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[Dry Bones in the Valley]

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Title Religion. Dry bones in the valley

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Place of origin Chicago, Illinois Date 4/17/39

Project worker Grace Outlaw

Project editor

Remarks

W3640

Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

CHICAGO FOLKSTUFF

FORM A

Circumstances of Interview Religion

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

680 Words

May 18 1939

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER Grace Outlaw

ADDRESS 507 Oakwood Boulevard

DATE April 14, 1939

Library of Congress

SUBJECT Religion

1. Date and time of interview - April 14, 1939, evening
2. Place of interview - Holiness Church, 335 East 37th Street
3. Name and address of informant - Maurita Ackers, 4733 Champlain Avenue
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.-
Maurita Ackers, 4733 Champlain Avenue, Chicago, Illinois
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you Same
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. -

Store front church. The services of the "Holiness" Church are held in an old building which has been long vacant and in poor repair. It is only one story high. The neighborhood is run down and the people for the most part are on relief. There is electricity in service, a general utility room which serves as a waiting room and toilet room for both men and women. Odd chairs are used by the audience, there are numerous pictures of Christ on the dirty walls; on the rostrum is a lighted cross, suspended by a wire from the ceiling, just over the pulpit.

FORM B

Personal History of Informant

CHICAGO FOLKSTUFF

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

Library of Congress

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER Grace Outlaw

ADDRESS 507 Oakwood Boulevard

DATE April 14, 1939

SUBJECT Religion

NAME OF INFORMANT Material secured by observation during service.

1. Ancestry - Negro (Preacher)
2. Place and date of birth - Not given
3. Family - Not given
4. Places lived in, with dates
5. Education, with dates
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates
7. Special skills and interests
8. Community and religious activities -

Makes an effort to assist folk in community to get relief; not ordained by any church group, just preaches, because he was called 'by the holy spirit'.

9. Description of informant
10. Other Points gained in interview

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FORM C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

CHICAGO FOLKSTUFF

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER Grace Outlaw

ADDRESS 507 Oakwood Boulevard

DATE April 14, 1939

SUBJECT

NAME OF INFORMANT

Dry Bones In The Valley

There is a certain religious group who boast of being sanctified and unafraid, thus making the following incident which actually happened, a real joke.

At the beginning of the services there were testimonials as to their fitness for the "kingdom" because they were sanctified, thus free from harm.

The store-front church was crowded. At the completion of the testimonials the preacher announced, "I'm gonna talk shortly on 'Dry bones in the valley'.

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He thrilled them with vivid word pictures of death on a white horse riding through the valley . . . the grim reaper at harvest time.

Under the spell of his appeal, the fury of his shouting and the magnetism of the songs with which he interspersed the sermon, they broke forth in a spasm of religious fervor that gratified his efforts.

He hissed through his teeth with fiery vehemence, moaned, sobbed and grunted; ending with a chant that struck them with such poignancy, they were fairly lifted out of their seats.

The conglomerate response of amens, halleluahs, stomping of feet, clapping of hands and the rhythmic dancing of those who pranced up and down

FORM D

Extra Comment

CHICAGO FOLKSTUFF

FOLKLORE

CHICAGO

STATE Illinois

NAME OF WORKER Grace Outlaw

ADDRESS 507 Oakwood Boulevard

DATE April 14, 1939

SUBJECT

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NAME OF INFORMANT

the aisles charged the air.

The preacher gulped down glasses of water as sweat poured down his face. "You see the silent rider on his white horse but you aint afraid cause you're God's own children, sanctified and saved by grace," he moaned.

At this point the lights went out leaving the place pitch dark. There appeared a figure clad in white. Eyes bulged as they beheld the spectacle in white, a small light focused on it.

There was a brief, tense silence followed by the noise of chairs being overturned, women screaming and the general commotion of everyone trying to get out of one door at the same time.

The preacher proved himself adept at tackling and was the first out of the building.

Three people knew what had actually happened. Three mischievous boys planned the thing. One turned out the light, another held the small flashlight and the third one clad in a sheet. The latter came near getting the worst of the deal for he was pretty well trampled before he could get out of the sheet.

3

The story of the passage of scripture, "Moreover the dog licked Lazarus sores," is an example of the strange interpretations put upon the bible. It is also something of a revelation as to the spontaneity and ease with which some of the folk can create verse.

It is no uncommon thing for those Negroes who make up verses to old familiar tunes, to hear a sermon and sing three to ten new verses which they make up as they sing. There is always repetition of one or more lines such as "Oh my Lord . . . yes my Lord . . ." or as

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in the case of the song mentioned in the story, the line, "I got a home in that rock, dont you see," is repeated three times when the entire verse is sung.

This spontaneous origin is true of the Negroes religious songs, work songs and social songs. The tune may be one common to every one but the words are changed to express the singer's thought or idea. Plagiarism has no place in their conscience.

Moreover, the dog licked Lazarus sores

Preacher: (chanting) And Lazarus lad on Divas' steps, a sick man, a beggar man, covered with sores from head to foot . . . sick unto death. . ." (repeating) "sick unto death . . ."

Audience: "Amen" . . . "Halleluah" . . . "Praise his name . . ."

Preacher: And the scriptures tells you that it was, moreover, the dog licked Lazarus sores . . . didja hear me? The bible say moreover the dog licked Lazarus sores." Then with strong emotion and weird intonations he 4 asked, "Now what was the dog's name? I ask you what was the name of the dog that licked Lazarus' sores?"

Audience: "Preach the word brother! Tell the truth! . . ."

Preacher: All the years you been hearing about the dog what licked Lazarus' sores and you aint never thought about what his name was. "Moreover," he shouted, "Moreover, the dog licked Lazarus' sores . . . the dog's name was Moreover . . . dont it say "Moreover, the dog licked Lazarus' sores . . . says it plain as anything."

Audience:(singing) Poor man Lazarus poor as I when he died he found a home on high, I got a home in that rock dont you see. Now we know for the very first time The name, Moreover is divine, I got a home in that rock dont you see.