means to exist, and Born means to be physically

manifested, and both are attributable to a woman since she exists, was, can, and does born a child. My attribute of Queen Be Love was given to me by Himself when I was 18. Be is the manifestation of Love (Hell or Right). Love, Hell, or Right is the struggle that someone goes through of the good, bad, and the ugly in order to come out right (get to the best part). My name means the path that one travels to get through to love (the best part).

Since Divine relates to a person's character, and way of life, it applies to both men, and women. In order to be Divine, one must become superior in body, and mind, and equal to a Supreme Being. In this context, a Supreme Being is one who manifests their true nature by expressing their culture without being subject to external control. While usually attributed to Allah, both men and women are expected to live the culture of I.S.L.A.M. at all times. Living out my culture involves the way I dress, the foods I eat, how I speak, and my ways and actions. I am able to be divine in character by living a righteous life. My divinity is manifested in my wearing clothes that cover my body as well as covering my head, making sure I eat nutritious food while avoiding unhealthy ones, using positive words that uplift instead of tear down, and making sure that my actions are in accordance with truth and righteousness.

As in the Supreme Mathematics, Equality is associated with the feminine characteristics of a woman. The emotional nature of a woman is to react to a constant need to balance the swift and changeable emotions of her ways and actions with her ability to put knowledge before wisdom, or in other words to put thought before action. If you add up all of the letters in my attribute Queen Be Love they equal the number five. E is the fifth letter of the alphabet. Equality is balance. Balance is a form of justice where you get what you give and that can either be good or bad according to your actions. One

way that I manifest balance is through my relationship with Rallah. Whenever one of us does something that action is reflected back. For example, one time he came up behind me and pulled my hair and as he ran away he tripped and hit the wall. Humorous as it was it was his justice or balance to his act.

Father, like Be or Born, is also indirectly related to the woman in that a Father impregnates the mother in order for her to physically manifest, or Born, a child as well as mentally manifest what he has taught her. To Fat-her is to fill both her mind and body with Knowledge. As an original man Rallah is the Father of Civilization. He is not my actual father just as my being the Mother of Civilization does not make me his mother. However, we would both be the father and mother of any seeds that are produced within our cipher.

He or Her directly relates to the woman as it is both of their duties to Build, or add positively to their cipher, and Destroy all negativity within their cipher. I am in charge of what comes in and out of my own cipher. If there is negativity in my life it is because I have allowed it to enter my life at some point. Ultimately, I am held accountable for who and what affects me and how I respond to such negativity. It also means to add on to one's knowledge of self by studying, growing in awareness of their culture, getting rid of negative thoughts, words, ways, and actions, and refining oneself to live according to their true nature (Divine). The divine nature of the man and woman is Islam. In order to properly manifest their culture, both man and woman must be of supreme character, have righteous words, ways, and actions, and be in a continuous state of refinement through seeking and applying knowledge to their foundation.

In the NGE, Islam is viewed as a way of life. It is considered a complete culture (way of life) and the true nature of the Black man, woman, and child. It is not limited to men as both He and Her are represented with the letter I. Both man and woman have a divine nature, but do not manifest the same wisdom (roles) within the culture. Islam (I.S.L.A.M) stands for I-Self-Lord-And-Master, and is usually attributed to men. However, I.S.L.A.M. also stands for I-Self-Lady-And-Mother, and is indicative of the true nature of the Black woman. Both show the different roles that men and women play within the NGE culture. Women are to carry themselves in a civilized way (Lady), and have what is considered to be the most important role of being a mother since the children are considered the greatest asset of any family and the future of the Nation as a whole. In this sense, Mother can mean being the Mother of civilization (as in humanity, or in fulfilling one's duty as a Queen in building/teaching others), or in being the Mother of a child (as in being the Earth). As a woman I am considered to be the home of Islam because I am the cradle of civilization and the place where the seed is planted (Earth). Islam as a culture comes through me because I am the first teacher of the child and the example of how Islam is as a righteous way of life.

Both men and women are subject to the consequences of their own actions. Justice is an acronym that means, Just-I-See-Equality, or Just-ICE. Just-I-See-Equality means that a person has a proper (see) understanding of a Cipher, and is able to achieve Equality (balance) in the ways they live in that Cipher. Just-I-See-Equality is a type of reward that shows a person is capable of creating an environment that has achieved balance in all things within that Cipher. Just-ICE is seen as a type of penalty that means a person is frozen, or unable to understand. In this sense, the man and/or woman is unable

to achieve balance within their Cipher because they are unable to See what is going on around them (as in a 360-degree circumference) that is too negative, causing their Cipher to be imbalanced. After my mother died I was stuck, out of balance with reality because she was the core of my existence. I did everything for her, because of her, or with her help and my reason for doing the things I was doing was suddenly gone. Over time I had to realize that my cipher revolved around me and I was responsible for what happened in it. Time doesn't necessarily heal all wounds, but it does make it easier to live with the things that once seemed unbearable. Mathematically time breaks down to True I Master Equality. I had to learn to balance my Equality (emotions, thoughts, etc.), regain my focus, and not be overcome by the currents of life.

