

[Negro Cults in Harlem]

Beliefs and Customs - Negro folk stuff

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK 9 Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Vivian Morris

ADDRESS 225 W. 130th St. New York City

DATE January 9, 1939

SUBJECT NEGRO CULTS IN HARLEM

1. Date and time of interview
2. Place of interview
3. Name and address of informant By the Staff-worker
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
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

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The greatest cult leader of them all, Father Divine, has his followers shouting "thank Father", "Father Divine is God," "God is heah reigning and ruling in de name of Father Divine," - and the shame of it all is that the poor devils believe the tripe that they give voice to.

Father Divine rides in a big special built deluxe Dusenbergs sedan with a throne in the center, for "Father" to sit on. He's a great showman. When he comes into view, with his body guards and his followers shouting "De body is heah." "God is heah", he quickly runs through the crowd shouting, "Peace."

The man either has no conscious, or he is mentally warped. If the latter is the case he can be forgiven. If the former is true he should be lauded as a super-psychologist, and condemned to live like and have the simple-minded beliefs of his followers.

True, he does have stores, restaurants, and places of abode, that have dirt-cheap prices. But, he also advocates a person entering his cult to turn over their jewels, land, homes and automobiles over to God. After all God could keep them better than any mere mortals.

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He also allows his followers to work on a cheaper wage scale, thereby bringing down the wage scale in the domestic servant field. "Father" gets a percentage of the pittance that they earn.

2

But they continue to insist that "Father Divine is God" and who am I to tell them no?

Prophet Costonie is a younger cult leader and he was power a while back as a faith healing prophet of God, but his group has dwindled to a few hundred.

Daddy Grace, the big blustering "disciple of God", extorts on a larger scale. He has dinners at sixty-five cents; his marching group buys its uniforms directly from him and he makes over one hundred percent profit. He is putting in on Father Divine's "gravy" at a systematic clip.

There are innumerable "small fry" cults in Harlem, two and three in a block. No two are exactly the same. If the Negro and white people, who are members of these cults, would turn their money and energy to gainful enterprise an amazing difference would be seen in their economic status.

Tis a pity that the "Father Divines", "Daddy Graces", Prophet Costonies", etal turned their powers of leadership into such nefarious channels instead of in a construction constructive direction.