

New Jersey Tenant Accused of Sacrificing Animals in Rented Apartment

Warning: This story contains graphic content. Reader discretion is advised.

A New Jersey man has been accused of sacrificing livestock as a part of Santeria after investigators discovered 22 farm animals—not all of them alive—in his apartment late last week, several media outlets are reporting.

Santeria has been labeled by some as a form of witchcraft, but Emilio Otero, the alleged perpetrator, told *NBC-4 New York* that he is a Santeria doctor and that Santeria is “an Afro-Caribbean religion that started in Cuba and popularly sacrifices animals as a form of devotion.”

Goats, chickens—including some with their throats allegedly slashed—and a dead pigeon were discovered in Otero’s apartment.

Santeria is “based upon the development of personal relationships through divination, sacrifice, initiation and mediumship between practitioners of the religion and the orisha deities, who provide their devotees with protection, wisdom and success and who guide devotees in times of crises,” per .

“Like many modern religions, Santeria followers believe in just one god, Creator known as Olodumare,” according to . “ It is neither a Polytheistic nor a pagan religion, nor an animistic one. ... Each individual is thought to be a child of an Orisha. There are hundreds of Orisha, but there are some that are more popular than others. Amongst the most well-known Orishas are Elegua, the trickster deity, Ogun, the blacksmith

warrior and Ochosi the hunter. They are collectively known as 'The Warriors.'"

There is no mention of Jesus Christ in either description, however.

The Daily Star reported Otero's landlord, a member of the U.S. Navy who was returning home from active duty in the Middle East, discovered the animals grazing in the renter's backyard. "The bizarre situation got worse when she saw a pile of chicken carcasses," the report said.

Otero explained to NBC-4 New York that he helps "people with cancer, ladies that are not pregnant and people with psoriasis." He denied partaking in animal sacrifices and says that he actually teats the animals as part of his religion. He also said "it's legal in the United States ... you respect the religion."

But H. James Boor of the Division of Environmental Health for Jersey City says Otero's actions are very much illegal.

"Jersey City has an ordinance that prohibits residents from keeping farm animals, livestock in the city limits," Boor says.

As the investigation continues, media reports indicate Otero could face per count, fines of \$2,000 and 90 days in jail. Due to the ongoing investigation, Otero has not been arrested and is not facing any charges as of Monday. {eo}

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