

MYSTIC SOUTH 2026



Hoodoo Poppets & Doll Magic



*Conjuring Life into the Inanimate:
History, Practice, and Justice Work*

Presented by Sherry 'That Hoodoo Lady' Shone

What We'll Cover Today

01



A History of Doll Magic & Meet & Greet

Healing dolls, ancestor dolls, poppets, and dedication dolls across time

02



What Is a Hoodoo Poppet?

Energy, intention, and human likeness — the doll as a spiritual vessel

03



African & Hoodoo Origins

The roots of doll magic in West Africa and how it took root in the American South

04



Enslaved People & the Living Doll

How dolls were used for protection, healing, messages — and what that means for justice work today

Dolls are in our blood



Ancient Egypt 3000–300 BCE

Ushabti figurines buried with the dead to serve them in the afterlife. Execration figures used to bind and curse enemies — the name of the target was written on the clay doll.



Ancient Greece & Rome

Kolosoi — clay or wax figures used in binding spells. Defixiones (curse tablets) were used alongside doll figures to constrain a target's will or movement.



European Poppets

Cloth poppets stuffed with herbs and personal concerns for healing, love, and harm. Often associated with folk healers and hedge witches. Later vilified during witch trials.



West African Fetish Dolls

Bocio (Fon people, Benin): power figures used for protection and justice. Nkisi (Kongo tradition): spirit-inhabited figures driven with nails and charged with specific tasks.



Healing & Ancestor Dolls

Across Native American, African, and folk European traditions: dolls made to represent and honor ancestors, carry prayers for the living, and maintain ancestral connection.



Hoodoo Dolls (South)

Emerged from African traditions carried by enslaved people. Doll babies or 'babies' used in rootwork across the American South — sewn from burlap, stuffed with roots and hair.

Just like magic....the stuff that makes the doll makes the doll

1



Form & Material

Fabric, wax, clay, or natural materials. Fabric may come from the target's clothing. Shape is chosen to reflect the work — a cloth figure for a person, a clay heart for love work, a lemon for cursing.

2



Personal Concerns

Hair, fingernail clippings, skin, bodily fluids, handwriting, or a photograph are inserted into the doll or attached. This creates the spiritual link between the poppet and the person.

3



Herbs, Roots & Bible Verses

Stuffed with roots selected for their purpose — healing work uses hyssop and rue; love work uses Adam & Eve root. A Bible verse written on paper is often placed inside as authority over the working.

4



Naming & Baptism

The doll is formally named and 'baptized' — spoken over with commands declaring it to be the person. From this moment it IS them in the spiritual world. Treat it accordingly.

5



Activation & Feeding

The doll is fed through candle work, oils, prayer, and continued ritual attention. Enslaved practitioners kept dolls wrapped in cloth, buried under doorsteps, or hidden in walls for ongoing protection.

What Is a Hoodoo Poppet?

A hoodoo poppet is a human likeness — or any form — into which **energy, intention, and spirit** are placed. It becomes a vessel that carries the essence of a specific person, animal, or force.

Core Principles

Correspondence

Poppets were used for several reasons in hoodoo but to be used by a hoodoo worker for deliverance with intention and direction of the rootworker

Living the Doll

Hoodoo is a magic system based on Black trauma and enslavement for the deliverance of those humans and souls, living includes Bible verses, roots, personal items, etc.

Intention is Everything

The focus and will are important, prayers, chants, and even oils are specific to the work being done

Slavery Traditions First

Hoodoo techniques passed down through enslaved communities are honored and preserved — not replaced by modern interpretations

Any Object Can Be a Poppet

The poppet does NOT need to be human-shaped.
Any form that carries intention is valid:

▲ Fruit/Vegetables ● Animal Carcasses

🐶 Machine made objects

🐟 Drawings or likeness

Sacred texts or materials







Images are
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African Origins of Doll Magic



The unbroken root — from the continent to the American South

Bocio

Fon & Ewe Peoples — Benin, Togo, Ghana

- Name means 'empowered cadaver' — a corpse given a second life
- Made of wood, fiber, metal, and found objects
- Used for justice and protection — the doll fights on behalf of its owner
- Wrapped and bound — restriction is a key technique (similar to binding in Hoodoo)
- Often displayed publicly to warn enemies
- Personal concerns of the enemy or target were included in the figure

Nkisi (Minkisi)