The Black man is the King of his Cipher. Women relate to the King as his Queen, or female counterpart. A King shows and proves himself by building, and a Queen's duty is to build alongside him. The Kingdom, or home of a King, is the planet Earth, a Cipher. The planet Earth is symbolic to the Black woman. The King rules over the planet Earth, thereby ruling over the Black woman. In this sense, the Black woman can be seen as the Kingdom, and it is her duty to maintain herself and her environment (Cipher) in a constant state of refinement (purity). Now that I have a King I have a counterpart that helps me fully realize what it means to be a Queen and the importance of having a bond. I am able to build alongside him and I am in a constant state of refinement by eating healthy, finishing school, exercising, removing the negativity from my life, and in general living out the culture.

Cipher represents the same concept in the Supreme Alphabets as it does in the Supreme Mathematics. The Black woman is needed to complete the cipher of man,

woman, and child. It is her power that the man must have knowledge and understanding of in order to control (or rule) her instead of her using those same powers to control him. The difference between cipher in the Supreme Mathematics and the Supreme Alphabets is that each letter corresponds to its numerical position in the alphabet. The letter O (Cipher) is the 15th letter of the Alphabet. Since the Supreme Mathematics deals with single-digit numbers, the number 15 is broken down into the numbers 1 and 5. The number 1 equals Knowledge, and 5 equals Power/Refinement. When added together, $1+5=6$, and the number 6 equals Equality. This means that Knowledge+Power/Refinement=Equality. Using this formula, and relating it to Cipher, the man is to do the knowledge (look, listen, and observe) to the woman in order to see her powers, and determine what is positive, and what needs to be refined in her. By having the knowledge of her powers, the man is able to refine her in order to create balance (Equality) within his Cipher. Through my relationship, I have been able to refine certain aspects of myself that I was unable to See as a problem. Rallah has helped me see where I needed to change and where I need to add on to make myself a better person.

Queen directly relates to the Black woman. A Queen (17th letter of the alphabet) is a refined woman who has Knowledge (1) of who God (7) is. The numbers $1+7=8$. The number 8 in the Supreme Mathematics is Build/Destroy. As mentioned above, it is both He and Her responsibility to build, so a woman with the knowledge of the true and living God has a duty to build alongside God, and teach according to the knowledge that she has. A Queen, as the female counterpart to the King, must help either add on, or take away, that which positively, or negatively, affects the Kingdom. As a Queen I am expected to build alongside Rallah. As a first born, he comes with a level of respect and

expectation that I, as his counterpart, have to live up to. While a Queen remains her own entity, she is still a reflection of the King and their Kingdom. It is a heavy weight to uphold, but the crown is worth the effort for me.

The Earth is the only known planet that is able to re/produce life as we know it in our universe. The Black woman is considered the Earth because in much the same way as the planet Earth she is able to re/produce life through her womb by physically absorbing/using what the Sun (man) provides her. A Universe can be considered a Cipher in the sense that everything that exists in reality as part of that universe has gone from Knowledge to Born (a completed Cipher in the Supreme Mathematics) in order to be made manifest. Because I am responsible for my own Cipher I am also the sole controller of my universe. That means that I am the master of my own circumstances and in control of my destiny. A woman's body can also be seen as a miniature universe through which the sun (man), moon (woman--more specifically her mind. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, the woman reflects the light/energy/knowledge/truth that the man provides her.), and stars (children) are born, or manifested.

Wisdom in the Supreme Mathematics represents the Black woman. However, in the Supreme Alphabets it is important to consider its numerical place (23) in order to understand its definition within this context. Using the Supreme Mathematics, the numerical placement of the letter W (Wisdom) as the 23rd letter of the alphabet is broken down into the single digit numbers 2 (Wisdom) and 3 (Understanding). In order to produce a single digit number, both 2 and 3 need to be added together as $2+3=5$ (Power/Refinement). By breaking Wisdom (23) down into Power/Refinement (5), this becomes part of the explanation of what Wisdom represents alphabetically instead of

