

VARIATIONS IN TRAJECTORY:  
MARCUS GARVEY IN THREE  
MOVEMENTS, 1914-1922

by

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at

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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*For a dear friend, Amy Anderson,  
who understood my confusion.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Marcus Mosiah Garvey was the leader of the largest and most populous Black Nationalist movement of the early twentieth century. The movement began in Colonial Jamaica in 1914 but became a transnational phenomenon having its greatest success in the United States and a rather variegated existence throughout the rest of the globe. The difference in trajectories of the Garvey movement has created a localized approach to the study of the movement. American historians have been at the forefront of this approach. To that end, this thesis attempts to unite the localized histories of the Garvey movement in order to emphasize the ideological continuities and discontinuities of this movement, a creation of colonial disaffection.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED**

ARPS	Aboriginal Rights Protection Society
BSL	Black Star Line
CMS	Church Missionary Society
MGP	Marcus Garvey Papers
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples
NCBWA	National Congress of British West Africa
SLWN	Sierra Leone Weekly News
UNIA	Universal Negro Improvement Association
UNIA & ACL	Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League



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## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **What Shall We Do With Marcus Garvey?**

Let's recall some great men, who've been fighting for our rights/ Recall Paul Bogle, Recall Marcus Garvey, Recall Nelson Mandela, Mandela/ Let's recall some great men, who've been fighting for our rights<sup>1</sup>

Marcus Mosiah Garvey was the Jamaican-born leader of the largest Black Nationalist movement of the early twentieth century. His Universal Negro Improvement Association, (UNIA) began very modestly in Kingston, Jamaica in 1914. Garvey moved the UNIA headquarters to Harlem, New York in 1916 and from there he extended his racialist political and economic platform throughout the black world. At the peak of its success in the early twenties, the UNIA had a membership of over 2 million blacks and branches in the Americas, the Caribbean and Africa.

The movement followed different trajectories in different areas of the globe. It was extremely successful in Harlem but had a rather scattered existence throughout the rest of the black world.<sup>2</sup> The variegated existence of the Garvey movement produced a very localized and narrow approach to the study of the movement and its ideology. There are three main localized historiographies of the Garvey movement. The American

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<sup>1</sup> Burning Spear, "Let's Recall Some Great Men" *Mek We Dweet (1990)* Mango/ Island 539 863.

<sup>2</sup> For example, there were several UNIA branches established in various parts of Africa. However, many Africans who were not actively involved in the organization sympathized with the movement. The fourth chapter of this study will analyze this dimension of the Garvey movement in British West Africa.

historiography emphasizes the context of the UNIA in the United States, the rise of the organization in the immediate post-war era and its inevitable failure with the imprisonment of Garvey on charges of mail fraud in 1925.<sup>3</sup> American historians tend to dismiss both the earlier Jamaican and later African contexts as irrelevant to the overall development of the movement. The Jamaican Pan-African historiography explores the Garvey movement as a continuum within the tradition of anti-colonial struggle in the island. These historians emphasize the early anti-colonial influences on the creation of the Garvey movement in Jamaica prior to the Harlem years of 1916.<sup>4</sup> The British West African historiography tends to see the Garvey movement as an episode rather than an epoch in the history of British West Africa during the early 1920s.<sup>5</sup>

In providing localized accounts of the Garvey movement, these historians have failed to recognize that the racialist ideological principles of the UNIA, characterized by an intense valuation of blackness, were born out of the colonial experience in Jamaica. Garvey continuously asserted the need for black cultural, political and economic self-determination. He insisted on the worth of the black historical experience and the black aesthetic, vigorously rejecting the principles of black inferiority that legitimized colonial

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<sup>3</sup> Although Liberia is part of West Africa, historians of the Garvey movement in Liberia tend to describe Liberia as an extension of the American story. In many ways, this is due to the significant historical ties between Liberia and America. There was also a tendency amongst Liberians to distance themselves from the rest of West Africa during this period. See Ibrahim Sundiata, *Black Zion, Black Slavery, 1914-1940* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003); Tamba M'Bayo, "W. E.B. Dubios, Marcus Garvey and Pan-Africanism in Liberia, 1919-2004," *Historian* 66, 1(2004):19-44.

<sup>4</sup> There is also considerable scholarship published on the post-Harlem years of 1927 to the early 1930s in Jamaica but again this is outside of the period of this study.

<sup>5</sup> These are general historiographical tendencies. There are significant variations within each category.

domination.

Thus despite the variegated existence of the movement, the racist ideological principles were an enduring feature of the Garvey movement and this feature was adapted to suit various political and economic contexts throughout the black world. This malleability enabled the political expression and elaboration of American Black nationalist sentiment from 1919, at a time when the fate of the global black race was tied to the events of post-war reconstruction. The racist feature of the Garvey movement also found effective expression in the economic nationalism of British West Africa in the early twenties. In this study, I hope to reconnect the three separate historiographies in order to understand the complex trajectory of the movement. This will deepen our understanding of the enduring symbolism of Garveyism long after and far beyond the limits of his original organization.

Studies on the racist ideology of the Garvey movement in America date back to the 1940s in the immediate aftermath of Garvey's death.<sup>6</sup> However, it was within the context of a resurgence of Black Nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s that American historians began to produce the most serious scholarly work on this issue.<sup>7</sup> E. David Cronon's seminal study *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* traces the evolution of Garvey, emphasizing both the

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<sup>6</sup> See Aron Birgit, "The Garvey Movement: Shadow and Substance." *Phylon* 4, 8 (4TH Qtr., 1947): 337-343. Birgit equates Garvey's principle of racial self-determination within white society with Jewish Zionism.

<sup>7</sup>The publication of *Garvey and Garveyism* by Amy Jacques Garvey influenced the production of more scholarly publications on Garvey and his movement. See Amy Jacques Garvey, *Garvey and Garveyism* (Kingston, Jamaica, 1963).

significance and tragedy of the man and his ideology. According to Cronon Garvey was relevant as he represented “the longings and aspirations of the black masses” in America and “the deep seated Negro discontent with the injustice of American life.”<sup>8</sup> Garvey’s emphasis on the value of the black aesthetic and the importance of racial autonomy helped to create a sense of purpose amongst a degraded and disillusioned black population in the post-war arena. Cronon’s work is influential for its biographical content, (since it was the first published work of its kind) and its affirmation of the enduring symbolism of Garvey despite the tragic demise of his movement in America.<sup>9</sup> However, Cronon does not refer to the early movement in Jamaica; neither does he attempt to trace the ideological origins of the movement within the colonial context of Jamaica.

Tony Martin’s *Race First, The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*, attempts to define the racialism of the Garvey ideology and how this affected the organizational struggles of the UNIA to substantiate racist policies in the face of criticism by both black and white organizations in America.<sup>10</sup> Martin believed that it was Garvey’s idea of the primacy of race that was central to the creation of a cultural, political and economic framework of

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<sup>8</sup> See introduction, E. David Cronon, *Black Moses, The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).

<sup>9</sup> Cronon sees the tragedy of the movement inherent in its escapist philosophy that the solution of the Negro problem in America was with the redemption of Africa. In Cronon’s opinion, this was an unrealistic goal as blacks in the United States were powerless against the strength of white colonialism.

<sup>10</sup> Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976).

exclusivity for the black race to develop on its own lines. This meant that blacks should not only emphasize self-reliance but that blacks should assert their independence from white society.

Martin's book is the first American study that attempts to highlight the significance of Garvey's racialist ideology beyond the confines of the American context.<sup>11</sup> His work is also important as it highlights the ramifications of Garvey's racialism especially for the colonial context. By stressing black self-reliance and independence, Garvey's ideology undercut the hierarchical principle at the heart of colonialism. However, Martin too fails to connect his perceptions on Garvey and the UNIA with the fact that the movement was born out of the colonial context in Jamaica; thus, the creation of the racialist principles of the movement undermined the racist principles of colonial superiority.

An explicit analysis of the ramifications of Garvey's ideology for the colonial powers is Theodore Vincent's *Black Power and the Garvey Movement*.<sup>12</sup> Vincent demonstrates the power of Garvey's racialist ideology and that it was this emphasis on the power of blackness that created an intense opposition to the Garvey movement amongst the colonial powers. Garvey failed because of the calculated attempts by white imperialists to repress his movement. Vincent also validates the emerging African liberation

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<sup>11</sup> Unlike Cronon, Martin is more sympathetic with the ideological goals of the Garvey movement.

<sup>12</sup> Theodore Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (Berkeley, California: Ramparts Press, 1971).

struggles in light of Garvey's ideological principles.<sup>13</sup> Vincent's work is important as it attempts to analyze the racist ideology of the Garvey movement in light of the anti-colonial struggles within the then-emerging African nations. However, his analysis portrays the emerging African liberation movements as logical extensions of the past Garvey movement and this is often misleading, since different circumstances produce nationalist agendas at different junctions in history. Although some emerging African nationalists acknowledged Garvey's influence, the current context often presented factors that mitigated these influences.

Building on all three Black Nationalist historians, Judith Stein's *The World of Marcus Garvey* provides an interesting class-based approach to the birth of the ideology of the Garvey movement. In doing so, she attempts to debunk the notion of class unity within the context of black struggle against white racism. Unlike her predecessors, Stein delves into the Jamaican context of the Garvey movement. However, her analysis is limited as she only attempts to prove that the Garvey movement was born out of the petit-bourgeois frustrations of blacks under the colonial government in Jamaica – in other words, the aims and aspirations of the movement were disconnected from the real issues plaguing the black population especially in America.<sup>14</sup> The UNIA was disconnected from the experience of the majority of the black laboring classes and therefore failed to enact policies that would decidedly improve their position in America.

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<sup>13</sup> Vincent sees value in Garvey's political goals of African redemption and denies Cronon's assertion that they were indeed escapist. He highlights that Garvey's policy of racial self-determination had local implications for blacks within American society.

<sup>14</sup> Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey, Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge & London: Louisiana State University Press, 1991).

Several smaller and less influential studies have also emerged since the 1970s that deal with the American context and are explicit in their analysis of the Jamaican ideological roots and its influence on the overall movement. Ewa Nowicka, in her article “The Jamaican Aspects of the Garvey Ideology,” claimed that Garvey’s colonial experience in Jamaica is important to his racial outlook.<sup>15</sup> As Garvey was the foremost creator of ideology within the movement, his own experiences in colonial Jamaica were likely to influence his distinctive approach to racial uplift. As historian Lawrence Levine notes, Garvey grew up in a colonial atmosphere and traveled to the imperial center -- a place where the ideas of colonial writers and intellectuals converged.<sup>16</sup> Garvey combined several strands of political thought to create the ideological principles of his movement, including the emphasis on blackness and the decisive validity of the black cultural experience born out of the colonial context.

In most recent years, however, Michelle Stephens has provided a more useful framework of analysis of the racialist ideology of Garveyism beyond the American context.

Stephens emphasizes the transnational appeal of Garvey’s racialist ideology with its emphasis on the universal concept of blackness. In her article “Black Transnationalism and the Politics of National Identity: West Indian Intellectuals in Harlem in the Age of War and Revolution,” Stephens demonstrates the influence of the colonial situation on

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<sup>15</sup> See Ewa Norwicka, “The Jamaican Roots of the Garvey Ideology,” *Acta Poloniae Historica* 37(1978): 129-161; Keith S. Henry, “The Black Political Tradition in New York, A Conjunction of Political Cultures,” *Journal of Black Studies* 7, 4 (June 1977): 455-484.

<sup>16</sup> Lawrence W. Levine, “Marcus Garvey and the Politics of Revitalization,” in *Black Leaders of the 20th Century*, ed. John Hope Franklin and August Meier (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982).



the creation of Garvey's black transnational ideology.<sup>17</sup> She also sees the colonial influence at work in the philosophies of black West Indian intellectuals during the New Negro Movement from 1910 to the 1920s in Harlem.

She describes the colonial situation as marginalizing West Indian blacks that could never become fully integrated into their imperial European motherlands.<sup>18</sup> In the United States, they faced the same situation where African Americans experienced marginalization from the American national process. This dual experience encouraged the creation of a black transnational identity. "There is no consensus on the nature and measure of his contribution within American society."<sup>19</sup> However, Garvey's memory in American society rests securely in a "pantheon of Black nationalist leaders" that at some point or another has articulated the African American desire for equality and autonomy.

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<sup>17</sup> Michelle A. Stephens, "Black Transnationalism and the Politics of National Identity: West Indian Intellectuals in Harlem in the Age of War and Revolution," *American Quarterly* 50, 3 (1998): 592-608.

<sup>18</sup> See also Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance: Africa and Britain 1919-1945* (Routledge, 1999), chaps 8 and 9 (208-47).

<sup>19</sup> Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey*, 1.

Jamaican Pan-African historians<sup>20</sup> are at the forefront of analyzing the colonial experience and its effects on Garvey's racialism. There is, however, the tendency within the Jamaican Garvey historiography to see the movement as explicitly anti-colonial and thus part of the progressive march towards nationalism and self-government within the island. This tendency is a result of the post-independence appropriation of Garvey as a national heroic symbol. For these historians the Garvey movement was born out of the tradition of struggle against colonialism among the Jamaican black masses. This tradition is as old as the British colonial encounters in the island against the Maroons. These Maroons were Spanish ex-slaves who formed independent communities in the interior of the island and effectively resisted British colonial slavery for over one hundred years. Thus, the Maroons were an enduring symbol of anti-colonial resistance, a symbol that the black population replicated in their cultural and physical attempts to undermine British colonialism in the island. Garvey's Maroon ancestry has significant appeal for historians who advance this thesis.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> There are other Pan-African historians outside of the Jamaican context that study the Garvey movement, however, some of these histories tend to give very narrative accounts of the general histories of the Garvey movement. They are good for the background and overall context of the history of Pan-Africanism since its unorganized expression and organized beginnings. See Immanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement* (London: Methuen, 1974); P. Olanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism, the Idea and the Movement, 1776-1991* (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1994) There is also a considerable body of literature that highlights the inherent failure of the Pan-African ideal. One of the most influential writers on this subject is Tunde Adeleke. See his "Black Americans and Africa, A Critique of the Pan-African and Identity Paradigms," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 31, 1 (1998): 505-536.

<sup>21</sup> The foremost Garvey historian Robert A. Hill noted this aspect of Garvey's ancestry in the introduction to the First edition of his nine volume documentary history of the Garvey movement. See Robert A. Hill, ed., *Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, vol 1* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

Jamaican Pan-African historian Rupert Lewis is perhaps foremost among the historians who underscore the racialist ideological roots of Garveyism born out of the colonial context.<sup>22</sup> He justifies Garvey's program as an extension of the secular and religious forms of anti-colonial protest in the island.<sup>23</sup> He extends this analysis to explain the relation of this racialism to Black Nationalism in the United States and the overall anti-colonial struggle in the colonies of British West Africa.

His scholarship is most valuable to the examination of the question of how the racialist ideological principles of the Garvey movement were born out of the colonial context. However, it is necessary to approach his work with caution and to qualify the meaning of his use of anti-colonial. Indeed while Garvey's racialist ideology undermined the hierarchy that legitimized colonial domination, Garvey within the Jamaican context was never explicitly anti-British. He was pro-British, and emphasized ideals of social reform and moral uplift for blacks in Jamaica in his public statements. In his private correspondence, he denounced the racial apathy of black Jamaicans and the aping of the norms of their white masters by blacks in Jamaica. The difference between his private and public assertions is worth some analysis, as this discrepancy provides an insight into his more genuine feelings about the political climate in Jamaica. I will address this gap in chapter two.

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<sup>22</sup> I use Lewis's work extensively throughout this thesis, as he is the only Jamaican Pan-African historian that has produced such a wide proliferation of scholarship on Garvey.

<sup>23</sup> The religious form of anti-colonial protest that Lewis saw as precursor to the Garvey movement was the religio-political black millenarian movement of Alexander Bedward. The secular form of anti-colonial protest that Lewis saw as precursor to the Garvey movement was the agitation of Dr. Robert Love. See Rupert Lewis, *Marcus Garvey, Anti-colonial Champion* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1988).

It is within the history and popular culture of the Rastafarian movement that the racialist image of Garvey finds the most enduring expression. The development of the Rastafarian emphasis on blackness is directly linked to Garveyite ideology. The Rastafarian movement emerged after the period addressed in this study. However, it is worth mentioning since the image of Garvey today permeates the popular culture of the Rastafarian movement, notably in reggae music -- a genre that is decisively part of the unique culture and identity of the Jamaican people. It is also within the Rastafarian movement that the mythical image of Garvey as radical anti-colonial leader “Chanting down the Babylons” (both colonial and post-colonial established orders of society) finds its most enduring expression.<sup>24</sup> Jamaican Garvey historians tend to downplay his significance as a Black nationalist within Jamaican society. Black self-determination is woven into the broader history of anti-colonial versus anti-white struggle in Jamaica. This is part of a broader historical tendency to emphasize racial unity within the nationalist agenda of the twentieth century in Jamaica.

The British West African Garvey historiography also tends to highlight Garvey’s influence on the later nationalist movement in West Africa. Leading nationalists like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Nnandi Azikiwe of Nigeria are two West African figures quoted by historians as being influenced by Garvey’s racialist ideology.<sup>25</sup> However,

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<sup>24</sup> Nathaniel Samuel Murrell & Lewin Williams, “The Black Biblical Hermeneutics of Rastafari,” in Nathaniel Samuel Murrell et al., eds., *Chanting Down Babylon*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press). See also Barry Chevannes, “Garvey Myths among the Jamaican people,” in Rupert Lewis and Patrick Bryan., eds., *Garvey His Work and Impact*, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1994), 123-134.

<sup>25</sup> J. Ayodele Langley, “Garveyism and African Nationalism,” *Race* 11, 2 (1969): 157-172.

during the period of the early twenties Garvey's influence was not what it would become in the 1930s.

British West Africa historians such as Rina Okonkwo and J. Ayodele Langley have provided useful frameworks for analysis of the racialism of Garvey within that region.

Rina Okonkwo states that Garveyism in British West Africa was part of a continuum of influential philosophical approaches to race consciousness and African Nationalism.<sup>26</sup>

Key figures in this philosophical tradition include Edward Wilmot Blyden and Africanus Horton.<sup>27</sup> West Africans in that continuum understood Marcus Garvey. Indeed, Garvey's racialism was clearly influenced by Blyden's principle of the "African personality."<sup>28</sup> This principle also stressed the validity of the African cultural and historical experience and the unique potentialities of Africans in comparison to other races. Africans were thus poised for greatness if allowed to develop on their own lines.

According to Okonkwo, British West Africans never saw Garvey as the "Black Moses" who came to redeem the people of Africa. For the most part they were ambivalent towards the political goals of the Garvey movement that emphasized African redemption

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<sup>26</sup> Rina Okonkwo, "The Garvey Movement in British West Africa," *Journal of African History* 21, 1(1980):105-117.

<sup>27</sup> Edward Wilmot Blyden, was born in 1832 in the West Indian Virgin island of St. Thomas of free black parents. He went to the United States in 1850 to study theology but was denied admission because of his race. From there he immigrated to Liberia in 1851 where he became one of the most influential political thinkers of his time. He is credited as the most influential figure in the development of African nationalism. Africanus Horton was the first African to serve in the colonial medical service in the 1860s. His influence on the development of West African nationalism will be discussed in the third chapter.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas H. Henriksen, "Edward Blyden, His Influence on Contemporary Afro-Americans," *Pan-African Journal* 4, 3 (1971): 255-265.

since Garvey saw this redemption as coming from outside rather than from within Africa. Although Garvey's racialist ideology placed a high value on African culture and civilization, Garvey still held paternalistic attitudes towards native Africans. In this sense, his racialist ideology differs from Blyden who affirmed the potential of native Africans. Indeed, this paternalism was a product of socialization within the British imperial context in the New World. From the nineteenth century, the use of New World blacks by British colonial authorities in the civilization mission in Africa helped to foster this mentality.<sup>29</sup> Historian George Shepperson has noted the role of British colonialism in providing the context for the development of Pan-Africanism and the racialism of the Garvey ideology. He highlights that the British Empire inevitably fostered "a triangular trade of commerce of ideas of politics, between the descendants of the slaves in the West Indies and North America and their ancestral continent."<sup>30</sup>

Africans have historically rejected the paternalistic views of American blacks. Yekutiel Gershoni explores the West African formation of attitudes in response to American paternalism.<sup>31</sup> He also notes the African response to the political mandate of the Garvey Movement. West Africans had their own political agenda and Garvey's racialist policy of black self-determination was incompatible with the local political agenda of the West African intelligentsia agitating for constitutional reform in 1920. Both the National

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<sup>29</sup> See Nemata Amelia Blyden, *West Indians in West Africa, 1808-1880, The African Diaspora in Reverse* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> George Shepperson, "Notes on Negro American Influences on the Emergence of African Nationalism," *Journal of African History* 1, 2 (1960): 299.

<sup>31</sup> Yekutiel Gershoni, *African on African-Americans, the Creation and Uses of an African American Myth* (Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 1997).

Congress of British West Africa<sup>32</sup> and the Garvey movement wanted increased autonomy for blacks in Africa but both organizations held different views on how this autonomy was achievable.<sup>33</sup>

It is important to note that the distance between the UNIA branches in British West Africa and the parent body meant that, for those who appropriated the Garveyite message; his racialism was malleable to fit various contexts.<sup>34</sup> This is highlighted in the economic aspects of Garvey's racialism that found expression in the economic nationalism of British West Africa. West Africans marginalized by the colonial economic structure understood Garvey's message of the necessity of economic self-determination. J. Ayodele Langley emphasizes this theory of the acceptance of the economic aspects of the Garvey movement. However, he emphasizes a class-based approach, that the acceptance of Garvey's economic policies was a matter of elite self-interest and post war exigency.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> The National Congress of British West Africa was a political organization founded in 1920 to provide a regional basis for agitation for constitutional and economic changes from the British Imperial Government. For detailed study of the organization, see J. Ayodele Langley, *Pan Africanism in West Africa, 1900-1945, A Study in Ideology and Social Classes*.

