



**MARCUS MOSIAH GARVEY**  
**17 August 1887 - 10 June 1940**

Marcus Mosiah Garvey was born on 17 August 1887 at St. Ann's Bay in Jamaica. His parents were Marcus and Sarah Garvey. He was the last of eleven children. At 14 years (1901) Garvey became an apprentice to his godfather, Mr Burrows, who was in the printing trade.

In 1907 he involved himself in social reform and participating in the first Printers' Union strike in Jamaica. Garvey took up public speaking. He received elocution lesson from Dr J Robert Love (1835 - 1914)

His first paper called 'Garvey's Watchman' was published around 1910. That year he visited his maternal uncle in Costa Rica where he was concerned with the living conditions of the black (African) people and vowed that he would do something to make changes. In 1912 Garvey visited Panama and England. He also went to the British Isle (France, Italy, Spain, Austria, Hungary and Germany). He returned to London in July 1913. Garvey learnt a lot from his experiences and decided to go back to Jamaica to implement systems, which would make life better for his people. He left England on 17 June 1914. On his journey back to Jamaica he stopped in Port-of-Spain in Trinidad and arrived in Kingston Jamaica on 15 July 1914.

On 20 July 1914 Garvey formed the Universal Negro Improvement and Conservation Association and African Communities Imperial League in Jamaica. It was later called Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). The UNIA entertained and fed the poor and sick especially on Emancipation Day [1 August]. UNIA opened an employment bureau for African people. The UNIA was not a political party but was interested in political events.

**Lecture Tours In America**

On 23 March 1916 Garvey went to America on a lecture tour. The tour, scheduled for five months went on for eleven years. His first meeting was on 9 May 1916 in Harlem. The subject was "**Jamaica**". He also lectured in New York; Boston; Washington; Philadelphia; Chicago; Milwaukee; St Louis; Detroit; Cleveland; Cincinnati; Indianapolis; Louisville and Nashville. Garvey was the first Negro to speak to the Veterans' Club of

London. Garvey was impressed with African-America, when speaking of them he said '*The people of the race have sufficient pride to do things for themselves*'. On Monday 2 July 1917 there were race riots in East St Louis. At a meeting on Sunday 8 July 1917 Garvey said 'White people are taking advantage of Black men today because Black men all over the world are disunited'. In 1918 the UNIA in Kingston, Jamaica gave way to Harlem, New York as Headquarters. It was legally incorporated on 2 July 1918. Garvey's ideology, known as Garveyism, was ***Race First; Self Reliance; Nationhood***. His ideology was also known as '***Black Nationalist***'.

Garvey's most successful publication, Negro World Publication (New York) commenced on 2 August 1919. It had sections in Spanish and French. However, It was banned in Trinidad; British Honduras (Belize); British Guiana (Guyana); Gold Coast (Ghana); Rhodesia (Zimbabwe); and the French African colonies.

In November 1919 George Tyler shot Garvey in the leg and head in the UNIA office. The shots were superficial.

On 25 December 1919 Garvey married Amy Ashwood at Liberty Hall in Harlem. They went on a three weeks honeymoon in Canada.

### **Black Star Line Steamship Corporation**

In October 1919 - 1922 Garvey ran the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation. The first ship was called 'Yarmouth'. It was later renamed 'Frederick Douglass' in honour of the 19th century Africa-American leader. On 31 October 1919 thousands gathered to witness the launching of the ship. There was a second vessel in 1920 named 'Shadyside'; an excursion boat that took passengers on summer cruises up and down the Hudson River in New York. Unfortunately it sank in a snowstorm while anchored for the winter. A third vessel, 'Kenawha' was launched in June 1920, renamed 'Antonio Maceo'. A fourth named Phyllis Wheatley cost \$20,000.00 but was never obtained.

### **Negro Factories Corporation**

In 1920 Garvey started the Negro Factories Corporation which was a chain of businesses in Harlem such as restaurants; groceries; laundries; factories making black dolls; printing press; tailoring; trucking businesses and a hotel. The UNIA was a Provisional Nation as it had a ceremonial head:

executive head; industrial sector; army; diplomatic service; financial resources and media.

### **Universal Negro Improvement Association Convention**

1 - 31 August 1920 saw the first UNIA Convention. The theme was 'West Indian Slaves Were Freed'. 25,000 black people jammed Madison Square Garden. There were parades by the Universal African Legion; African Motor Corporation; Black Cross Nurses; Black Star Line and the UNIA Juveniles. The convention was seen as a Parliament of African People. The declaration demanded '*Africa for Africans at Home and Abroad*'. Red, Black and green were declared the colours of African race. The Universal Ethiopian Anthem was adopted as the anthem. In all there were eight UNIA Conventions (United States 1920, 1921, 1922, 1924 & 1926; Kingston 1929 & 1934; Toronto 1938)

Only people of African descent were UNIA members. UNIA had branches all over the world: **West Indies** - Cuba 52; Trinidad & Tobago 30; Jamaica 11; British Guiana (Guyana) 7; Dominican Republic 6; Barbados 3; United States Virgin Island; British Honduras (Belize); Dominica; Antigua; Nevis & St. Kitts; St. Lucia; St. Vincent; Grenada; Surinam; Aruba; St. Eustatius; Bahamas and Puerto Rico [122]. **South Africa** - Cape Town; Claremont (Cape); Woodstock Cape Town; Evaton (Johannesburg); Goodwood; Pretoria; East London; Basutoland; Luderitz; Windhoek [10]. **West Africa** - Liberia; Lagos; Ghana; Sierra Leone; Gambia and Senegal [6]. **East Africa** - Kenya and Ethiopia [2].

