

THE SHAYTAN · CHAPTER FOUR

The New Culture

What a people made anyway. What they carried from the continent and what they forged here. What the world received from them without, in most cases, being told who made it, where it came from, or what it cost.

1619 – 2026 · What Was Created · African Roots Carried · What It Became

THREE RECOGNITIONS

Before the Generations

WHAT WAS CREATED

Both scriptures agree that what is pressed down hard enough does not disappear — it transforms. “And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient” (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:155). The culture that emerged from this crucible was not a copy of what was taken — Ndongo, Akan, Igbo, Yoruba, Fulani — nor was it the culture of the people holding the chains. It was the third thing: something never before seen on earth, made under conditions no culture in the history of the world had been shaped under in quite this way.

WHAT IT COST

The price of every item in this chapter was paid in full before it was given to the world. The spirituals were composed by people who could be sold the next morning. Jazz was played in cities shaped by redlining. Hip-hop was built in neighborhoods deliberately starved of resources. Every invention listed here was made inside the exact conditions Chapter Two and Chapter Three documented — denied the law, denied the school, denied the wage, denied the history — and made anyway. “Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord” (Psalm 130:1) is not a description of defeat. It is a description of where the creation came from.

WHAT IT BECAME

There is a specific and documentable claim at the heart of this chapter: the culture of the Crossing Nation became, measurably, the dominant popular culture of the 20th and 21st centuries on a global scale. Blues and jazz formed the root of all popular music worldwide. African American English introduced vocabulary, grammar, and cadence into American English that still runs through it. The visual, literary, athletic, political, and spiritual contributions of seventeen generations of a people denied every advantage are disproportionate by any honest accounting. What the lie tried to suppress, the culture carried out anyway — and the world received it.

GEN 1 • First Arrivals (1619-1644)

WHAT WAS CREATED

The act of survival as cultural foundation. Anthony and Isabella's marriage, William's birth and baptism, and the persistent use of African naming patterns (preserved in early Virginia records) constitute the first creative act: building a family and an identity in a place designed to deny both.

AFRICAN ROOTS CARRIED

Kongo/Ndongo naming traditions; Bantu-family communal kinship structures.

WHAT IT BECAME

The template for every generation that followed: hold the name, hold the family, hold whatever piece of the original self the system does not yet know to take.

GEN 2 • Founding Settlement (1644-1669)

WHAT WAS CREATED

The first free Black landowners in English America — Anthony Johnson, his wife Mary, and their children among them — built self-sufficient farms on Virginia's Eastern Shore. Their land and their freedom pre-date the hardening of the codes. They are the first proof that a different outcome was always possible.

AFRICAN ROOTS CARRIED

Ndongo agricultural knowledge; Bantu concepts of communal stewardship of land.

WHAT IT BECAME

A documented counterexample, suppressed in the same generation it appeared, that historians had to go looking for in the 20th century to recover.

GEN 3 • Codification (1669-1694)

WHAT WAS CREATED

Hoodoo / Conjure begins its documented existence as a fused African American spiritual and medicinal practice. The minkisi tradition (Kongo sacred objects) and Igbo and Yoruba herbal knowledge begin combining with local Native American botanical knowledge and, later, European folk practices.

AFRICAN ROOTS CARRIED

Kongo nganga (ritual specialist) tradition; the minkisi sacred object; the Yoruba concept of àṣe (spiritual power in material things).

WHAT IT BECAME

The longest-running continuous African American spiritual tradition. Still practiced today. Its core object, the mojo bag, takes its name from the Kikongo word mooyo, soul.

GEN 4 • Plantation Expansion (1694–1719)

WHAT WAS CREATED

The first documented African American musical forms: field hollers and call-and-response work songs. The drum — not yet banned — carried rhythmic patterns from Kongo, Akan, and Yoruba percussion traditions into this new soil. The drum ban of 1740 would not stop the rhythm; it would simply force it into the body itself.

