

Colonial Park

Beliefs and Customs - Folkstuff

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview 19

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

JUN 19 1939

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Ralph Ellison

ADDRESS 470 W. 150th St.

DATE June 7th, 1939

SUBJECT

1. Date and time of interview June 6th, 1939
2. Place of interview Colonial Park near 150th St., Man.
3. Name and address of informant
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

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

A City Park, benches and childrens' Playground. Behind us, the strata of rock leading up to Edgecome Avenue. The Subject is an elderly Negro man, born in Virginia.

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C [?]

TEXT OF INTERVIEW (Unedited) [??]

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Ralph Ellison

ADDRESS 470 W. 150th St.

DATE June 7th, 1939

SUBJECT

Its too bad bout them two submarines. They can experiment an everything, but they caint go but so far. Then God steps in. Them fellows is trying to make something what'll stay down. They said they'd done done it, but look what happened. Take back in 1912. They built a ship called the Titanic. Think they built it over in England; I thinks that was where it was built. Anyway, they said it couldnit sink. It was for all the big rich folks; John Jacob Astor-all the big aristocrats. Nothing the color of this could git on the boat. Naw suh! Didnt want nothing look like me on it. One girl went down to go with her madam and they told her she couldnt go. They didnt want nothing look like this on there. They told the madam "you

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can go, but she caint.” The girls madam got mad and told em if the girl didnt go she wasnt going. And she didnt neither. Yessuh, she stayed right here.

Well, they got this big boat on the way over to England. They said she couldnt sink - that was man talking..It was so big they tell me that was elevators in it like across yonder in that building. Had the richest folks in 1 England, almost ready to dock, and ups an hits a iceberg, and sank! That was the boat they said was so big it couldnt sink. They didnt want nothing look like this on it; no ssuh! And dont you think that woman wasnt glad she stuck by that girl. She was plenty glad. Man can only go so far. Then God steps in. Sho they can experment around. They can do a heap. They can even make a man. But they caint make him breath. Why the other day I was down on 125th St., and 8th Ave. They got one of them malted milk places. Well suh, they got a cow on the counter. It looks like a real cow. Got hair. I was standing there looking and the doggone thing moved its head and wagged its tail; man done even made a cow. But, they had to do it with electricity. Gos God the only one can give life. God made all this, and he made it for everybody. And he made it equal. This breeze and these green leaves out here is for everybody. The same sun's shining down on everybody. This breeze comes from God and man caint do nothing about it. I breath the same air old man Ford an old man Ruckerfeller breath. They got all the money an I aint got nothing, but they got to breath the same air I do.

Man caint make no man. Less see now: This heahs nineteen-hundred-and-twenty-nine. For 1900 years mans had things his way. Hes been running the world to suit himself. Its just like your father owned that building over there and told you you could live in it if you didnt do certain things. And then you did what he told you not to. And he finds it out and says, “Go on, you can have the whole building, I wont have nothing else to do with it. You can turn it upside-down if you want to.” Well, that was the way it was in the world. Adam an Eve sinned in the Garden and God left the world to itself. Men been running it like they wont to. They been running 2 it like they wont to for 1900 years. Rick folds Rich folks? done took all the land. They got all the money. Men down to the City Hall making \$150,000 dollars a year and nothing like this caint even scrub the marble floors or polish the brass

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what they got down there. Old man Ford and J.P.Morgan got all that money and folks in this park caint even get on relief. But you just watch: the lawd made all men equal and pretty soon now its gonna be that way agin. Im a man. I breath the same air old man Ford breaths cause God made man equal. God formed man in his own image. He made Adam out of the earth; not like this concrete we sitting on, but out of dirt, clay. Like you seen a kid making a snow man. He'll git him a stick and make the arms. And he'll get another stick and make for his neck; and so on, just like we got bones. That was the way God made man. Made him outa clay and in his own image: That was the way he made Adam. One drop of God's blood made all the nations in the world; Africans, Germans, Chinamen, Jews, Indians; all come from one drop of God's blood. God took something outa Adam and made woman, he made Eve. The preachers tell a lie, and say it was his rib. But they have to lie I guess. They didnt do nothing but sit back in the shed and let you do all the work anyway. But God went into Adam and took something out and made Eve. Thats the Scriptures; it said he took [something?]. I caint remember the exact words, but it said he took something and it didnt say nothing bout no rib. Eve started having children. Some of em was black and some of em was white. But they was all equal. God didnt know no color; we all the same. All he want from man is this heart thumping the blood. Them what take advantage of skin like this got to come by God. They gonna pay.

They tell me bout ol George Washington. He was the first president this country ever had. Frist thing I heard was he said keep us 3 look like this down in the cornfield. He tole em "dont let em have no guns. You aint to let em have no knife. Dont let em have nothing. "He tole em if they wanted to have a strong nation to keep us down. He said if ever they git guns in they hands theyll rise up and take the land; dont let em have nothing. But he didnt says nothing bout no pick and ax!"

They been carrying out what he said. God didnt say nothing. That was just mans idea and here in this country they been carrying out what old man George Washington said. But God's time is coming. Today you hear all these folks got millions of dollars talking bout God. They aint fooling nobody, though. They even got "IN GOD WE TRUST" on all the

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silver money. But it dont mean nothing. This sun and air is God's. It dont belong to nobody and caint no few get it all to theyself. People around this park can have all they want. But you wait. God's gonna straighten it all out. Look at the dust blowing in that wind. Thats the way all the money they got gonna be. You see things, folks, they call white, but man aint got no idea of how white God gon make things. Money wont be worth no moren that dust blowing on the ground. Wont be no men down to Washington making fifty-thousand dollars a week and folks caint hardly make eighteen dollars a month. Evervbodyll be equal, in God's time. Wont be no old man Ruckerfeller, no suh! Today you caint even buy a job if you had the money to do it with. Wont be nothing like that then. He'll let loose and somethingll slip down here and them what done took advantage of everything'll be floating down the river. Youll go over to the North River, and over to the East River and youll see em all floating along. And the river'll be full and they wont know what struck em. The lawd's gonna have his day.

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Theyll be a war. But it wont be no more wars like the World War. It wont bother me and you. Wont really be no war. Itll be the wicked killing the wicked! The war like the World War'll never be agin. They fooled now. They building navies and buying guns. But dont you worry, itll be just the wicked killing out the wicked. Its comings; God's time is coming and its coming soon!