only using its numerical placement within the Supreme Mathematics as the number 2. Wisdom still includes the definition of acting/speaking wisely, and as being symbolic to the Black woman, but by adding the definition of Power/Refinement as a force, truth, and to be purified, Wisdom now can be defined as a wise Black woman who is refined in mind, body, and character with the ability to teach the truth of who the true and living God is. By teaching the truth, she is capable of effecting change, i.e. a force that can clean, or purify, her Cipher, as well as the people she teaches. Part of my refinement is reflected in the way that I dress. In the culture women cover their bodies and typically wear a headwrap. It is taught that because the Black woman is symbolic to the Earth she carries the same characteristics as the Earth. The Earth is $\frac{3}{4}$ s covered in water so the Black woman is supposed to cover $\frac{3}{4}$ s of her body as well. Headwraps have been a part of my style since the age of 18 and because of the attractive nature of my refinement I have been able to teach others the importance of dressing modestly as well as given lessons on how to wrap their own heads. My mother used to dislike my covering my hair, but over time I was able to teach her the benefits and beauty of the way I dressed. Eventually she started wearing headwraps on her own and would wake me up to tie her scarf on in the morning before work.

Zig Zag Zig represents the path to gaining knowledge of self. One must go through twists, turns, and move backwards in order to move forward again to achieve Equality (balance). While both men and women struggle along this path, women are genuinely more observed as the Zag. The letter Z has 3 lines that represents man (Zig), woman (Zag), and child (Zig). The man is the top line, as he is the beginning/originator, the woman represents the diagonal line, as she is the bridge between that connect the top

to the bottom line that represents the child. It is important to note that both the man and child are in the same position. This is because the man reproduces himself, but as the diagonal line (woman) shows, he is unable to bring forth (connect to) that understanding (child) without first going through, or utilizing, the woman. The path to gaining knowledge of self has not been an easy one for me. I have put the lessons down, switched educators, ventured into other various schools of thought, and had different relationships that have made my journey a struggle at times. No matter how many times I put the lessons down the desire to study was still there and I always picked them back up again. Starting and stopping, moving forward and taking two steps backwards are what make this culture so unique. No matter how long someone has had knowledge of self there is always room for refinement.

The use of the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets is intended to show students how to synthesize and gain a clearer understanding of their lessons. As the student travels further through their lessons, they are expected to be able to break down, or relate, each degree back to the foundation of the Supreme Mathematics. The definitions of the Supreme Mathematics, and Supreme Alphabets, are generally similar across the board, but the above definitions, while based upon general knowledge, personal experience, and my own understanding, are both influenced by, and subject to, the basic universal ideological concepts, standards, and practices of the NGE.

V. ANALYSIS

The use of the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets is intended to show students how to synthesize and gain a clearer understanding of their lessons. As the student travels further through their lessons they are expected to be able to break down, or relate, each degree back to the Supreme Mathematics. Each day's date (corresponding number) affords a new way to apply the Supreme Mathematics, allowing each individual to employ a different rhetorical choice in language as it relates to them personally. Ideally, a person's perceptions, or awareness, will grow and change each day, which should reflect in a greater understanding of each day's reflection through their rhetorical language choice. There is no way to predict that an individual's perspective on women that will be objective, or subjective, in its relation to NGE ideology, or as it pertains to a secular understanding of misogyny, as each person's life experience is different.

However, this understanding of the need for refinement in one's ways and actions is not always reflected as a person grows into the knowledge of him- or herself. Arrogance, egotism, etc. can prevent a person from seeing any need for improvement, and people may try to adapt their pre-existing sexist/misogynistic beliefs, and customs (ways/actions) into the culture of the NGE, and not recognize their internalized biases while in turn subjecting others to their unreasonable standards. Within the NGE ideology there is room for multiple perspectives and understandings since things can be viewed from many different angles; however, if one is close-minded, or even blind to other ways of knowing, one will most often hold oneself as the ruler by which to measure others.

For example, the numbers 1, 2, 3, and their corresponding numerical order/placement of first, second, third is reflective of their position, and meaning, in the

Supreme Mathematics. Knowledge (1) as first, Wisdom (2) second, and Understanding (3) third show an order of operations for existence, with Knowledge (thought) coming before Wisdom (action) in order to create Understanding (product). The most often referenced example is to use 1, 2, 3 to represent the Black family as Man (1), Woman (2), Child (3). The man is first, because it is his seed that enters the woman. He is knowledge as it takes a thought to spark actions/words into existence—he is where life starts. The woman is wisdom because she is the receiver of the man’s seed, and she carries/nurtures that seed until it is made born. Knowledge is made born by going through wisdom. The acting on of a thought, or speaking of words, is where the process of wisdom becomes manifested into reality. The seed from the man is carried/nurtured by the woman, who in turn produces the child or reproduces the seed. Understanding is the reproduction of knowledge as a clear picture, and is made manifest by going through wisdom.