AFRICAN ROOTS CARRIED

Kongo and Akan polyrhythmic drum traditions; West African call-and-response vocal structure.

WHAT IT BECAME

The foundation of the entire subsequent history of American music. Every genre that followed — spirituals, blues, jazz, gospel, R&B, rock, soul, funk, hip-hop — descends from this generation's musical practice.

GEN 5 • Peak Importation (1719–1744)

WHAT WAS CREATED

The Gullah Geechee culture crystallizes on the South Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands — the most African-retentive culture to survive the Middle Passage in North America. Rice cultivation techniques from Sierra Leone and the Grain Coast arrive with this generation's captives and transform the Low Country economy.

AFRICAN ROOTS CARRIED

Sierra Leone and Senegambia rice cultivation; Mandinka and Wolof craft traditions; Akan day-naming practices (still present in Gullah naming patterns today).

WHAT IT BECAME

Gullah Geechee remains a living, federally recognized cultural heritage corridor. Its cuisine (okra, rice, and groundnuts), its basket-weaving (direct descendant of West African coiled-grass techniques), and its language survived 300 years of pressure.

GEN 6 • Creole Generation (1744–1769)

WHAT WAS CREATED

The first distinctly American Black vernacular begins to form — a language that is not African, not English, but a third thing: African grammar running inside English vocabulary. This is the generation in which African American English begins to take the specific shape linguists now study as a fully formed, rule-governed dialect.

AFRICAN ROOTS CARRIED

West African tonal language patterns; Wolof and Mandinka grammatical structures (the habitual “be,” for instance, has direct West African grammatical parallels); Kongo phonology.

WHAT IT BECAME

African American English is the single most studied dialect of English in the world. Its vocabulary, grammar, and cadence have shaped American English generally, and through American popular culture, influenced English globally.

GEN 7 • Revolutionary (1769–1794)

WHAT WAS CREATED

Phillis Wheatley publishes “Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral” in 1773 — the first book published by an African American, and only the third book published by a woman in colonial America. Prince Hall founds the first Black Masonic Lodge. Free Black communities in Philadelphia and Boston build their first independent civic institutions.

AFRICAN ROOTS CARRIED

Yoruba and West African oral praise-poetry traditions (griots) transformed into published verse; Islamic traditions of scholarship carried by Senegambian-descended community members.

WHAT IT BECAME

The Wheatley collection went through multiple printings in England and the colonies. The Black Masonic tradition Hall founded still operates today. This generation establishes that Black intellectual life will find its expression whether or not a publisher, a university, or a library is made available to it.

GEN 8 • Trade-Ban Generation (1794–1819)

WHAT WAS CREATED

The spirituals take their earliest documented shape. The ring shout — a circular shuffling prayer-dance — is first recorded on the Georgia Sea Islands and provides the structural foundation for what will become gospel music. The AME Church, founded 1816, provides the first institutional home for an entirely independent Black musical tradition.

AFRICAN ROOTS CARRIED

Kongo circular ceremonial dance (the counterclockwise circle is a Kongo cosmological symbol of the soul's journey); Yoruba and Fon call-and-response worship; Islamic communal prayer posture adapted into Christian form.

WHAT IT BECAME

The spirituals are the direct root of gospel, which is the direct root of soul, which is the direct root of R&B. The ring shout's circular structure and call-and-response form run through all of them.

GEN 9 • Domestic Trade / Cotton Kingdom (1819–1844)

WHAT WAS CREATED

The Underground Railroad operates not as a single organization but as a distributed network of knowledge, sign, and trust — the quilt-code tradition, the use of the North Star, the reading of landscape and season — constituting an entirely self-organized navigation and communication system operating inside a police state.

AFRICAN ROOTS CARRIED

West African traditions of clandestine communication; Igbo and Yoruba secret society organizational structures; Islamic network-of-trust models carried by Senegambian community members.