<sup>33</sup> Yekutiel Gershoni, "Common Goals Different Ways: The UNIA and The National Congress of British West Africa, 1920-1930," *Journal of Third World Studies* 18, 2 (2001): 171-185.

<sup>34</sup> Historian Michael O. West notes the multiplicity of rhetorical uses of Garvey's racialism for anti-colonial struggles in colonial Zimbabwe. See, "The Seeds are Sown: The Impact of Garveyism in Zimbabwe in the Inter-war Years," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35, 2-3 (2002): 362.

<sup>35</sup> Langley, "Garveyism and African Nationalism," 157-172.

On a whole West African Garvey, historians highlight the crucial elements of Garvey's racialism and its creation in the broader colonial context while overlooking Jamaica and the local politics of agitation that helped to define Garvey's racialist ideology. However, looking beyond local histories of the Garvey movement to making connections deepens our understanding of the continuities and discontinuities of one of the most powerful racialist ideologies of the twentieth century within the black world.

## **Structure**

The chapters in this study are arranged based on the chronology of the Garvey movement. Thus the next chapter deals with the Jamaican context of the movement up to 1917, the third with the movement in America between 1917 and 1920 and the fourth with its inception in British West Africa in 1920.

In my second chapter I begin to explore the phenomenon of Garvey and Garveyism as it evolved in the Jamaican context, highlighting the unique features of the leader and his movement, in order to conceptualize in subsequent chapters the continuity and discontinuities between the early Garvey movement in Jamaica and the later organization in the United States and British West Africa. It is necessary to analyze the socio-cultural context within the British colonial system that helped to create the racialist mainstay of the Garvey movement from its inception in August of 1914.

The first section of this chapter therefore deals with the cultural and political climate of Jamaica after emancipation in 1834, noting relevant developments that affected the



creation of the British Crown Colony system of government. While this was an act of the metropolitan government, I emphasize the role of the organized resistance of the subordinate classes in influencing British decisions at two crucial moments. I also highlight the colonial mission to civilize the black population within Jamaica and the role of the church in this collaboration, with an emphasis on the response of the subordinate classes to these attempts to civilize them from above. This leads to an analysis of the role of religion in the development of the political culture of the various classes in Jamaica. Within the context of the development of a political culture, I highlight the differences among the religious and economic groups in the island. I note the emergence of a socially conservative and a more radical and vocal middle class and the relationship of both groups with the colonial government.

The next section of this chapter highlights the development of the radical black millenarian religio-political organization of Bedwardism in order to emphasize the political culture of the masses that supported the Bedward movement. How did the movement fulfill the needs of its supporters? A discussion of the response of the colonial establishment to the Bedward movement follows. The next section describes organized Pan-Africanism, as it existed in Jamaica prior to the UNIA. I will highlight the contribution of Dr. Robert Love and Dr Albert Thorne to the development of a Jamaican Pan-African tradition. The final section of this chapter highlights the organization of the UNIA, as it existed in Jamaica. I highlight how Garvey continued in the tradition of earlier Jamaican Pan-Africanists and the ways in which he differed. I emphasize his public versus private sentiments in order to analyze the specifics of his racialist thought.

I also deconstruct the objectives of the organization highlighting the class structure of its membership. This chapter will ultimately provide an interesting analysis of how demographics shaped the nature of Garvey's early movement.

The purpose of the third chapter is to highlight how the various "back to Africa" sentiments were responses to the political and economic marginalization of African Americans and how Garvey's racialism provided another expression of these sentiments at a crucial point in Black American history after World War One. In the first section, I therefore analyze the history of the various "back to Africa" movements in America in the antebellum and post-bellum periods and the socio-economic and political climate that encouraged African Americans to turn to this phenomenon. This will involve an analysis of the North/ South divide and the impact of slavery on the development of political organization amongst African Americans. The second section highlights Garvey's early years in the United States after 1916, and his attempts to carve a niche in the American political scene. I emphasize the importance of Harlem as a center for radical Afro-American thought. I highlight the socio-economic and political upheavals of wartime America and how these influenced the political elaboration of Garvey's racialist sentiments. The third section of this chapter highlights the subsequent internationalization of his racialist philosophy by 1919 and the importance of the UNIA Declaration of the Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World to this process. The problems of this attempt at internationalization will be addressed using the example of UNIA involvement in Liberia.

The final chapter analyzes the trajectory of Garveyism in British West Africa between 1920 and 1921 and the political and economic response to his racialism. I provide a background of the British colonial influences on the political and economic situation in West Africa, with specific reference to Lagos and Sierra Leone, from the nineteenth century. Particular reference will be made to the British mission to civilize Africa and the impact of this attempt on the creation of an African intelligentsia. I highlight the divisions that were part of the evolution of the social fabric under colonialism. This will provide a future reference point for the significance of these divisions as barriers to political action based on the racial principle. I will then analyze regional attempts at political mobilization in 1920 with the organization of the National Congress of British West Africa. I then emphasize the necessity and difficulty of economic solutions outside of the colonial machinery by highlighting the problems with wartime shipping and trade and the influence of Garvey's Black Star Line in 1920 as a potential solution to black economic marginalization. This chapter will ultimately show the hidden flaws of Garvey's racist political and economic policies when projected into British West African politics.

### **Methodology And Sources**

I attempt to unite the three local historiographies of the Garvey movement. In many ways, this study will involve a certain degree of comparison of the racial and class dynamics in the local context based on three broad categories. The first is the development of political institutions and policies of socio-economic and political integration within the British colonial and American settings. The second is the

development of political protest based on these policies of integration; the third is the process of identity formation in light of the first two categories. I will highlight the continuities and the discontinuities within the three disparate regions in order to ascertain how these three categories affected the expression of Garvey's racialist ideology in the three settings I examine.

*The Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* edited by Robert Hill will provide the bulk of my primary source material. *The Garvey Papers* are a continuing publication comprising twelve volumes of documents in three series: the American Series, the African Series and the Caribbean Series (which to date remains unpublished). These documents are a combination of public and secret government papers, correspondence and manuscripts. *The Garvey Papers* also provide a wide range of press commentary on the movement from these three areas as well as Europe. I use Volumes one (1826-August 1919), two (27 August 1919- 31 August 1920) and three (September 1920- August 1921) as they document the early movement in Jamaica and the Harlem years. For my third chapter on West Africa, I use volume nine (June 1921-December 1922), the first publication in the African Series.

I also rely on press sources. In Jamaica, this includes the *Daily Gleaner* published from 1834. I make extensive use of a wide range of West African press sources including *The Gold Coast Leader* (1920-1929), the *Lagos Weekly Record* (1890-1921), the *Nigerian Pioneer* (1914-1934) and the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*. For metropolitan colonial opinion on Jamaica or British West Africa, the *Times of London* is also useful.

## **Background To The Garvey Movement<sup>36</sup>**

Marcus Mosiah Garvey was born on August 17, 1887 in St. Ann's parish in rural Jamaica. His parents were of the independent peasantry with modest holdings. Garvey's father was a descendant of Maroons. Historians note that his formative years helped to define his attitudes towards race and his racialist ideology.

Garvey received education up until the Grammar school level. At fourteen, Garvey became an apprentice to his uncle Alfred Burrows who ran a printery. With his obvious deficiency in formal education Garvey read widely, with his uncle's printery providing a considerable source of material. Thus, from the beginning Garvey was unlike most prominent Pan-African leaders in his native Jamaica, the United States or Africa who had attained higher levels of formal education, and Garvey's emphasis on self-reliance is a result of his own experience of being self-taught.

According to Garvey, his first experience of race difference came at an early age when a beloved playmate refused his acquaintance after she told him of her departure to England. Her parents had advised her against corresponding with Garvey since he was black. The obvious emphasis on the spatial difference is worth noting, as while it was acceptable behavior for blacks and whites to correspond in Jamaica, it was unacceptable behavior at the seat of empire in England.

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<sup>36</sup> This introduction is based on the collective works of Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey*; Cronon, *Black Moses*; Garvey, *Garvey and Garveyism*; Lewis, *Marcus Garvey Anti-Colonial Champion*.

In 1906, Garvey left rural St. Ann's Bay for Kingston the capital of Jamaica in search of brighter prospects. Kingston was the bustling and vibrant seat of the British colonial government in the island. It is here that Garvey got his first taste of the political scene as he listened to men lecturing and debating in the streets. Kingston was also the scene of working class strike action and Garvey's first political involvement came in 1908 when he participated in a Printer's Union strike. The workers took strike action for a better wage package in light of the hardships created by the earthquake of the previous year. The colonial authorities had failed to provide relief for many Jamaicans displaced by the crisis. Garvey lost his job because he was the only supervisor to show solidarity with the workers. Historians trace his disdain for organized labor to this incident. The result was a blacklist from private printeries, so he got a job at the government printery. Garvey's job exposed him to current events on the local and imperial stage due to the nature of publications he handled there.

Garvey from 1912 became involved in the National Club, a political lobby group in Kingston that challenged colonial electoral and legislative policy. Dr. Robert Love was also active in this organization and Garvey soon became intimately acquainted with the local race leader. Garvey curtailed his political involvement with the club to travel overseas in search of better employment opportunities. In Costa Rica and Panama Garvey worked as a timekeeper on sugar plantations. He witnessed the degraded working conditions of his fellow Jamaicans in Central America and sought redress through British consular officials. They were indifferent to Garvey's appeals to investigate the plight of Jamaican migrant workers and it is from this instance that

Garvey began to agitate to provide meaningful changes for blacks.

In the tradition of Robert Love, Garvey started two newspapers to enlighten the public of the conditions that blacks faced in these areas. The first was the *Nacion* published in Costa Rica and the second was *La Prensa* published in Panama. Garvey understood the value of the printed press, and he effectively employed this medium to disseminate his racialist ideology during the lifetime of his movement. Garvey also understood the necessity of context, as in printing his papers in Spanish he could effectively convey his message to those he hoped to represent.

His attempts at organization failed and Garvey returned to Jamaica, travelling to Britain shortly thereafter. In the imperial metropolis, Garvey firmly cemented the racial ideologies he had met in the colonial periphery. Garvey experienced the politics of minority status -- an experience that his native Jamaica did not offer -- and this had a significant bearing on his ideological development since the spatial difference of metropolis versus colony seemed to also legitimize discrimination that is more overt. He worked with Duse Mohammed Ali, a Sudanese-Egyptian Pan-Africanist who published the *African Times and Orient Review*, a publication that was the organ for the economic grievances of West African producers and traders. It was here that Garvey was introduced to large scale economic Pan-Africanism. His Black Star Line Shipping Company would replicate these experiences.

Garvey returned to Jamaica in 1914 with a clear idea of the solution to not only the migrant black workers he had encountered but also to the discrimination that he and other blacks continued to experience. He established the Universal Negro Improvement Association in August of 1914 with Dr. Thorne, a leading Pan-African figure in Jamaica during this time. The organization was poised to unite the black people of the world to achieve their own salvation and uplift. However, at first, Garvey had to solicit support for his movement and the feeble existence of the UNIA in Jamaica is the story of failed attempts to attract interest in a movement that had only grand ideological aims and no concrete political or economic platform on which to achieve these objectives.



## CHAPTER 2

## VARIATIONS OF “CHANTING DOWN BABYLON” GARVEYISM IN JAMAICA BEFORE 1917

### Introduction

The early Garvey movement in Jamaica was not as successful as the later grand movement in Harlem, New York. As one American historian notes, “the Garvey movement had its real beginnings in New York in 1917,”<sup>37</sup> and due to the existence of extensive histories of the American movement, scholars tend to ignore the significance of the activities in Jamaica. This lack of attention coincides with a marked absence of Pan-African elements in the Jamaican and West Indian setting in general histories of black political organization before 1925.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, the Garvey movement in Jamaica is important to an understanding of the evolution of the racialist ideology of the organization and to an assessment of the extent of its success in both Harlem and British West Africa. This is especially pertinent since societies shape protest movements created within them. Garvey’s example gives us an insight into the complex nature of race and politics in colonial societies.

This chapter will provide the necessary background for an understanding of the evolution of Garvey’s racialist ideology. The first section deals with the cultural and political

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<sup>37</sup> Aron, Birgit, “The Garvey Movement: Shadow and Substance,” *Phylon* 4, 8 (1947): 337.

<sup>38</sup> For example, Geiss’ authoritative history of Pan-Africanism gives very few details of Pan-African organization in the Caribbean. See Immanuel Geiss, *The Pan-Africanism Movement* (London: Methuen, 1974).

climate in post emancipation (1834) era Jamaica; the second deals with Bedwardism, the black peasant-based millenarian religio-political movement and its ties to Garvey's racialist liberation theology; the third, contributions to Pan-Africanism by Dr. Robert Love and Dr. Albert Thorne. The final section is an analysis of how these factors contributed to create a UNIA that was quite unlike the later organization in New York. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to outline the Jamaican socio-cultural context that helped to create the racialism of the Garvey movement. This racialism found political expression in the Harlem years.

### **Social Cleavage And The Politics Of Agitation**

The Garvey organization in Jamaica before 1917 was unlike its American sequel. At the height of its popularity in the United States during the early 1920s, Garvey's movement was associated with black separatism, economic Pan-Africanism and radical anti-colonial nationalism. While embracing Pan-African sentiment, the Garvey movement in Jamaica before 1917 publicly espoused a conservative program that combined "social reform and self-help through Christian religious doctrine."<sup>39</sup> These were characteristics of "legitimate"<sup>40</sup> uplift organizations in Jamaica during this time. The Jamaican organization "preached class conciliation, affirmed loyalty to Britain and its principal supporters were from the white and mulatto elite. Thus, Garvey's program was more

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<sup>39</sup> Abigail Bakan, *Ideology and Class Conflict in Jamaica, the Politics of Rebellion* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1990), 95.

<sup>40</sup> The basis of my definition of legitimate is the *OED*: Conformable to law or rule; sanctioned or authorized by law or right; lawful; proper. Applied to the Jamaican context this definition would mean organizations recognized, supported and upheld by the colonial government.

conciliatory than radical. Garvey's conservative program reflected the precarious nature of the British colonial situation since the emancipation of slavery in 1834.

Jamaican society at emancipation in 1834 was a complex combination of two dominant cultural traditions with diverging philosophical outlooks. The mixture of African and British cultural norms created a distinctive Creole society<sup>41</sup> that metropolitan elements<sup>42</sup> despised but allowed to exist since the ruling plantocracy was still able to maintain some control over its black subordinates. With the economic decline of the plantocratic elite after emancipation, many colonial authorities feared social disintegration. The Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865<sup>43</sup> confirm fears that the morality and manners of the white ruling

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<sup>41</sup> Historian Edward Brathwaite defines Creole society as the development of a distinctive character or culture from the mixture mainly of British and West African co-existence in the New World, amongst people born in this environment. There are distinctive elements of Creole culture, and in this study Afro-Creole religious aspects will become important. See, Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1971), xiii.

<sup>42</sup> Metropolitan elements include Whig politicians and several Church groups such as the Baptists who tried to establish missions in the island. For discussions on the perceived "Mungrell Condicion" of the plantocracy and objections to their right to rule see Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972); Abraham D. Kriegel, "A Convergence of Ethics, Slaves and Whigs in British Anti-Slavery," *The Journal of British Studies* 2, 4 (1987).

<sup>43</sup> The Morant Bay Rebellion was an uprising led by Paul Bogle, a black Baptist deacon who led a contingent of ex-slaves to protest the economic conditions and the forced imprisonment for trespassing of one of their own. Denied audience from the governor and fired on by the militia, the ex-slaves launched a revolt. Thousands of ex-slaves roamed the island burning fields. Several whites were killed during the rebellion. Both the *Daily Gleaner* in Jamaica and *The Times* in London extensively covered the rebellion. (See *The Times* London, December, 1865) Humanitarian interests in Britain viewed the killing of innocent men, women and children in order to suppress the rebellion as a moral outrage. (For the opinion of some humanitarian interests see "Deputation of the Baptist Missionary Society Praying for an Inquiry into the Rebellion," *The Times*, December 7, 1865, 9, & "Anti-Slavery Society on the Rebellion," *The Times*, December 11, 1865, 12. There are many detailed histories of the Morant Bay Rebellion as it marked a turning point in the political and economic development of the island. For a recent study of the

elite were depraved and therefore they could not exert control over what they saw as an ignorant and barbaric black population. The Morant Bay rebellion was the climax of an ongoing conflict between the ex-slaves trying to assert their freedom in emancipation and the planters trying to reinstate the system of servitude.<sup>44</sup> The British colonial government intervened in this conflict destroying plantocratic power with the imposition of crown rule.<sup>45</sup> The agents of crown rule sought to impose a religious and moral order based on “British imperial ideologies and middle class Victorian ideals”<sup>46</sup> in order to arrest this perceived state of decay especially amongst the black population. After the imposition of crown rule a new conflict emerged between the agents of the metropolitan government bent on creating a distinctive social order and the black population struggling for “cultural self-determination in face of resolute attempts from above to transform them into model British citizens.”<sup>47</sup>

Crown colony rule also brought increased missionary activity to Jamaica since social reform through Christian religious doctrine was essential to the process of civilizing the once subordinate black population. This civilizing process, however, created unforeseen

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rebellion see Richard Hart, *Slaves Who Abolished Slavery, Blacks in Rebellion* (Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2002).

<sup>44</sup> There were other racial groups present in Jamaica during this period. East Indians arrived as indentured servants after 1845 followed by the Chinese who arrived after 1849. Both races were considered more industrious and docile. While they were in need of Christianization the British authorities did not consider these races as morally depraved as the blacks. See Brian L. Moore & Michelle A. Johnson, *Neither Led Nor Driven: Contesting British Imperialism in Jamaica, 1865-1920* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2004).

<sup>45</sup> Crown colonies were entities that lacked autonomous self-government that is there was no elected legislature. See William Green, *British Slave Emancipation: The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment 1830-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

<sup>46</sup> Moore & Johnson, *Neither Led Nor Driven*, xiii.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

changes in the class/caste structure. Three missionary led developments upset the once three-tiered social class/caste system where whites were traditionally of the landed upper classes, the mulatto hybrid (mixed) population comprising the middle classes with limited access to property and the blacks placed at the bottom rung of the social ladder.<sup>48</sup> The first development was the changes in property ownership. Missionary activity aided the development of an independent peasantry.<sup>49</sup> Baptist missions especially helped freed blacks to acquire land and devoted significant energy to promote husbandry amongst the black population.<sup>50</sup> Land ownership was no longer a variable in defining racial status.

The second development was the increase of church-organized educational institutions. These educational facilities allowed blacks to gain access to the means of improvement. Missionaries were also keen on educating blacks as they could help with the process of proselytization in Jamaica.<sup>51</sup> The third development was the creation of British subjects. Missionary education socialized blacks to appreciate the benefits of British value systems and to uphold the moral order. Thus, the process of Christian education created a black middle class with significant ties to the imperial establishment.

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<sup>48</sup> The three-tier social order refers to the white, mulatto and black system of classification. This is a general classification since within the mulatto group there were several gradations based on the amount of black blood in a person's heritage. For a detailed classification system of the mulatto group see Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica, Reflections on the Situations, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws and Government, vol 1* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002 (1774).

<sup>49</sup> Catherine Hall, "White Visions, Black Lives: The Free Villages of Jamaica," *History Workshop Journal* 36, (1993): 100-132 and C. S. Reid, "Early Baptist Beginnings," *Jamaica Journal* 16, 2 (1983): 2-8.

<sup>50</sup> Reid, "Early Baptist Beginnings," 2-8.

<sup>51</sup> Garvey was born of peasant stock and received elementary education at a mission grammar school. Thus without these developments Garvey's existence in post-emancipation society would be quite different.

With access to land and education blacks increasingly gained autonomy over their daily existence. Whites had denied them this autonomy during slavery. Blacks were now more poised to challenge the injustices of the colonial system. Christianization and education, however, had the potential to produce perceived subversive elements, as increasingly some middle class blacks would use the principles of the British moral order (that emphasized just governance) to challenge colonial injustices. These people agitated for the improvement of conditions within Jamaica. It is easy to portray them as the clichéd bourgeois self-interested group, since their “advancement in all areas -- professional, mercantile, social, cultural and political was sometimes hindered by white racism.”<sup>52</sup> However, men such as Dr. Robert Love and Dr. J. Albert Thorne were involved in either agitation for colonial reform or Pan-African organization in an effort to bring meaningful changes to the black population in Jamaica and in the Diaspora irrespective of class.

Subversion did not only emerge from the black middle classes. The introduction of Christianity to blacks allowed for the development of Afro-Christian beliefs especially amongst the lower classes. The creation of black religious movements that embraced elements of Christianity such as the trinity while emphasizing African elements such as spirit worship were a key feature of British Crown colony society. These Afro-Christian

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<sup>52</sup> Rupert Lewis, *Marcus Garvey, Anti-Colonial Champion* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1988), 36.

movements also emphasized reform but in a deeply spiritual way.<sup>53</sup> Many of these groups were small, centered in the rural areas and thus removed from the seat of imperial power in Kingston the capital of Jamaica. However in the 1880's, one Afro-Christian movement emerged that was not only populous but was located in August Town in the hills directly bordering Kingston. This Afro-Christian movement led by Alexander Bedward was not only religious but had significant political undertones that challenged black degradation and exploitation by whites in colonial society. Bedward's organization was close enough to the seat of colonial power to raise fears in the colonial authorities still traumatized by the historical memory of Morant Bay.