### **Garvey's Children**

Marcus and Amy's marriage did not last for long. They were separated by February 1920 and divorced in June 1922. Garvey remarried that same year to Amy Jacques. They had their first child, Marcus Junior in 1930. Marcus and Amy Jacques second son, Julius, was born in 1933.

### **Garvey On Trial**

In 1922 intergrationalist launched a campaign called 'Marcus Garvey Must Go'. He was charged with mail fraud. His trial was held in 1923 and lasted on month. Judge Julian Mack sentenced him to five years imprisonment; a fine of \$1,00 plus court costs. Garvey was kept in prison for three months before being granted bail.

In 1924 Garvey launched Negro Political Union. In 1925 he was imprisoned again at Atlanta penitentiary. UNIA members and non-members launched a worldwide campaign for his release. Telegrams, letters and petitions were sent to the US government. The African National Congress in South Africa and the International Peasants' Council in Moscow were also involved in Garvey's release campaign. In Harlem, 150,000 people took part in the demonstration rally. In prison, Marcus Garvey consoled himself by writing two books of poems, 'The Tragedy of White Injustice' and 'Selections from the Poetic Meditations of Marcus Garvey'.

In November 1927 President Calvin Coolidge commuted the sentence to take immediate effect. Jamaicans celebrated 'Garvey release week'. He was deported on 2 December 1927. 5,000,000 people gathered at the dock ship Saca Macca. He gave a speech to the people of America 'I was convicted not because anyone was defrauded in the temporary failure of the Black Star Line, brought about by others, but because I talked about Africa and about its redemption.... I live and die for Africa redeemed.... The greatest work is yet to be done. I shall with God's help do it'. Garvey arrived in Kingston, Jamaica at 4.00 p.m. on Saturday 10 December 1927. It was said to be the most historic event that taken place in the metropolis of this island.

In January 1930 Garvey lost the St Andrew seat in the election. He then organised a Workers and Labourers Association. The purpose was to encourage workers to form unions. That year Negro World ceased publication after 14 years.

The seventh UNIA Convention in 1934 sanctioned a move by Marcus Garvey to London, England. Garvey left his homeland, Jamaica on 13 April 1935 and went to London. He visited Canada in 1936, 1937, and 1938. In 1937 - 1940 he opened the School Of African Philosophy in which he also lectured.

### **Hated By The Government Loved By The People**

Governmental Authorities hated Marcus Garvey because he disturbed the peace of colonies; told his people not to be content with second class treatment and fight for equality and justice. Garvey's success seemed to show up their own inability to mobilise the mass of African-Americans. In four years of arriving in the U.S.A he assembled 25,000 people in Madison square Garden.

People loved Marcus Garvey as he brought them hope; taught them to exercise Self Pride and love themselves; open businesses and schools; to be proud of their heritage and to demand respect.

## **Garvey**

Garvey wore military uniforms and a plumed hat on parades. It is reported that Garvey had charisma; power to attract people; hold their loyalty and stir their emotions.

Garvey had chronic asthma and had suffered two bouts of pneumonia. In January 1940 Garvey suffered a stroke and was left with a right side paralysis and unable to speak. On 10 June 1940 Marcus Garvey died in a cottage in West Kensington at the age of 52 years.

Garvey is known as a spiritual forerunner and a prophet. He believed that *'If black people knew their glorious past then they would be more inclined to respect themselves'*.

## **After Garvey's Death**

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| 4 November 1956  | • Kingston And St. Andrew Corporation Council unveiled a bust of Marcus Garvey in George VI Park                              |
| 6 March 1957     | • The Black Star [representing the people] in the centre of Ghana's flag derived from Marcus Garvey's 'Black Star Liner'      |
| 10 November 1964 | • Garvey's body was brought back to Jamaica. Guests from 32 countries were present at his memorial                            |
|                  | • The Jamaican government considered Marcus Garvey Jamaica's first National Hero. A school and a highway were named after him |
| 1965             | • First Marcus Garvey Scholarship for boys was established  |
| 1969             | • First Marcus Garvey Peace Award   |
| 1971             | • Marcus Garvey's face was printed on the Jamaican 10 cents stamp and fifty cent note   |
| 1980             | • Organisation of American States unveiled a bronze bust of Marcus Garvey in the Hall of Heroes located in Washington DC      |

- There is also a statue of Marcus Garvey outside St. Ann's Bay Public Library

Lady Leo  
24 July 2004

#### Sources

- Marcus Garvey, Hero ~ Tony Martin, 1983
- Universal Dictionary ~ Readers Digest, 1987
- [www.kasnet.com/herosofjamaica](http://www.kasnet.com/herosofjamaica)