For many, this is seen as not only the proper/best way, but the only way for proper understanding to exist. In order of operations, 1 is always first, and 2 is second, and without 2 there would be no 3—hence the saying “secondary, but most necessary.” This hierarchical value ascribed to the Supreme Mathematics can be seen as reinforcing the idea that women, and women’s issues, are not as valuable as men. Viewing the Supreme Mathematics in this way keeps the positions of men and women fixed, and seemingly provides no room for upward mobility within the NGE for women. Women will always be kept in a “secondary” position, be seen as, and expected to be submissive to men. This feeds the concept of male superiority, which can unintentionally lead to the upholding of misogynistic practices within the NGE.

However, the Supreme Mathematics can also be viewed as having a cyclical nature, where everything has a time, and place, to be utilized. In this sense, the Supreme Mathematics is like a clock, where there is a time for knowledge (1) will be used, a time wisdom (2) will be used, and so on until you go through each degree, and come back around. In this way, the positions of men and women have more fluidity, and women are not stuck in a “secondary” position. The importance is not placed on who’s first, but on what degree is the most applicable at the time. There are times when a woman may be the best knower, but is typically not valued as such. The removal of the view of hierarchical value in the Supreme Mathematics may allow for a more balanced view of the day’s math, and the positionality of women within the NGE as a whole.

An example of the fluidity of the Supreme Mathematics is shown in the dates 12 and 21. Within the course of a month, a person is expected to reflect on its opposites, since both knowledge wisdom (12) and wisdom knowledge (21) are dates that draw upon Mathematics, with knowledge (1) coming before wisdom (2) leading to a proper/clear understanding (3). Conversely putting wisdom (2) before knowledge (1) leads to a mis/understanding (3). At a surface level this appears reasonable, as it is out of order, but when applied to the black family it becomes a little trickier to say that putting the woman before the man will lead to a mis/understanding (i.e. chaos/confusion, etc.).

A lot of people, including myself, were taught that putting wisdom before knowledge wasn’t done, and when you get to that day’s math (the 21st) the oft cited response is that “wisdom knowledge leads to misunderstanding” even though it doesn’t always. There are times when you go through wisdom before you have any real knowledge. One example is having to move to another city, or state, where you have no

family, or friends, and have to navigate through unfamiliar territory until you learn your way around--eventually finding favorite places, making friends, and possibly even showing others around town. In this instance, through experiences you gain knowledge of a new city.

There are also times where you learn lessons from an experience that leads you to gain knowledge from it. I started physical therapy at a new facility where the doctor suggested that I take Pilates for my back pain. I had never taken Pilates before, but I decided to try it out. During the class I ended up meeting a chiropractor who offered a discounted consultation, and decided to go as I'd had a positive experience with one previously. Meanwhile, I switched physical therapy facilities, and started doing more exercises that ended up causing pain, but no one could tell me why. Going over my x-rays at the chiropractor's office, I found out that my spine was severely curved, and my hips were misaligned--both of which were the cause of the pain. I was able to go back to my physical therapist, and Pilates teacher, to develop a better plan for pain management, and find different exercises. In my case, the experience (wisdom) of therapy led to gaining knowledge of the source of my pain, which then gave a clear picture (understanding) of how to go about my treatment.

Bringing secular/cultural customs of misogyny into the NGE becomes a problem when people take things at face value and refuse to accept that there is another perspective that makes equally as much sense. Wisdom before knowledge can happen, and one is expected to do the knowledge to how, and when, wisdom can, and does, come before knowledge, and what type(s) of understanding it produces. However, if one is unable or unwilling to see the benefits in a woman coming before a man, then they will

never see the positive aspects of wisdom before knowledge—it will always be something “you just don’t do,” because the man is the center of the universe (sun) and the earth (woman) revolves around him.

Language Patterns

The language being used by members of the NGE that is specific to women can first be separated by the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets. There are terms that are in both, such as Wisdom, Power, Born, and Cipher that have a direct relation to one another, but there are also terms that have a cultural significance, that is not directly reflective of the actual meaning.

According to cultural belief, the woman is said to not be able to rise above the number 6 (Equality), because she is emotional in nature, and her brain weighs only six ounces in comparison to the man’s seven and a half ounces. The number 7 in both Supreme Mathematics, and Supreme Alphabets, represents God. The Black woman is said to not be able to “rise above her equality,” or to reach number 7, because she is stuck at number 6 (Equality). However, the Black woman is indirectly represented in the number 7 as the attribute of Earth, because when all numerical values are added together the word Earth bears the number 7. Each letter is a number E=5, A=1, R=18, T=20, H=8, and when those numbers are added together $5+1+18+20+8=52$, and $5+2=7$, they show that the Earth (Black woman) bears God (Black man).