### **Alexander Bedward And Bedwardism**

The Bedward Movement began in 1889 and existed until the colonial authorities committed its leader, Alexander Bedward, to an asylum in 1921. Although the movement's name is associated with its charismatic leader, H.E.S Woods (otherwise known as the Prophet Shakespeare) actually founded the movement.<sup>54</sup> Shakespeare was an American who traveled to Jamaica some time during the 1870s. In June of 1879, he visited Dallas St. Andrew Jamaica and prophesied that there would be destruction by flood. A.A. Brooks, author of the only published history of the Bedward movement,

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<sup>53</sup> As we will see in the Bedward movement the emphasis on reform was manifest in the rituals of fasting (denial of self) prayer and baptism (atonement through water).

<sup>54</sup> A. A. Brooks, *The History of Bedwardism or the Jamaica Native Baptist Free Church* (Kingston: The Gleaner Co., 1917), 3. Shakespeare's background as a non-native of Jamaica is important as his no one could then challenge his claim to authority, since he was an outsider. The mystery of his background also added to his claims to divinity. It was impossible to identify the background of the author of the Bedward history. By the tone of the book, however, one can assume that Brooks was a Bedwardite sympathiser.

noted, “The occurrence of flooding in October of the same year and the destruction of several church properties,” (considered an ominous event) gave credibility to the traveling preacher amongst the local black inhabitants. In 1888, he visited August Town St Andrew and called the first religious meeting compelling persons from all the religious denominations in the area to attend or risk the destruction of the community. The meetings convened in August of the following year and while several Baptists and Wesleyans attended, the Anglican population failed to send representatives. It is impossible to ascertain the true denominational composition of the first meeting. However, the fact that Brooks highlights the absence of any Anglicans is indicative that from the start the movement had no association with the establishment or civilized society in Jamaica of which the Anglican Church was a part. Bedwardites were largely from the black peasant population and the poor underclass.<sup>55</sup> The movement attracted the “impoverished and demoralized” black elements in Jamaican society.<sup>56</sup>

Shakespeare continued to prophesy noting that his successor would open a religious fountain in August Town and that “fruits would so abound in August Town that from various parts of the world people would come to enjoy them.” In doing so, he prophesied the rise of his successor Alexander Bedward. According to Brooks, Bedward was divinely ordained through a series of visions.<sup>57</sup> Shakespeare died in 1901 but even before then his successor Bedward had fulfilled the old man’s prophesy of a healing fountain in

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<sup>55</sup> Roscoe M. Pierson, “Alexander Bedward and the Jamaica Native Baptist Free Church,” *Lexington Theological Quarterly*, 4, 1 (1969): 65-76.

<sup>56</sup> Lewis, *Marcus Garvey, Anti-Colonial Champion*, 36. There is no indication from the available sources of the movement that Bedwardism attracted a considerable or even any person outside of the black population in Jamaica.

<sup>57</sup> Brooks, *The History of Bedwardism*, 7.



August Town that would draw the attention of thousands. Bedward made his first appearance in 1891 baptizing persons in the Mona River in August town. The miraculous healing of many triggered an intense reaction amongst the black masses that historians believe identified with the mystical aspects of the movement.<sup>58</sup> Thousands flocked to August Town for the leader to cure their bodily ailments and their sins.<sup>59</sup> It is possible, however, that it was not simply the mysticism of the movement that attracted black support. Bedward had a physical significance for a black population with limited access to health care. He was their healer.<sup>60</sup>

Some Jamaican political scientists believe that the early development of a political culture<sup>61</sup> amongst lower class blacks in Jamaica coincides with the existence of the Bedward movement. Indeed the influence of the church in post-emancipation society and the inability of much of the black population to access political institutions could have provided the impetus for this religio-political organization. It is necessary to qualify this theory since Bedward did not organize his movement in the traditional political sense and it is impossible to analyze if Bedwardites perceived the function of their organization as

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<sup>58</sup> Lewis, *Marcus Garvey, Anti-Colonial Champion*.

<sup>59</sup> Moore & Johnson, *Neither Led Nor Driven*, 79.

<sup>60</sup> In 1860, the ratio of doctor to patient was 1: 8.822 and this was out of a total population of approximately 441, 300 inhabitants of the island. By 1921, this ratio had only increased to one doctor per 6,129 persons. Many poor especially in the rural areas could not afford doctors nor had access to health care as physicians often practiced in the cities such as Kingston. See Gisela Eisner, *Jamaica, 1830-1930, A Study in Economic Growth* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1961), 133, 339, 341.

<sup>61</sup> Political Scientist Dr. Trevor Munroe defines the political culture as “the beliefs, the ideas, and the values relating to politics prevalent in any given society. In Jamaica, as part of this political culture, people tend to identify with the persona of the charismatic and invincible Christian leader and Alexander Bedward embodied these characteristics. See Trevor Munroe, “The Impact of the Church on the Political Culture of the Caribbean: The Case of Jamaica,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 37, 1(1991): 83-97.

purely religious or religious and political; rather, the movement was decidedly an escapist religious form of expression. “Bedwardism was an expression of the restless frustration of the downtrodden and distressed black peasants who looked to God to deliver them from their socio-economic plight under the colonial system.”<sup>62</sup>

Bedward was thus a more radical (and feared) precursor to Garveyism and his organization proved that Jamaican blacks could use the church to organize themselves albeit in a qualified political manner. It is impossible to analyze the veracity of the movement in detail here. What is important for the purposes of this study is that Bedwardism from 1891 to 1920 was the largest and most populous movement amongst the black masses in Jamaica. The movement also triggered a more intense fear from the colonial authorities than any other organization at the time, including the emerging political clubs and Garvey’s UNIA. While churches in Jamaica complained of decline in membership in the beginning of the twentieth century Bedwardism continued to see increases in membership especially after the 1907 earthquake. As one writer notes “Bedward has baptized any number of persons since January 14 [the earthquake]... And all this is because many persons believe that the earthquake was sent by God as a punishment for sin.”<sup>63</sup>

Bedwardism in the eyes of civilized society was associated with disorder. A story in 1911 in *The Daily Gleaner* concerning a disturbance in Lower West Street Kingston

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<sup>62</sup> Lewis, *Marcus Garvey, Anti-Colonial Champion*, 34.

<sup>63</sup> “Earthquake Credulity and Drift,” *The Daily Gleaner*, August 13, 1907.

linked the trouble to a Bedwardite meeting that was in progress. The writer noted, “The act was the result of a plan that had been made by Bedwardites to create a disturbance.”<sup>64</sup> *The Daily Gleaner*<sup>65</sup>, a pro-establishment publication, provides one of the few detailed commentators on the movement. The publication was consistently anti-Bedward and was the first to call attention to the organization by publishing details of Bedwardite activity. The newspaper at first expressed concern about the health issues of the movement. The risk of contagion due to the proximity of the diseased to each other during the healing process was an issue that alarmed local authorities. According to one report, “There were lepers, people with running sores, the crippled and deformed, blind, consumptive, asthmatic and in fact every complaint known in the medical world was well represented.”<sup>66</sup> There was also a growing alarm at the supposed indecency that the movement encouraged since while undergoing healing males and females bathed together naked in the pool. Such disregard for Victorian codes of decency was a matter that needed urgent attention.<sup>67</sup>

It was *The Daily Gleaner's* commentary on the movement, which also resulted in a charge of sedition against the leader, whose supposed anti-government, and anti-white

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<sup>64</sup> “Meeting Disturbed, Panic in Lower West Street,” *The Daily Gleaner*, August 22, 1911.

<sup>65</sup> The newspaper was founded in 1834 by private owners Joseph and Jacob DeCordova, two Jewish Jamaicans of Portuguese heritage, as an arts, entertainment and advertising publication. The paper developed a pro-establishment agenda that became more explicit after the publication became a public company in 1897. See L.D. Cameron, *The Story of the Gleaner- Memoirs and Reminiscences* (Kingston: The Gleaner Co., 2000).

<sup>66</sup> “The Healing Spring of Mona: A Visit to August Town,” *The Daily Gleaner*, September 14, 1893.

<sup>67</sup> The marked presence of women in the hierarchy of the Bedward movement was also an interesting phenomenon that made the movement different from other religious

statements it claimed had the potential to foment race hatred on the island.<sup>68</sup> At his trial in 1895, the Indictment read against Bedward was as follows:

Whereas information has this day been laid before the undersigned magistrate that Alexander Bedward being a wicked, malicious, seditious and evil disposed person, wickedly and maliciously and seditiously contriving and intending the peace (of Our Lady the Queen and of this Island) to disquiet and disturb, and the liege subjects (of Our said Lady the Queen), and to incite and move to hatred and dislike the person of Our said Lady the Queen and of the Government established by law.....and in a said speech and discourse did seditiously publish and utter that we (meaning the black subjects of our said Lady the Queen in this island) are the true people, the white man are hypocrites and thieves... hell will be your portion if you do not rise up and crush the white man, the time is coming, I tell you the time is coming. There is a white wall and a black wall, and the white wall had been closing around the black wall; but now the black wall has become bigger than the white wall and they must knock the white wall down. The white wall has oppressed us for years; now we must oppress the white wall. Let them remember the Morant War.<sup>69</sup>

The prosecution based their charge against Bedward solely on this statement as recorded by a representative of the newspaper. As the newspaper was anti-Bedward, the reporter might have misinterpreted Bedward's statements. However, it is clear that Bedward identified himself with the socio-economic plight of the marginalized lower class black populace in Jamaica. Bedward's words were an allegorical statement "challenging the colonial state."<sup>70</sup> However, allegory was still enough to warrant a charge of sedition as in metaphorically "challenging the colonial state,"<sup>71</sup> Bedward was also challenging Imperial

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denominations or groups in Jamaica at the time. See Brooks *The History of Bedwardism*, 13.

<sup>68</sup> Bedward had several incidents with the law. He was acquitted on grounds of insanity at this trial. His final encounter with the law came in 1921 when he was committed to an asylum.

<sup>69</sup> "Bedwards Trial, Scenes in Court, the Indictment," *The Daily Gleaner*, August 30, 1895, 5-6.

<sup>70</sup> Lewis, *Marcus Garvey, Anti-Colonial Champion*, 35.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

authority. This notion is re-enforced by the constant reference to “Our Majesty the Queen” interspersed in the wording of the indictment.

Historian Rupert Lewis claims that Bedward’s statement was “seditious.... defiantly uttered in the tradition of Paul Bogle which bore testimony to the fact that the black militancy and rebellious spirit of elements among the downtrodden peasantry had not been snuffed out in 1865.”<sup>72</sup> Rupert’s assertion of the militancy of the black masses is quite accurate within the history of bloody slave revolts in the island. What is important is the fact that the Jamaican masses had proved through Morant Bay their sense of consciousness as a marginalized group within the colonial system. They possessed the potential to revolt again if united under a strong leader. Bedward as a leader could potentially incite them to action and this made the colonial authorities extremely nervous.

The reaction of *The Daily Gleaner* to Bedwardism was a clash of philosophical outlooks. The scientific rationalism of the establishment that the paper represented questioned the validity of a movement that claimed mystical potentials. The paper ordered an analysis of the water of the stream to prove whether there were healing properties inherent in the river, while Afro-Creole belief systems identified with these aspects of the movement.

One of the important aspects of the theology of the Bedward movement is its emphasis on the divine authority of God as manifest through his prophets. This authority

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<sup>72</sup> Lewis, *Marcus Garvey, Anti-Colonial Champion*, 35.

superseded any earthly power. Bedward was both prophet (God's messenger) and divine leader. Brooks noted in history of the movement that God sent Bedward to retrieve the fallen.<sup>73</sup> Bedwardites claimed the movement was a logical progression from Judaism and Christianity, which had now run its course.<sup>74</sup> Bedward was a new black messiah for a new black Christian religion.

Through baptism and fasting Bedwardites would not only gain deliverance from earthly calamity but also ultimately achieve divine salvation. Bedward also called for his followers "the black followers of Christ," to overcome the evil of the white "Pharisees and Sadducees."<sup>75</sup> Ultimately, their triumph would be a divine one. The movement espoused a clear racial separation of divine justice and was a call for blacks to attain racial salvation. In this respect, the movement expressed elementary Afro-centric beliefs. Bedwardism was an example of a black liberation theology, a theology that Garvey's movement also effectively employed in his own racist ideology.<sup>76</sup> This emphasis on a black God was a principle also embraced by Garvey's racist ideology that attempted to serve the needs and experiences of blacks. A black God could identify better with his black followers than a white one. Eventually a more developed form of Bedwardism was

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<sup>73</sup> Brooks, *The History of Bedwardism*, 12.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

<sup>75</sup> Barry Chevannes, "Garvey Myths among the Jamaican people," in *Garvey His Work and Impact*, Ed Rupert Lewis & Patrick Bryan (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1994), 123-134.

<sup>76</sup> On Garvey's black theology see Randall K. Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement* (Metuchen, NJ & London: Sacrecrow Press, 1978).

to manifest itself in the ideology of the 1930s Rastafarian movement amongst the Jamaican underclass.<sup>77</sup>

## **A Jamaican Pan-African Tradition**

In addition to excluding Garvey's pre-1917 efforts in Jamaica, historians also have often failed to recognize the importance of Pan-African and anti-colonial protest as part of the formal political scene in Jamaican politics at the turn of the twentieth century. Scholars tend to overlook black political developments in parts of the world that had no direct connection with American Pan-African organizations or were not a part of the London metropolitan scene.<sup>78</sup> They have often overlooked the involvement of Jamaicans in particular and West Indians in general in progressive Pan-African organizations in the local British West Indian setting at the turn of the century.

Despite the differences in form and expression of dissent, Jamaica and the West Indies have been important arenas for both organized and unorganized Pan-African and anti-colonial protest.<sup>79</sup> During the period of slavery, unorganized anti-colonial protest was

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<sup>77</sup> Rupert Lewis has noted this progression from Bedwardism to Rastafari. See "Marcus Garvey and the Early Rastafarians: Continuity and Discontinuity," in *Chanting Down Babylon*, Ed. Nathaniel Samuel Murrell et al (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 145-159.

<sup>78</sup> Immanuel Geiss, in his authoritative work *The Pan-African Movement* fails to include developments in the West Indies. Even Garveyite activities in Jamaica are given scant attention. P. Olisanwuche Esedebe, in his study *Pan-Africanism the Idea and the Movement, 1776-1991* (Washington D.C.: Howard University, 1994) briefly mentions Pan-African developments in Jamaica. Rupert Lewis' work is one of the most detailed accounts of Pan-Africanists and their agitation in the local Jamaican setting. See Lewis, *Marcus Garvey Anti-Colonial Champion*.

<sup>79</sup> One of the most influential and researched forms of unorganized Black Nationalist sentiment in Jamaica is the Ethiopianism of the Rastafarian movement.

manifest in the numerous slave revolts, which culminated in the Haitian revolution. The significance of this uprising was never lost on both the slaves and the various colonial authorities in the West Indies. As slave protest movements are specific to the historical context, it is impossible to describe their actions as explicit expressions of early Pan-African sentiment. However, slaves did share a rudimentary sense of mutual experience and struggle and this was evident amongst the slave population in the West Indies who commemorated the events of Haiti and used the memory of Haiti to incite new revolts.<sup>80</sup> Nonetheless, formal identification with and idealization of Africa are also an integral part of Pan-African (and Black Nationalist) sentiment and have been a part of the Jamaican historical experience, albeit at different junctions. Garvey's first encounter with formal racial ideology was with the political speeches of men like Dr. Robert Love.

Dr. Robert Love, at the end of the nineteenth century, was part of an emerging group of educated blacks working in Jamaica who were at the forefront of not only local black anti-colonial politics but also the wider emerging international Pan-African network. Loves as well as Dr. J. Albert Thorne are two individuals whose Pan-African activities American Garvey historians have overlooked.<sup>81</sup> Both men were actively involved in questions of black redemption. Thus while historians and even Marcus Garvey himself

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<sup>80</sup> In Trinidad, "Slave societies, known as Convois or Regiments, for the purpose of dancing and innocent amusement used songs that invoked the spirit of the Haitian revolt. However, such compositions became significant when slaves used these organizations to plot against their white masters. The songs were used to foster an insurrectionary spirit as emphasized by the following tune: "The Bread we eat is, Is the White man's flesh, The Wine we drink, Is the White man's flesh, He St Domingo, Remember St Domingo," See John Cowley, *Carnival, Canboulay and Calypso, Traditions in the Making* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 15.

<sup>81</sup> For example there is no mention of Dr Robert Love in Cronon's authoritative text on Garvey Cronon, *Black Moses*.



tend to highlight the apathy towards the notion of race consciousness in Jamaica, the political experience of these two men underscore the fact that Garvey did inherit a Jamaican Pan-African tradition. These men were formative influences on Garvey's racialist ideology and policies.

The history of Dr. Robert Love's activities is scant. He appears in scholarship on the development of politics in Jamaica but no major published historical work exists on his political career.<sup>82</sup> Jamaican historians are also at fault for this disparity in scholarship, as they tend to overlook this period in the island's history. As Brian L. Moore laments, the common view among some Jamaican historians is that the years between the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 and the violent working class protest in Jamaica in 1938 are "placid years."<sup>83</sup>

Love's birth and early career highlight the extensive network of influential blacks in the Diaspora but also the necessity of internationalizing the problem of race. Love was not of Jamaican birth. Born in the Bahamas in 1839, he took orders in the Episcopal Church and received medical training from the University of Buffalo. He traveled to Haiti where he had a short-lived career in the medical service after which he came to Jamaica in 1889, and immersed himself in the politics of agitation against colonial policies.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Joy Lumsden's unpublished PhD thesis is the only work that exclusively looks at his political career in detail. See Joy Lumsden, *Robert Love and Jamaican Politics* (Ph.D. diss., University of the West Indies, 1987).

<sup>83</sup> See Introduction to Moore & Johnson, *Neither Led Nor Driven*.

<sup>84</sup> Lumsden, *Robert Love and Jamaican Politics*.

Love's experience in the United States and Haiti no doubt helped to shape his political outlook that found its expression in Pan-African circles in the island. In Jamaica, he published a newspaper called the *Jamaican Advocate* that became the organ for Pan-African politics in the island. In April of 1901, in the wake of the European partition of Africa, Love wrote, "Africa had been the carcass upon which the vultures of Europe have descended and which they have sought to partition among themselves, without any regard whatever for the rights of the African."<sup>85</sup> Love was not only keenly aware of the crisis of Africans on the world stage but also identified with the regional injustice of migrant workers in Central and South America. In his newspaper, he exposed the terrible conditions under which they worked.<sup>86</sup>

In 1900, Love publicized the Pan-African Conference in London and in 1901; he organized the Pan-African Association in Kingston Jamaica along with Trinidadian Barrister Sylvester Williams.<sup>87</sup> The aims of this organization were:

To secure the Africans and their descendants throughout the world their civil and political rights; To ameliorate the condition of our oppressed brethren in the continent of Africa, America, and other parts of the world, by promoting efforts to secure effective legislation; To encourage our people in educational and industrial enterprises; To foster friendly relations between the Caucasian and African races; To organize a depository for collections of authorized productions, writings and statistics, relating to our people everywhere; To raise a fund to be used solely for the forwarding of the above.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> *Jamaican Advocate*, April 20, 1901, 2, in Lewis, *Marcus Garvey Anti-Colonial Champion*, 25.

<sup>86</sup> Lewis, *Marcus Garvey Anti-Colonial Champion*, 28.

<sup>87</sup> Sylvester Williams has been credited for bringing the word Pan-Africanism into twentieth century political discourse He was pivotal to the organization of the first Pan-African Conference in London in 1900. See Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement*, 176.

<sup>88</sup> Lewis, *Marcus Garvey Anti-Colonial Champion*, 31.

This Pan-African association was short-lived. Its membership did not exceed five hundred. However, it is impossible to overlook the importance of this organization. There were many short-lived black political organizations during this time that have been mentioned by historians if only briefly. That Love preceded Garvey is worth noticing and as we shall see, the later Garvey movement owed a considerable organizational and ideological debt to Jamaican Pan-Africans, a debt that historians have failed to highlight. Lewis makes the claim that while Alexander Bedward represented the religious form of anti-colonialism, Dr. Love was at the forefront of secular anti-colonial protest in Jamaica. Love agitated for social and electoral reform and in doing so, he challenged the political superstructure of the colonial government. In this sense, Love was more anti-colonial than even Bedward's metaphorical anti-colonialism.

Love was a fierce critic of the colonial government both in Jamaica and in Africa. He seemed to have at least been aware of the situation in West Africa and other British territories on the continent at the turn of the century. The frequent mention of prominent West African newspapers in his *Jamaican Advocate* suggests at least more than a peripheral awareness of the local situation there. This was not a farfetched scenario due to the increased availability of news relating to the British Empire at the turn of the century. There was indeed a triangular trade in ideas and influential men of the time were keenly aware of their position and the plight of other blacks within the British colonial system.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> On the notion of a triangular trade in ideas see George Shepperson, "Notes on Negro American Influences on the emergence of African Nationalism," *Journal of African History* 1, 2 (1960): 299-312.

