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## [Journey of 'Jesus Guy' silver screen-bound](#)

**Controversial preacher who spent time in Hazleton is the subject of a documentary.**

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Controversial preacher Carl James Joseph has spent the past 13 years visiting 47 states and 13 countries, including spending time in the Hazleton area preaching the message of Jesus.

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Remember “What’s Your Name?” – the long-haired, bearded preacher who created a sensation when he walked barefoot into the Hazleton area several years ago, wearing nothing but a white tunic and spreading a message of peace and love?

Well, the man who some call holy and others call “a kook” will soon be appearing on the silver screen in a documentary film titled “The Jesus Guy.”

Filmmaker Sean Tracey said the 66-minute film is in post production, and he’s attempting to enter it in various film festivals throughout the United States.

“I’m hoping we can have a screening in your area, where he received so much publicity and reaction from people,” Tracey said in a telephone interview last week.

He hopes to find suitable venues for screenings in the Hazleton area.

Tracey learned of Carl James Joseph, who usually responds with the phrase “What’s Your Name?” when asked his name, through a Time magazine article published after a public appearance Joseph made in Hazle Township in February 2000.

During a talk before a crowd of about 700 people and a few dozen members of the local and national media at the Shrine of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Joseph urged people to become more open-minded, love each other and be ready for God to come.

Joseph had arrived in Hazleton in October 1999 and was widely welcomed. He appeared on talk shows, stayed with locals, visited hospitals and gave impromptu sermons on the street.

Still, many in Hazleton remained skeptical, some indignant.

Days after the talk at the shrine, Joseph said a man had attacked him, shaking him and yelling at him because he thought Joseph was pretending to be Jesus. He was not hurt in the incident.

Hazleton Mayor Lou Barletta’s wariness of Joseph is apparent in a segment of a film trailer.

“When somebody walks into town without any shoes, dressed in a robe in the wintertime, carrying a Bible, obviously he’s someone to keep an eye on,” Barletta said.

The film also includes segments with retired Bishop James Timlin and encounters Joseph had with people on the streets of Hazleton and other towns.

Tracey said he contemplated making a documentary film for some time, and after reading the Time article about Joseph, he ripped the page from the magazine and set it aside. “It just kept coming to the top of my pile for ... maybe a year,” he said.

“I just wanted to know what was up with the guy. ... I’ve been reading Time since I was a little kid; it’s not

a sensationalist rag. The author treated him with seriousness and respect. I sensed that in the article,” he said.

After talking with the author, Fred Mogul, Tracey decided to meet Joseph for himself. He tracked him down in Bethlehem.

“I didn’t feel he was a hoax. He has a certain intensity, for sure. He’s intelligent and he has a certain charisma that people get attracted to. He’s certainly a fascinating subject for the documentary,” Tracey said.

Tracey said Joseph, when approached about the documentary, was “receptive to the idea philosophically. He’s not afraid of having some publicity at some times. That’s in theory.”

But in reality, Tracey said he spoke with another filmmaker who said she abandoned a documentary with Joseph because “he’s just too difficult. He doesn’t want a film made about him unless he has (editorial) control over it.”

Tracey said he negotiated an agreement with Joseph in which Joseph would tell him when he could turn the camera on and when he should shut it off. But anything Tracey caught on film could be in the documentary.

“I told him, ‘I’m not going to turn you into a charlatan or make you look foolish. But I’m also not going to make you look like a saint or someone you’re not. We’ll get the good and the bad, the ups and the downs, your highest attributes and maybe your lowest lows,’” he said.

“I think I did that in this film. I think it’s a fair and honest story about him,” Tracey said.

A section of the marketing packet for the film says that Joseph “fell off track for nearly a year” during the course of filming, “losing touch with his intense faith, living in the lap of luxury with an enabling wealthy widow and local TV show host.”

“(Joseph) allowed our cameras access and full disclosure during this time, which resulted in a story that allows the viewer into the mind of an intense, solemn person,” the packet reads.

Tracey said the widow and TV show host was Mary Elizabeth Battles, whose home in Brigantine, N.J., Joseph used as “his little retreat.”

“The Jesus Guy” is the 47-year-old Tracey’s first documentary. Tracey has been directing TV commercials for more than 15 years and has a background in performing arts. He majored in religious studies and philosophy at Brown University.

“I’m fascinated by religion and how it manifests itself in different cultures. All of those things sort of came together for me in this film,” he said.

Tracey said he funded the film on his own at an out-of-pocket cost he pegged between \$100,000 to \$150,000. He spent about three and a half years, on and off, filming Joseph in his travels and wrapped it up in 2004.

Tracey hopes to have a private screening with Joseph before the film’s release.

“I’m hoping for a positive reaction, but you never know. ... He has his occasions where he’s very

opinionated or a little cantankerous. But remembering our agreement, I think he'll feel very comfortable about it being a really honest film," Tracey said.

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Read more about "The Jesus Guy" at [www.thejesusguy.com](http://www.thejesusguy.com)

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