



# Prince Monolulu

Monolulu claimed to be a chief of the Falasha tribe of Abyssinia, but in reality he was born in St Croix, Danish West Indies (now part of the United States Virgin Islands). His baptism (as Peter Carl McKay) is noted in the records of the English Episcopal Church of the Danish West Indies. His father, whose name is not shown in the register, was William Henry McKay and his mother was Catherine Heyliger. His father and brothers were

horse breeders, raisers and racers on St Croix.

He first went to the Derby in 1903. He adopted colourful robes, a plumed headdress, and the slogan "I've gotta horse!", sometimes alternating with "Black man for luck!". Monolulu rose to prominence after picking out the horse Spion Kop in the 1920 Derby, which came in at the long odds of 100–6, and from which he personally made some £8,000, a vast amount of money at the time, equivalent to £ 400,000 in 2020 .

Monolulu claimed to have been married six times, though only five marriages are documented at all, and reliable evidence exists for only three.

Monolulu frequently featured in newsreel broadcasts, and as a consequence was probably the best-known black man in Britain of the time.[7]

He appeared in a clip in the 1939 propaganda film by Alexander Korda, *The Lion has Wings* (1939 film), Korda used him as an example of what Britain was, a nation at play and at ease with herself.

He appeared briefly in the 1952 film *Derby Day*, which is set around The Derby, the 1954 film *Aunt Clara* with Margaret Rutherford and Sid James, and also in the 1959 film *Make Mine a Million*.

In 1957 Monolulu appeared on the March 28th and April 4th episodes of Groucho Marx's quiz show *You Bet Your Life*.

Monolulu's name is referenced by the character Rigsby in the 1974 pilot episode of the UK comedy series *Rising Damp*, in humorous comparison to the new tenant Philip, (played by Don Warrington – police chief in *Death in Paradise* who had stated he was the son of a chief.

## Death

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The biography of Jeffrey Bernard by Graham Lord relates Prince Monolulu's death in some detail. It describes how Bernard at the time was working as a horse-racing journalist and visited Monolulu in the Middlesex Hospital to interview him. Bernard had brought with him a box of Black Magic chocolates and offered Monolulu a "strawberry cream". Monolulu subsequently choked to

death on it and Bernard bade him farewell. **And not a lot of people know that.**