

Marcus garvey
stands out as a
historical figure in the
fight for african-
american...

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Marcus Garvey, a legendary hero, was born on August 17, 1887 in St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica. He was the youngest child of 11 children. His family was comprised of poor peasants, who only survived because of his mother. Garvey's mother had to supply the family with money by selling cakes and pastries. Garvey's father worked irregularly as a 'village lawyer' (Edwards 5). Growing up he was influenced by his father, who was a stonemason descended from the Maroon tribes (Davis 66). Marcus grew up knowing what it was like being poor and what deprivation meant. He attended elementary school and secondary school at St. Anne's Bay. He ended up graduating from high school at a private school called Church of England High School. After high school he could not afford college so he had to go straight to work. As such, at age fourteen, he decided to go and work for his grandfather who was a printer at St. Anne's Bay.

While he was working for his grandfather he experienced something that affected him deeply. There was a group of white kids with whom Marcus Garvey would play. He started to like one of the white girls who was the daughter of a Methodist minister. Her parents found out that they were hanging out with a black person and they made her write a letter telling Garvey that she could not ever see him again anymore because in the parents own words, "he was a nigger". He was furious ever since, and decided not to hang out with any more white girls while growing up. "After my first lesson in race distinction I never thought of playing with white girls any more, even if they might be next-door neighbors" (Edwards 4).

Because of his bad experience, he decided to move to Kingston, away from his neighborhood friends and start working as an apprentice for his
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grandfather. Later he was promoted as a supervisor responsible for the post. At age 18, he was supervising people his grandfather's age. While he was working there a powerful earthquake shattered Kingston. Because of this many people's wages were increasing significantly especially the Union workers. Garvey was the leader of a crowd of Union workers however it was eventually ended unsuccessfully. Most of the workers were allowed to return to their jobs but Garvey was left unemployed (Davis 66). He then found employment at the Government printing office as an editor of his first periodical-" The Watchman". Since he was not making enough money to support himself he decided to continue his activities in the political organization known as " Our Own". During his time working there he worked with a guy named Dr. Love who inspired him to improve Jamaica. Dr. Love spent most of his time volunteering to help improve the poor conditions of Jamaica. Some would say that Dr. Love was the inspiration that Marcus Garvey got. In 1909, Marcus left Jamaica and went to Costa Rica.

During the visit of Costa Rica, Marcus Garvey was in desperate need of money, so he started to work as a timekeeper in a banana plantation. He sadly realized that it was the black people that were doing all the slave labor even after slavery. He was so disturbed that he started to lecture to the field workers about how to live their own life without depending on the white people. Garvey quoted, " Growing up as I did my own Island, and traveling out to the outside world with open eyes, I saw that the merchant marines of all countries were in the hands of white men" (Education 2).

Marcus Garvey protested to the British consul in Limon about the treatment of black labor (Edwards 5). White people were threatening his speeches.

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Traveling all over South America, he realized there were men in the countryside who were unemployed because of their color. He tried to organize them and help them search for employment, but he was unsuccessful.

As a result of his bad experience, Marcus Garvey felt the need to change the Caribbean. To do so, he realized that he needed to become more knowledgeable on the history of African so he moved to England to go to college. Later on he ran out of money so he found a job at a magazine company where he helped publish "Africa Time and Orient Review". He became friends with one of his co-workers Duce Muhammad Ali, a scholar from Egypt. Duce provided him books about African history. One caught Garvey's attention; it was *Up From Slavery*, by Booker T. Washington. He was fascinated by Booker T. Washington and realized that he wanted to start leading his people.

Now that Marcus Garvey was well educated, he started to change the Caribbean slowly by preaching and leading organizations. Garvey became excited and decided to go back to Jamaica in July 15, 1914. Only within five days of being in Jamaica he decided to start a group that would unite all black people-Universal Negro Improvement Association. The association motto was "One God! One Aim! One Destiny!" Marcus Garvey became the president of the organization. The purpose of this organization helped the unification of all black people, and stressed the necessity of economic and cultural development (Whitney 100). For almost two years, Garvey struggled to improve and

educate people in Jamaica by having weekly meetings. The meeting would consist of debates, music, and certain kinds of entertainments (Senoir 23).

After Garvey's organization failed, he moved to the US so he could help lead and gain more support. Garvey ended up staying in US for 11 years doing many different lectures, fundraising and other activities. UNIA started to become very successful; it grew to become the largest Pan African Movement ever. It grew to 1, 200 branches in more than forty countries. There were many different international conventions that brought thousands of people together. He also contributed to the Pan-Africanism; which was a political project calling for the unification of all Africans into a single African state. During all of this he had a newspaper called " Negro World," which entertained many different stories, film reviews, short stories and articles of literature. This magazine helped the black community learn and appreciate their culture more (Senior 21). In 1920, the UNIA had their first huge convention in New York. The convention opened with a parade down Harlem's Lenox Avenue. More than 25, 000 people showed up for the convention and Garvey spoke about how he had a plan to build an African nation state. That idea became very popular; about a thousand people enrolled in the UNIA (Bayne 1). Because of the increase popularity branches started forming all over the world such as Cuba, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Venezuela, Ghana, Namibia, and South Africa (Bayne 2). By 1919 the Association had a membership of two million (Whitney 100).