Kongo People — Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola

- Spirit containers — a powerful spirit (nkisi) inhabits the figure
- Most famous: Nkonde (nail figures) — nails driven in to activate the spirit's power
- Each nail = an oath, contract, or request made to the spirit
- Bilongo: the medicine or sacred materials packed inside the figure
- Used for healing, justice, fertility, protection, and warfare
- This tradition is the direct ancestor of nail-driving techniques in Hoodoo

Hoodoo Origins of Dolls in the South

*"The doll baby is rooted in African soil. It survived the Middle Passage, the auction block, and the plantation — **because the spirits traveled with the people.**"*



The Doll Baby Tradition

In Southern Hoodoo, small cloth dolls called 'doll babies' were made from burlap, cotton, or whatever fabric was at hand. They were the working person's Nkisi — spirit containers for justice and survival.



Materials of Necessity

Enslaved practitioners used what was available: corn husks, Spanish moss, grave dirt, beeswax, lard, and pieces of worn clothing. Every material was chosen with spiritual intent, not aesthetic.



The Bible as Root

Psalms, Proverbs, and Revelation were weaponized as Conjure. Bible verses folded inside the doll, spoken over it, or rubbed into it with oil gave it Christian spiritual authority in a world that denied them other power.



Hidden in Plain Sight

Dolls were buried under thresholds, hidden in walls, sewn into mattresses, placed in chicken coops. They worked invisibly — the enslaver saw cloth; the practitioner saw a soldier.



Roots & Roots Workers

The Rootworker who made the doll was a community healer, protector, and strategist. Their knowledge of which root to use, which Psalm to read, and how to name the doll was passed down in secret.



Doll as Messenger

Dolls were used to send and receive messages — a small figure left at a crossroads carried a prayer. Found by another practitioner, it communicated need, threat, or alliance across plantations.

Enslaved People & the Living Doll



Protection · Healing · Communication · Resistance

Protection

- Dolls buried at the four corners of a dwelling created a spirit barrier
- A doll made in the overseer's likeness with binding herbs kept violence at bay
- Doll babies carried in the field protected the worker from harm
- Iron nails driven in — Kongo-style — activated aggressive protection

Healing

- A sick person's hair placed in a doll stuffed with healing roots drew illness out
- The doll received the ailment so the person could be freed from it
- Hyssop, rue, and angelica root stuffed inside for fever and spiritual attack
- The Rootworker prayed over the doll, not the patient — distance healing

Messages & Intelligence

- Small dolls left at crossroads carried coded messages between plantations
- The form of the doll (color, knots, material) communicated meaning to those who knew
- Buried under an owner's path: a curse or a warning sent without words
- Spirit communication — dolls kept messages from the dead for the living

Justice Work: Using Dolls Today

Honoring the tradition while continuing its purpose

🪄 Types of Justice Work

♦ Binding

Restrain a person causing harm — bind their actions, words, or access to you

♦ Court Case Work

Psalms 35, 7, and 109 used with a doll in the judge's or prosecutor's likeness

♦ Return to Sender

Send back harm that was dispatched — the doll acts as a mirror and a messenger

♦ Uncrossing a Community

A community poppet absorbs generational curses, poverty consciousness, or a shared hex

♦ Police / Institutional Work

Dolls representing systems of oppression are bound, buried at crossroads, or worked to soften their violence

♦ Ancestor Petitions

A doll made in an ancestor's likeness acts as a phone — a direct line for prayer and petition

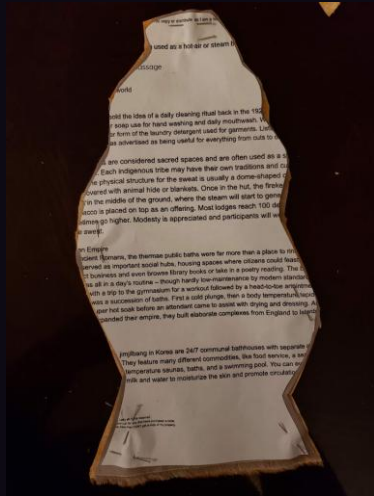


Working in the Tradition

- Use the language and prayers of the tradition — not modern substitutes
- Call on the same spirits, psalms, and roots the enslaved practitioners called on
- Do not conflate Hoodoo with Wicca, New Age energy work, or ceremonial magic
- Acknowledge whose hands first held this knowledge
- Justice work is not cursing for personal gain — it is restoring balance
- Crossroads work, cemetery work, and candle work remain central — honor that
- Teach this with the weight it deserves: lives depended on its power