The Black woman is also called Queen, and in the Supreme Alphabets the letter Q=17. If Black women were truly unable to rise above the number 6, it is highly unlikely that she could be considered a Queen if taken at numerical face value. While the notion

of not “rising above equality” is taught by some as an example of one’s understanding of the Supreme Mathematics, it appears to be more of a cultural misunderstanding somewhat rooted in sexism, than a true manifestation of NGE ideology.

Another reference is the term “Build Power” that is an insult to any woman, but especially one who has knowledge of self. Essentially, the woman is being called a person of the 85%, or someone who is uncivilized and has no knowledge of who she is. Build Power could also relate to a woman not rising above her equality since in the Supreme Alphabets the Build degree (8) is He or Her, and the Power degree (5) is Equality. Again the limitation of the woman places Her at the level of Equality, but in a more negative way by saying she is a savage regardless as to whether or not she actually has knowledge of self.

In the Supreme Mathematics, Wisdom is the only degree that directly mentions the woman as being the receiver and nurturer of the child. In this instance, the woman is seen as “secondary, but most necessary” to the man, and her position is very much fixed. However, in the Supreme Alphabets, Wisdom (23) takes its numerical value of Power/Refinement (5) into account. By adding the definition of Power/Refinement to Wisdom, the woman becomes much more than a nurturer. In her refined state, she becomes a force that is capable of purifying her Cipher, as well as the people she teaches.

Born and Cipher are also both in the Supreme Mathematics, and Supreme Alphabets, but unlike Wisdom the definition doesn’t change much. However, when Cipher’s numerical value in the Supreme Alphabets is added up, it equals the number 6, and the number 6 in the Supreme Mathematics is Equality. Cipher relates to the woman

as an emotional creature that needs to be controlled. Unlike with Wisdom, where her powers are a force capable of purifying a Cipher, her powers are viewed as corruptible, and in need of refinement in order to be purposeful. In this sense, Cipher can be broken down to C-I-Power-Her Equality that again reinforces the limitation of a woman's power being stuck at "Her Equality."

The NGE is a predominately male-dominated culture with male-centered lessons that are structured for the betterment, and upliftment, of Black men. Men are the typically the teachers, and women are generally taught from, and influenced by, a male perspective. The traditions, ideas, views, and interpretations of the lessons that are passed down may reflect sexism and misogynistic practices that are not indicative of the ideology of the NGE. The male-dominated culture often times leaves the female voice silenced, and at times even omitted. Women are left to gain an understanding of themselves by navigating through male-centered lessons and unknowingly sexist practices. Its patriarchal structure helps to foster sexism and misogyny within the culture by creating linear power distribution and unequal knowledge dissemination.

Without being checked on such behaviors, many so-called Gods are acting out of bad character rather than in their true divine nature. Defined by the NGE's Supreme Alphabets, both men and women can be Divine in nature if they are capable of living out their true culture of I.S.L.A.M. I.S.L.A.M. stands for I-Self-Lord-And-Master, or I-Self-Lady-And-Mother, and if lived properly, are the balanced roles of men and women in said culture. Both men and women must not only carry out the duties attributed to each role, but recognize the importance of one another's roles. The ability to live (and let live) is a reflection of the other's divinity, and purpose, within the culture. If a man is too

arrogant to see the divinity of a woman's purpose within the culture, then he would hold misogynistic, or sexist cultural values that are seemingly in opposition to the lessons.

NGE in Composition

Language and identity are key to developing critical consciousness. Language can be a tool used to “inculcate dominant ideologies through speech and literature in the lives of the less powerful” (Willis et al. 22). Typically, Western society via colonialism is seen as the oppressor, and Black people as being oppressed. However, this same dynamic is being played out within the NGE. In the fourth degree of 1-36 it says: “My uncle cannot speak his own language.” This degree refers to African slaves being brought over to America and not being able to speak their native tongue. With the stripping of their language, Africans were also left without an identity. The fifth degree of the 1-36 says: “He does not know that he is my uncle.” This degree shows that the African has lost a sense of self along with his or her language. When a person can't speak their own language they lose their identity. The NGE has created its own language through Mathematics, and in turn developed a unique identity and culture. However, when a critical feminist lens is used, it is possible to see how the focus on the Black male (the uncle) unfortunately leaves out the presence of the Black woman (an aunt). This raises several questions that are left unanswered: Is there an aunt? Can she speak her own language? What is her language? Does she know who she is? Who is she? The Black woman loses her language and identity in her relation to the Black man in much the same way that the African lost his language and identity in that of his oppressors.