Love was definitely not a mass leader; however, he did champion causes that directly affect the situation of the masses.<sup>90</sup> He was an advocate of land reform and agitated for the equitable distribution of Crown lands in order to give the peasantry-increased access to property. He also agitated for electoral reform. His own election to the city council in 1906 helped to forward this cause. Land reform would have resulted in increased enfranchisement of a section of the population (since property qualifications were one of the pre-requisites to political participation) and this would have eventually filtered down into the lower classes of society such as the peasantry.

Ideologically Love espoused certain theological opinions that were closer to the lower class religio-political movements in Jamaica such as Bedwardism. Love expressed afro-centric interpretations of the bible.<sup>91</sup> His association with the Episcopal missionaries would have exposed him to prevailing ideas amongst black clerics across diverse areas of the Diaspora who had begun to reject the derogatory images of blackness in the bible. The assertion of black theology was part of the process of indigenization of the Christian church both in the Diaspora and in Africa. Both Bedward and Garvey embraced a black theology in their movements.

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<sup>90</sup> Garvey became a mass leader but his racialist policies were not specific to mass needs.

<sup>91</sup> Nathaniel Samuel Murrell & Lewin Williams, "The Black Biblical Hermeneutics of Rastafari," in *Chanting Down Babylon*, ed. Nathaniel Samuel Murrell et al (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), 330.

Despite Love's black theological assertions, he was never explicitly paternalistic with regard to the role of Christianity and proselytization to civilize Africans in Africa.<sup>92</sup>

Unlike the later Garvey movement whose organization explicitly embraced the civilizing mission, Love viewed education and effective representation within the colonial system as most important for the redemption of the black race. He was therefore more apt to lend his support to schemes that focused on educational issues and the achievement of effective representation among blacks, as highlighted by his Pan-African and anti-colonial activities within Jamaica. Love's contemporary, Dr Albert Thorne, however, saw the Christianity and proselytization process as pivotal to African redemption and his Pan-African schemes emphasized this notion.

Dr. Albert Thorne was a Barbadian who settled in Jamaica during the 1890s. He was therefore in the island during the rise of the Bedward movement. His opinions on the Bedward organization are unknown. However, Thorne sought to organize a practical scheme for African redemption. He first started out by building an industrial school in St. Ann Jamaica. This school would be a model for his later designs. Thorne hoped to resettle blacks in the British Central African colony of Nyasaland and between 1897 and 1920; he actively sought to promote this plan. The purpose of Thorne's African Colonial Enterprise was to:

assist enterprising members of the African race now resident in the Western Hemisphere to return and settle down in their fatherland, Nyasaland, British Central Africa being the site selected; To develop agricultural, commercial and other available resources of the country; To give the natives a suitable and profitable education; To extend the Kingdom of God in those vast regions, by leading such as are in darkness and error or superstition to Jesus

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<sup>92</sup> This assertion was part of the black theological tradition of the nineteenth century in America.

Christ; To improve the status of the African race; To foster and cement the bonds of friendship and brotherhood between all races of mankind, without respect to color or creed.<sup>93</sup>

As late as January of 1915 in an interview with a *Daily Gleaner* correspondent in London, Thorne emphasized that his scheme was “still alive.”<sup>94</sup> The *Daily Gleaner* correspondent asked this question against the backdrop of Chief Alfred Sam’s Back to Africa Movement that was just gaining pace.<sup>95</sup> Thorne’s reply was that Her Majesty’s Government in the Zambesi region of Nyasaland had given him a concession.<sup>96</sup> The terms of the concession were as follows

(1) That the colonist must be of persons of good reputation (2) That each person should have a freehold of thirty acres of land but that we would purchase as much more land as might be required at the rate of 2/6 or sixty cents per acre (3) That the land must be cultivated for a period of not less than two years after which it would be the absolute property of the guarantee.”<sup>97</sup>

The notion that slavery and Christianization had redeemed blacks was at the heart of the philosophy behind Thorne’s scheme. This was all a part of God’s divine plan. New World Blacks therefore had a mission to return and help civilize their fallen brethren in Africa. Several African Americans expressed this sentiment in the nineteenth century

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<sup>93</sup> Patrick Bryan, “Black Perspectives in Late Nineteenth Century Jamaica: The Case of Dr. Theophilus E. S. Scholes,” in *Garvey His Work and Impact*, 54.

<sup>94</sup> “African Colonial Enterprise, Dr Thorne Declares that his Old Scheme is still Alive, Interviewed at Bath, Has Concession From British Government to Establish Settlement,” *The Daily Gleaner*, August 28, 1915.

<sup>95</sup> I will discuss the Chief Sam, Back to Africa movement in the third chapter. See J. Ayodele Langley, “Chief Sam’s African Movement and Race Consciousness in West Africa,” *Phylon* 32, 2 (1971): 165.

<sup>96</sup> “African Colonial Enterprise,” *The Daily Gleaner*, August 28, 1915.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

including Alexander Crummell whose role in Afro-American immigration movements in the nineteenth century is important.<sup>98</sup> As Thorne reiterated in his interview:

Then again, what a power of good we would be to the natives, our own brethren, dwelling in darkness and superstition, when God has given us light, and has commanded us to let it shine. Indeed, I feel sure we are criminally responsible to him for the present condition. And be not deceived, every man will have to give and account of his gifts.<sup>99</sup>

While Thorne's scheme was an appeal to race consciousness, the phraseology of its aims and objectives were in keeping with prevailing notions of British paternalism and the civilizing mission. As historian Patrick Bryan demonstrates, "The irony of Thorne's pragmatic plan for race redemption was that he used much of the language of the paternal imperialists who aimed for a universal Christendom linked to Anglo-Saxon cultural domination."<sup>100</sup> Thorne's scheme did not express overtly Black Nationalist sentiments or aspirations. His approval by the British government also highlights the non-threatening nature of his proposal. Thorne did not intend to upset British imperial interests in Nyasaland.

Indeed Thorne's African scheme was not unique: he was part of a Black Atlantic tradition of affinity with Africa that had found expression through various avenues in Jamaica, elsewhere in the Caribbean and the United States during the nineteenth and twentieth century. What is important about Thorne's scheme was that he created a local example

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<sup>98</sup> See also Anthony Appiah, "Alexander Crummell and the Invention of *Massachusetts Review* 31, 3 (1990): 385-406.

<sup>99</sup> "African Colonial Enterprise," *The Daily Gleaner*, August 28, 1915.

<sup>100</sup> Patrick Bryan, "Black Perspectives in Late Nineteenth Century Jamaica: The Case of Dr. Theophilus E. S. Scholes," in *Garvey His Work and Impact*, 54.

for the future Pan-African and anti-colonial organization of Marcus Mosiah Garvey. Historians must not overlook Thorne's role in the organizational and ideological development of the Garvey movement especially since he was one of its founding members.<sup>101</sup>

## **Garveyism In Jamaica**

On August 14, 1914, Garvey announced the formation of his Universal Negro Improvement Conservation Association and African Communities League (UNIA).<sup>102</sup> From the beginning, the organization expressed extremely grand, general ideological aims. Garvey hoped to foster racial uplift through establishing:

[a] Universal co-fraternity among the race, promoting the spirit of race pride, and love, reclaiming the fallen of the race, assisting in civilizing the backward tribes of Africa, strengthening the imperialism of Basutoland and Liberia, establishing commissionaires in the principal countries of the world for the protection of all Negroes regardless of nationality, promoting a conscientious Christian worship among the native tribes of Africa and establishing universities, colleges and secondary schools for the further education and culture of the boys and girls.<sup>103</sup>

The organization's objectives obviously embraced an international agenda in an endeavor to promote a racial program aimed at enhancing the welfare of blacks, irrespective of

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<sup>101</sup> Eserdebe, *Pan-Africansim, the Idea and the Movement, 1776-1994*, 58.

<sup>102</sup> Garvey first named the organization the Universal Negro Improvement Conservation Association and African Communities league, however by 1915 the name was shortened to the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League, prior to Garvey's departure to the United States in 1916.

<sup>103</sup> Marcus Garvey, "A Talk with Afro-West Indians. The Negro Race and it's Problems, Kingston Jamaica, July-August 1914," Robert A. Hill, ed. *The Marcus Garvey Papers*, vol. 1, 62.



nationality. However, the UNIA lacked an explicitly defined political platform to achieve these objectives.

As each community in which the society would operate could promote its own objectives according to local needs, the Jamaican division was more specifically concerned with the technical and cultural advancement of the black masses in Jamaica.<sup>104</sup> The Jamaican division sought to establish

Educational colleges, (day and evening) for the further education and culture of our boys and girls and to train them to a higher state of application among the more advanced classes, to reclaim the fallen of the people (especially the criminal classes) to help them to a state of good citizenship, to rescue our fallen girls from the pit of prostitution and vice, to help in the general development of the country.<sup>105</sup>

In order to achieve the local objectives of the organization Garvey embraced a more traditional program that combined social reform and self-help, characteristic of many uplift organizations in Jamaica at the time.<sup>106</sup> American historians have emphasized that Garvey was inspired by Booker T. Washington's autobiography *Up From Slavery*. Garvey believed that Washington's moderate conservative political program of technical and industrial education of blacks, which the old sage had promoted through his Tuskegee Institute, represented the perfect approach for racial advancement in

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<sup>104</sup> Marcus Garvey, "The Universal Negro Association, What it aims at, Real Aristocracy of Race," 16<sup>th</sup> January 1915, *MGP* 1, 104.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Rupert Lewis, "Garvey's Significance in Jamaica's Historical Evolution," *Jamaica Journal, Special Issue to mark the Marcus Garvey Centennary*, 20, 3, August-October 1987, 61.

Jamaica.<sup>107</sup> Such a program was compatible with the colonial order in Jamaica, since the organization did not espouse radical claims for black equality.

Historians have also highlighted that Garvey conceptualized his racial organization after extensive travel in Central America and England had made him keenly aware of the universally degraded condition of the Negro worldwide. In London he was apprenticed to Duse Mohammed Ali, the editor of the *African Times and Orient Review*.<sup>108</sup> His employment with Duse exposed him to Pan African circles.<sup>109</sup> He also gained valuable insights, especially on the various economic problems plaguing colonial British West Africa.<sup>110</sup>

However, prior to his London days, Garvey's encounters with men like Dr. Robert Love and Dr. Albert Thorne are significant of the fact that it was not necessarily traveling to

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<sup>107</sup> Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement*, 5. Booker T. Washington organized an International Conference on the Negro in 1912. This was not a conference with a racial or any significant political platform as Washington. The purpose of the conference was to collaborate with mission societies and the colonial governments to study whether the Tuskegee model could be extended to Africa and the West Indies. Three Afro-West Indians attended this conference. Garvey would have at least had some knowledge of the event through the press.

<sup>108</sup> Duse established this publication in 1912 to provide a forum for the expression of Pan-African and Pan-Orient sentiment throughout the British Empire. See Ian Duffield's "The Economic Activities of Duse Mohammed Ali, An Example of the Economic Dimension of Pan-Africanism," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 4, 4 (1969): 571-600.

<sup>109</sup> Cedric J. Robinson, "Black Intellectuals at the British Core: 1920s-1940s," in Ian Duffield and J.S. Gandara, *Essays on the History of Blacks in Britain* (Aldershot, England: Avebury, 1992), 176. Robinson highlights black intellectual agitation in the metropolis as integral to the anti-colonial engagement in the periphery.

<sup>110</sup> Between 1912 and 1931 Duse was engaged in various business activities, which included "organizing sympathetic credit and banking facilities for West African farmers and producers." His personal activities soon conflated with his journalism and his newspaper became a platform to promote coloured business in West Africa. Garvey's

the metropolis that exposed Garvey to the leading Pan-African circles. His initial exposure to the political scene in Kingston, Jamaica was an important impetus to the development of both his approach to Pan-African politics in Jamaica and his racialist ideology elaborated in the United States. Garvey attended several lectures given by Robert Love and was a reader of Love's *Jamaican Advocate*. Garvey was thus aware of the degraded situation of blacks especially in Central America since Love was a consistent critic of the situation of Jamaican migrant workers. Garvey's travels to Central America brought him face to face with the economic condition of his black race.

The radical outlook concerning the race question in Jamaica of Garvey's London days thus comes as no surprise. We get our first glimpse of Garvey's racialist ideological stance in an article in the *African Times and Orient Review*. In this article, Garvey attempts to outline the grievous situation in the island of Jamaica, highlighting the problems of miscegenation and white exploitation. He noted that, "The hybrid population is accountable for by the immoral advantage taken of the Negro women by the whites, who have been in power and practice polygamy with black women as an unwritten right."<sup>111</sup>

The white population was not only guilty of sexual exploitation of blacks but they also denied educated blacks any participation in the system of governance. According to

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later interest in economic Pan-Africanism can be attributed to his exposure while under Duse's employment. See Duffield's "The Economic Activities of Duse Mohammed Ali."<sup>111</sup>Marcus Garvey, "The British West Indies in the Mirror of Civilization. History Making by Colonial Negroes," *African Times and Orient Review*, London England, October 1913, *MGP* 1, 31.

Garvey the whites in Jamaica, “were found to be intellectually inferior to the blacks and thus persuaded the government to abolish the competitive system for civil service and fill vacancies by nomination.”<sup>112</sup> As a result, “the service ha[d] long since been recruited from an inferior class of sycophantic weaklings whose brains [were] exhausted by dissipation and vice before they reach[ed] the age of thirty-five.”<sup>113</sup> This article was a very scathing attack on the white population of Jamaica.

Indeed, Garvey’s description of the Jamaican situation was accurate to some extent. Jamaica on the eve of World War I still possessed the demarcations of a former slave society. The white population in Jamaica was a minority. Miscegenation, through years of slavery, had created a relatively large and hybrid mulatto population, in comparison to the whites. The precarious racial position of this group acted as a buffer between white society and the blacks. Mulattos were, for the most part, pro-establishment and defended their marked privileged position above the black population. Blacks were still amongst the lowest ranks of Jamaican society. It would appear that the absence of a system of Jim Crow segregation, after slavery, meant that blacks could hope for some minimal level of advancement, but the social institutions that would facilitate this advancement did not exist, and as Garvey emphasized in his article, both whites and mulattoes seemed to conspire against the blacks, in order to maintain their privileged position. The basis of Garvey’s racialist ideology comes to the fore here in his anti-miscegenation attitudes. Garvey valuation on blackness justified his ideas of racial purity. The key to racial uplift was development in physical and biological isolation from white society.

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<sup>112</sup> Marcus Garvey, *MGP* 1, 30.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

Garvey also appeared to be deeply concerned with the social consciousness of the few educated blacks in Jamaica. Colonial education was more likely to create a Harold Moody, partially if not fully wedded to the establishment.<sup>114</sup> As demonstrated earlier, education and Christianization had created a class of educated blacks that supported the colonial mission and the civilization process. The education system sometimes nullified any sustained racial consciousness amongst the few educated blacks. Garvey also had very scathing remarks about these men who aped the social and cultural norms of white society instead of helping to enlighten the black masses. In his later correspondence, especially to the Tuskegee Institute, Garvey maintained his opinions on the various racial divisions in Jamaica.<sup>115</sup> In a letter to Major R. Moton, the head of the Tuskegee Institute, he described the situation as such:

The black people have had seventy years of emancipation but during that time have not produced a leader of their own, hence they have never been lead to think racially.....He has therefore grown with his master's ideals and up to today you will find the Jamaica Negro unable to think apart from the customs and ideals of his old time masters....In a small minority he pushes himself up among the others but when he gets there he too believes himself other than black and he starts out to think from a white and colored mind much to the detriment of his own people.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Anne Spry Rush, "Imperial Identity in Colonial Minds: Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples, 1931-50," *Twentieth Century British History* 13, 4(2002): 356-383. I use Harold Moody as an example here to emphasize how colonial education in creating an "Imperial identity," oftentimes moulded an affinity with the high ideals of the metropolis and a reservation to support ideologies that might subvert the system. This was not always the case. See C.L.R. James *Beyond a Boundary* (Durham: Duke University Press: 1993).

<sup>115</sup> Garvey's correspondence with the Tuskegee Institute began in 1914 when he first wrote to Booker T. Washington. Even after the old principal's death Garvey continued his correspondence with the new principal R.R. Moton and the secretary Emery Scott. R.R. Moton became the head of the Tuskegee Institute on the death of Booker T. Washington in 1915.

<sup>116</sup> Carl S. Matthews, "Marcus Garvey writes from Jamaica on the Mulatto Escape Hatch," *Journal of Negro History* 59, 2 (April 1974): 171, 172.

It would appear that based on Garvey's early exposures in Jamaica and his later experience in London that he was destined for an extremely radical path; however, on his return to Jamaica in 1914, Garvey's program for the local organization was extremely conservative. He seemed to be more interested in cultural, technical and spiritual advancement for blacks than in any major disruption to the status quo by demanding racial equality or an end to the perceived exploitation of the black masses he had described earlier. Garvey often did lament the situation in Jamaica in various public forums but his remarks were never as poignant as those he expressed in his correspondence or in the article, he wrote for the *African Times and Orient Review*.

A careful analysis of the early organization and the social context in which Garvey operated gives us an appreciation of his decision to publicly espouse more conservative views than his private correspondence would suggest. In the first instance, Dr. Albert Thorne was influential in assisting Garvey to establish his organization. Thorne was one of the founding members of Garvey's UNIA. What is interesting about Garvey's connection with Thorne is the fact that the phraseology of the aims and objectives of Garvey's UNIA was in the same tradition as Thorne. There was the same emphasis on civilizing the backward tribes, supporting industrial development and promoting amicable relations between the races. Garvey's program was similar to Thorne's in the sense that the organization did not make radical claims to undermine British imperialism nor were there any overt Black Nationalist sentiments.

Indeed the first resolution of the organization in September of 1914 was a decisive statement of support for imperial Britain. The UNIA expressed its sentiments of loyalty towards the British Empire and her impending conflict on the continent:

Being mindful of the great and protecting influence of the English Nation and people, and their justice to all men, and especially to their Negroes subjects scattered all over the world, [we] hereby beg to express our loyalty and devotion to His Majesty the King and Empire... We further hope for the success of British arms on the battlefield of Europe and at sea, in crushing the common foe of Europe and the enemy of peace and further civilization.<sup>117</sup>

The UNIA subsequently distributed the resolution to the governor of the island and various officials in the British metropolis. *The Daily Gleaner* described the actions of the organization as a “patriotic” endeavor passed in front of a “large and representative crowd.”<sup>118</sup> The UNIA also passed expressing similar sentiments towards France and her peoples. This resolution was an obvious attempt by the organization to gain support by rendering loyalty to the British imperial government in her current situation.<sup>119</sup> This is important since the legitimate operation of Garvey’s organization was dependent on the support of the colonial authorities in Jamaica and Britain. The resolution perhaps created the desired effect as from then onwards, *The Daily Gleaner*, the organ of the establishment, provided sustained coverage of the UNIA meeting. The tone of press coverage was also supportive, unlike the negative press coverage of the Bedward movement that intensified during this period.

It is necessary to highlight the importance of press coverage in analyzing the early organization. Jamaica had well-established newspapers and their acknowledgement of

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<sup>117</sup> *Gleaner*, Kingston, 17<sup>th</sup> Sept, 1914, *MGP* 1, 70.

<sup>118</sup> *Gleaner*, Kingston, 17<sup>th</sup> Sept, 1914. *MGP* 1, 70.

<sup>119</sup> Both resolutions were printed in *The Times*, London.

any organization indicated a certain level of notoriety. It is also through the press that we are able to gain access to activities of the general meetings of the UNIA, since the *Daily Gleaner*, the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Jamaica Times* carried reports on the organization.<sup>120</sup>

The success of his organization would depend on his ability to attract elite patronage. Blacks were for the most part too poor to provide a sustainable financial base. Garvey had thus to contend with soliciting support from amongst the white and mulatto elite. Garvey would have alienated this group by explicit racial appeals to philanthropy. The weekly commentary of the meetings in *The Daily Gleaner* showed that indeed Garvey's patrons were mostly white. Many of the distinguished guests at the meetings of his organization were also prominent white men. At one meeting in particular, Garvey's guests included the Jamaican Colonial secretary, the Hon. Major Hughes Bryan and Sir John Pringle, the largest landowner in the Jamaica at the time.<sup>121</sup> Since the elite were mostly of the white and mulatto class, a radical racial platform was not suited to this audience.

Despite Garvey's best efforts, however, the initial public response to the establishment of the UNIA was one of apathy. Undoubtedly, the declaration of war by Britain a few days earlier would have been more newsworthy than the establishment of a racial uplift

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<sup>120</sup> There was a marked change in the presentation of Garvey in the press after his first years in America. This change occurred within the context of the politicization of the movement.

<sup>121</sup> *MGP* 1. 89.



organization.<sup>122</sup> The local press had announced Garvey's arrival in the island after his sojourn in London but there was no indication of his plans for a racial organization.<sup>123</sup> There was only some controversy surrounding an article that Garvey submitted to the *Tourist*, a London-based magazine.

In his article, Garvey expressed the opinion that the state of the Jamaican Negro had improved tremendously since independence and this was due to the "benign influence of English justice, liberty and philanthropy." He also claimed that "in the state all men had equal rights and that there was "no friction of color...the day is yet to come for anyone to hear anything disparaging said about the difference of race among the people."<sup>124</sup> For similar reasons as described above, Garvey shaped his article to fit the white traveling audience who would have subscribed to the *Tourist*. They were obviously unlike the more radical elements that subscribed to the *African Times and Orient Review*. Some Jamaicans, however, saw the article as embellishing the plight of the socio-economic and political state of blacks on the island and they expressed these concerns in the editorial section of *The Daily Gleaner*.<sup>125</sup> Whether or not Garvey was indeed insane as his critics suggested is beyond our analysis, but both incidents highlight that he obviously cultivated a conservative public platform in order to gain legitimate support for his organization.

