

A COMPANION REFERENCE · THE CROSSING NATION

Three Roots

*How a nation's root determines everything above it —
comparing Israelite identity, the Nation of Islam, and the
Crossing Nation, with teaching notes and talking points.*

For Teaching · Discussion · Reference

THE CORE COMPARISON

What Are We Rooted In?

TRADITION	ROOT	WHAT THAT MEANS
Israelite Identity	Religion AND Nation, fused	The covenant (Abraham, Sinai) and the bloodline (the twelve tribes) were never separate. Faith is the genealogy. You cannot exit the nation by losing the belief, because the two were never two different things.
Nation of Islam	Religion alone	A theology asserting a new origin story — the Tribe of Shabazz, the Yakub myth. The doctrine generates the entire claim to nationhood. There is no independent genealogical record underneath it; the religion is the root.
The Crossing Nation	Event + documented lineage	Anthony and Isabella are real, dated, verifiable people; 1619 is a real, dated event. No theology is required to validate it. The root is what happened to a people, not what they believe.

ON ISRAELITE IDENTITY

From Abraham forward, Jewish identity has never separated faith from genealogy. The covenant bound a bloodline to a religious law at the same moment. This is why, in Jewish religious law (halakha), identity still runs through descent even for secular or non-practicing Jews — you don't need to believe to remain inside the nation, because the root was never purely doctrinal. It is covenantal *and* genealogical at once, which makes it nearly impossible to separate the religious claim from the national one.

KEY LINE: "Faith is the genealogy."

ON THE NATION OF ISLAM

The NOI's claim to nationhood is manufactured entirely by its theology: the Tribe of Shabazz, the Yakub origin myth, the claim that Black Americans are the "Asiatic" original people. No genealogical or historical record independent of the doctrine supports this — the doctrine *is* the whole origin story. This is provable by what happens when the doctrine changes: when Imam Warith Deen Mohammed dissolved the original theology in 1975, and when Clarence 13X broke away in 1964 over a single doctrinal disagreement, the "nation" didn't bend — it split, because there was no non-doctrinal root underneath to hold the pieces together.

KEY LINE: "The religion is the root."

ON THE CROSSING NATION

Unlike the two above, this root is empirical, not doctrinal. It does not require belief to be true. This is exactly why the religions documented elsewhere in this project — Kongo Catholicism, Conjure, the Black Hebrew Israelite congregations, the Nation of Islam, Oyotunji's Yoruba revival — all function as *branches* responding to the root, not as the root itself. They are competing, sometimes contradictory, attempts to explain what the Crossing meant — and they can coexist precisely because none of them was ever asked to hold the structure up.

KEY LINE: "A root doesn't argue with itself."

TALKING POINTS

For Teaching and Discussion

- One clock vs. four clocks.** A nation rooted in religion only needs one calendar — the Hijra is the Ummah's one clock. The Crossing Nation needed Four Reckonings (the Nile, the Ummah, the Crossing, the Emancipation) precisely because its root isn't a single truth-claim. Multiple clocks are evidence of a non-doctrinal root.
- Pluralism is structural, not accommodated.** Because the root is event and lineage rather than belief, the Crossing Nation can hold Christian, Muslim, Yoruba, Conjure, and Hebrew Israelite identity all as legitimate branches — without picking a winner. In a religion-rooted nation, that same diversity would be schism. Here, it's just the branches doing what branches do.
- "Diaspora of rupture" vs. "diaspora of religion."** Scholar Paul Gilroy's concept of the Black Atlantic describes a people constituted by the shared memory of a violent historical event — not a shared faith (the Jewish model) or a shared ethnicity (most other diasporas). This gives the comparison an academic name: a diaspora of rupture.
- Removing the doctrine is the real test.** Remove Islam from the Nation of Islam and nothing is left. Remove Conjure, or Christianity, or the Yoruba revival from the Crossing Nation, and Anthony, Isabella, and 1619 are still standing exactly where they were. That asymmetry is the whole argument in one sentence.
- This is why the religions came after, not first.** Every movement catalogued in *Religions of the Crossing* and *Visions of Deliverance* is dated *after* 1619 — sometimes centuries after. They are responses to the root. None of them founded it.

Discussion question: does a nation need everyone inside it to believe the same thing in order to hold together — or can a shared history alone do that work, with belief left free to disagree?

Compiled from this project's prior work on the Four Reckonings, Religions of the Crossing, Visions of Deliverance, and Rebellions of the Body, Rebellions of the Soul. The Gilroy reference is to Paul Gilroy's "The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness" (1993).