

[My People Made the Truckin Business]

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FOLKLORE

NEW YORK 18 Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview Tales - Anecdotes

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Clarence Weinstock & Ralph Ellison

ADDRESS 110 King Street

DATE May 1, 1939

SUBJECT My People Made The Truckin Business

1. Date and time of interview

2. Place of interview

Harlem Labor Center, 125 Street, N.Y.C.

3. Name and address of informant

A heavy-set Negro man of light complexion. Apparently in his late forties.

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

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5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Labor hiring room. Benches, chairs, Posters: "Black and White Unite." Bunch of bananas with caption, "Stay In Your own bunch, Or You'll get Skinned". Card tables. A row of large windows looking down upon streets below, alive with cars, street cars and people.

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NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Clarence Weinstock & Ralph Ellison

ADDRESS 110 King Street

DATE May 1, 1939

SUBJECT My People Made The Truckin Business

a.

My people made the trucking business. You see all these companies around here? We made em. We even built the buildings. Some of the fellows whats big shots now, used to go round with wheel barrows. Now they got trucks; they're big shots. We helped em get where they are and now they dont want to look at us anymore. They dont want you. Its the same thing everywhere. Now take the worlds fair. They had us draining and fillin-in out

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there, working in all that filth. They got us when they wanted to get it ready and now the dirty work's done, let me see you go out there and get something. Let me see you!

Same thing, all over. Just take the truckin business. I'm a handler. I've been in this business since 1898. Our people made that business; made them warehouses. N when they got it made they didnt wont us. Its just like a man makin steps. You make the business and ask for a raise. Well, they got to pay you. Thats two steps. Then things go long n you got to get a union. Thats the third step. And right there's the step they kill you on. Now theyd rather give 2 the work to somebody else. They dont want to pay you that good money. N aint much you can do about it. You see that picture up there in the wall? "Black and White Unite". Them hands is clasped together in the picture, but here its wide apart. Always squabbling. Caint get together. Thats really the way it is.

I been in this business forty-one years. Sometimes I get tired and leave it n get me a family. But dam it! I was tellin my wife the other day, the last time I did it I believe it changed my luck. Folks connected with this dam Oxford movement. Just a lot of dam talk. Its just like you sittin here talkin to me; just a lot of questions. Made me so tired I quit the job. She was always askin me questions. Always wanted to know my business, Made me tired as hell. But I finally go so I could talk to em like I wanted to n I told her it was just a lot of noise. The Oxford movement, hell! She asked me all my business, just everything, trying to get in my business. Talking bout the Oxford movement. Just trying to get in my business; thats all. So I said 'You ask me all these questions, so Im goin to ask you: How many times do you go with your old man a night?' That stopped her. Hell yes I told her. Thats just what I told her. Shes tellin me somethin about Buckman. Hell, what'd he do: He couldnt get along with his parish, so he beats it to England to do some more studyin. Then he had some goddam dream about Christ on the cross n writes back here hes very sorry n everything, that he was wrong. So he starts this Oxford movement. And all the suckers, they fall for / his dream. So he goes back to England and gets a big building and she tells me about this vision. Hell anybody can have a vision and then say \$5000,000. N these suckers fall for it. Made me sick askin all them questions. N they talk 3 about

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Father Devine. Now there's a man whose doin somethin. Talking about the work of Christ dont cost nothin. Hell, you get these big buildings and these coal bills n light bills got to comin in n you get all them people travelin round with Buchman — why he had seventeen people come over with him last time — who you thinks payin for all that? The vision? Tellin me about visions. Hell my luck aint been the same since I worked for them people. Ever since I worked down there my lucks been bad; aint had a thing to do. Thats the reason I dont have no faith in man. I been around all this stuff too much. It dont mean nothin. The unseen spirit up yonders alright. Get on your knees and get in touch with him. But man? Man aint nothin. Thats the reason we caint get nowhere down here with this union; man aint no good.

Sure, theres some good. Same is alright. What did God say about em being all mixed up. He said: Let em mingle together, I'll seperate the goats from the lambs. How many times you ate goat thinking you was eating spring lamb?

Yes, I believe in visions. Ive had em myself. I was living down town with a family an seen the womans husband who'd been dead six years. Her boy was sick n seen him too. He came and stood in the hall between the two rooms n said “Im going to take three rooms. You can come on if you want to” The boy was a kid twenty-two years old n he heard im too. A few days later the boy was gone, dead.

Dreams come to me all the time. I get fore-warnings whenever somethings about to happen to me. I know just when and 4 how. Hell, you have am too. All fellows do; they just forget when they wake up. I had one last night bout what this meeting was for this morning. N I think things'll be alright for me n a lot of the fellows. Things we been workin on oughta come out right.

Things would be alright if it wasnt for these Irishmen. They the ones causing the trouble. You know that. I'll tell you bout the Irishman. What makes em so dam onery is that they been slaves to the English. Couldnt even hunt on their own land. Raise crops and it all

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goes to the king. Caint even shoot the hares thats running over their own land. Caint plant corn except by permission. Everything goes to England. N dont let him get over here. Hes like a bird out of a cage, a canary bird thats been in such a small place he couldnt feel himself. He gets over here and gets a little land n hes gone. He dont know you. You know thats right. You caint get along with him. Hell. They the ones whats causing all the trouble. You just have to get an Irishman down n beat the shit out of him; than hes the best friend you got. You couldnt have a better friend than a Irishman you knocked the hell outta.

I had a warnin one time when I was working. I had a piano bout to lower it out of a window on a pulley. N when I started down stairs to let it come, somethin said "You better not let that down!" So I runs back up stairs an looks and the dam piano was hanging there by a strand. The dam rope was coming apart n it was just hanging there by a few strands. Now if I hadnt listened to that warning, me n six or seven other men would have been dead. I have dreams all the time. I dreamed about my grandfather who had been dead thirty-three 5 years who I'd never seen n I asked my mother the next mornin n she said yes that was the way he looked.