

Interview with Vivian Morris from Harlem, New York, June 29, 1939

[Harlem]
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 W. 130th Street

SUBJECT Harlem

DARE TO BE A DEVIL Standing by a purpose true, Heeding God's command, Honor them the faithful few, All hail to Daniel's Band! Many mighty men are lost, During not to stand, Who for God had been a host By joining Daniel's Band. Many Giants great and tall, Stalking thru the land, Headlong to the earth would fall If met by Daniel's Band. Hold the Gospel banner high! On to victory grand, Satan and his host defy, And shout for Daniel's Band. Dare to be a Daniel, Dare to stand alone, Dare to have a purpose firm, Dare to make it known.

Yeah, mam, we ain' been doin' so well in this here coat n' dress job. An' I kin say fum my own person' experience us cullud people ain' been doin' so well in other kinds a wuk. I kin see y' knows that already, an' I kin not tell y' so much 'bout that. Y' know how we does fer ourselves in any kinda business. Well, if y' wants to know my experience I'll tell ya. I been wukkin' in this coat establishment fer onta twelve years. A friend of mine give the job t' me when he quit. He said he can't stan' it no more, he gotta leave. I cum up fum Charleston with my wife an' kid so I took it. I been put into the shippin' department doin' all kindsa wuk. An, mam, I learnt ev'ry thing there wuz t' learn. They takes me out an' shoves me inta th' fac'try. I learnt that too. Learnt how t' run the machines n' take a dishin' out th' wuk proper. I wuz all aroun' help to th' foreman. I knows his wuk, too. In fac' I does his wuk fer a couple hours ev'ry mornin'.

I gets \$16 a week now. Been wukkin here for 12 years an' gets a dollar raise – only one goddam dollar. I knows the job. I known it inside an' out. I practic'ly runs the place. The foreman's outa the place gabbin' wit' th' boss for hours an' says to me — “Man, y' take care of the wuk. I dpends on ya. I knows y' kid do it! An' so he leaves an' I gotta go trampin' up n' back fum th' shippin' room to th' fact'ry, fixin' machines an' shippin' and dishin' out wuk fer about 25 folk. They ain never give me a chance t' wuk on 'me machines. Why? 'Cuz they keeps me fer th' laborin' [end?] a the wuk. An' why? 'Cuz I know as well as you becuz a my culla. I ain' never got a half chance t' make some [?] decent dough. Yeh,

I remember when I gets th' job th' boss wants t' give me 12 bucks an' I says this ain' fair; I got a wife an' kid. How 'm I gonna get along on 12 bucks. I argue with him an' then he comes across with 15 bucks.

I know I'm worth more. I knows every job on my finger tips an' I even shows others how t' do the job but I ain' never got no chance an' I don' expect none fum this joint. — The foreman comes in about 10 every day when he's supposed t' be here at 8:30. An' me? I knows the wuk's gotta get out so I comes in at 8 instead a 8:30 like I'm supposed to t' get the wuk done. He gets \$75 a week t' be foreman an' I gets \$16 an' I does some a his wuk. First he asks me t' help him out wit' his wuk an' I wants t' be agreeable an' does it. That's a long time ago. Now he never asks me but expects me t' do it, an' I gotta or else. [md;] I think they don' want me t' do operatin' wuk on the machine. I'd hafta join the union an' get more pay. They don' like that, no [mam?]. The don' like payin' if they don' have to if they kin get away wit' it. I'll tell y' sumthin'. Once I needed a coupla bucks an' asks th' boss t' lend me 2. He lend it t' me very nice. Next week I comes t' pay him back an' he says fer me t' keep it 'cuz I deserves it. I says no I don' want it. I ain' askin' fer a han' out. If he thinks I deserve it why don' he give me it every week at th' proper time on Saturday. He didn' like it much. I tol' him jus' like that. Of course I didn't get it.

Yeh, mam; I'm on my vacation for a week. This's been the first one since I been here. Maybe I oughta thank him, huh? But I don' think I feels like thankin' him fer somethin' I shoulda got every year.

They ain' fair [md;] an' that ain' the half a it. There wuz a strike an' the boss tried t' use me durin' the strike. No go—no mam!

I ain' gettin mixed up again' the union. I ain' gonna do no strikebreakin' atall. They's strikin' fer what they wants that's why they join the union.

I gotta get back t' wuk Monday. Wukkin' fum 8 t' 6 an' 7 an' 8 when it gets busy. The boss says t' me t' be in early Monday because 4 there's lotsa wuk an' it's gettin' busy an' the foreman is gonna be on a vacation.

No, mam; you knows this ain' fair t' us but whats y' gonna do, huh? Somethin's gotta be done — I knows that. This here's discrimination t' us cullud people. We gotta do ev'ry thin' an' get paid least. We knows th' job as well as any an' 'me but they don' give us a chance t' do th' same wuk. The situation ain' good. Somethin's t' be done.