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<sup>122</sup> The local press usually carried reports of important events of concern to the Imperial situation. During the Boer War for example *The Gleaner* carried accounts of the event "blow for blow." Moore & Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven*

<sup>123</sup> *Daily Gleaner*, 11 July 1914.

<sup>124</sup> Marcus Garvey, "The Evolution of Later Day Slaves, Jamaica a Country of Black and White," *Tourist*, London, England, June 1914, *MGP* 1, 43.

<sup>125</sup> See *MGP* 1, 47-48.

Cultural concerns formed an important part of the activities of the weekly meetings.<sup>126</sup> Here again Garvey sought to appeal to the acceptable aesthetic of the Jamaican white elite population. Debates were regular events at weekly meetings. On October 13, 1914, at the general meeting “the main item on the agenda was a debate, the subject of which was:- ‘Rural or City Life, which helps more in the development of the State.’”<sup>127</sup> Prominent members of the organization would feature in these debates and those assembled would pass a resolution on which argument was more substantial. The UNIA invited prominent figures in the Jamaican community and sympathizers to deliver papers on various subjects. On October 1, 1914 for example, the white Mayor of Kingston R. W. Bryant delivered an address on the “Duty of Citizenship.”<sup>128</sup>

There were also several music and literary events. On one occasion in April of 1915, a variety entertainment and band concert was publicized in the local press as “what promise[d] to be one of the best performances staged in Kingston for a long time.”<sup>129</sup> Earlier in the year the *Daily Chronicle* described an elocution contest as “one of the most successful weekly meetings of the UNIA.”<sup>130</sup> It appears, however, that these cultural events were detrimental to the organization as they overshadowed any real attempt to achieve the organization’s local objectives. On November 12, 1914, several members of the UNIA went on an excursion to the Hope Farm School in St. Andrew, Jamaica in order

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<sup>126</sup> Beverly Hamilton, “Marcus Garvey Cultural Activist,” *Jamaica Journal, Special Issue to mark the Marcus Garvey Centenary*, 20, 3, August-October 1987, 21.

<sup>127</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, Kingston, October 16, 1914, *MGP* 1, 79.

<sup>128</sup> *Daily Gleaner*, Kingston, October 3, 1914, *MGP* 1, 74.

<sup>129</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, Kingston, April 28, 1915, *MGP* 1, 118.

<sup>130</sup> “Improvement Association Musical and Literary Evening at the Collegiate Hall,” *Daily Chronicle*, Kingston, February 27, 1915, *MGP* 1, 112.

to assess the work of the school.<sup>131</sup> The organization intended to send several students to the school the following year. This did not materialize before Garvey's departure to the United States in 1916. In 1915 the organization publicized a proposed Industrial Farm.<sup>132</sup>

Some of the objects of which the farm and Institute were to be established were:

Providing work for the unemployed; teaching our people to be industrious; providing better and more skilled agricultural workers; fitting our young women for a better place in the moral and social life of the country; training our young women to be good and efficient domestics etc; the establishment of a department for reclaiming and providing ready work for discharged prisoners so as to keep them from returning to crime; viz praedial larceny, petty thefts etc. The idea of the farm is to teach, and illustrate to the people the dignity, beauty, and civilizing power of intelligent labor; the object of the institute is to supply literary and cultured training and to help in the production of a more efficient and reliable class of tradespeople and domestic servants.<sup>133</sup>

The organization attempted to solicit funds from then on to establish this Institute; however, Garvey was unable to procure enough cash to establish the venture. The absence of evidence of real signs of progress sparked a wave of criticism, especially from some members of the black population in Jamaica. The first published cash statement showed that despite its modest budget, more money was spent on rental costs for Collegiate Hall and Ward Theatre for holding lectures, cultural and literary events.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> "Visit to Hope Farm School by Members of the Negro Improvement Association of Kingston, Interesting Outing Proposal is to Send a Few Students to Agriculture School," *Daily Chronicle*, Kingston, November 14, 1914, *MGP* 1, 90.

<sup>132</sup> The *Daily Chronicle* of August 3, 1915, carried a report the first report on this proposal. Garvey elaborated the details in a later article in the *Gleaner*.

<sup>133</sup> Marcus Garvey, "The Proposed Industrial Farm," Excerpt from the *Gleaner*, Kingston, September 9, 1915, *MGP* 1, 139.

<sup>134</sup> Just over twenty pounds was spent on such expenses while charitable contributions amounted to just over fifteen pounds. See "UNIA Cash Statement, *Daily Chronicle*, Kingston, September 14, 1915, *MGP* 1, 143-144.

Alexander Dixon, a black middle class Jamaican, criticized Garvey's financial statements for their vagueness but he based the brunt of his objections to Garvey on the latter's inability to identify with the lower-class population, despite Garvey's objective of wanting to civilize this class.<sup>135</sup> He wrote, "and through this state of affairs some of our most representative men even flatter themselves to believe that they are not of us and practically refuse to identify themselves with the people."<sup>136</sup>

Some Jamaicans criticized his continuous statements of the degraded and filthy situation of the blacks in Jamaica. Another letter to the editor of the *Daily Chronicle* criticized Garvey for his wholesale condemnation of the blacks in Jamaica, and the fact that he failed to give credit to previous organizations that had achieved tangible results to improve the lot of some blacks in Jamaica. The UNIA thus in an effort to advertise the benefits of their organization failed to acknowledge similar work done in the past. The UNIA was yet to show any tangible progress.<sup>137</sup> This situation comes as no surprise since Garvey tended to downplay the early influences in his formative years in Jamaica once he traveled to the United States.

It would appear that Judith Stein's condemnation of Garvey in his early Kingston years as bourgeois oriented holds some truth. The cultural and social activities of the organization were more likely to appeal to the conservative white and mulatto middle and upper

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<sup>135</sup> "Alexander Dixon to the *Daily Chronicle*, Kingston, September 20, 1915, *MGP* 1, 146-147. Dixon complained about statements concerning the large gatherings of meetings compositions of these gatherings, which tended to imply that the UNIA had extensive support.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> "Progress" to the *Daily Chronicle*, Kingston, September 4, 1915, *MGP* 1, 137.

classes and a veneer of middle class respectability, as opposed to an appeal to the degraded Jamaican lower class, is evident in Garvey's continuous statements about the condition of the Jamaican Negro. It is necessary to understand Garvey's public attitudes as an attempt to assuage this audience and solicit their support.

The activities of the UNIA in America are very much a part of the historiography of Black Nationalism in the United States. In Jamaica, the struggles and achievements of the UNIA are considered separate from the general struggle for political independence and thus outside of popular narratives.<sup>138</sup> The mystification of Marcus Garvey through popular culture has also influenced this historiographical tendency. Therefore, both American and Jamaican scholars have contributed to the lack of sustained attempts to analyze the cultural context that created its more conservative agenda. An analysis of the organizational activities in Jamaica highlight how social climate affected the UNIA and provides a contextual basis to understand how the social and economic climate in the United States would provide an arena for the elaboration of the movement's racist ideology. In the United States Garvey did not have to depend on elite white support, and thus he quickly reverted to the radical nature that we gained a glimpse of in his early days of political organization and in his private correspondence.

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<sup>138</sup> Anthony Bogues, "Nationalism and Jamaican Political Thought," in *Jamaica in Slavery and Freedom, History, Heritage and Culture*, ed. Kathleen E.A. Monteith & Glen Richards (Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago: University of the West Indies Press, 2002), 363-387.

## CHAPTER 3

# “MAMA AFIRCA, I’M COMING HOME”<sup>139</sup> GARVEY AND THE BLACK AMERICAN QUEST FOR NATIONHOOD IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

### Introduction

The quest for an autonomous black political space has been a part of the historical response to the continued economic and political marginalization of Afro-Americans in the United States. This desire has found expression in the nineteenth century emigration movements and the strong renascent African intellectual tradition in the early twentieth century. Indeed, Marcus Garvey would develop a grand racialist political and economic platform for the expression of these sentiments at a crucial point in American history.

As historian Lawrence W. Levine has highlighted, Garvey provided a “political channel and a global perspective for American consciousness.”<sup>140</sup> However, Garvey’s platform consisted of philosophical additions that were not features of the history of black political protest in America. This included his emphasis on blackness and his anti-colonial sentiments.<sup>141</sup> A critical examination of Garvey’s attempt to extend this political platform in order to achieve race uplift reveals that elements of his program proved problematic when extended beyond America. As my final chapter will show West

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<sup>139</sup> Garnet Silk, “Hello Mama Africa,” *Jet Star*, 1996.

<sup>140</sup> Lawrence W. Levine, “Marcus Garvey and the Politics of Revitalization,” in *Black Leaders of the Twentieth Century*, Ed. John Hope Franklin & August Meier (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 115.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

Africans were not nearly as certain about Garvey's definition of blackness and insistence on a black nation state.

On March 6, 1916, Garvey left Jamaica for a tour of the United States, ostensibly "to lecture in the interest of [his] organisation and to get a little help on [its] Industrial Farm and Institute scheme."<sup>142</sup> However, Garvey's interests gradually shifted from amassing economic support for the modest aims of the Jamaica UNIA to creating a mass movement geared towards the more international agenda as outlined in the general aims of 1914. A combination of social and economic factors in the United States helped propel the organisation towards an explicitly radical Pan-African nationalism.

Garvey established a base for his organisation in the eclectic community of Harlem, the centre of black political and cultural activism in the United States. The demographic variety of Harlem provided a cultural reservoir for diverse Pan-African traditions.<sup>143</sup> As noted in the previous chapter Garvey inherited a "variety of anti-colonial positions." His experiences in Jamaica, Latin America and Britain "molded his opinions, mentality and outlook" towards a universal program for racial uplift even before his emergence on the American scene.<sup>144</sup> The American post-war situation did not initially radicalize Garvey.

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<sup>142</sup> Marcus Garvey to Emmett J. Scott, Kingston Jamaica, February 4, 1916, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, Vol 1, 1826-August 1919*, ed. Robert Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 173.

<sup>143</sup> Wilson Jeremiah Moses, Introduction, in Moses, ed., *Classical Black Nationalism, From the American Revolution to Marcus Garvey*, (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 33.

<sup>144</sup> Ewa Nowicka, "The Jamaican Roots of the Garvey Ideology," *Acta Poloniae Historica* 37 (1978): 129-161.

The climate of social and economic upheaval, the history of intensely violent racial antagonism and the pragmatic climate of Harlem, however, created the environment for the elaboration of the political aims of the movement.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold: first, to place Garvey within the long tradition of African-American political philosophy (specifically that having to do with emigration to Africa) and two, to explore how his racialist version of this philosophy proved successful, yet problematic in the United States and also when projected unrealistically unto “Africa.” The first section will trace the history of this political thought in America, focusing on pre-civil war (pre-1865) and post civil war (post -1865) expressions of emigration highlighting the social context that made it seem feasible. This will provide a context for the second section, Garvey’s initial Harlem years and the state of crisis during and after World War One that allowed these sentiments to emerge again. The last section will deal with the solidification and political elaboration of Garvey’s racialist ideology within the immediate post-war arena. I will examine the Declaration of the Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World in 1920 and the ramifications of this statement for Garvey’s racialism by highlighting the significance of Liberia as a focal point for a greater pan-Negro Republic.

### **What Is The Afro-American’s Place?**

In pre-civil war America the variations in political and economic institutions between the northern and southern states affected the development of black political protest as a response to racism. Black political protest from the nineteenth century assumed three



broad but often overlapping forms of expression: emigration, black nationalism/separatism, and integration. Garvey's racialist mandate embraced emigration and Black Nationalism while assuming an anti-integration stance for blacks in American society. It is necessary, however, to emphasize key points in the development of each category of protest in America as they relate to the policies of the Garvey movement in order to understand how Garvey was able to incorporate these strands into his political mandate.

Slavery in the southern states in America created a subordinate class of individuals, with a defined legal status as property. Before 1865, slaves were not defined as human and thus their rights were not protected or respected by the American constitution. The free black population in the southern states was small and the restricted conditions of their freedom did not allow for opportunities in which they could gain any reasonable access to the means of social elevation or improvement. Blacks experienced political, economic and social exclusion from southern society, as they were not considered American Citizens. In the northern states, however, the absence of slavery and some of its restrictive elements by 1830<sup>145</sup> created a small lettered free black population. However, they still experienced racial exclusion despite the fact that they possessed the legal status of free men.

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<sup>145</sup> This date for the ending of slavery in the Northern States varies. While the institution of slavery was not as prevalent in the Northern states as in the South there still existed in the North a sizeable slave population. The American Revolution, however, is described as being the first blow for the eventual death of slavery in the North. Vermont was the first state in America to abolish slavery in 1777. In Massachusetts in 1780 the Chief Justice Cushing ruled that the slavery and the constitution were incompatible and this set the stage for the process of abolition. In New York, the state legislature granted abolition in 1817 but the institution did not formally end until 1827.

As a result of their exclusion, even in freedom, blacks in the North became more vocal in contesting the racial ideology of white society. Thus, while in Jamaica, differences in political expression were defined by urban versus rural spaces; in the United States, the institution of slavery defined the regional differences in black political protest. This is significant since in the twentieth century Garvey's racialist ideology and his African political program found more support in the north than in the south of the United States.

Emigration in the pre-civil war era was therefore a northern phenomenon, an expression of political exclusion. There were, however other mitigating factors that affected the shape of this type of black political protest. The case of Paul Cuffe, one of the first emigrationists of the early nineteenth century, provides an example of the combination of paternal and economic exigency that also affected the development of black emigration in the United States. Cuffe was a freed black from Maryland who at the beginning of the nineteenth century used his financial connections and his nautical experience to establish a small shipping interest to trade with blacks on the West African coast and to help African-Americans who wanted to emigrate to their ancestral homeland. A deeply religious Quaker Cuffe felt he was both economically able and spiritually primed to bring Christianity and legitimate commerce to Africa. In 1812, Cuffe sailed his first ship landing in the free black settlement in Sierra Leone. His accounts of his journeys whilst in the black settlement highlight his pervasive paternalism, not least his claim to possess in Christianity the religious truth. In 1812 he wrote

Having been informed that there was a settlement of people of colour at Sierra Leone under the immediate guardianship of a civilised power, I have

for many years past felt a lively interest in their behalf, wishing that the inhabitants of the colony might become established in the truth.<sup>146</sup>

That Afro-Americans were pivotal to the dissemination of this “truth” is emphasized in his following statement

Nevertheless, I am convinced that further help will be requisite to establish them in the true and vital spirit of devotion: for although there are many who are very particular in their attendance of public worship, yet I am apprehensive that the true substance is overlooked, that their religious exercise is rendered rather a burden than a pleasure.

Afro-American help was necessary to teach the once-barbarous blacks in Africa true religious piety. Cuffe’s paternalism was part of a New World attitude of blacks towards Africa and Garvey as a New World racial leader inherited this tradition. Africans have historically rejected the paternalism of New World blacks. This history of rejection had serious ramifications for the possibilities of acceptance of Garvey’s mandate to civilize and redeem Africa in the twentieth century.

Cuffe is significant since he set an example for black emigration through maritime and commercial enterprise as a means of extending civilization across the Atlantic to Africa. This would become one of the essential features of the economic Pan-Africanism of Albert Thorne in early twentieth century Jamaica and later Marcus Garvey. Cuffe was also well aware of the economic potential of his shipping venture for both African-

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<sup>146</sup> Paul Cuffe, *A Brief Account of the Settlement and Present Situation of the Colony of Sierra Leone in Africa*, New York, 1812.

American and African economic development.<sup>147</sup> This awareness was not lost on Africans and, as the case of Marcus Garvey in British West Africa will highlight, West Africans were more likely to respond to the economic aspects of Pan-Africanism.

Cuffee was, however, not widely copied at the time because although Afro-Americans were at the forefront of emigration in pre-civil war America their inability to finance these ventures resulted in the failure of many an emigration scheme. As one historian notes, “the stories of black emigration from the 1780s to the 1820s are for the most part stories of meager economics and failed attempts.”<sup>148</sup> White philanthropic groups fared better than blacks did as they had access to more financial resources. The American Colonization Society’s (ACS) Liberian project in the 1820s was the most successful emigration scheme of the nineteenth century.

The ACS, created in 1816, represented white philanthropic attempts to address the problematic place of blacks in American Society. It encouraged black emigration from the United States in order to solve the problem of black exclusion from American society. They were pivotal to the establishment and development of the black republic of Liberia from 1822. While many African Americans condemned the motives of this organization Liberia would become a significant symbol of black autonomy especially after she acquired republican status in 1847.

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<sup>147</sup> Frankie Hutton, “Economic Considerations in the American Colonisation Society’s Early Effort to Emigrate Free Blacks to Liberia,” *Journal of Negro History* 68, 4 (1983): 376-389.

<sup>148</sup> Manthia Dawara, *In Search of Africa* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 27.

Liberia's symbolism as a self-governing black political entity would endure into the twentieth century even for Afro-Americans who did not support the idea of returning to their ancestral homeland. Liberia was extremely significant for the development of the political aspects of Garvey's racialist mandate since it was Garvey's intention to launch his Pan Negro Empire in Africa from this black state. What Garvey had in common with the American Colonization Society that historians have understated is the shared belief that the black race could never survive in white American society. Blacks therefore needed to create their own political and social space in an environment in which they were more likely to be accepted.

Black emigration during the nineteenth and even into the twentieth century was a spatial phenomenon that grew out of the situation of the northern States. As highlighted earlier blacks in the southern states were subject to the restrictions of slavery until 1865, and thus for the most part they could not conceive of launching such grand initiatives. Most blacks in the south were more engaged in attempting to negotiate their brutal existence at the mercy of white owners.<sup>149</sup> In the south, the institution of slavery also created white objections to black emigration on economic grounds. Emigration would deny slaveholders the right to their property and labor supply, the most vital elements of the plantation system. Thus, up until the 1850s emigration was a political defense

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<sup>149</sup> Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind, African American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 119.

mechanism against white American racism and exclusion for blacks especially in the north.

In the post civil war era, however, the abolition of slavery in the southern states created an opportunity for the extension of organized black protest to these areas. Northern blacks were pivotal to the abolition process and for a time, the promise of reconstruction undermined further emigration schemes. Instead, northern blacks for the most part supported programs that would help to rehabilitate their southern brethren.

The defeat of the South in the American Civil War created the basis for the political and economic domination of the South by the North. Historians have debated the role of slavery as grounds for the American Civil War. What is important for our study is that the Civil War justified northern destruction of the political, economic and social infrastructure of the southern states of which the institution of slavery was an integral part. The result was a period of northern enforced reconstruction where the promise of freedom was contemplated but again denied. Federal efforts to force southern whites to include blacks in American society were undermined by the rise of Jim Crow segregation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Post-civil war emigration sentiment emerged in a period of crises. While paternal and economic exigency still affected the creation of black emigration schemes the crises of Jim Crow segregation and the increase in lynching prompted many blacks to entertain the thought of emigration as the only way out of an extremely desperate situation. This re-

emergence of emigration at a time of crises in American race relations is important as it emphasises the cyclical nature of this type of protest especially since the Garvey movement emerged at another period of crisis and disillusionment in America during the twentieth century at the end of the First World War.

The emigration scheme of Bishop Henry Turner at the turn of the twentieth century highlights the changing attitudes and context that fuelled and sustained black emigration. Turner supported black emigration as a means to escape the increasing white racism and degradation of American society. Turner was a bishop of the American Methodist Episcopalian church who travelled to Liberia in the 1880s. He held a romanticised view of the potential of Liberia. However, he based his campaign for emigration on more pragmatic and less paternalistic grounds. In the tradition of Cuffe, Turner established the African Steamship Line in 1892 to facilitate commerce between Afro-Americans and Africans and to carry emigrants to Africa.

Some blacks, while recognising the value in colonisation, staunchly defended the Afro-American right to political inclusion in American society. In the pre-civil war era John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish, while supporting Liberian colonisation in 1826, were active critics of American race relations and seeming champions of the effective inclusion of blacks in American society. Russwurm and Cornish established the *Freedom's Journal* in New York City in 1827, the first black newspaper in America. They set a journalistic precedent for black political protest in the twentieth century. Most black political organisations including that of Marcus Garvey had a newspaper that

disseminated political propaganda. They were both West Indian by birth although it is debatable whether or not they identified with this heritage. Historians such as W.E.B. Du Bois and later John Henrich Clarke have noted the value of this ethnicity to the Afro-American struggle.<sup>150</sup> Many of the black political leaders in Harlem in the post-WWI era, including Garvey, were of West Indian heritage. Again the importance of the West Indian colonial setting to the overall development of New World Pan-Africanism is yet to be fully explored by historians.

In the post-civil war era, the promise of reconstruction supposedly guaranteed the extension of rights to the once subordinate black population. However, some blacks began to assert their autonomy outside of white society. Undoubtedly, the imperial scramble for the continent of Africa and the threat this posed to Liberian independence created an explicit desire amongst some blacks to declare an agenda of national self-determination for the black race -- Martin Delany had influenced this transition in political thought. From the 1850s, he was an essential proponent of this overt Black Nationalism based on the racial principle and the right to self-determination within this principle. In 1852 he wrote

Every people should be the originators of their own designs, the projectors of their own schemes, and creators of the events that lead to their destiny-the consummation of their desires. We have native hearts and virtues, just as other nations; which in their pristine purity are noble, potent, and worthy of example. We are a nation within a nation -- as the Poles in Russia, the Hungarians in Austria, the Welsh, Irish and Scotch in the British Dominions.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup>On West Indian contribution to the Afro-American struggle, see W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Modern Library, 1996).

