

# Nation of Islam

*Cults, Sects, and New Religious Movements*

**Official Name:** The Nation of Islam (NOI)

**Leader:** Louis Farrakhan

**Headquarters:** Chicago, Ill.

**Date of Beginning:** 1978. The Nation of Islam follows the teachings of W. D. Fard.

**Adherents:** The Nation of Islam does not release statistics, but there are an estimated 25,000 to 100,000 members. Many more people admire Louis Farrakhan as a national leader. In 1995 he called for a Million Man March and several hundred thousand men answered his call.

## History

The NOI was created by Wallace D. Fard, also known as Wallace Fard Muhammad. Fard claimed to come from the Islamic city of Mecca. He began a mosque in Detroit in 1930. He taught that Christianity should be rejected since it was the “slave-master’s religion.” In 1934 Fard disappeared and was neither seen nor heard from again. Fard was succeeded by Elijah Muhammad (Elijah Poole).

Elijah Poole was born in Sandersville, Ga. on October 7, 1898. He changed his name to Elijah Muhammad after joining the NOI. After Fard disappeared, Elijah took over the leadership of NOI.

Malcolm Little was born in 1925. He joined the NOI and changed his name to Malcolm X. He achieved fame in the early 1960s as the spokesperson for Elijah Muhammad. Malcolm was removed as spokesperson because of an inappropriate remark about the assassination of President Kennedy and was severed from the NOI because of his accusations of sexual misconduct between Elijah and female staff members (C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslim in America*, 3d. ed. [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994], p. 258). After he left

the NOI, Malcolm began the Muslim Mosque, Inc., in 1964. Less than one year later, on February 21, 1965, Malcolm X was killed by assassins.

Warith Deen Muhammad became the new leader of the NOI after his father, Elijah Muhammad, died on February 25, 1975. Warith eliminated from NOI teaching that Fard was Allah. Warith led the NOI to adopt beliefs compatible with traditional Islam. He changed the name from the NOI to the World Community of Islam. Later, he altered the name to the American Muslim Mission but eventually disbanded the organization and his followers became part of traditional Islam. The NOI was resurrected by Louis Farrakhan.

Farrakhan was born Louis Eugene Walcott in New York City on May 11, 1933. He attended college for two years in North Carolina, but left to begin a career as an entertainer. He sang in nightclubs until he joined the NOI. Louis Farrakhan separated from Warith Deen Muhammad in 1978 because of doctrinal disagreements. Farrakhan formed a splinter group using the original name—the Nation of Islam. He reestablished the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and also reinstated the movement’s security force known as the Fruit of Islam (FOI).

## Beliefs

Several teachings of the NOI are incompatible with Christianity. Many of their beliefs are also incompatible with traditional Islam.

## God

The Nation of Islam claims that God is a man. “God is a man and we just cannot make Him other than man” (Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America*, [Chicago: Muhammad’s Temple No. 2], p. 6). The NOI teaches that Fard was Allah in physical form (Elijah Muhammad, *The Fall of America*, p. 236, as reprinted in “The Mother Plane,” *The Final Call* 15, no. 25 [July 16, 1996]: 19). According to Elijah Muhammad, Fard told him, “My name is Mahdi; I am God” (Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman*, p. 17). The NOI continues to teach that Fard is Allah. The current NOI statement is published in every issue of their weekly newspaper, *The Final Call*, in an article titled “What the Muslims Believe.” It states, “12. WE BELIEVE that Allah (God) appeared in the Person of Master W. Fard Muhammad, July, 1930; the long-awaited ‘Messiah’ of the Christians and the ‘Mahdi’ of the Muslims.” The NOI denies that God is spirit. The NOI claims that Christians worship an “invisible spook somewhere in space” (Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman*, p. 5). According to Elijah Muhammad, “God is in person, and stop looking for a dead Jesus for help, but pray to Him whom Jesus prophesied would come after Him. He who is alive and not a spook” (Ibid., p. 3).

**Christian Response:** The Bible teaches that God is spirit (see John 4:24) and denies that He is a man (see Num. 23:19). The NOI worships a false god. Jesus is the only begotten Son of God (see John 3:16). Jesus is unique; there are no other incarnations of God. Jesus, not Fard, is the true Savior of the world (see Acts 4:12; John 1:1-14).

## Humanity

The NOI teaches that blacks are gods and whites are demons. The NOI claims that blacks are of the same race as God. According to Elijah Muhammad, “To accept your own means yourself and your kind, your God Who is of you and you are of Him. It was your fathers who created the heavens and the earth, while there is nothing that the white man has created independently. He did not even create himself. The Black Nation is self-created, while the white race is made by one of the gods and scientists of the Black Nation” (Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman*, p. 42). The NOI claims that one of these black scientists created the moon. They teach that 66 trillion years ago, he decided to destroy the earth. He drilled a shaft into the earth, filled it with high explosives, and then set it off. He failed to totally destroy the earth but he did blow it into two parts. The smaller part became what we now call the moon (Tape of Louis Farrakhan, Dec. 9, 1990, Compton, Calif.).

