

Five-Percent Nation

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Not to be confused with [Zaidiyyah](#) who call themselves Fivers



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The **Five-Percent Nation**, sometimes referred to as **NGE** or **NOGE**, the **Nation of Gods and Earths**, or the **Five Percenters** is an American organization founded in 1964 in the [Harlem](#) section of the borough of [Manhattan, New York City](#), by a former member of the [Nation of Islam](#) named [Clarence 13X](#) (born Clarence Ernest Smith and later known as "Allah the Father"). Clarence 13X, a former student of [Malcolm X](#), left the Nation after a theological dispute with the Nation's leaders over the nature and identity of God.^[1] Specifically, Clarence 13X denied that the Nation's [biracial](#) founder [W. Fard Muhammad](#) was God ("[Allah](#)") and instead taught each man was himself God personified.^[1] Members of the organization call themselves Allah's Five Percenters, which reflects the concept that ten percent of the people of the world know the truth of existence, and those [elites](#) opt to keep eighty-five percent of the world in ignorance and under their controlling thumb; the remaining five percent are those who know the truth and are determined to enlighten the rest.^[2]

Initially, the Nation of Gods and Earths, as it is known today, was viewed as little more than an off-shoot of the Nation of Islam (NOI). While the Nation of Gods and Earths has been characterized as an organization, an institution, a religion, or even a gang, representatives of the Nation teach that Islam is a natural or mathematical way of living. The New York City areas of [Harlem](#) ("Mecca") and [Brooklyn](#) ("Medina") are named after notable Islamic cities by members of the organization.^{[3][4]} Other areas include [Detroit](#) (D-Mecca), [New Jersey](#) (New Jerusalem), [Chicago](#) (C-Medina), [Queens](#) (the Desert), [Connecticut](#) (New Heaven), [St. Louis](#) (Saudi) and [Dallas](#) (the Sudan).^[5]

The Nation of Gods and Earths teaches that Asiatic black people are the original people of the planet Earth, and therefore they are the fathers (Gods) and mothers (Earths) of civilization.^[1] The Nation teaches that Supreme Mathematics and Supreme Alphabet, a set of principles created by Allah, is the key to understanding humankind's relationship to the universe. The Nation does not believe in a mystery God but instead teaches that the [Asiatic Blackman is God](#) [*sic*] and his proper name is Allah, an acronym for Arm, Leg, Leg, Arm, Head.^[1] Members believe that numerous prophets, including Jesus (citing such verses as [John 10:34](#)), have made reference to this divine status.

Asiatic Blackman- Rather than Asiatic meaning of Asian decent and Blackman meaning a male with dark brown skin, it can be broken down and redefined. Asia-Body, atic (or attic, which makes this, like most definitions in this belief system, a metaphor)-mind, Black-dominant force, man-higher intelligence (another metaphor).^[6]

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Founding



One of the few extant photographs of [Clarence 13X](#), the founder of the Nation of Gods and Earths, date unknown.

The Nation of Gods and Earths was founded by Allah (Clarence 13X) after he left the [Nation of Islam](#)'s Temple Number Seven in Harlem, New York (the same temple where [Malcolm X](#) was a minister from 1960 to 1963). Multiple stories exist as to why Clarence and the NOI parted ways: some have him refusing to give up gambling; others have him questioning the unique [divinity](#) of [Wallace Fard Muhammad](#), whom the NOI deified as the True and Living God in person; or questioning his position as God due to the belief that Fard was born of a [Caucasian](#) mother.^{[[citation needed](#)]} The story states that Allah (Clarence 13X) was then disciplined by the NOI and [excommunicated](#) in 1963, but another version of events says that he left on his own free will along with Abu Shahid,^[7] who agreed with Clarence's questioning of Wallace Fard Muhammad. That same year Clarence met James Howell, a sea merchant, who would later become Justice, and Clarence's closest associate until his death.^[8]

Clarence proselytized the streets of Harlem to teach others his views based on his interpretation of NOI teachings. After failing to reach elder adults whom he saw as already set in their ways, he found success with the disenfranchised street youth.^{[9][10][11][12][13][14]} This young group formed the First Nine Born of what became known as the Five Percent Nation, or later the Nation of Gods and Earths, on October 10, 1964. In December of that year, Clarence was shot in a basement gambling den called the Hole. After surviving the shooting, he assumed the name Allah, and, according to some, boasted that he was immortal.^[7]