<sup>151</sup> Apropos of Africa: sentiments of Negro American leaders on Africa from the 1800s to the 1950s, ed. Adelaide Cromwell Hill and Martin Kilson (London: Cass, 1969), 67.



His views were radical for his time, as the black leaders who professed nationalist sentiments in the decade of the 1880s in America were less virulent in their calls for black self-determination. Alexander Crummell, black Episcopalian priest and missionary, who had spent time in Liberia, expressed his Black Nationalist sentiment in his firm support of Liberian statehood. He encouraged Americans to participate in the continuation of this black Christian republic that he believed had so intricately interwoven the best of western civilization and African ways of life.<sup>152</sup> He was a firm proponent of the civilizing mission of Afro-Americans to tame the wilds of Liberia especially at a time when the political and economic health of the black republic was at risk. Nearly thirty years later, Marcus Garvey would also support Liberian independence, since the political autonomy of the country was to him a symbol of the progress of the black race.<sup>153</sup>

It was, however, the cultural Black Nationalist philosophies of Edward Blyden that had an especially enduring influence and became a significant component of Garvey's own racial philosophy. Blyden was a native of the West Indies who traveled to the United States to study, eventually settling in Liberia where he became a prominent political and intellectual leader. Blyden rejected European mores and encouraged Africans to develop and take pride in their indigenous institutions. He was a proponent of Pan-Negro ideas

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<sup>152</sup> Anthony Appiah, "Alexander Crummell and the Invention of Africa," *Massachusetts Review* 31, (1990): 385-406.

<sup>153</sup> His support for Liberia would change after the Americo-Liberian elite's unwillingness to support his program in their country. These issues are discussed later in this chapter.

and a firm believer in the idea of the “African Personality,” the unique potentialities of native Africans.<sup>154</sup>

By the eve of World War I, however, there was a decisive shift in the tone of Afro-American politics as increasingly blacks looked inwards for solutions to the problems of race in America. For a while, emigration and Black Nationalist sentiment were at the background of American racial politics as two new racial leaders emerged with varying integrationist approaches to the racial question in America. It was the politics of these two men that Garvey had to contend with even before his formal arrival on the American scene. In carving a niche in Afro-American politics, Garvey’s racialist philosophies placed him to the left of the two dominant integrationists that were at the forefront of Afro-American politics at the turn of the century.

### **Garvey In The United States: The Early Years**

Before Garvey arrived in the United States, he tried to solicit some support from the two most prominent racial leaders in America at the time, Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois. Both men failed to accept his overtures for assistance or patronage. Thus, from the beginning Garvey was forced to carve his own niche in black political protest in America. The fact that Garvey’s program for uplift in the United States was created independent of the patronage of either race leader is reflected in the significant deviation from the standard policies of both leaders in his own political mandate. Both men supported varying degrees of integrationist policies while Garvey especially after 1917

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<sup>154</sup> Hollis Ralph Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot, 1832-1912* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

would promote black separatism. Since Garvey was not constrained by possible political patrons, he was able to include strands of political thought that were not part of the tradition of black protest in America to elaborate his racialist ideology.

Washington and Du Bois, from the end of the nineteenth century, were both concerned with the issue of how black men should achieve equality in the United States.

Washington, publicly the more conservative of the two, advocated a more gradual approach.<sup>155</sup> He emphasized the technical education of blacks to improve their economic situation at a time when Jim Crow Segregation had created permanent institutional barriers to prevent blacks from rising.<sup>156</sup> Du Bois, the less conservative of the two, insisted upon immediate and full civil rights and agitated for political participation for blacks in America. He helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples in 1909, an organization that relied significantly on white patronage for support.

Both men represented different philosophical approaches reflected by their personal histories.<sup>157</sup> Du Bois' approach to the race question in the United States was embodied in the idea of the talented tenth, the notion that

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<sup>155</sup> His private correspondence shows that he did indeed resist attempts at segregation, however, his actions were more covert and never publicized. See for example Booker T. Washington to Archibald H. Grimke, June 5, 1899, *Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 5, ed. Louis R. Harlan and Raymond Smock (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972-1983).

<sup>156</sup> See introduction to Jacqueline M. Moore, *Booker T Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and the Struggle for Racial Uplift* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2003).

<sup>157</sup> See introduction to Jacqueline M. Moore, *Booker T Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and the Struggle for Racial Uplift* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2003).

The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races.<sup>158</sup>

Washington on other hand believed that providing vocational training for individual blacks would improve not only their sense of worth but also provide a means for gainful employment, and eventually economic independence. By the beginning of the twentieth century, both men were the foremost race leaders in America. While historians have painted a picture of the black American community as divided between these two camps, there was significant co-operation between the two men on several occasions.<sup>159</sup>

Garvey's correspondence with Washington's Tuskegee Institute in 1915 and 1916 shows Tuskegee's interest in the general principles of Garvey's aims for his local organisation. However, there was no initial offer of patronage. As early as 1914, Washington himself wrote, "I regret, however, that I am not able now to make a contribution towards your work."<sup>160</sup> Garvey then sent a statement outlining the aims and purposes of his association and the reply stated, "Certainly I shall do what I can to help you in this country."<sup>161</sup> The shape of this "help" remained unspecified.<sup>162</sup> The reply, not from Washington himself

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<sup>158</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," from *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative Negroes of Today* (New York, 1903).

<sup>159</sup> For example concerning the Pullman Car Incident, See William Henry Baldwin to Booker T. Washington, January 24, 1900, *Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 5.

<sup>160</sup> Booker T. Washington to Marcus Garvey, Tuskegee Institute Alabama, September 17, 1914, *MGP* 1, 71.

<sup>161</sup> Booker T. Washington to Marcus Garvey, Tuskegee Institute Alabama, April 27, 1915, *MGP* 1, 118.

<sup>162</sup> Garvey had enclosed an envelope in the second letter to Washington along with his statement. There is no mention of the envelope and thus one can speculate that Washington never contributed to Garvey's UNIA.

but his secretary, was, presumably, more a formality than an endorsement. This was the first of many rejections from prominent race leaders in the United States that Garvey would face.

Garvey had an even less successful encounter with Du Bois. When Du Bois visited Jamaica, in 1915, Garvey sent him a note expressing his compliments on behalf of the UNIA.<sup>163</sup> Garvey again sought to solicit the race leader's support when he finally arrived in the United States, inviting Du Bois to chair his first public lecture. In this instance, his approach was a blatant request for patronage. He stated, "I also beg to hand you tickets for same<sup>164</sup> and to submit to you a circular in general circulation among prospective clients."<sup>165</sup> Garvey failed to obtain any form of endorsement from Du Bois or the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (hereafter NAACP). He was only briefly mentioned in its *Crisis Magazine*,<sup>166</sup> as "founder and president of the UNIA in Jamaica, [visiting] America."<sup>167</sup> Since Garvey did not represent the educated element of Jamaican society, it is unlikely that he would have received the patronage of Du Bois. Garvey later became extremely hostile towards Du Bois, criticizing his elitism, a charge that Garvey himself was guilty of in his native Jamaica. Garvey well knew that he was an unknown to the American populace and thus lacking credibility among Afro-Americans. His attempt to identify with the established organizations in the United States was an obvious public relations maneuver.

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<sup>163</sup> Marcus Garvey to W.E.B. Du Bois, Kingston Jamaica, April 30, 1915, *MGP 1*, 120.

<sup>164</sup> He is referring to the lecture.

<sup>165</sup> Marcus Garvey to W.E.B. Dubois, Crisis Office, April 25, 1916, *MGP 1*, 187.

<sup>166</sup> The *Crisis Magazine* established in 1910 by W.E.B. Dubois. It was the official organ of the NAACP.

<sup>167</sup> Item in the *Crisis*, May 1916, *MGP 1*, 194.

Until 1917, Garvey's lectures and publications were usually centered on the theme of the condition of Blacks in the West Indies after emancipation. On other occasions, Garvey gave a comparative lecture emphasizing the advanced position of African Americans when compared with Africans throughout the globe. However, even those who knew Garvey questioned his credibility. W.A. Domingo, a friend of Garvey and later supporter and editor of his newspaper *The Negro World*, described Garvey's first lecture as a "comical incident."<sup>168</sup> Garvey was unable to keep his composure due to nervousness and fell off the stage. Domingo also lambasted Garvey's proclamations about his world-famous stature. Apparently Garvey had printed some "flamboyant handbills announcing to all world and sundry that he, Marcus Garvey, the world-famous orator would speak at St. Mark's Hall."<sup>169</sup> During his early days in the United States, Garvey had a tendency to exaggerate his accomplishments especially on the handbills printed to advertise his lectures. He claimed to have spoken to packed audiences in countries where his activities were not yet publicized, such as England. These statements were unsupported and thus Garvey was liable to initial criticism from many educated blacks, especially in Harlem, who were cognizant of the various fraudulent soap box orators "who flayed old targets like Moton<sup>170</sup> and new targets like Du Bois.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Account by W.A. Domingo of Marcus Garvey's St. Mark's Church Hall Lecture, New York, *MGP* 1, 190.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> R. R. Moton succeeded Booker T. Washington, as principal for the Tuskegee Institute after Washington's death in 1915.

<sup>171</sup> Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey, Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge & London: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), 41.

In 1917, Garvey's public fortunes changed. Through his association with Hubert H. Harrison Garvey began to carve a niche in American race politics. Garvey began to elaborate his political program for racial uplift that although built on previous programs in America, embraced a radical separatist ideology and anti-colonial nationalism. Garvey soon began to build a following mainly from Harrison's already large fan base. It is at this stage that Garvey began his sudden rise to prominence in the Afro-American political scene that culminated in the immediate post-war years.

John Henrik Clarke describes Garvey's eventual success in post-war America as "no accident."<sup>172</sup> Garvey, "came to the United States to build this movement at a time of great disenchantment among Afro-Americans who had pursued the 'American dream' until they had to concede that the dream was not for them."<sup>173</sup> Afro-Americans willingly closed ranks with whites in order to aid the war effort and were "hard pressed to explain the continuation of second class status at home for blacks."<sup>174</sup>

The war had created several opportunities for the socio-economic advancement of blacks. The increased demands of the wartime economy in the industrial north created a "Great Migration of Blacks who sought an alternative to share cropping, disenfranchisement, lynching and racial injustice in the south."<sup>175</sup> This was the first sustained wave of voluntary black migration for mostly economic reasons. However, in the post-war period

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<sup>172</sup> John Henrik Clarke, "Marcus Garvey: The Harlem Years," *Transition*, no. 46 (1974): 14.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Otis B. Grant, "Social Justice versus Social Inequality, The Capitalistic Jurisprudence of Marcus Garvey," *Journal of Black Studies* 33, 4 (March 2003): 491.

<sup>175</sup> Joe William Trotter Jr., "The Great Migration," *Magazine of History*, 17, 1 (2002): 31.

whites were determined to use legal means to prevent blacks from enjoying these newly acquired benefits.<sup>176</sup> Garvey's organization aimed to provide black socio-economic institutions as alternatives to the white American capitalist framework, a framework that because of inherent racism could never support the aspirations or needs of blacks in America.<sup>177</sup> American race relations differed from the situation in Garvey's native Jamaica. Blacks were a minority competing with the white majority in the post war era for the scarce resources brought on by post-war economic depression.

Hubert Harrison was the founder of the Liberty League, an organisation that attempted to address the "coffin of conventional politics" by providing a political party platform built on black representatives.<sup>178</sup> Harrison hoped to provide an alternative to the entrenched Republican Party machinery that although gaining a large percentage of the black vote, did not represent their aspirations or interests.<sup>179</sup> During World War One Harrison built his political career on "the strength of the power of his street commentaries."<sup>180</sup> He was a soapbox orator who used oral journalism to amass a significant following.<sup>181</sup> While Harrison had been a member of the Socialist Party of America from 1911, he believed that the suppression of racial politics in favor of class by the party's structure failed to answer the needs of black workers. In 1916, he resigned from the party in an attempt to promote his own brand of race-first social democracy. In 1917, Harrison introduced

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<sup>176</sup> Grant, "Social Justice versus Social Inequality," 491.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 492.

<sup>178</sup> Stein, *World of Marcus Garvey*, 43.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 43

<sup>180</sup> Keith S. Henry, "The Black Political Tradition in New York: A conjunction of political cultures," *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 7, no. 4 (June 1977): 458.

<sup>181</sup> Keith S. Henry, "The Black Political Tradition in New York," 458.



Garvey at the official launch of the Liberty League and from then on Garvey became famous based on Harrison's following.

The organization of the Liberty League coincided with the East St. Louis Street Massacre. Migration of blacks to the East St. Louis area in search of jobs during 1916 and 1917 created frictions in the labor market. The influx of blacks upset the predominantly white East St. Louis population, who feared increased competition for jobs.<sup>182</sup> On July 1, 1917, several reports from published and oral sources claiming that a group of blacks had killed a white man sparked a race riot in which several blacks were beaten and killed and approximately \$400,000 in property destroyed. It has been argued that the press helped to compound the situation by citing the alleged killing of a white man by blacks as a premeditated act when indeed; the blacks had acted in self-defense after a previous incident of white attack.<sup>183</sup>

Black racial leaders responded to the massacre with utter dismay and tensions were heightened amongst the black public in New York. R.R. Moton, principal of the Tuskegee Institute, described the incident as a "Shame to the Nation." In an official statement published in the *New York Times* Moton said

I am pained, chagrined and discouraged that these riots on the eve of the Declaration of Independence should occur to bring shame to our country especially at a time like this when we are calling on Negroes as well as white men to defend democracy. All races can exist alongside each other in this country.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> E. Mervin Goodwin, *Black Migration in America from 1915 to 1960, An Uneasy Exodus* (Lewiston/ Queenston/ Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 15.

<sup>183</sup> Terry Ann Knopf, "Race, Riots and Reporting," *Journal of Black Studies* 4, 3 (March 1974): 303.

<sup>184</sup> *New York Times*, July 4, 1917, 5.

According to a report of the *New York Times*, Hubert Harrison's statements were more radical than those of Moton. At a meeting of the Liberty League, he supposedly advised his race "to defend their lives... we intend to fight, if we must for the things dearest to us for our hearts and homes." He emphasized joint action by blacks as, "We Negroes in New York cannot lie down in the face of this proposition. This thing in East St. Louis touches us too dearly. We must demand justice and we must make our voices heard."<sup>185</sup> It was Garvey's response to this incident that was most important. His response thrust him onto the Black American political scene. His words were a far deviation from the more subdued tone of Moton. In a speech at the Lafayette Hall in New York, Garvey expressed his fierce indignation.

The East St. Louis Riot, or rather massacre . . . will go down in history as one of the bloodiest outrages against mankind for which any class of people could be held guilty. This is no time for fine words but a time to lift one's voice against the savagery of a people who claim to be the dispensers of democracy.<sup>186</sup>

Garvey also described the American government as hypocritical.<sup>187</sup> The language of Garvey's speech was potentially seditious. The importance of Garvey's speech, however, was in the connections that he made between the black situation in East St. Louis and the race rioting in London. According to Garvey, black men in London were targets of racial violence as white police officers claimed that English girls were infatuated with black men. In both the East St. Louis riots and the London riots Garvey claimed innocent

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<sup>185</sup> *New York Times*, July 5, 1917, 9.

<sup>186</sup> Printed Address by Marcus Garvey on the East St. Louis Riots, July 8, 1917, *MGP* 1, 213.

<sup>187</sup> *MGP* 1, 213.

blacks had died because of false accusations made by white men. This was Garvey's first attempt to radically internationalize the plight of blacks in an attempt to demonstrate his believe that there was a worldwide conspiracy to rob the "Negro" of life and liberty.

The East St. Louis riots also marked a turning point in the development of Garvey's racist political platform. It was at this stage that Garvey began to decisively preach the necessity of a black political space as the white race had threatened and would continue to threaten the very existence of blacks. At this time of crises, Garvey was able to resurrect two traditions of African American political thought, Black Nationalism and emigration, in an attempt to convince the African Americans that their salvation lay not with a quest for an unattainable equality but with a program to repossess the land of their ancestors, Africa.

### **A Case Of Africa For The Africans**

As emphasized earlier the concept of identification with and a quest for an autonomous geo-political space, Africa fuelled Black Nationalist sentiment in the United States.

Afro-American "frustrations over the intractable and elusive American nationality" found expression in Black Nationalist movements such as those of Marcus Garvey.<sup>188</sup> Garvey's movement capitalized on these prevailing sentiments by providing the hope, whether realistic or unrealistic, of institutions controlled by blacks for their mutual benefit.

Garvey believed this was the only solution to the Negro problem. The UNIA attempted

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<sup>188</sup> Tunde Adeleke, *Unafrikan Americans* (Lexington Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1998) 2.

to create a universal political platform for racial uplift and African redemption. This endeavor was problematic, as a unified platform could never represent the multiple political aspirations and experiences of blacks throughout the African continent and the Diaspora.

The UNIA held its first International Convention of Negro Peoples of the World in New York in August 1920. The purpose of this convention was to “outline a constructive plan and program for uplifting of the Negroes and African redemption.”<sup>189</sup> In a series of speeches, UNIA delegates described conditions in their own jurisdictions. They highlighted the achievements of their local divisions and the contributions they had made to achieve the goals of the parent body. Garvey and members of the New York parent body then attempted to delineate the framework for their plans of African redemption. Garvey noted that the black people as a race “desired a place in the sun.”<sup>190</sup> It was the intention of the organization “to continue to agitate, expect and demand from the world a free and redeemed Africa.”<sup>191</sup> The Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World was an explicit affirmation of this resolution. Articles 13 and 14 declared

We believe in the freedom of Africa for the Negro people of the world, and by the principle of Europe for the Europeans and Asia for the Asiatic, we also demand Africa for the Africans at home and abroad. We believe in the inherent right of the Negro to possess himself of Africa and that his possession of the same shall not be regarded as an infringement on any claim or purchase made by any race or nation.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Opening of the UNIA Convention, Liberty Hall New York, August 1, 1920, *MGP 2*, 477.

<sup>190</sup> Report of Madison Square Garden Meeting, “Negro World Convention Bulletin,” August 3, 1920, *MGP 2*, 502.

<sup>191</sup> *MGP 2*, 503.

<sup>192</sup> UNIA Declaration of Rights, New York, August 13, 1920, *MGP 2*, 571.

The organization now had a clearly expressed mandate, based on the supposed inalienable right of black men to inhabit and govern Africa because of their racial affinity with the continent. Thus, Africans in exile were poised to return to their fatherland. Garvey described the European powers as tenants. He gave notice to these tenants, the European imperialists, and colonists to quit or face forcible eviction.<sup>193</sup>

The UNIA instituted political and economic measures in preparation for the future “Negro Republic” in Africa. The organization enacted these measures in an attempt to consolidate existing political and economic advances that the Negro worldwide had made. This included supporting existing Black republics such as Haiti and Liberia. Liberia was extremely important as the UNIA hoped to establish its future headquarters in that republic and from there embark on the extensive plans for African redemption. As Garvey emphasized,

We believe that any progress, any advancement made by the Negro in Western alien civilization is a progress, is an advancement that is insecure, because at any time the alien forces desire to destroy the progress and development of the Negro -- the advancement of the Negro -- they can do so. For the security of our racial strength, economically, commercially, educationally, and in every way, we have decided to concentrate on the building of the great republic of Liberia, and to make Liberia one of the great powers of the world.<sup>194</sup>

The Mayor of Monrovia, Gabriel Johnson, was present at the convention. He gave a speech highlighting the necessity of preserving the integrity and sovereignty of his black

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<sup>193</sup> P. Olanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism, The Idea and the Movement 1776-1991* (Washington D.C: Howard University Press, 1994), 61.

republic. He noted that Liberia had not developed rapidly as the country refuses to receive more capital from certain foreign investors. The country intends to “Preserve intact what we desired for future generations and the integrity and autonomy of Liberia than to have an open hand to those who would be willing at any moment to swallow her due to their might and their capital.”<sup>195</sup>

Liberia was the “lone star, the stronghold of the Negroes in Africa and its wealth and resources of natural products were something worth the while of any farmer or commercial man if he desires to go there.”<sup>196</sup> To the UNIA, Liberia embodied the hopes and dreams of an independent and autonomous African republic. Garvey and the UNIA were unaware of the prevailing economic and political conditions of oppression perpetuated by the black Americo-Liberian elite against the indigenous population.<sup>197</sup> Other political measures instituted by the UNIA included the election of a government in exile for the future African republic. The convention elected Garvey as the Provisional President of Africa. The UNIA also adopted a flag and other national symbols such as the anthem “Ethiopia Land of Our Fathers” for the government in exile. A Universal African Legion formed the potential nucleus of a shadow army to liberate Africa.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Opening of UNIA Convention, Liberty Hall, New York, August 1, 1920, *MGP* 2, 478.

<sup>195</sup> Address of Gabriel Johnson, Mayor of Monrovia, Liberia, New York, August 3, 1920, *MGP* 2, 527.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 528-529.

<sup>197</sup> See Ibrahim Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slavery, 1914-1940* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>198</sup> Imanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement* (London: Methuen, 1974), 268.