According to the NOI, a black scientist named Yakub created the white race about 6,000 years ago. They claim that whites are a race of devils (Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman*, p. 51). According to Elijah Muhammad, “If you understand it [the Bible] right, you will agree with me that the whole Caucasian race is a race of devils (Ibid., p. 23). The NOI claims that Christianity is the devil’s religion and was created to mislead blacks (Ibid., p. 11).

**Christian Response:** Blacks are not gods and whites are not demons. Both races are descended from Adam and made in the image of God. “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl or the air, and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:26). “God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). The moon was created by the God of the Bible, not by a scientist 66 trillion years ago (see Gen. 1:16). The Bible warns Christians not to believe cunningly devised fables (see 2 Pet. 1:16).

## The Bible

While the NOI often refers to the Bible, they claim it has been corrupted. “The original scripture called ‘The Torah’—revealed to Musa (Moses)—was Holy until the Jews and the Christian scholars started tampering with it” (Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman*, p. 87). Elijah Muhammad taught, “The Bible is not all holy, nor is it all the word of God” (Ibid., p. 89)! Contrary to traditional Islam, the NOI also teaches that the Qur’an has been tampered with. “The enemy has tampered with the truth of both books: for he has been permitted to handle both books” (Ibid., p. 90).

**Christian Response:** There is no evidence that the Bible has been corrupted as the NOI claims. Jesus promised, “I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matt. 5:18, NIV). There are thousands of biblical manuscripts that support the Bible as being incorrupt.

## The Resurrection

The NOI denies the physical resurrection of the dead. Their doctrinal statement proclaims, “WE BELIEVE in the resurrection of the dead—not in physical resurrection—but in mental resurrection; therefore, they will be resurrected first” (*Final Call* [July 16, 1996]: 39). Despite their denial of a physical resurrection, the NOI apparently believes that Elijah Muhammad is still alive. Every issue of their newspaper carries a statement of *The Muslim Program*. Included with this statement is Elijah Muhammad’s picture and the declaration, “He Lives.”

**Christian Response:** The Bible declares the physical resurrection of the dead (see Pss. 49:15; 71:20; Hos. 13:14; John 5:25; 6:40; 11:25; 2 Cor. 4:14). The dead

will rise from the grave. The saved will live forever with the Lord in heaven. The lost will go to hell, a place of everlasting punishment (see Matt. 18:8-9; 25:41-46; Mark 9:43-48; 2 Thess. 1:9).

### The Last Judgment

The NOI teaches that a giant spaceship—the Mother Plane—will carry out Allah’s judgment. Black scientists will use the same bombs that brought up the “mountains out of the earth” to destroy the white race (Elijah Muhammad, *The Fall of America*, p. 236, as reprinted in *The Final Call* [July 16, 1996]: 19). They claim this judgment will not only destroy the white race but also Christianity. Elijah Muhammad asserted, “Armageddon has started, and after it there will be no Christian religion or churches. Jesus was a Muslim, not a Christian” (Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman*, p. 22). Louis Farrakhan claims that he was taken aboard the Mother Plane in a vision. While in the giant UFO, he spoke to Elijah Muhammad who had been dead for several years (see *Washington Post* [September 18, 1995]: D3). Farrakhan also asserts that this giant spaceship follows him when he travels (Tape of Farrakhan, July 13, 1986, Chicago, Ill.).

**Christian Response:** God, not a giant spaceship, will deliver the last judgment upon the world (see Matt. 25:31-32; 2 Cor. 5:10). God’s judgment will not be restricted to one race, but will fall upon all who have not trusted in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior (see John 3:18).

### Witnessing to People in the NOI

1. Learn the primary Christian truths about God, Christ, the Scripture, and salvation. Know what you believe and why you believe it.
2. Acquaint yourself with the teachings and arguments of the NOI and be ready to give a Christian response (see 1 Pet. 3:15).
3. Listen to those in the NOI and discover why they joined.
4. Explain why you believe the Bible. If they claim that the Bible has been changed, ask them, “When did this happen?” and “What evidence causes you to believe the Bible has been corrupted?”
5. Define your words. Remember that the NOI redefines many terms. For example, when the NOI talks about God, they mean something very different from the God of the Bible.
6. Tell how to become a Christian. Share your testimony about how Jesus has saved you, and the difference He makes in your life. Center your witness on Christ and how to have a personal relationship with Him. Many NOI followers know about Christianity, but they do not know Christ.

7. Witnessing to those in the NOI may be frustrating. They often need to hear the gospel several times before trusting in Christ.
8. Trust God’s Spirit to guide you and to convict the unsaved.

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