

## Marcus Garvey Documents

### Marcus Garvey and the United Negro Improvement Association

\*Note: this timeline focuses on Garvey and the UNIA during the years he was based in NYC. Garvey continued to be active after 1927, and the UNIA continued to exist after his death in 1940.

1914 Garvey founds UNIA in Jamaica.

1916 Garvey leaves Jamaica for New York City.

1917 Thirteen members join to form the New York branch of the UNIA.

1918 Garvey starts Negro World newspaper.

1919

- Garvey starts Black Star Line shipping company.
- FBI instructs New York and Chicago offices to begin monitoring Garvey.
- Black Star Line signs contract to purchase its first ship, which will be re-named "Frederick Douglass."

1920

- The U.N.I.A. holds its first International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World at Madison Square Garden and schedules a massive parade in Harlem.
- UNIA adopts and signs a Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World, adopts a "nation" flag with the colors of the Red, Black, and Green, and elects officials for its government. Garvey himself is elected Provisional President of Africa.

1921 A 16-man UNIA delegation leaves for Liberia.

1922

- Garvey is arrested for mail fraud (he allegedly sent out brochures advertising a Black Star Line ship that he had not yet purchased).
- The Black Star Line is dissolved due to financial failure.
- Garvey meets with the Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, resulting in a "Garvey Must Go" campaign headed by black leaders.

1923 Second UNIA delegation heads to Liberia. Garvey arrested and sentenced to 5 years in prison for mail fraud.

1927 President Calvin Coolidge commutes Garvey's sentence. Garvey deported to Jamaica.

1940 Garvey dies

Source A: Excerpt from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 1964, pp. 1-6. Malcolm X was a political activist who was a strong advocate for black rights. He initially advocated for black separatism but later moderated his views. He was assassinated in 1965.

When my mother was pregnant with me, she told me later, a party of hooded Ku Klux Klan riders galloped up to our home in Omaha, Nebraska, one night. Surrounding the house...the Klansmen shouted threats and warnings at her that we had better get out of town because "the good Christian white people" were not going to stand for my father's "spreading trouble" among the "good" Negroes of Omaha with the "back to Africa" preachings of Marcus Garvey.

My father, the Reverend Earl Little, was a Baptist minister, a dedicated organizer for Marcus Aurelius Garvey's U.N.I.A. (Universal Negro Improvement Association). . . . Garvey, from his headquarters in New York City's Harlem, was raising the banner of black-race purity and exhorting the Negro masses to return to their ancestral African homeland—a cause which had made Garvey the most controversial black man on earth. . .

[My father] believed, as did Marcus Garvey, that freedom, independence and self-respect could never be achieved by the Negro in America, and that therefore the Negro should leave America to the white man and return to his African land of origin. . .

I remember seeing the big, shiny photographs of Marcus Garvey. . . The pictures showed what seemed to me millions of Negroes thronged in parade behind Garvey riding in a fine car, a big black man dressed in a dazzling uniform with gold braid on it, and he was wearing a thrilling hat with tall plumes. I remember hearing that he had black followers not only in the United States but all around the world, and I remember how the meetings always closed with my father saying, several times, and the people chanting after him, "Up, you mighty race, you can accomplish what you will!"

Source B: Letter to U.S. Attorney-General (Modified)

Harry M. Daugherty, U.S. Attorney-General Jan 15, 1923  
Department of Justice, Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

(1) There are in our midst certain Negro criminals and potential murderers, both foreign and American born, who are moved by intense hatred against the white race. These undesirables continually to proclaim that all white people are enemies to the Negro. They have become so fanatical that they have threatened and attempted the death of their opponents, actually assassinating in one instance.

(5) The U. N. I. A. is composed chiefly of the most primitive ignorant element of West Indian and American Negroes. The so-called respectable element of the movement are largely ministers without churches, physicians without patients, lawyers without clients and publishers without readers, who are usually in search of "easy money." In short, this organization is composed in the main of Negro sharks and ignorant Negro fanatics.

(27) The Garvey organization, known as the U.N.I.A., is just as objectionable and even more dangerous as the KKK, inasmuch as it naturally attracts an even lower type of crooks, and racial bigots.

(29) The signers of this appeal have no personal ends or political interests to serve. Nor are they moved by any personal bias against Marcus Garvey. They sound this alarm only because they foresee the gathering storm of race prejudice and sense the danger of this movement, which cancer-like, is eating away at the core of peace and safety -- of civic harmony and interracial coexistence.

The signers of this letter are:

- Robert S. Abbott, Chicago, editor and publisher of the "Chicago Defender."
- Dr. Julia P. Coleman, New York City, president of the Hair-Vim Chemical Co.
- William Pickens, New York City, field secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
- Chandler Owen, New York City, co-editor of "The Messenger" and co-executive secretary of the Friends of Negro Freedom.
- Robert W. Bagnall, New York City, director of branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Source C: Memo from J. Edgar Hoover (Modified)

J. Edgar Hoover to Special Agent Ridgely Washington, D.C., October 11, 1919

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. RIDGELY.

I am transmitting information that has come to my attention about the activities of Marcus Garvey. Garvey is a West-Indian negro and in addition to his activities in endeavoring to establish the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation he has also been particularly active among the radical elements in New York City in agitating the negro movement. Unfortunately, however, he has not as yet violated any federal law whereby he could be proceeded against on the grounds of being an undesirable alien, from the point of view of deportation. It occurs to me, however, from the attached clipping that there might be some proceeding against him for fraud in connection with his Black Star Line propaganda and for this reason I am transmitting the communication to you for your appropriate attention.

The following is a brief statement of Marcus Garvey and his activities:

- \* Subject a native of the West Indies and one of the most prominent negro agitators in New York;
- \* He is a founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League;
- \* He is the promulgator of the Black Star Line and is the managing editor of the Negro World;
- \* He is an exceptionally fine orator, creating much excitement among the negroes through his steamship proposition;
- \* In his paper the "Negro World" the Soviet Russian Rule is upheld and there is open support of socialism.

Respectfully,

J. E. Hoover, Bureau of Investigations (FBI)