Garvey had also created an exclusively black-owned and operated shipping line called the Black Star Line. The *New York Call* announced on April 27, 1919 that the UNIA planned to found a shipping line. “According to Garvey, the Negroes are anxious to go back to Africa and the West Indies to create empires of their own as strong as that of the yellow and the white man. To go back they need ships.”<sup>199</sup> Garvey confirmed this project in an editorial letter to the *Negro World*. He described the cost of the venture. He also appealed to blacks all around the globe to support what would be “a line of steam ships owned and operated in the interest of the people for the fuller economic and industrial development of the race.”<sup>200</sup> Garvey advertised the line as a national project. The Black Star Line was hence the property of the “Negro Nation” and as “every Negro [could] be a member of the UNIA, every Negro [could] by majority vote determine how the Black Star Line [was] operated.”<sup>201</sup>

It is impossible to decide whether Garvey’s plans were practical or even feasible. His contemporaries gave ample criticism in the black press, some motivated by pure malice. However, many Black Nationalist leaders in America criticized Garvey on the issue of representation. They raised the question of whether Garvey did represent the aspirations of the 4,000,000 Negroes around the globe for whom he claimed to speak.

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<sup>199</sup> *New York Call*, April 27, 1919. *The New York Call* was a socialist newspaper established in 1908. The founders of *The New York Call* did not establish the paper with any race affiliations. The newspaper was “dedicated to the working class in whose interest *The Call* was founded.” See *Ten Years of Service, 1908-1918: A History of The New York Call to Commemorate the Tenth Anniversary of Its Establishment, May 30th 1918* (New York: New York Call, 1918).

<sup>200</sup> “Letter to the Editor,” *Negro World*, June 7, 1919.

<sup>201</sup> *Negro World* Editorial Letter, June 7, 1919.

As early as January 1918, the journalist John Edward Bruce posed several questions to Garvey regarding the issue of representation. These questions came at a time when the direction of the UNIA had changed. Garvey was no longer soliciting support for the building of an industrial school by the Jamaica UNIA division. Bruce was interested in the economic record and the viability of Garvey's organization. Although the tone of these questions was malicious, they were practical concerns presented by a man whose history with Pan-African interests spanned several decades. Of greatest significance to Bruce was the question of Garvey's authority to represent the interests of blacks especially on the African continent and the feasibility of his plans for the economic and political redemption for Africa. Bruce asked the editor of the *New Negro*,

What Africans of light and leading in Africa are co-operating with you to establish a great Negro commercial center? How is your organization going to bring this about? What authorities have you to represent the Africans? Have any of the native kings or chiefs authorized you to speak for them or their peoples? Have you any written endorsement from leading Africans in Africa supporting your scheme?<sup>202</sup>

Bruce's questions were valid since up until the UNIA conference, Garvey had failed to make tangible links with Africans on the continent, outside of Liberia. African delegates were scarce at the UNIA convention when compared with Du Bois' earlier Pan-African

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<sup>202</sup> John Edward Bruce to the Editor of the *New Negro*, *MGP 1*, 337. John Edward Bruce (1856-1924) was a journalist and historian with a long history of black national and Pan-African involvement. Bruce was once a supporter of the Tuskegee school but became disenchanted with the seeming accommodationist ideology of Booker T. Washington. Bruce eventually turned to Garveysim in 1920. He wrote a weekly column for the *Negro World* entitled "Bruce Grit." For biographical information on John Edward Bruce see the introduction to William Seraile, *Bruce Grit, The Black Nationalist Writings of John Edward Bruce* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003).



Congress in Paris in February 1919.<sup>203</sup> Du Bois had at least attempted to contact a few notable Africans such as the Senegalese Blaise Daigne, who chaired the proceedings.<sup>204</sup>

Du Bois also gave a critique of Garvey's movement in a two-part essay in *Crisis*. His critique was a bit more balanced than the one by Bruce.<sup>205</sup> According to Du Bois, "Garvey had with singular success capitalized and made vocal the long-suffering grievance and spirit of protest among the West Indian peasantry. This was the central and dynamic force of the Garvey movement."<sup>206</sup> Du Bois, however, stated that Garvey had imported the racial antagonisms of his native Jamaica in order to create his separatist ideology.<sup>207</sup> Garvey's movement was therefore unreasonable in its aspirations as blacks in America were part of the white capitalist system and Garvey failed to address the tangible social and economic problems such as racism and poverty that affected the majority of blacks in the United States.

Bruce and Du Bois criticized Garvey's ability and authority to represent the aspirations of blacks in the Diaspora and on the African continent. Garvey's plan was never comprehensive, but projections of an African American need to escape a society that would never incorporate the aspirations of a black minority group. Garvey did not

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<sup>203</sup> There was one delegate from Nigeria, a Prince Madarikan Deniyi at the UNIA conference. Historians know very little of his background and he was never active in the UNIA divisions in Nigeria. Akinbaba Agbebi was another Nigerian involved in the movement in New York but he was exclusively part of the Black Star Line.

<sup>204</sup> J. Ayodele Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in Africa, 1900-1945, A Study in Ideology and Social Classes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 63.

<sup>205</sup> Cary D. Wintz, ed., *African American Political Thought, 1890-1930, Washington, Du Bois, Garvey, and Randolph* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 121.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., WE.B. Du Bois on Marcus Garvey, *Crisis* 21, December 1920, 122.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., WE.B. Du Bois on Marcus Garvey, *Crisis* 21, January 1921, 127.

attempt to collaborate with Africans on a plan for their own redemption. Unaware of the realities on the continent, Garvey contrived his grand plans; however, Africans had their own agendas regarding post-war reconstruction, as we shall see in the next chapter. The interpretation of the Garvey movement in British West Africa highlights the confrontation between Garvey's vision for Africa and the realities of the continent itself.

## CHAPTER 4

## “A WILD CONCEPTION” GARVEYISM IN BRITISH WEST AFRICA 1920-1922

### **Introduction**

The unifying principle of the Garvey movement was race defined by blackness. Race was the basis for united action among blacks for their own political and economic uplift. Garvey believed the system of alien European rule in Africa only served to deny blacks real and tangible progress. The creation of a strong, unified, black nation in Africa would secure the future development of the race, along its own lines, free from white oppression and exploitation. Some West Africans, especially the educated elite, were open to the idea of racial solidarity. African intellectuals often understood and emphasized the significance of racialist thought and effectively employed such philosophies to undermine white racism.

However, Garvey failed to realize that British West Africans were wary of claims to race leadership from outside of Africa especially since they were continuously attempting to affirm their right to leadership within the tenuous political circumstances created by the British system of indirect rule. They therefore would not accommodate rival political assertions from American blacks to uplift native Africans.

Thus the reception of the UNIA shows how Garvey's racialist ideals, born in Jamaica and transformed in Harlem played out in British West Africa. They helped power the strong attraction of the BSL program (which was also based on powerful economic self-interest) but did not get much farther (especially as the BSL collapsed). Garvey's racialist

political dreams of a unified black nation under black American leadership did not appreciate that in British West Africa the elite had prospects for leadership, which were threatened by Black solidarity if carried beyond the realm of rhetoric.

### **Colonialism, Race and Uplift In The Principle Coastal Towns**

The complex interaction of British colonialism, Atlantic ideas and traditional customs of the ethnic groups in the coastal cities created a political outlook in West Africa distinct from both Jamaica and Black America. British acquisition of territory in West Africa was piecemeal and the development of administrative policy was therefore ad hoc.<sup>208</sup> In the first decades of the nineteenth century, missionary zeal and abolitionist fervor influenced colonial policy. The result was an apologetic paternalism that fuelled both the creation of black settlements and the institution of educational facilities to raise Africans to a higher state of civilization. There were conscious attempts at assimilating blacks into European norms through education and Christianization. Missionary education was geared towards the moral uplift of Africans whose potential had remained untapped due to the degraded condition of slavery. The early development of the colonial system reflected this agenda.

The colony of Sierra Leone, established in 1787 by British philanthropists is an example of this conscious attempt at social and cultural engineering through Christianity and

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<sup>208</sup> For a detailed account of the development of British administrative policy in Nigeria see Walter R. Crocker, *Nigeria; A Critique of British Colonial Administration* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1936). The British administrative model in West Africa was based on the development of the colonial policy in Nigeria.

education.<sup>209</sup> The founders hoped to develop a black community that would evolve on the patterns of Western civilization. Freetown the capital of Sierra Leone developed into an ethnically cosmopolitan area as the demographic makeup of the freed slave population hailed from various parts of the British Empire. These included the Nova Scotian Maroons, English blacks, the Yourba speaking peoples from Western Nigeria and in the immediate post-abolition period, West Indians and Afro-Brazilians. The result of this ethnic mixture was a cultural atmosphere that embraced both the black Atlantic and African experiences.

These black settlers or Krios would develop a keen sense of identity as the bulwarks of Western civilization on the West African coast, especially in comparison to the native Africans living outside the colony in the Protectorate.<sup>210</sup> Historians have emphasized their role as collaborators, to some extent, in imperial expansion.<sup>211</sup>

Krios would define their nationalism by a sense of inherent rights as British citizens. However, this does not mean that they failed to eventually grasp the indignities of the colonial system. Other historians have attempted to refine this opinion that Krios were exclusive and elitist, highlighting that despite the sense of separation, Krios in their attempt at self-determination were aware of and did collaborate with native Africans. Krio nationalism was also an expression of anti-racism and thus engendered the

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<sup>209</sup> Akintola Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone, An Interpretive History* (London: C. Hurst, 1989), 1.

<sup>210</sup> The colony of Sierra Leone was established in 1787; however, the interior did not come under British control until 1896 when it was declared a Protectorate of Britain.

<sup>211</sup> Emmanuel Ayandele, *African Historical Studies* (London; Totowa, N.J.: F. Cass, 1979).

aspirations of those Africans in the hinterland.<sup>212</sup> A strict sense of the civilizing effects of Christianity and education characterized the attitude towards African uplift for these “Black Englishmen.”<sup>213</sup>

By the 1830s, amidst the growth of the colony, a wave of emigration occurred. Sierra Leonians (Saro) for the most part migrated to other parts of West Africa in search of economic and employment opportunities afforded by British commercial transactions along the coast. Many of the Yoruba ethnic groups migrated specifically to Lagos and the surrounding regions in an effort to reunite with and aid in the development of their kin in Western Nigeria.

Throughout West Africa, the Saro Diaspora affected the development of educational institutions, and the spread of Christianity. Saro were powerful intermediaries in the economic process, both promoting and gaining from the extension of legitimate commerce.<sup>214</sup> They were at the forefront of the intellectual tradition of the educated elite in West Africa after 1850 and pivotal to the development of the political process in the Gold Coast and especially in Lagos.

The continuous spread of Christianity and education resulted in changes in social stratification. These changes were most visible in the coastal towns (such as Lagos and

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<sup>212</sup> Akintola Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone, An Interpretive History* (London: C. Hurst, 1989).

<sup>213</sup> Leo Spitzer, *The Creoles of Sierra Leone: Responses to Colonialism, 1870-1945* (Madison Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974).

<sup>214</sup> Jean Herskovits Kopytoff, *A Preface to Modern Nigeria, The Sierra Leonians in Yoruba, 1830-1890* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965).

Cape Coast) that were at the centre of the economic and administrative structure of the colonial system. As in Freetown, missionary activity and the economic and climatic exigency of the colonial setting warranted the education of Africans to serve as mediators. These Africans became an educated elite deriving their status not only from economic factors but also from their valued role in the colonial structure.<sup>215</sup>

As an emerging elite group and beneficiaries of the British civilizing mission, they were poised to challenge the traditional elite for leadership in African society especially since the superstructure of traditional government was significantly altered as a result of the colonial encounter. This educated group saw themselves as the promise of the African potential. With Christianity and western education, their claims to leadership as native Africans were both religious and political. They would lead Africa in a glorious destiny of redemption through Christianity. As political leaders, they would help create modern institutions. Men like Bishop Samuel Crowther, the first African Anglican bishop in Nigeria and Africanus Horton the first African in the colonial medical service represented this thrust by westernized Africans in the middle of the nineteenth century to lead native Africans to civilization.<sup>216</sup> Horton especially saw the promise of civilization in non-

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<sup>215</sup> Kristin Mann, *Marrying Well: Marriage, Status and Social Change among the educated elite in Lagos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>216</sup> Bishop Samuel Crowther was the first African Anglican Bishop. Born in 1800 in Southern Nigeria, Crowther was a recaptive who landed in Sierra Leone in 1822. He was educated at Fourah Bay College and eventually took up ministry in the Anglican Church. Crowther, like many Saro returned to Nigeria, to spread Christianity and civilization to their kin. He was pivotal to the establishment of missions in Badagry and Abeokuta and to the penetration of Christian missions into the lower Niger and Yorubaland. See Robert A. Hess, "J. F. Adi Ajayi and The New Historiography in West Africa James," *African Studies Review*, 14, 2 (1971): 277. Africanus Horton, the son of liberated Africans of Igbo descent and a medical officer in the colonial civil service, was pivotal in the development of attempts to achieve self-government among the Fanti peoples around the

racial terms. While Africans were indeed degraded at present their potential was yet untapped and through education and Christianization Africa would yet rise from her condition of depravity to a position of equal terms with white European societies. Horton was thus a firm proponent of the necessity of educational institutions in Africa in order to facilitate the civilization process.<sup>217</sup>

While Horton's philosophical approach was non-racial there were mid-nineteenth century educated Africans who saw the modernizing mission in essentially racial terms. Edward Wilmot Blyden saw Africa's degraded state as providential.<sup>218</sup> Blacks had served the world. As Christ had first served men to fulfill a greater purpose so too was the black race destined to fulfill a greater purpose. Blyden did not valorize European society, he did not see Africa's future in terms of wholesale importation of European institutions as Horton, and many of his contemporaries did. Instead, Blyden saw redemptive features in African culture and believed that Africa's uplift from their present state must come from within by cultivating the essential and unique qualities of the African race. While Blyden did see the benefits of European colonialism, as it brought technological advancements to Africa, he believed the colonial phase was brief and transitory, significant only for the opportunities for technical development that it afforded the African continent.<sup>219</sup>

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Cape Coast region. In 1868 he helped to organize the Fanti Confederacy, the first West African attempt to introduce a centralized constitutional system of government based on a European model. See Christopher Fyfe, "Africanus Horton as a Constitution-Maker," *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 26, 2 (1988): 173-184.

<sup>217</sup> Arie J. Vanderploeg, "Africanus Horton and the Idea for a University in West Africa," *Journal of African Studies*, 5, 2 (1978): 185-204.

<sup>218</sup> M. Yu Frenkel, "Edward Blyden and the Concept of African Personality," *African Affairs*, 73, 292 (1974): 277-289.

<sup>219</sup> Hollis R. Lynch, "Edward Blyden, Pioneer West African Nationalist," *Journal of African History*, 6, 3 (1965): 379.



As early as 1856, Blyden challenged the emerging British racialist anthropological philosophies that began to cultivate theories of a hierarchy of races.<sup>220</sup> Such theories would potentially negate the possibilities of untapped African potential as Africans were then bound to a fate of perpetual degradation. Blyden is considered the forerunner of African nationalism and his role in the development of African racialist thought must be emphasized since by the end of the nineteenth century the rise of scientific racial theories created changes in colonial attitudes towards subject races. The apologetic paternalism that fuelled conscious abolitionist efforts to civilize and assimilate subject races into British cultural norms was superseded by claims that the preservation of native life and institutions was the best route for African development. This course was emphasized since Africans were so dissimilar from Europeans and thus development along European lines was impossible.

Instead of preparing Africans through Christianity and education to govern themselves colonial officials began a system of governance that depended on native polities and the traditional elite. The development of the system of Indirect Rule was thus the result of this new pattern of acknowledging traditional polities while marginalizing the educated elite.

Arguably, the period of colonial expansion and extension of the administrative machinery at the turn of the twentieth century precipitated by economic necessity not only saw the exclusion of educated Africans from the colonial civil service but also affected African

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<sup>220</sup> Frenkel, "Edward Blyden and the Concept of African Personality," 279.

perceptions of the benighted promise of the civilizing mission. “Increased discrimination from the 1880s aggravated by economic discontent led not only to a reappraisal by the educated elite” in the leadership roles that they would play in colonial society, but also influenced the proliferation of racialist thought between the 1880’s and the eve of World War One.<sup>221</sup> In the tradition of Edward Blyden, many of these emerging cultural nationalists questioned the efficacy of Western norms and standards for African society especially since they believed Christianity threatened the social fabric of African society.

There were two sides to the cultural nationalism and racialist thought during this period. There was often no distinction between race and nation as the modern African elite questioned the colonial encounter and its ramifications for not only Africa but also the black race as a whole. Conversely, there was an increased affiliation with individual native groups. In Lagos, the increased identification with Yoruba versus European culture was synonymous with this trend. Men like Mojola Agbebi, a Baptist missionary, prominent scholar and lecturer represented this duality in West African cultural nationalism. Agbebi wrote and lectured on the subject of the race question in Africa, and like Blyden believed that Africans “as a race possessed a regular engrained order of life.”<sup>222</sup> However, Agbebi renounced the trappings of western civilized culture afforded him by mission education opting instead to identify with his Yoruba heritage. This included changing his European name to a Yoruba one and donning native attire. For

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<sup>221</sup>Patrick Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elite in the Politics of Lagos* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 74.

<sup>222</sup>Akinsola, Akinwowo, “The Place of Mojola Agbebi in the African Nationalists Movements, 1890-1917,” *Phylon* 26, 2 (1965): 126.

many cultural nationalists like Agbebi identification with native Yoruba culture went beyond these outward trappings, to the formation of a “Yoruba political consciousness.”<sup>223</sup> This consciousness was evident in the literature produced in the native tongue during this period.

In the Gold Coast, men like Casely Hayford also expressed this duality in their approach to cultural nationalism. Hayford was a prominent Gold Coast lawyer and West African nationalist. In his writings he was both keenly aware of his the position of Africans as a race and of his native Fanti heritage and customs. In a 1911 novel *Ethiopia Unbound* Hayford highlighted the challenge of race reform and identity especially for the educated elite negotiating between the European and African cultural spaces.<sup>224</sup> His earlier publication *Gold Coast Native Institutions* was a political treatise that defended indigenous social and political structures. While affirming the validity of indigenous polities, Hayford admitted that they proved divisive to the process of modern state formation. This aspect of his philosophy is important since Hayford was pivotal to the formation of the National Congress of British West Africa, a supra-nationalist organization.

Overall, the cultural nationalism in British West Africa prior to World War I that traversed between the race and ethnic line had ramifications for the engagement of the

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<sup>223</sup> Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elite*, 78.

<sup>224</sup> Kwadwo Osei- Nyame, “Pan-Africanist Ideology and the African Historical Novel of Self-Discovery,” *Journal of Arian Cultural Studies*, 12, 2 (1999): 139.

race question in the international arena. West African race leaders believed that they understood the racial questions at both the micro and macro level in African society. Throughout the early twentieth century, they continuously based their claims to represent their fellow Africans on this principle.

## **World War One And Economic Unrest**

The effect of World War One on British West African society has often been understated by historians since the conflict did not create the social upheaval and progressive nationalist movements of the Second World War.<sup>225</sup> World War One and its aftermath did coincide with the extension of the principle of Indirect Rule and this had serious implications for the political structure within the colonial system.<sup>226</sup> However, while the political consequences of the Great War were less pronounced than the 1939-45 conflict, the economic ramifications of the war showed the degree to which Africans were indeed a part of the Western European economic complex. The Great War also demonstrated the powerlessness of Africans irrespective of class to counteract the forces unleashed by a conflict that the vast majority did not understand. In the already racially defined atmosphere of colonial society post-war economic distress seemed to take on similar definitions.

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<sup>225</sup> James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965) Coleman places little emphasis on the effects of World War One on Nigerian Nationalism. See also, Richard Rathbone, "World War One and Africa: Introduction," *Journal of African History*, 19, 1 (1978): 1.

<sup>226</sup> Jide Osuntokun, "Post-First World War Economic and Administrative Problems in Nigeria and the Response of the Clifford Administration," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 7, 1 (1973): 35. While the system of Indirect Rule was a Lugardian creation for Northern Nigeria, the first decades of the twentieth century saw the extension of this principle to other parts of British West Africa.

British West African initial attitudes to the conflict varied depending on the region and the level of involvement of the inhabitants in the colonial system. Coastal towns like Lagos and Freetown that were more economically and politically active within this system were the first to feel the effects of the war. The availability of European goods and services in these areas was dealt a decisive blow in the early years of the conflict. The war, however, had the most impact on British West African shipping and trade. In Freetown disruptions in shipping and trade created “wage-induced inflation” that had the effect of economically displacing ordinary Africans.<sup>227</sup> In Lagos, the city and its surroundings occupied a central place in British West African commerce and thus the class of African merchants and traders felt the brunt of the displacement.<sup>228</sup> Overall the war brought to the fore the longstanding economic and racial grievances of Africans who were continuously at a disadvantage within the colonial economic framework.

In Lagos, the first action of the colonial government at the onset of the war was to enact repressive measures against the citizens of belligerent nations in Nigeria. These meant actions were taken against the large German and smaller Austrian interests within the

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<sup>227</sup> N. A. Cox-George, *Finance and Development in West Africa: The Sierra Leone Experience* (London: D. Dobson, 1961).

