CHAPTER 12

The “Nu” Nation
An Analysis of Malachi Z. York's Nuwaubians

Paul Easterling

Alien can blend
Right on in
With your kin.
Look again
’cuz I swear I spot one every now and then.¹
ANDRE 3000

Introduction

During the late 1960s, amidst the social and political turmoil in the United States, various religious groups sparked new understandings of what it meant to be human in the world. Particular groups focused on particular factions or demographics of the world population. One such group is the Nuwaubian Nation founded by Malachi Z. York (born Dwight York) in 1967. This movement was started in Brooklyn, New York, but moved its headquarters to Georgia in the 1990s. It centered on themes of the Christian New Thought religion, Islam, Ancient Egyptian based belief systems, and Ufology. Further, the Nuwaubians’ belief system is centered on the understanding that they are an ancient people who are not originally from planet earth.

The purpose of this chapter will be to unlock some of the mysteries of the Nuwaubian belief system. The focus will be on York’s teachings and writings which have centered on establishing a different identity for African Americans in the United States. York has a deep reservoir of texts, which have become popular amongst African American urban youth. York’s group is similar to other African American religious groups, such as the Moorish Science Temple of America, the Nation of Islam, the Nation of Gods and Earths and the Hebrew Israelites, however, the Nuwaubian Nation has its own unique understandings of what it means to be of African descent in a world dominated by white supremacy.

Guiding Method

The primary method of this work will be qualitative in nature. It will make use of primary writings, video and audio recordings of Malachi Z. York. This chapter also employs the secondary information of his proponents and opponents. The reason for this is because of the large amount of attention he and his group received from media personalities, newspaper reporters and writers. It is hard to determine why the group has received the attention it has, because despite the charges York was convicted of, it has not all been negative. Nevertheless, due to this attention and York's expansive publications there is wealth of material from which to pull.

In this investigation, I will focus on York's writings/lectures/talks that center on the history and origin of the Nuwaubian Nation as well as their understanding of the very shaping of their belief system. Who is York to the Nuwaubian Nation? Who are they in the world/universe? Who are they to themselves? Who are they to the world? These are the questions that make-up the basis for this chapter. Answers to these questions are meant to shed light on some of the more “obscure” religious traditions like the Nuwaubian Nation.

Situating the Nation: Ancestry and Organizational Violations

African American religion has taken on an innumerable type of expressions since the first African touched the shores of this nation. A great number of these expressions have looked to the past for both inspiration and information to shape the mind, body and spirit of their belief system. For instance, there are still many African Americans who practice African Traditional Religions (ATR) such as Yoruba and Vodun. As well, many African Americans have put their faith in belief systems which are an amalgam of ATRs and “New World” religions such as Christianity. Santeria is one such example, as it combines the texture and tone of an ATR while making use of the motif and characteristics of Catholic saints. And still other traditions, redefine the parameters of “New World” religions as well as create new understandings of the past (both a historical and mythological past) in order to redefine their present and (re)shape their future.

Over the past century, there has been a different type of redefinition of self that has taken place within various traditions of African American religion. These traditions have adopted the motif of the three “great” monotheistic religions while also making use of a theorized African past in an attempt to provide answers and insight into the triumphs and tribulations of Black people