Language is also culture. The oppression of language limits cultural expression. In this case, the oppressive use of language towards women limits their ability to function, and affects their positionality within the NGE. Gender equality expressed within the context of the NGE's ideology is necessary for true equality in the Black community in general, and critical consciousness in particular. The language used in the Supreme Mathematics dictates how the culture will be lived out. Ideally, as one learns knowledge of self, they will also learn about their relation to others, and how to redefine, or refine, ourselves, and our spaces. It takes a reformer to challenge the status quo for things to ever change in a system where the dominant majority is receiving the benefit of gender inequality. Seldom is it addressed from the top until someone from the bottom voices the injustice loudly enough that it is felt at the top. This liberation is the core of critically conscious research.

VI. CONCLUSION

THE DYNAMICS OF GENDER, POSITION, AND POWER

The Female Voice

One of the concerns with the NGE's rhetorical language choices is the lack of the female voice, or presence within its teachings. Black men and their issues of oppression primarily concerning race and class come first. Issues of gender oppression are secondary, if considered at all. This accounts for the teachings being male-dominated, and focused on the uplifting of the Black man.

While this is not inherently a bad thing, as Black men as a whole need to be elevated into a greater consciousness, understanding, and knowledge of who, and what they are, their purpose, and their duty as a "Maker, Owner, Father of Civilization, and Cream of the Planet Earth," and being God in general. The position of Black men in American society is low enough to warrant such a change within the Black community. This is the main reason that members of the NGE took the lessons to the streets where Knowledge of Self was most needed. Many were coming from broken homes and communities that were in chaos. As a foundational lesson, the Supreme Mathematics gave order and structure to people that needed a method of problem-solving to help themselves, and in their community. Black boys needed a way to grow into the knowledge of themselves, and the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabet were the keys to becoming Black men with the proper understanding of who, and what, they are. This is why the NGE says that "the babies are the greatest," meaning that [the] children

raised with knowledge of self will grow to be greater representations of the culture and have the ability to make manifest the goals of the NGE.

Unfortunately, Black men's issues taking precedence means that Black women's "perceptions, experiences, meanings, practices, and values—are not incorporated into language," and the representations of women are through the male perspective (Herrick 260). While the protection and education of women is vital to any nation, the Black woman does not have a separate set of gender-specific lessons, and must find herself within the NGE lessons.

The lack of women's voices coupled with the male representation of the woman's perspective has arguably resulted in the "loss of women's meanings, and thus [...] the loss of women themselves as members of the social world' (Herrick 260). Women within the NGE that do have a voice generally uphold the patriarchal ideology, and often times are the female voice of the male perspective. Women that oppose patriarchy, or have different views of the way the culture should be lived out, are rarely heard, and often silenced.

The second concern builds off of the first. If women's voices are silenced, or at least being suppressed, then they are being defined by men's perceptions of what a woman should be, and the culture is being shaped disproportionately despite the NGE's concept of equality. This imbalance makes it easier for some to manipulate women that are new to the teachings of the NGE, and take advantage of their position as the "God of the Universe."

Often times women are introduced to the culture of the NGE through a man, and in general through their attraction to him. Many women are unfamiliar with the teachings, and are dependent upon the man to educate them properly. For those that choose to take on students, whether they be simply students, or in the process of becoming his Earth, the responsibility of teaching is great. That student becomes a reflection of you, and is a walking representation of how, and what you teach. Women that are miseducated will often parrot what they have been taught, without even thinking or questioning in order to “reflect” and live up to what is expected.

It also poses a problem when dealing with children that are born into the NGE, since young girls will grow up with a skewed sense of self in place of having knowledge of themselves. This could very well be the reason why when couples break up, the woman often rejects all NGE teachings and culture, returns to her previous religious beliefs, and removes the same from the lives of the children. If women are not being taught who they are as women, do not dialogue with other women, and aren't knowledgeable enough to teach their own children, the future of the NGE seems rather bleak.

Power Distribution

The dynamics of power distribution and its ability to be abused or misused is the reason I chose to also use critical theory. There is no singular definition of critical theory, though Sam Porter claims that its goal is “to look beneath the surface of knowledge and reason (Kant), in order to see how they are distorted in an exploitative society (Marx), and thus show the possibility of less distorted forms (Hegel)” (1). Porter also argues that

researchers must go beyond reporting data, explain behaviors in terms of their socioeconomic and cultural contexts, which can be used as a “basis for uncovering social inequality at the micro-level of one-to-one interaction [...] which allows for the uncovering of power at the point at which it is exercised [to help] explain the dynamics of day-to-day life” (2). Herrick defines critical theory as “the systematic means of analyzing discourse for its hidden assumptions and implications,” which is supposed to lead to liberation through ideological criticism (239).