He taught the 120 Lessons to his young followers (who came to refer to him as the Father), but instead of teaching them to be Muslims, he taught them that they were God the same way he was. The women who came into Clarence 13X's growing movement to study along with the males were taught they were symbolic of the planet Earth, because it is the planet on which God produces life (hence the female practitioners using Earth as their title). The NGE does not consider itself a religion—its position is that it makes no sense to be religious or to worship or deify anyone or anything outside of oneself when adherents themselves are the highest power in the known universe, both collectively and individually.^{[[citation needed](#)]}

In addition to the 120 Lessons, Clarence 13X taught a system he developed called Supreme Mathematics, which can be compared to a version of the Jewish mystical traditions of [Kabbalah](#) or even more closely [Gematria](#), or the Arabic [Abjad numerals](#). In this system, the numbers from one to nine, and zero all represent principles and concepts. Coming together to discuss the Supreme Mathematics is the most fundamental regimen of the NGE. Whenever members meet, they discuss about the Supreme Mathematics and 120 Lessons and relate them to life. This dialogue is referred to by the NGE as Building, which is the eighth degree of the Supreme Mathematics. Gods and Earths can build their minds, which means to elevate or add on to the knowledge one has. Building also refers to the building of their physical bodies, their financial status, or institutions, among much more that the principle of Building can represent.^{[[citation needed](#)]}

Teachings

Basis

Representatives of the Nation of Gods and Earths view themselves (black men of their Nation) as their own God (both individually and collectively as the Original Man).^[10] Gods and Earths sometimes refer to themselves as [scientists](#), implying their search for knowledge and proof.^[15] In recent years the Nation has sought constitutional protection for their identity as a God-centered culture. According to the *Five Percenter Newspaper*, "God first means that it is no longer a judicial argument; centered means everything we do is about God. Culture is the practices and principles of a people at any given time."^[16]

The teachings of the Nation of Gods and Earths are passed on through a modern oral tradition. The advancement of a God or Earth is based on his or her memorization, recitation, comprehension, and practical application of the Supreme Mathematics and the Supreme Alphabet and also the 120 Lessons, sometimes referred to as degrees, a revised version of the Supreme Wisdom lessons of the NOI, originally written by [Wallace Fard Muhammad](#) and [Elijah Muhammad](#).^{[9][12][17]} The first literary Anthology *Knowledge of Self: A Collection of Wisdom on the Science of Everything in Life* has been published of the teachings of the Nation of Gods and Earths by [Supreme Understanding](#).^{[18] [19]}

Origin of Five-Percent title

The term Five Percent comes from NOI doctrine that sees the world's population divided into three groups: 85% of the people are blind to the knowledge of themselves and God, while 10% of the people know the truth, but teach a lie for their personal gain; seen as part of this 10% are religious leaders that teach that God is an [incorporeal](#) being (hence the term mystery God). The 10% can also include the governments of the world that deceive and mislead the majority of the world through most of the available media outlets. The remaining 5% are the Poor Righteous Teachers—those who do not subscribe to the teachings of the 10%, as they know and teach that God is the Asiatic Blackman.

The Universal Language

Supreme Mathematics

The Supreme Mathematics is a system of understanding [numerals](#) alongside concepts and qualitative representations that are used along with the Supreme Alphabet.^{[12][17]} The Supreme Mathematics is thought to be the highest system of [mathematics](#) in the NGE, used to give qualitative value to numbers in addition to quantity.

For example, the numeral

1 symbolizes Knowledge,

2 symbolizes Wisdom,

3 represents Understanding,

4 represents Culture/Freedom,

5 represents Power/Refinement,

6 represents Equality,

7 represents God,

8 represents Build/Destroy,

9 represents Born,

0 represents Cipher.

The system (similar to [numerology](#)), is claimed to maximize a person's logical thinking in order to solve life's problems. ^{[[citation needed](#)]}

Supreme Alphabet

Main article: [Supreme Alphabet](#)

The Supreme Alphabet is a system of interpreting text and finding deeper meaning from the NOI Lessons by assigning actual meanings to the letters of the [Latin script](#). For example, the first letter, A, stands for Allah; the 12th letter, L, stands for Love, Hell, or [live] Right; and the 13th letter, M, stands for Master. The corresponding mathematical number of each letter is also important to the alphabet's use. This symbolic alphabet was developed with assistance from Justice by Father Allah after splitting from the Nation of Islam, after which he developed his Supreme Understanding. ^{[[9](#)][[10](#)][[12](#)][[17](#)][[20](#)]}

The Twelve Jewels

The Twelve Jewels are considered a companion to the Supreme Mathematics and the Supreme Alphabet, as [axioms](#) by which one should live. ^{[[citation needed](#)]} They were not created by Allah.