Marcus Garvey had a mission and had an entrepreneurial drive to succeed in what he was doing (Davis 66). During his strong leadership he decided to

open up a steamship company, the “ Black Star Line”, which would “ link the colored peoples of the world in commercial and industrial discourse”. He only allowed blacks to purchase the stocks, and Garvey raised millions of dollars selling single shares at five dollars apiece to believers in his ideas of Black pride and redemption. Some people did not like the idea because they thought that Garvey was providing the Blacks with transportation back to Africa for those who wanted to go. Garvey stated, “ Having traveled extensively throughout the world and seriously studying the economically, commercially and industrial needs of our people, I found out the quickest and easiest way to reach them was by steamship communications. So immediately after I succeeded in forming the UNIA in America, I launched the idea of floating ships under the direction of Negroes” (Education 3). Garvey faced constant harassment from the federal and New York authorities. He was forced to rename the Black Star Line S. S. Federick Douglas, and it began traveling between New York and Jamaica in 1920.

During his leadership of his organizations and management of the steamship company he had many followers that supported him all the way. He also hosted a worldwide convention of the UNIA in New York. Thousands of people showed up to support Garvey and they paraded around Harlem. Garvey was issuing a problem of anticolonialism and African nationalism. He shouted, “ We are the descendants of a suffering people. We are the descendants of a people determined to suffer no longer.” (Davis 67). After that day Harlem sold cigars with Marcus Garvey’s picture on the box and black communities in big cities had the UNIA anthem, “ Ethiopia Thou Land of Our Fathers.” (Davis 68).

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Although he was blessed with success, Garvey had many obstacles to overcome. One of the main problems he had to face were his enemies; he had to meet with the hierarchy of the Ku Klux Klan in Louisiana to discuss support of the African repatriation. During all of this he had financial problems. The Black Star Line started to have trouble because of poor management. Garvey was forced into bankruptcy. With the Black Star Line in serious financial problems, Garvey decided to start up two new businesses organizations-the African Communities League and the Negro Factories Corporation. In addition to the financial problems he was having, he also faced problems with his first marriage to Amy Ashwood whom he married in 1919. Amy was Garvey's first wife since 1914. The marriage was not successful and in 1922 she filed for a divorce. Later that year he married his private secretary, Amy Jacques (Edwards 17).

By early 1923, Garvey had some serious problems to deal with. Garvey was tried for mail fraud and tax evasion. Eight prominent Negroes sent a letter to the Attorney general asking to disband or stop the trial. Before the trial, Garvey spoke to the hundreds of people there to support him. He gave an optimistic speech about how he was going to be free in an hour and that there was nothing to worry about. The crowd was still crying and praying for it all to be over with (Edwards 17). Garvey was found guilty under a single account that he continued to sell stock in the Black Star Line even though the company was broke. Garvey was fined \$1, 000 and sentenced to five years imprisonment. He was sentenced in 1927 by Calvin College, and Garvey was deported to Panama (Davis 68).

However, Garvey did not let anybody stop him from losing hope. He started another organization called “ Black Navigation and Trading Company” to take place of the Black Star Line. His supporters still stuck with him all the way through. But this company ended up losing its profits. Garvey thus moved back to Jamaica where he had some spectacular theatrical UNIA conventions that older Jamaicans remember as the most amazing, memorable time.

In 1940, Marcus suffered a stroke that left him paralyzed on the right side of his body. However this was not his first illness that he had suffered. After leaving Jamaica he had two cases of severe pneumonia. He also suffered greatly from asthma. On June 10, 1940, Marcus Garvey, “ the hero of many blacks” passed away from a stroke. He was only fifty-two years old but he lived his life as a hero, savoir, and a fighter (Martin 161).

Although Marcus Garvey passed away, he still had a huge impact on the Caribbean’s future. Because of Garvey’s leadership, he was announced a “ National Hero” by Jamaica in 1952. Jamaican Garveyites saw the picture of the new African emperor on the front page of the Daily Gleaner and consulted their Bibles for a sign. The question was whether if what Garvey was preaching was what they saw in the Bible all along. The proof lies in Revelation 5: 2, 5. Several Kingston preachers started to preach about Haile Selassie-which means “ Power of the Trinity”, as the living God and the main focus of African redemption. A new religion was made and the worshipers are known as Ras Tafari, or Rastamen. There would be no Rasta if it weren’t for Marcus Garvey (Davis 72). The Rasta will always remember the

proclamation that Garvey preached, “ Look to Africa, where a Black King shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is near” (Whitney 103). To some of the Rastafarians, Garvey is known as a prophet. In fact, Bob Marley a famous singer who was also Rastafarian, idealized Marcus Garvey. Most of Marley’s music relates to Garvey beliefs. He used them in his philosophies in his song.

For example, “ Exodus” he sings about how the blacks are free so where are they going to do with this generation (Whitney 105).

In conclusion, Marcus Garvey is considered a hero, savior, and a prophet. He had many failures in life but in history’s perspective he has had a lot of successes. He did significantly impact not just the Caribbean people but also the Africans. He has never set foot in his own country Africa, but to Africans he is known as a prophet. Garvey was a strong leader and influenced a lot of future leaders of the world. He succeeded in several factors that helped the Africans. Garvey’s time was needed; Africa was under Europeans conquest and the Black world needed its independence. He gave his time and leadership to help explain to blacks why they need to be independent and join UNIA. He attracted many followers and started international institutions. Also, he influenced a new religion and had many goals that he achieved and still had yet to achieve, but his followers helped accomplished his goals. In 1952 the Jamaican House of Representatives recommended that Garvey’s birthday be celebrated as a public holiday and have a scholarship in his name, which passed a resolution. The scholarship has been established; as for ‘ Marcus Garvey’s Day’, it is yet to come. The west end of Kingston is a

park; they have the street named after him. Marcus Garvey will never be forgotten in the world. He is a man never to be forgotten. This is a powerful quote showing you how unselfish Marcus Garvey is by having a dream:

“ I have a vision of the future and I see before me a picture of a redeemed Africa, with her dotted cities, with her beautiful civilization, with her millions of happy children going to and from. Why should I lose hope, why should I give up, and take a back place in this age of progress?” (Whitney 100).