

[Abyssinia Baptist Church]

ONE COPY WITH THE WOODRUM COMMITTEE Beliefs & Customs - Religious Customs

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Vivian Morris

ADDRESS 225 West 130 Street

DATE May 2, 1939

SUBJECT Abyssinia Baptist Church—Unemployed Section and Adult Education

1. Date and time of interview
2. Place of interview
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
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

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NAME OF WORKER Vivian Morris

ADDRESS 225 West 130 Street

DATE May 2, 1939

SUBJECT Abyssinia Baptist Church—Unemployed Section and Adult Education

Reverend Powell might be a Baptist preacher, but he sho dont believe only in preachin bout God. He preached the Government right into givin us all these teachers to teach us all the things we didn't have a chance to learn when we were young. This was the community house, but now its a school, better for the community.

I do part time housework, in the afternoon.

Come to school every morning.

Comin to school three years now.

Cant make my madam know, she'll think I'm gettin too smart.

I don't work Sunday's.

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I sing in the Choir.

I learn Music in this school, two nights a week.

One of the women wrote a song for the school.

D'ya wanna hear it? Listen.

----- Oh! Abyssinia how dear you are You rescue us from
near and far When we are inclined to go astray You change our minds to come your way.
2 Abyssinia Center! may it never be That the Government will take you away from me But
always be as now you stand The best Center in all the land. -----

Its good ain't it?

She learned that here, puttin dem words together, sounds good ah?

You learn to sing here too, and sew, and knit, and type, and a whole lot of other things.

This one is good, I want to learn it soon.

I forgot the name, the Supervisor calls it by, oh yes Speech improvement.

You know what that is?

Makes you talk better eh?

I'm gonna take it, soon as I git thew the knitting class.

Knitting is alright, but talking is better.

Nowadays you gotta talk yourself in and out of a lotta things.

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If you want a job you gotta be able to talk the boss into givin it to you. Then after you git it you gotta talk him into keepin you.

See! You gotta job asking questions.

Spose you couldn't talk, do you ask questions all day?

If Reverend Powell couldn't do a lotta talking, dam if we'd have this center here.

The Government aint givin you nuthin so easy.

Did you see all the old folks in the Center, some older than me and I'm 57. The younger people come at night, they work in the day time.

Education, Education, keep fightin for it.

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Reverend Powell prays, but he fights too, prayin alone aint gonna get you nowhere.

Sometimes when he prays, sounds like he's fightin with God, but he's fightin for all of us.

Now he's fightin for jobs.

World's Fair jobs.

We gotta help, we gotta help.

Abyssinia Baptist Church

Unemployed Section

Where's Adam? Gone, want be back for a month huh? Well, when the Reverend comes tell him I was here. Tain't goona be like it was last time. We want jobs. Only the people

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a't picket and get on picket lines gonna get em. Ain't gonna be like it was the last time the preachers gave in too easily, they could'a got more jobs for us. Why dont they fight instead o prayin. The jobs ain't gonna be given out like they were last time.

All these women round this church that ain never been on a picket line got de jobs. De minister wanna make them think prayin got it for them.

Fifty jobs at the World's Fair, how'd we get em Picketin, not prayin.

Taint gonna be like it was the last time. I got locked up last week picketing Kress. First time I been locked up in me life. The only way we gonna get jobs is to throw an economic blockade around the stores.

Those girls in that picket line in front a Kress are students.

They're hungry.

We're all Hungry.

I'm a Negro.

I say Negroes should join the Unions, and dont pray so dam much.

Down South you gotta pray, or make the white folks think so anyway, but up North you can fight, you got de right. No matter what your political belief is Nationalist, Republican, Communist, you ain gonna get a dam thing by belief. That's why I'm here to tell Powell that it ain gonna be like last time.

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I gotta go.

I gotta go back to 126 Street and Lenox Avenue and picket.

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We're picketin a gin mill down there, it ain't a Union joint, they got six people working there, and only one Negro and what'd you think they got him doin? Washing dishes.

Me and me old man don't agree on our methods of getting jobs for Negroes. Yeh, he's one a those "bourgeois negroes" as the communist calls them. All we want is jobs.

When the jobs come their as a result of picketin, tell Adam him and the rest of the preachers ain't gonna gi dem to who they want, dem on the picket line gonna get em.

I gotta go.

I gotta get back to that gin mill.

I'm hoarse from yellin.

Do without a drink.

Dont cross the line.

The boss will kick in soon.

I gotta go