1. Knowledge 2. Wisdom 3. Understanding 4. Freedom 5. Justice 6. Equality 7. Food 8. Clothing 9. Shelter 10. Love 11. Peace 12. Happiness

Universal Flag

The Universal Flag is the group's official [trademark](#), which consists of a sun, moon, star, and the number seven. According to its doctrine, it represents the Original Family as the following:

- [Seven](#)—The number held sacred in many ancient and modern traditions. In Supreme Mathematics, the number seven represents God, that is, the Original Man, not the mystery god of many organized religions.
- [Sun](#)—Another symbol of the male, Knowledge, the Truth, and the Light. The points around the sun symbolize the expanding consciousness.

- [Moon](#)—The crescent moon symbolizes the women and wisdom.
- [Star](#)—The five-pointed star symbolizes understanding and children as the beginning of a new sun.

The eight outer rays (points) of the Sun have also been spoken as representative of the core components Nation of Gods and Earths' teachings:

1. Supreme Mathematics
2. Supreme Alphabet
3. Student Enrollment (1–10)
4. Lost & Found Muslim Lesson #1 (1–14)
5. Lost & Found Muslim Lesson #2 (1–40)
6. English Lesson C-1 (1–36)
7. Actual Facts
8. Solar Facts

The last six of these bodies of lessons (1–10 through Solar Facts) are collectively called 120.

Customs

Gods and Earths hold events known as Universal Parliaments in various cities—usually once a month—to build on their interpretation of the Supreme Mathematics, lessons, and to discuss business concerning the NGE. These meetings usually take place in public parks and in schoolyards.

The Show and Prove is an annual event that takes place in the Harlem section of Manhattan every second weekend in June (on or before the June 13 anniversary of Smith's assassination). Gods and Earths converge from all over the world at [Harriet Tubman](#) Elementary School for this gathering, which includes a marketplace, performances, and speeches in the school's auditorium and a [science fair](#) in which children participate.

The Nation generally does not recognize traditional [holidays](#), most notably those associated with religion such as [Christmas](#) or [Easter](#). However, some regions where the Nation is active may hold events close to dates in honor of Smith's birthday (February 22) or the official founding of the Nation (October 10).

Dietary laws of the Five Percent dictate that adherents are forbidden to eat [pork](#) or any pork-based by-products. Many take further steps and eschew meat altogether, often opting for [veganism](#) or a [raw food](#) diet.

Influence and interactions

City Hall and the Urban League

The NGE established a headquarters in the Harlem section of Manhattan. The Allah School in Mecca, previously known as the Street Academy, was founded in 1966 through the [Urban League](#), with the help of the then-current Republican mayor of New York, [John Lindsay](#), and his assistant, Barry Gottehrer. The agreement reached between Allah and the Urban League was a payment of one dollar a day.^[citation needed]

The first programs instituted in the school contained 10 to 30 youths, state-certified teachers, and three street workers. Graduates of the street academy would transfer to an academy of transition and then on to college preparatory school. The Father disagreed with the program originally instituted at the Urban League, and so, the curriculum was later turned over to him to manage, while the daily programs switched to [math](#), [English](#), and [self defense](#).^[9]

Conflicts

The schism between Smith and the NOI led to numerous confrontations. The murder of Smith in 1969 remains unsolved, but it has been widely blamed^[by whom?] on J. Edgar Hoover's FBI [Counter Intelligence Program](#).^[citation needed] The group known as [Moorish Americans](#) believe the [FBI](#) and the [New York Police Department](#) were heavily involved. The murder was a blow to the movement, but according to the direct orders of Clarence before his death, some of his earliest disciples, a group of nine men who were called the First Nine Born carried on the teachings, and an acting leadership role was assumed by his friend Justice. In the years to follow, the Gods and Earths gained a varied reputation, from being known as outstanding members of and contributors to their communities who at one time quelled a potential rebellion when [Martin Luther King](#) was assassinated, to being called an unruly and confused group of African-American teenage thugs and even categorized as a gang.^{[9][11]}

