

## [West Indies]

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Ellis Williams

ADDRESS 852 St. Nicholas Avenue, NYC

DATE January 11, 1939

SUBJECT DOWN IN THE WEST INDIES...

1. Date and time of interview
2. Place of interview
3. Name and address of informant Staff-writer
4. Name and address of person, if any, one 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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NEW YORK

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Ellis Williams

ADDRESS 852 St. Nicholas Ave., NYC

DATE January 11, 1939

SUBJECT DOWN IN THE WEST INDIES... Down in the West Indies, I am a law clerk and stenographer. I am largely dependent on my parents for existence, and because of that I am discontented with my lot. I am Aquaris, born to travel, they say. The nomadic urge engulfs me. I want to leave home and the dependency of my folk. I hear and read a lot of American. People say it is a "bed of roses." A fortune to easy to acquire and a profession easier still. I want to go! I want to go!

I am only in my teens and my parents try to discourage me. I listen to their good counsel but cannot be dissuaded. I feel that I have been a parasite on them too long. I am going even if I suffer, and there is one thing certain, if I do, they will never learn it from me.

I save my pence the lawyer pays me and book a passage. Dad comes to the rescue and furnishes me with a good cabin and places me in the care of the captain who knows something of the family because of shipments of produce to America by the same line.

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The trip is uneventful. America is beautiful, but I am anxious to get adjusted and find employment. I am assured it is only a question of time and perseverance. Encouraged, I go into the tall office buildings on lower Fifth Avenue. I try them all. Not a firm is missed..... I walk in and offer my services..... I am black, foreign looking and a curic. My

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name is taken and I will be sent for in a short time. "Thank you." "Good day." "Oh don't mention it." ..... I am smiled out. I never hear from them again .....

Eventually I am told that this is not the way it is done in America. What typewriter do I use? Oh!..... Well go to the firm that manufactures them. It maintains an employment bureau for the benefit of users of their machines. There is no discrimination there, go and see them. Ere I go, I write stating my experience, etc., etc., etc., etc. In reply I [get?] a flattering letter asking me to call. I do so.

The place is crowded. A sea of feminine faces disarms me. But I am no longer sensitive. I have gotten over that .... long since. I grit my teeth and confidently take my seat with the crowd. At the desks the clerks are busy with the telephones, filling out cards and application blanks. I am sure I am not seen. I am just one of the crowd. One by one the girls, and men too, are sent out after jobs. It has been raining. The air is foul. The girls are sweating in their war paint. They are of the type that paints their lips, pencil their brows, rouge their cheeks and up to themselves: "Clothes, I am going downtown; if you want to follow.....hang on." At last they get around to me. It is my turn.

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I am in front position. In order to get to me the lady is obliged to do a lot of detouring. At first I thought she was about to go out, to go past me. But I am mistaken. She takes a seat right in front of me, a smile on her wrinkled old-maidish face. I am sure she is head of the department. It is a position that must be handled with tact and diplomacy. She does not send one of her assistants. She comes herself. She is from the Buckeye state. She tries to make me feel at home by smiling broadly in my face.

"Are you Mr.....?"

"Yes, I am."

"That's nice. How much experience you say you have had?" She is about to write.

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"I have stated that in the letter, I think. I have had..... I worked for....."

"Oh yes, I have It right here. Used to be secretary for a lawyer..... And you took honors in your class at school. That is interesting, isn't it?"

I murmur unintelligibly.

"Well," continues the lady, "we haven't anything at present...."

"But I thought you said in your latter you had a position for me. I have it here with me. I hope I have not left it at home...."

"That position wouldn't suit you," stammering, "it, t, t, t, t, t, it is a position that requires banking experience. It is one of the largest banks in the country. Secretary to the Vice-President..... Ah, by the way, come to think of it, You know Mr..... of Harlem?"

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You do! I think his number is.....Seventh Avenue. Here is one of his cards. Well if I were you I would go to see him..... Good day."

Dusk is on the horizon. I am once more on Fifth Avenue. I am not going to see the gentleman..... The man she is sending me to was my Father's.....groom.