WHAT IT BECAME

The network model of the Underground Railroad — distributed, trust-based, without a central authority, with multiple overlapping routes — is now studied as a model of resilient organizational design in fields from logistics to computer science.

GEN 10 • Civil War & Emancipation (1844–1869)

WHAT WAS CREATED

The spirituals go public — the Fisk Jubilee Singers (founded 1871) take this generation's music to concert halls across America and Europe, and their tour literally saves Fisk University from bankruptcy. At the same time, the first wave of Black journalism and political writing flourishes: Frederick Douglass's *North Star* (1847), David Walker's *Appeal* (1829).

AFRICAN ROOTS CARRIED

All prior musical traditions converging; the griotic oral tradition finally reaching print form in mass-market publications.

WHAT IT BECAME

The Fisk Jubilee Singers introduced African American musical performance to a global audience for the first time. The music of this generation is what the world, in 1871, understood African America to sound like — and it was overwhelming.

GEN 11 • Reconstruction & Redemption (1869–1894)

WHAT WAS CREATED

Scott Joplin composes his first ragtime pieces in the 1890s, pioneering a syncopated musical form that will directly seed jazz. Charles W. Chesnutt publishes groundbreaking fiction. The Black press expands dramatically, with Ida B. Wells turning investigative journalism into anti-lynching activism. Howard, Fisk, Morehouse, and Spelman build the first Black academic institutions of real scale.

AFRICAN ROOTS CARRIED

African polyrhythm entering European harmonic structures; West African storytelling traditions entering the American short story form.

WHAT IT BECAME

Ragtime was the first African American musical form to achieve wide mainstream popularity. Within a decade it would become jazz, and within another decade jazz would be the dominant popular music of the world.

GEN 12 • Jim Crow / Nadir (1894–1919)

WHAT WAS CREATED

The blues is born in the Mississippi Delta, first recorded by W.C. Handy in 1903, and codified as a named form by the 1910s. Jazz emerges in New Orleans. Jack Johnson becomes heavyweight champion. The NAACP's *Crisis* magazine, edited by W.E.B. Du Bois from 1910, becomes the most widely-read Black publication in American history.

AFRICAN ROOTS CARRIED

The blues descends directly from the field hollers, work songs, and spirituals of prior generations — it is the same musical tradition, stripped to its barest structure, and placed in an entirely secular context for the first time.

WHAT IT BECAME

The blues is the direct root of rock and roll. Every rock guitar riff traces to a Delta blues musician in this generation. The culture made under the nadir of American racial history produced the foundational music of the 20th century worldwide.

GEN 13 • Great Migration / Harlem Renaissance (1919–1944)

WHAT WAS CREATED

The Harlem Renaissance: Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, Alain Locke's "The New Negro." Louis Armstrong records the first jazz albums. Duke Ellington establishes jazz as a serious compositional art form. Marcus Garvey's UNIA peaks at 2 million members. Jacob Lawrence's migration series. Bessie Smith defines the blues as a performance tradition.

AFRICAN ROOTS CARRIED

Griot oral poetry entering the Harlem literary scene; West African visual aesthetic principles entering American painting and sculpture; African communal organizational models in the UNIA.

WHAT IT BECAME

Jazz, produced by this generation in Harlem and Chicago, became the dominant global popular music by 1930. The Harlem Renaissance is now studied in every major university's literature curriculum. The culture produced here had a global reach no prior generation had achieved.

GEN 14 • Civil Rights (1944–1969)

WHAT WAS CREATED

Gospel transforms into soul (Ray Charles, 1954). Soul transforms into Motown (Berry Gordy, 1959). James Brown invents funk. Muhammed Ali redefines athletic identity as political statement. Malcolm X redefines rhetorical power. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech becomes the most quoted piece of American political oratory. Lorraine Hansberry writes *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959). Aretha Franklin releases "Respect" (1967).

AFRICAN ROOTS CARRIED

All prior musical traditions converging in a single generation at full creative power; West African rhetorical tradition (the griot's political speech function) running through King and X simultaneously.