Willis et al. states that through the “challenging [of] the underlying assumptions that work in the internal and external worlds to privilege some while disprivileging others” (5), a person has developed a critical consciousness, which they consider to be at the core of critical theory. Critical consciousness is necessary in looking at the power relationships between men and women in the NGE. It is clearly the patriarchal structure of the NGE that gives privilege to men, but the underlying assumption of marginal masculinity is at the foundation of their structure. It is also likely to be the source of the hyper-masculine behaviors, and misogynistic rhetorical choices that occurs within the NGE.

There is the idea that Black men are oppressors of Black women, because they are oppressed themselves and cannot fight back against their oppressors. Since the Black Power Movement, Black women have been continually encouraged to put the shared struggle for racial equality ahead of their personal struggle against gender inequality. The patriarchal structure of the NGE provides men with the security of power in their positions as head of the family, or “God of the Universe”, but the teachings of the NGE

theoretically provide the balance for that power so that it does not get abused. This balance is not always manifested.

By definition, achieving equality between the sexes within the NGE means creating balance between He and Her. In the Supreme Mathematics, the number 8 represents Build/Destroy, while in the Supreme Alphabets, the number 8 is He and Her. It is the duty of both He and Her to build a nation. When you look at the numerical symbol of 8, you have two complete ciphers (0 and 0) that when joined together form the symbol 8. He and her are two separate, and complete units that come together to build, or add on, to each other's lives. When each does their duty then balance is achieved.

When left unbalanced, there will be a struggle for power. In a patriarchal culture, power lies with the men. Within the NGE this power struggle can be seen in the use of male-centered language directives that transposes the meanings of specific words within the degrees. In both the Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabets the word Cipher is broken down into Cee-I-Power-Her. To Cee (See) is to Understand, I is Islam or I-Self-Lord-and-Master (referencing the Black man), Power means to control, or motivate, and Her is the Original Woman (Black woman). This means that the Black man understands that he is the one that motivates, or controls, the Black woman. This is different from the definition of a Cipher being any person, place, or thing within your environment. It is also reflected in other degrees, such as the first degree of the 1-10:

1. Who is the Original Man?

The Original Man is the Asiatic Blackman, the Maker, Owner, Cream of the Planet Earth, Father of Civilization, and God of the Universe.

This degree describes the man's role within the NGE. While words like maker, owner, and father go by traditional definitions, they are broken down like Cipher. Maker becomes Make-Her, Owner becomes Own-Her, and Father becomes Fat-Her. This new definition redirects the meaning of these words into displays of power. Now, the maker is not merely someone that creates, but someone that makes the Black woman into an Earth. As an Own-Her the Black woman becomes his possession. Father now means to Fat-Her, or to increase her mind with Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding, and/or to physically impregnate her body, which would make her stomach or body full (fat) with child. Now the man's roles are defined in terms of his relationship with a woman, and what he is capable of doing to, or with, her.

Under patriarchy there can be a play for power that results in competition between men and women as women fight for equality, and attempt to eradicate sexism. In the NGE, men and women have specific roles that are not in opposition to one another. This does not mean that there is no sense of competition between individual members, but that as a whole, if the ideology is upheld, then men and women would already have equality between the sexes. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Men who are intimidated by women, or who feel a sense of inferiority, may take their frustrations out on a woman by making her feel inferior.

After returning from my trip to South Africa, I went to a friend's house to give the gifts I brought back, and share stories. While I was excitedly recounting the details of my experience, I noticed that he appeared to be visibly upset that his family was enjoying my tales. Instead of being excited for me, he took it as a slight to his manhood that I, a woman, went on a trip he couldn't. It didn't matter that I had thought of him, and brought

back a gift. What mattered to him was that a woman did something he couldn't. Because he felt inferior, he decided to belittle me and my accomplishments to the point that I just stopped talking. I was unaware that we were even in a competition with one another, and his attempt to make me feel bad about doing so well worked. Ultimately, no man can become a "Supreme being" by making a woman an inferior one.

Men are also in positions of power as teachers. The typical male-female relationship within the NGE is primarily that of student and teacher. As a teacher, the man holds the power in the relationship, and controls what material, and people, the student comes in contact with. Being a teacher you hold a level of authority that a partner in a relationship wouldn't, along with an added level of responsibility and accountability. While some are able to maintain the balance of mate and teacher, others use their position of power to manipulate, mold, and control their women under the guise of "making an Earth".