The gang label has caused much trouble for adherents to the teachings of the NGE in the United States. As the Nation has either gained students within the prison system or seen those who at least allege adherence to NGE teachings become incarcerated, the preceding gang reputation brought those with even remote NGE affiliation to be designated as security threats in states such as [Michigan](#), [New Jersey](#), New York, and [South Carolina](#).^[21] Literature has been banned from institutions in these and other states, and inmates have been denied privileges enjoyed by those of other persuasions. Such rules were relaxed in 2004 in New York to allow registered sincere adherents to study teachings personally but not share with unregistered inmates during their incarceration.^[22]

The Nation has vigorously defended itself against these accusations. Its newspaper *The Five Percenter* condemns the states who impose restrictions on their practice as those who "attempt to define us in ways that seeks to criminalize us".^[23]

In Michigan the Nation challenged a ban on the group's literature among prison inmates after an inmate was designated a security threat until he renounced his membership. Judge Steven Whalen found no evidence that group advocated violence and recommended that it be recognized as a legitimate belief system.^[24]

In July 2008, a man in [Staten Island, New York](#) already known in the Nation as Black Cream Allah was denied a legal adoption of the name because a judge felt it was sacrilegious and sounded like the name of a hip hop record. He has since filed a second petition for the amended name Original Kream Shabazz.^[25]

Hip hop

In its article on Five Percenter [Jay Electronica](#), [Vice Magazine](#) stated in regard to the Five Percent Nation: "It's a movement that's been affiliated with hip-hop from the very beginning, coining lexicon from "ciphers", to "dropping science" and influencing everyone from [Big Daddy Kane](#), [Rakim](#), [Wu-Tang Clan](#), [Brand Nubian](#) and [Nas](#). With these artists, and any others associated with the Five Percenters, music was more than just a message. It's the reason why no one else, except Jay Electronica, has managed to capture the essence of The Golden Era since."^[26]

From the early 1980s, the Nation of Gods and Earths has propagated its teachings throughout the [United States](#) and abroad. This spread was in part due to early adherents teaching when away at college or in the military and, more famously, because of the rise of [hip hop music](#). The main theme of the NGE doctrine spoken on hip hop records were the teachings that black people were the original or first human life to walk the planet, that the Blackman is God, the Black Woman is Earth, and through the inner [esoteric](#) powers of the Gods and Earths, the youth can transform and possess its true [potential](#), which seems to overthrow the overbearing [oligarchy](#) by becoming just rulers of themselves. This especially meshed well with conscious themes found in other golden-age hip hop recordings.^[citation needed]

Early hip-hop acts affiliated with the Five Percenters, and who spread its teachings through hip hop, include two MCs of the late 1980s–early '90s conscious-rap era—[Rakim](#) of [Eric B. & Rakim](#)^[27] and [Big Daddy Kane](#). These two acts, as well as some of their other contemporaries, infused Five-Percent teachings and symbolism throughout their music and videos. This reputation brought fans of Rakim in particular to refer to him as the God MC. Not soon after Rakim and Kane's heyday rose acts that were even more explicit with allegiance to the NGE, most notably [Brand Nubian](#), [Poor Righteous Teachers](#), [Wu-Tang Clan](#), [Killarmy](#), [Sunz of Man](#), [Gravediggaz](#), [Public Enemy](#), Godbliss and [Gang Starr](#). The popularity of these acts sparked a boom of new NGE students.^[citation needed]

Five Percenters were the innovators behind early hip-hop slang, including "'sup, G?" (originally "G" means God, not gangsta), "Word is bond," "Break it down," "Peace," "droppin' science," and "represent."^{[21][28]} Many MCs employ the technique and terminology of the Supreme Alphabet to create [acrostics](#), [acronyms](#) and [backronyms](#) in their rhymes. For example, in the song "Wildflower," [Ghostface Killah](#) rhymes, "I'm God Cipher Divine," spelling G-O-D in the Supreme Alphabet.^{[29][30]} Furthermore, [Raekwon](#) breaks down the science of his life story on the track "North Star," rhyming the words "sun, moon, and stars, rock on". The [RZA](#) directly rhymes the twelve pillars of life's objectives on his later work with [Gravediggaz](#), rhyming in succession Knowledge, Wisdom, Understanding, Freedom, Justice, Equality, Food, Clothing, Shelter, Love, Peace, Happiness. He regularly wears an eight-pointed star pendant, which can notably be seen on the cover of his album [The World According to RZA](#).