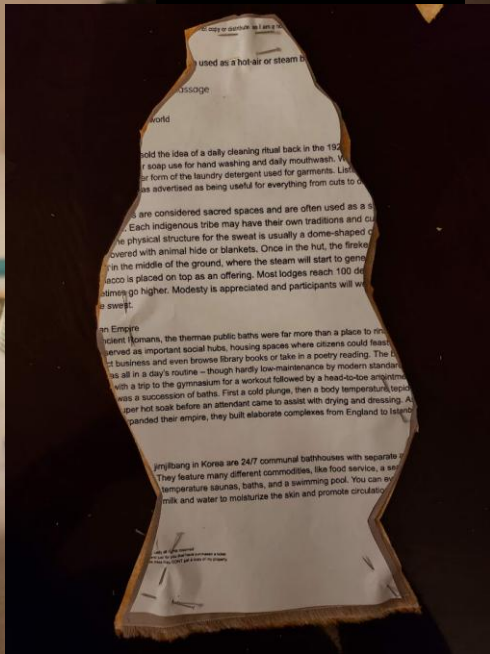
How to Build a Doll



Bible Verses for Poppets & Dolls

Type of Work	Bible Verse (Short Quote Allowed)	Traditional Hoodoo Use	How You'd Teach It (Your Voice)
Cleansing / Uncrossing	<i>"Wash me..."</i> (Psalm 51:7)	Used to cleanse the body, the home, or a doll; spoken over water, eggs, or hyssop.	"This is the verse you speak when you're pulling mess off somebody. It gives authority to the cleansing — washing the spirit clean!"
Breaking Crossed Conditions	<i>"The yoke shall be destroyed..."</i> (Isaiah 10:27)	Spoken when creating the doll with the intention to destroy the crossed condition and cut cords.	"When something's been sitting heavy on you, this verse breaks it. Snap a cord over the doll
Protection / Warding	<i>"Fight against those who fight against me."</i> (Psalm 35:1)	Used with the intention to make a doll for justice work	"This is the warrior Psalm. When you need Spirit to step in and block harm, this is the one you call."





My Gift to YOU!

Responsibility is the foundation of any authentic spiritual practice



Honor the Individual

Respect in Hoodoo begins with honoring the individuality of each person's spiritual line. No two readings look the same, and no one is "left out" if Spirit is quiet.



Consent is Key

Hoodoo respect includes bodily autonomy. Touch is a tool—not a right—and must be invited, never assumed.

Do No Harm

Hoodoo respect includes community safety. Spiritual workers have a responsibility to intervene when harm is imminent.



Confidentiality

Respect means protecting people while still honoring the tradition of passing down lessons, patterns, and spiritual teaching

Not a Doctor

Respect means knowing the limits of the work. Hoodoo is powerful, but it is not a replacement for medical, legal, or mental-health care.





The Doll Is Not a Toy. It Is a Witness.



Thank you for joining Sherry at Mystic South 2026

- ◆ The doll carries the memory of those who had no other weapon
- ◆ Work with these tools as if the original practitioners are watching — they are
- ◆ Justice work continues: protection, healing, and resistance are still needed

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Box Breathing:
Ancestor Ancestor
We welcome you
To these forgotten tools

Ancestor Ancestor
We welcome you
To these forgotten tools

We reject fear and shame
we cast aside what doesn't
belong
We open our minds to new ideas
We are ready to learn
We hear you
We see you
(repeat twice)

Forgiveness:
Forgive me I forgot you
My ways of the old ones

Remember
Open Open our hearts
Remind us remind us to
remember

Our feet
Our seeds
Our nuts
So many ways we can see your
spirit

Walking through this journey
together

Welcome welcome welcome you

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Revival
DolliesDollies
Poppets, space holders, keepers
of spirit

These are forgotten tools
Or reminders to us
We open our minds and hearts
to new ideas
We intend to learn and grow
We honor and respect you of our
understanding

Open our hearts today
Move mountains out of our way
Show us how to use this clay,
chalk, or fabric
To make a way when there is no
way

Sunset in Double:
Forgive me I forgot you
My ways of the old ones
Calling all the Spirits of old

We open open our hearts
Remind us remind us to
remember

These dolls, these pieces of
fabric and scrap
Speak to us and do our work
for us
We hear you and thank you

We Welcome welcome
welcome you

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