WHAT IT BECAME

Motown's first decade produced 37 Top Ten hits. "Respect" became the anthem of two simultaneous liberation movements. This generation's cultural output is what the world, in 1965, associated with American creativity — even as that same world was watching the Birmingham church bombing on television.

GEN 15 • Post-Civil Rights (1969–1994)

WHAT WAS CREATED

Hip-hop founded at 1520 Sedgwick Avenue, the Bronx, August 11, 1973 — DJ Kool Herc extends the break beat and invents an entirely new musical form. Rap, breakdancing, graffiti writing, and DJing constitute its four elements. Toni Morrison wins the Nobel Prize in Literature (1993). Michael Jordan redefines athleticism as global brand. The BET network, Black Entertainment Television, founded 1980.

AFRICAN ROOTS CARRIED

West African griot tradition entering hip-hop's MC function; talking drum tradition entering DJ technique; kente cloth aesthetic patterns entering graffiti art; Yoruba and Kongo rhythmic traditions entering breakbeat structure.

WHAT IT BECAME

Hip-hop is now the most globally consumed music genre in the world, surpassing all others in streaming share by 2017. Created in a South Bronx neighborhood stripped of resources by Robert Moses's Cross Bronx Expressway, it is the clearest single proof in this chapter that cultural creativity cannot be manufactured by denying it resources.

GEN 16 · Diaspora Expansion (1994–2019)

WHAT WAS CREATED

Barack Obama elected president (2008). Kendrick Lamar wins the Pulitzer Prize for DAMN (2018) — the first non-classical, non-jazz musician to receive the award. Beyoncé's Lemonade reframes the entire pop album as a political and spiritual document. Black Panther (2018) grosses \$1.3 billion worldwide, demonstrating global audience appetite for Black storytelling on Black terms. The Black Lives Matter hashtag (2013) becomes a global organizing framework.

AFRICAN ROOTS CARRIED

All prior traditions arriving at the scale that global media infrastructure could carry; the griot's political commentary function entering Twitter/Instagram as a new medium; African textile and aesthetic traditions entering high fashion directly.

WHAT IT BECAME

This generation's culture moved with a speed and reach no prior generation had access to. A tweet carries Harriet Tubman's logic. A film carries Langston Hughes's vision. A song carries Aretha Franklin's theology. The infrastructure changed; the root did not.

GEN 17 · New Diaspora (current) (2019–2026)

WHAT WAS CREATED

The culture of the Crossing Nation in real time: Afrobeats — a genre rooted in Nigerian Yoruba musical tradition — returns from the continent to become one of the fastest-growing global genres, completing a circle from the Bight of Benin that began in Generation 5. Ketanji Brown Jackson sworn in. A global reckoning with statues, names, and the memory of who built what. This chapter is still being written.

AFRICAN ROOTS CARRIED

The full circle: Yoruba music from the Bight of Benin, carried in captive bodies to South Carolina in Generations 5 and 7, transformed into blues, soul, R&B, and hip-hop over fourteen subsequent generations, and now returning to African artists who have absorbed the transformation and are carrying it forward as Afrobeats.

WHAT IT BECAME

Every prior generation's output is visible in this one. The 17th generation is simultaneously the newest and the oldest — it is the first generation to receive its own heritage back from the continent that sent it.

Compiled from this project's prior historical and cultural research: the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, linguistic scholarship on African American English (Molefi Kete Asante, Geneva Smitherman), the genealogy of American music from field hollers to hip-hop (Ted Gioia, "Delta Blues"; Tricia Rose, "Black Noise"; Jeff Chang, "Can't Stop Won't Stop"), the Fisk Jubilee Singers, the Harlem Renaissance, Kendrick Lamar's Pulitzer Prize (2018), and the global reach of Afrobeats. This chapter documents creation, not exception: seventeen generations of consistent, world-altering cultural output under documented conditions of deliberate suppression.