Five Percenters in New York City were even known as a visible presence at parties during hip hop's formative years of the 1970s. Scene pioneer [DJ Kool Herc](#) recalled that while there was a heavy gang presence in attendance, the Five Percenters were also there as a *de facto* peace-keeping element.^[20]

Other examples of hip hop and [R&B](#) acts who are (or have been) associated with Five Percent teachings include [Busta Rhymes](#), [Digable Planets](#), [J-Live](#), [Nas](#),^[31] [Jay Electronica](#), [Erykah Badu](#), [Queen Latifah](#) and [Planet Asia](#).

In popular culture

[Supreme Allah](#) is a fictional character of the [HBO](#) drama [Oz](#), a Five Percenter who is serving time for murdering a man who laughed at him during a dice game. He often preaches Five Percent philosophy while simultaneously dealing drugs. He is portrayed by [Lord Jamar](#) of the hip hop group [Brand Nubian](#).

In his one-man [Broadway](#) show, *Mike Tyson: Undisputed Truth*, [Mike Tyson](#) states that a Five Percenter friend changed his life around by telling him to stop robbing and embrace his new-found family, which consisted of trainer [Cus D'Amato](#).

Notable current and former members and associates of the Nation of Gods and Earths

- [Cliff Po](#) - Alternative hip hop artist from Harlem, NY
- [Rakim](#) - member of the influential duo [Eric B. & Rakim](#)
- [Big Daddy Kane](#) - [Grammy Award](#)-winning rapper
- [Nas](#)^{[32][33]}
- [Wu-Tang Clan](#) - [Ghostface Killah](#)^[34] and [Raekwon](#)^[35] have since converted to traditional [Islam](#)
- [AZ](#)^[32]
- [Gang Starr](#) - A duo consisting of MC [Guru](#) and [DJ Premier](#)^{[36][37]}
- [MF Doom](#)^[38]
- [Jay Electronica](#)^[32]
- [Busta Rhymes](#) - Raised a Five Percenter,^[39] he has since converted to traditional Islam.^[40]
- [Black Thought](#) - Lead MC of the [Philadelphia](#)-based hip hop group [The Roots](#)^[41]
- [Ras Kass](#)^[42]
- [Jus Allah](#) - Member of the underground rap duo [Jedi Mind Tricks](#)^[43]
- [Cormega](#)^[citation needed]
- [Allah Mathematics](#) - Hip hop producer and DJ for the [Wu-Tang Clan](#)^[44]
- [Brand Nubian](#)
- [Erykah Badu](#) - Her [Grammy Award](#)-winning song "[On & On](#)" features teachings of the Five Percent Nation^[45]
- [Pete Rock & CL Smooth](#)^[46]
- [Prince Paul](#) - One of the founding members of the group [Gravediggaz](#)^[citation needed]
- [Black Sheep](#)^[47]

- [Poor Righteous Teachers](#)^[48]
- [Large Professor](#)^[49]
- [Digable Planets](#) - [Grammy Award](#)-winning jazz-rap group^[50]
- [Michael Muhammad Knight](#) - author and journalist who has written extensively on the Five Percent Nation. He is a [Harvard](#) graduate who is currently in the process of obtaining his Ph.D from the [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#)
- [Supreme Understanding](#) - also known as Dr. Sujan Dass, he is an author and historian who obtained his Ph.D from [Argosy University](#) at the age of 26
- [GQ](#) - an [R&B](#) and [disco](#) group, best known for their 1979 hit "[Disco Nights \(Rock Freak\)](#)"^{[51][52]}
- [Killarmy](#) - Wu-Tang affiliate group.
- [Sunz of Man](#) - Wu-Tang affiliate group.
- [Talib Kweli](#)
- [Jadakiss](#)
- [Tragedy Khadafi](#)^[53] - He considers himself a Five Percenter, but not part of the Nation of Gods and Earths.
- [LL Cool J](#) said in his autobiography that he joined the Five-Percent Nation in school and took the name "Lord Supreme Shalik", but he also said, "We were just using the Five Percenter label as a shield to do our dirty work - fighting and eventually robbing."^[54]

See also

- [The 5% Album](#)

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- [A paper presented at the American Anthropological Association's Annual Meeting \(Nov 1996\) about Five Percenters and its influence on hip hop music, as well as its divergence from traditional Islam](#)

- [Official MySpace page of the Allah School in Mecca](#)
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