Rarely is the reverse true where a woman teaches a male student. When a woman is the source of knowledge, and she is able to share that knowledge with a man, she can be considered unqualified to teach him merely because she is a woman. It would be seen as putting wisdom (woman) before knowledge (man), and as previously stated that is seen as highly improper, and he would be referred to a man that has more years, or experience, in the NGE. Even if she is intellectually capable, women don't hold the authority or power when it comes to teaching male students.

Women are considered to only be capable of reflecting what light (knowledge) has been given to them. Symbolic to the moon, she has no light of her own to shine onto anyone, or anything else. Like the moon, she is to reflect the light of the sun, which is

symbolic to the Black man as being the center of the universe (family). In other words, she takes the knowledge that is given to her by a man, and in turn shares that knowledge with her children, or students. This is the reason that women will introduce themselves as “reflecting the light of,” and not simply as someone’s student. In this sense, the woman is defining herself by her relation to the man she is with.

Women are also not always included in policy making in the NGE. In the early stages of the development of Sudan (Dallas, Texas), only men were involved in meetings, and planning general events. Women were relegated to handling the food, and children, but did plan their own events for women, and children specifically. Even preserving the history is held amongst a few elders in the NGE, and their recollection of events. Some claim there were no women in the beginning, or that their roles were limited to “nurses,” and the inclusion of women came as an afterthought. In some cases, women were not even expected to knowledge 120, or were limited in the amount of degrees they received.

Things like dress code and other restrictions were primarily for women. Women were expected to dress in $\frac{3}{4}$, which means that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the body was to be covered in the same way that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the planet Earth is covered by water. Generally, it meant wearing a long dress, and a head wrap. Other restrictions, such as the dietary law of not eating pork, affected the way that they cooked, and even the type of makeup they were able to wear.

The NGE is a predominately male dominated culture with male-centered lessons designed to uplift the Black man. The focus on Black men instead of women is reflective of its patriarchal structure, but not its ideology. Ideologically, the NGE is based on a form of equality that separates men and women into specific gender roles, and duties, that identifies what each one is held responsible for, and is expected to live up to. The

patriarchal structure of the NGE allows for the presence of sexism within the culture, as men are in positions of power, and each individual is essentially an autonomous ruler of his own particular cipher.

The use of Supreme Mathematics in the NGE's foundational lessons places a hierarchical rank and order into the family and community structure. Men are primarily the teachers, and leaders, and women take on a supportive, and background role in most situations. Since the most of the teachers are men, men are the ones that influence their student's knowledge and awareness of sexist practices, and/or a sense of equality. It is also the male-centered interpretation of the lessons, views, and ideas that are being passed down to successive generations. Many people are unknowingly passing on tradition, or parroting someone else's understanding, rather than hold true to the ideology that the NGE is based upon.

Because a lot of things are left up to male interpretation, and experience, the feminine experience, and voice, is silenced and omitted. Women are left to gain an understanding of themselves through male-centered lessons, and through traditions that are passed down that may be unknowingly sexist. Since racism is the primary focus, sexism, and other issues women face, have taken a background position. The distribution of power leads to slanted views, but once equality is achieved it is the responsibility of women to make their voice heard within the NGE.

Many women within the NGE do not see the level of respect and equality that they are due, have become disappointed with their men and the NGE as a whole, and often times walk away from the NGE altogether. The number of women in the NGE is

much lower than the men, and this cannot solely be attributed to the group's purpose of restoring the Black man as the foundation of the Black family, or the Black woman's rejection of patriarchal values. While patriarchy is part of the foundation of NGE culture, misogyny is not. Hopefully, with a focus on words instead of just the culture, there will be more of an acknowledgment of the misogyny that can and does exist within the NGE, and a movement towards changing the language to reflect the culture that the NGE asserts that it stands for.

This is a self-reflective and literature-based qualitative research study based on the Supreme Mathematics, and Supreme Alphabets, and more research needs to be conducted through interviews of both men and women in the NGE as well as incorporating other research materials, and time frames. Research should be expanded to include the language used in the NGE newspapers from 2000-2016, on Internet blogs from various members (male and female), posts in Facebook group, books written by members and about the NGE, articles written by members, and personal interviews. The following questions should also be considered while collecting and analyzing data:

1. What is your understanding of the role women have within the NGE?
2. How is language used in the NGE's lessons or literature regarding women, and are there any identifiable patterns?
3. Do these patterns reflect a change in the use of language regarding women, and does the change in language represent a change in the understanding of women?

An attempt to generate a foundational vocabulary used by both men and women that is reflective of the changes over time, an exploration of the use of this same language by the

NGE's female members, and either their support or rejection of it as appropriate terminology for themselves should also be included into future research. The entire set of degrees known as 120 should be analyzed for its language usage towards women, as well as some plus degrees that specifically deal with women.

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