<sup>228</sup> The port of Lagos earned its reputation as the Liverpool of British West Africa, as it handled the bulk of Nigerian and West African maritime trade during this period. Lagos also had the largest and most extensive port facilities in British West Africa. See Ayodeji Olukoju, “The Making of an ‘Expensive Port,’ Shipping Lines, Government and Port Tariffs in Lagos, 1917-1949, *International Journal of Maritime History*, 6, 1 (1994): 141. Lagos merchants were not the only disgruntled and displaced group. Merchants in other areas too, like Ibadan felt the brunt of the wartime and eventually post-war bust and boon. See, “Garveyism, Obeisan and his Contemporaries,” in *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa: essays in honour of A.H.M. Kirk-Greene*, ed. Terrence Ranger & Olufemi Vaughn (Houndsmill: Macmillan, in Association with St Anthony’s College, Oxford, 1993), 113-127.

colony. Deputy Governor A. J Boyle suspended German trading in Nigeria. The government seized the assets of German firms. German firms had held the most prominent place in the commercial life of Lagos and were more popular amongst Lagos merchants because of the generous credit facilities that they gave to their African agents.<sup>229</sup>

The Colonial government also curtailed German shipping. Prior to the war the existence of two major shipping companies, one German and one British, had allowed for a regular availability of shipping prospects. Both groups had contractual arrangements that created similar rates, thus preventing overly exorbitant fees. The German Woermann Line had allowed the British Elder Dempster line exclusive access to British ports; however, the Germans had a greater share of access to continental ports. German lines ran more cargo boats per week and they built better vessels specifically adapted to the West African trade.<sup>230</sup> German shipping controlled approximately forty percent of pre-war tonnage.<sup>231</sup> The forced exit of German shipping from the West African market created the arena for the monopolization of shipping by the Elder Dempster Line.<sup>232</sup> Thus, the actions of the colonial officials in Nigeria affected credit prospects in Lagos and created a disparity in

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<sup>229</sup> Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, 187. British banks and firms were often reluctant to give credit to African merchants and traders claiming that their assets did not provide adequate security for credit. Coleman claims that some Nigerians even hoped for a German victory, as this would enhance their trading situation.

<sup>230</sup> Akinjide Osuntokin, *Nigeria in the First World War: the economy, revolts and the military campaigns* (Dalhousie University, 1971), 6.

<sup>231</sup> Peter J. Yearwood, "The Expatriate firms and the colonial economy of Nigeria in the First World War," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History (Great Britain)* 26, 1 (1998): 55.

<sup>232</sup> During the war the Elder Dempster Line assumed a more prominent place in British shipping as they held Imperial contracts to provide vital raw materials for the war effort such as tin and lubricants.

shipping. The lack of tonnage had disastrous effects especially on the palm produce trade.<sup>233</sup>

The war had created an increase in the demand for palm products such as oils that were used as lubricants. However, despite the increase in demand, Nigerian profits in palm produce did not increase but actually were depressed.<sup>234</sup> Several British trading firms had formed cartels, “contriving to lower produce prices to the barest minimum” in order to take advantage of wartime boom.<sup>235</sup> They absorbed most of the available shipping and this had the result of driving African traders and producers out of business.<sup>236</sup> African traders in Lagos complained bitterly about what seemed like a misuse of power by the British firms and the shipping company Elder Dempster.<sup>237</sup> War with Germany had thus created a distressing situation for African producers and merchants. Historians have viewed the conflict as a culmination of the displacement of African merchants in the colonial machinery.

At the retail end of the market, ordinary Africans were also affected by the disastrous state of the wartime and post-war economy. The 1919 strikes in Sierra Leone were a culmination of lower-class discontent with the present economic hardships. Workers waged strike action and the urban poor and unemployed rioted in Freetown. This was in

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<sup>233</sup>Yearwood, “The Expatriate Firms,” 55.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ayodeji Olukoju, “Elder Dempster and the Shipping Trade of Nigeria during the First World War,” *Journal of African History* 33 (1992): 258-259.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Yearwood, “The Expatriate Firms,” 52.

a series of general protests against the rising cost of living and the scarcity and high prices of foodstuffs such as rice.<sup>238</sup>

Like the shipping crisis that placed African merchants at a disadvantage, the rioting in Sierra Leone had a racial component. Syrian merchants were accused of hoarding foodstuffs especially rice an urban staple thus increasing the value of these goods. This accusation was not unwarranted since the Syrian merchants were in control of the rice trade during the war.<sup>239</sup> They had taken effective measures to control the price of the commodity during and immediately after the war in order to benefit from wartime and post-war economic demand for rice. Their actions were in many ways similar to those of much of the European expatriate business and shipping that during the war took positive steps to maximize their profits. However the Syrians were visibly involved in retail rather than wholesale trade.<sup>240</sup> Thus, they were easy targets of urban violence.

While the colonial government was quick to accuse the Creole intelligentsia of inciting the masses to rebellion, recently historians have refuted that notion, emphasizing that the lower-classes were capable of independent action.<sup>241</sup> The Syrians were a visible retail-trading minority as emphasized earlier. The lower classes did direct business with them and therefore were directly affected by their actions as opposed to the larger Europeans

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<sup>238</sup> Ibrahim Abdullah, "Rethinking the Moral Economy of the 1919 Strikes and Riots in Sierra Leone," *Canadian Journal of African Historical Studies*, 28, 2 (1994): 198.

<sup>239</sup> Abdullah, "Rethinking the Moral Economy of the 1919 Strikes," 207.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 197-218. Abdullah demonstrates that the Freetown masses were reacting on their own terms to a violation of the moral economy that is the acceptable wage- price differential that allowed for a minimum standard of living. When this was violated as in



firms that incurred the wrath of the large-scale African merchants. It is thus necessary to accentuate the independent motives of their actions. However, the actions of the workers and urban poor Sierra Leone needs to be understood as a working class movement against the economics of the colonial system that allowed expatriate firms to control the market at the detriment of the local populace. The lower classes took to the streets to express their grievances, however, African merchants and traders used their elite connections and sophisticated organs to counteract post-war economic duress.

### **Elite Protest: The National Congress Of British West Africa**

Protest movements against colonial excesses in the British West African coastal towns prior to 1930 were often class based. While the African educated middle classes often claimed to speak on behalf of all Africans irrespective of class, their protest organizations lacked a mass following since they believed the masses were more prone to radical action.<sup>242</sup> Elite protest movements were usually organized within the confines of British constitutional rights and thus these organizations were prone to moderate versus radical

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the situation in Freetown in 1919 when wages could not pay for basic food stuffs, the masses were forced to protest.

<sup>242</sup>Rina Okonkwo has highlights this class disparity within protest movements in Lagos in the early twentieth century. In her discussion of the 1916 water rate protest in Lagos she describes the situation of the withdrawal of the elite organized Lagos People's Union from the protest action after the colonial office charged the leaders of sedition and disloyalty. The protest went from moderate rallies to radical action when the working classes in Lagos took to the streets. At this point the educated elite distanced themselves from the proceedings and the traditional elite continued the protest. See *Protest Movements in Lagos, 1908-1930* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), 13- 17.

agitation.<sup>243</sup> The National Congress of British West Africa created in 1920 was organized within similar confines and therefore failed to garner mass support.

The National Congress of British West Africa was the first nationalist movement of its kind in West Africa that was not based on traditional African political loyalties.<sup>244</sup> The Congress was an attempt to create a regional political body that would lobby the British government for effective political, economic and social change in the West African colonies. Political institutions such as Aboriginal Rights Protection Society (ARPS) from the end of the nineteenth century agitated for land reform to prevent the displacement of Africans in the Gold Coast under the colonial system. However, their platform, although national was limited to a specific grievance in a particular region of British West Africa. The idea of organizing a congress was first advanced in 1913 by the Nigerian barrister Akinwande Savage. He tried to enlist help from the educated elite in Nigeria to develop this organization but failed to receive their support.<sup>245</sup> The leadership of the movement would ultimately pass to the Gold Coast's Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford. Throughout the history of the Congress, the Gold Coast played the most active role in its survival and development. World War I interrupted any real progress in the development of this regional body but the economic effects of the post war era created an arena for its necessity.

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<sup>243</sup> A. G. Hopkins, "Economic Aspects of Political Movements in Nigeria and in the Gold Coast, 1918-1939" *Journal of African History*, 7, 1 (1966): 135.

<sup>244</sup> Gabriel I. C. Eluwa, "The National Congress of British West Africa: A Pioneer Nationalist Movement," *Geneve-Afrique* 11, 1 (1972): 38. The Fanti Confederation and the Aboriginal Rights Protection Society are examples of pre-nationalist organizations in the Gold Coast. However, their political platforms were local and therefore limited.

<sup>245</sup> G. O. Olusanya, "The Lagos Branch of the National Congress of British West Africa," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 4, 2 (1968): 321.

As demonstrated earlier the all Africans irrespective of class experienced some economic displacement as a result of the Great War. The wartime practices of expatriate firms affected the African merchant and other business interests and their grievances have been discussed at length. Coupled with the economic marginalization created by the war African merchants were appalled at increased government attempts to control the colonial economies in the era of post-war reconstruction. While the working classes rioted against the economic situation created by the war, the National Congress of British West Africa was the elite organ of protest and their economic programme represented the shared economic “grievances and aspirations” of a certain class of British West Africans in the colonial system.<sup>246</sup>

The leading nationalists in British West Africa during this time were not necessarily agitating for political independence. They were, however, all concerned about the lack of economic autonomy that African merchants faced throughout the region. African merchants and business interests wanted autonomy over their own resources. The need for economic self-sufficiency was something everyone agreed with.

At the inaugural conference in Accra, Gold Coast in 1920 the congress made several declarations against the economic marginalization of their class of Africans within the colonial system. The conference resolved

That this organization views with great disfavor the propaganda of the  
Empire Resources Development Committee with respect to the British West

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<sup>246</sup> J Ayodele Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-1945: A Study in Ideology and Social Classes* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 107.

African Colonies and is strongly of the opinion that the natural resources of the British West African Dependencies are not for the exploitation of the Concessionaires under State Control.<sup>247</sup>

The emphasis on natural resources should be noted here. West African business interests thought it was an unjust situation that the resources of the region should be directed towards the reconstruction of Britain, especially since West Africans had nothing to do with the European War. While there was similar, economic grievances to sustain the Congress movement political variations within the region could not sustain a supra-nationalist organization as such. The entrance of the Garvey movement in British West Africa, another supra-national organization at the same time as the Congress movement demonstrated the tenuous hold of economic self-interest in uniting a movement in spite of political differences.

### **The Garvey Movement In British West Africa**

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<sup>247</sup> Resolutions of the Inaugural Meeting of the National Congress of British West Africa, Accra, March 1920, cited in Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism*, 219-221. The Empire Resources Development Committee was an institution set up by the British Colonial Government to regulate wartime imperial trade and eventually post-war imperial reconstruction. Britain had undermined previous laissez-faire economic policies by intervening in her local economy during World War One. After the war Britain extended this policy of interventionism to her Crown colonies. The Empire Resources Development Committee created a new era of protectionism as Britain sought to channel the resources of her colony for her own markets. See David Killingray, "The Empire Resources Development Committee and West Africa, 1916-1920," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 10, 2 (1982): 194-210. According to Langley West African merchants and nationalist groups objected to this imperial policy and this played an important part in the decision of the West African intelligentsia to form an inter-territorial nationalist organization (NCBWA) and to demand representative institutions. Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism*, 197.

The Garvey movement made its West African debut in Lagos and Freetown at the same time as the Congress Movement was organizing its first conference in Accra in 1919-1920. Garveyism came first to these more developed areas of British West Africa, places that were historically conduits for Atlantic ideas. Garveyism provided a powerful racial program for political and economic uplift for blacks. Garvey believed that blacks irrespective of nationality must unite in order to secure the independence of Africa from colonial domination. Economically the Garvey movement advocated the necessity of black business enterprises for the development of the race outside of the white capitalist framework.

The political and economic needs of the Garvey supporters influenced the shape and form of the movement throughout the Diaspora. In America, the history of political, social and economic exclusion of blacks fuelled emigration movements and created support for the political and economic platform of the Garvey movement. Displaced American blacks could find a place in their ancestral homeland and Garvey believed that they potentially stood to benefit from the possibilities of black business enterprises.

However, the political and economic needs of American blacks were specific to their local situation and not related to the immediate concerns of British West Africans negotiating within the uncertainty of the colonial system. The Garvey movement proved that it was impossible to amalgamate the political grievances of all blacks worldwide under one united front in the struggle against colonial injustice. The movement in British West Africa was also problematic from another standpoint. The issue of who understood

the unique situation of blacks in Africa and therefore could legitimately claim to lead the race within the continent was a longstanding political grievance that plagued even the ranks of the NCBWA.

In Lagos, the economic programme of the movement predates the actual political organization. The Black Star line in Lagos was established before the Lagos branch of the UNIA. Akinbami Agbebi<sup>248</sup> was the Lagos agent of the Black Star Line. While in New York his then mentor, John Edward Bruce<sup>249</sup> introduced him to the Garvey movement.<sup>250</sup> In many ways, Agbebi represented the prevailing opinion of the Garvey movement in British West Africa. He was extremely enthusiastic about the prospects of the economic policy of the movement. Immediately after attending a Black Star Line Meeting in New York in December of 1919, he wrote a letter to the Lagos Weekly Record announcing the formation of the Black Star Line Corporation. In the letter he stated, "Great Work was being done for the uplift of the Negro people and African Negroes should co-operate."<sup>251</sup>

The political organization of the Garvey movement in Lagos officially announced its existence on 25 September 1920 in the Lagos Weekly Record. The Lagos UNIA was headed by A.S. W. Shackleford a Jamaican.<sup>252</sup> The movement claimed significant West Indian and Saro support as demonstrated by the rank and file. John Ambleston the

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<sup>248</sup> He was the son of the Rev. Mojola Agbebi, one of the founders of the First Independent African Church in Lagos.

<sup>249</sup> Bruce, an earlier critic of Garvey, had recently converted to the movement.

<sup>250</sup> Okonkwo, *Protest Movements in Lagos*, 57.

<sup>251</sup> Akinbaba Agbebi, Letter, *Lagos Weekly Record*, February 7, 1920

<sup>252</sup> Okonkwo, "The Garvey Movement in British West Africa," 112.

treasurer was also West Indian and the only significant native Nigerian presence in the movement was Ernest Ikoli, an Ijaw born in Brass in 1893. In Sierra Leone, the UNIA had a feeble existence despite the presence of native Sierra Leonians in the leadership of the movement in New York. George O. Marke a Sierra Leonian was elected Supreme Deputy Potentate at the 1920 UNIA Convention in New York. The movements' rank and file was ethnically distant from the native population and thus not necessarily attuned to local interests.

The Garvey movement failed in British West Africa as while the economic aspects did excite some interest in light of the depression of the post-war era the political programme failed to provide a practical means of political advancement for British West Africans. Sympathizers of the Garvey movement both in the press and in the community were often ambivalent about the political goals of the organization. The *Sierra Leone Weekly News* described the Garvey movement as “thoughtful and the thought in the movement that Negroes worldwide should Act was sane.” However, “the wild conception of a Negro Republic in Africa is bound to fail ignominiously.”<sup>253</sup>

Many politically active West Africans believed that New World Blacks, by virtue of their removal from Africa, had lost their African identities and like the present alien colonial governments, had no legitimate claims to represent or speak for the mass of their brethren on the continent.<sup>254</sup> Casely Hayford leader of the congress movement was a firm believer

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<sup>253</sup> *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1922.

<sup>254</sup> Yekutiel Gershoni, *Africans on African Americans, The Creation and Uses of an African-American Myth* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

in the necessity of African leadership as only Africans understood their unique situation and knew what was suited to their own development.

Hayford's position was echoed by many leading West African figures. Kobina Sekyi a supporter of Garvey also emphasized this position. He believed Garvey's vision for the race was valid but dismissed Garvey's approach. However, the dismissal of the Garveyite political program by the West African elite was rooted in a more serious conflict over race leadership and the factionalism within the various branches of the NCBWA highlights this situation. The possibility of obtaining countrywide support in both Lagos and the Gold Coast Branches of the NCBWA was seriously hampered by conflicts of who could legitimately speak for Africans. Both Muslim and traditional elite raised objections over the educated elite leadership of the congress movement.<sup>255</sup> The objections of the Muslim and traditional elite highlight the long-standing particularities of race leadership within the West African context.

Historians have noted that the British West African elite who supported the Garvey movement did so primarily because of the economic programme.<sup>256</sup> The Times of Nigeria, a local newspaper in Lagos,<sup>257</sup> proclaimed most emphatically in 1920 that "the idea of establishing a line of steamers owned and controlled by Africans is a great and

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<sup>255</sup> See Olusanya, "The Lagos Branch of the National Congress."

<sup>256</sup> See J. Ayodele Langley, "Garveyism and African Nationalism," *Race*, 11, 2 (1969): 157- 172, Okonkwo, "The Garvey Movement in British West Africa," 105-117, and Rupert Lewis, *Marcus Garvey, Anti-Colonial Champion* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1988).

<sup>257</sup> The *Times of Nigeria* was established in Lagos by a Sierra Leonian named James Bright Davis. The newspaper historically was known for its clandestine anti-colonial



sublime conception for which everybody of African origin will bless the name of Marcus Garvey.”<sup>258</sup> The NCBWA inaugural meeting announced support of the commercial aspects of the Garvey movement. The organization noted that West Africans should support Garvey’s Black Star Line “as it is a Negro undertaking ... solely for the purpose of facilitating and giving us more and brighter prospects as Africans in our commercial transactions.”<sup>259</sup>

Economically, the war triggered a favorable response amongst some West Africans to aspects of the Garvey movement. The support of Garvey’s economic ventures in some ways highlights the economic self-interest of the elite who stood to benefit from the prospects of Negro-owned shipping.<sup>260</sup> The prospects of Garvey’s Black Star Line, although a risky undertaking from the start, would have been a promising venture especially for Lagos merchants whose shipping prospects had been heavily curtailed due to the exclusion of German shipping during and after the war. This exclusion had reduced access to certain European markets and created the opportunity for the monopolization of the shipping trade by the British shipping company, the Elder Dempster Line. The disruptions in trade and shipping had reverberations especially for coastal towns such as Lagos that were more economically engaged in the colonial system.

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publications. See Fred I.A. Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria 1880-1937*(London: Longman, 1978), 40.

<sup>258</sup> *Times of Nigeria* (24 May, 1920)

<sup>259</sup> Langley, “Garveyism and African Nationalism,” 159.

<sup>260</sup> Langley tends to highlight the economic determinism of the British West African elite that supported the National Congress of British West Africa. Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism*. The Majority of organizers of the National Congress of British West Africa hailed from this group of individuals.

As it was the “Westernized intelligentsia of lawyers, merchants and journalists,” (men that had direct or indirect mercantile interests) who were at the forefront of agitation in the NCBWA during this period the emphasis on the economic aspects versus the political aspects of the movement is understandable. Garveyism provided a rival political platform despite its appealing economic racial enterprise. In the post-war arena of economic marginalization, the language of black business resonated more readily with this elite group than the language of black political power.

## CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSION

Studies of the racist ideology of Marcus Garvey have been largely contained within each of the three main areas in which his ideology took root: Jamaica, America and Africa.

This tendency of historians to dissect a story into more manageable components, while allowing for more detailed analysis, tends to confine our understanding of the variations that extend beyond the local context. How does the Jamaican Garvey movement relate to the movement in the United States or Africa? For the study of a movement like Garveyism, these questions are pertinent since the movement was a transnational phenomenon.

Dissection constrains our analysis of broader qualities and variations extending throughout the movement from its point of origin. This study has highlighted these broader themes.

Garvey's UNIA was born in Jamaica in the early twentieth century. Since movements are influenced by the societies in which they are born, this birthplace is significant.

Garveyism, a symbol of anti-colonial resistance in the African Diaspora, thus took shape not in the United States, but in a place under colonial regime: Jamaica.

As a colony of the British Empire, Jamaica was in a relationship of dependency with the imperial metropole. Jamaicans therefore lacked an autonomous existence, their destiny being directed to a certain extent by imperial will. The class divisions in the island in many ways replicated this dependent relationship as the ex-slaves, despite their freedom in the legal sense, were still considered wards of the empire. The conscious and unconscious attempts to mould them into model British citizens through social reform

and Christian instruction highlights this continued paternalism. The ex-slaves, however, asserted their independence after emancipation and repeatedly rejected the efforts of the forces of empire to direct their daily lives. By directing their frustrations into the spiritual realm, movements like Bedwardism became the meaningful religious outlet of the lower class and of the black race that understood their sense of power and at the same time their powerlessness in colonial society. Garvey, while not directly identifying with this class or peasant-based movement in Jamaica, understood the sense of being powerless, black and a British subject. This is not least because he, like many colonials, traveled to the seat of empire where he experienced the spatial difference and racial implications of the divisions of colony and metropole. His racialism, by placing a positive value on blackness, attempted to resurrect the identity of a people that were considered both degraded and inferior and therefore in constant need of the influence of the civilized British power.

Thus, the racialist principles of Garveyism defined by a valorization of blackness were the movement's greatest strength, because they allowed it to begin on a small colonial island, only to become one of the largest and most enduring forces for the political and economic empowerment of black people worldwide. Further, it was adaptable to Black Nationalist and emigrationist sentiment in the United States. Garvey was able not only to carve a niche in the African American political scene but also to provide a means to understand the situation of the Negro in the United States at a time of crises. By internationalizing, the plight of the Negro especially after the East St. Louis Riots in 1917 Garvey was able to project the disaffection of American blacks onto the world stage,

emphasizing that their redemption and salvation lay not with integration into American society but with the creation of a geo-political space in their ancestral home. The Declaration of the Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World was a clear political statement, an affirmation of the UNIA that blacks would reclaim their ancestral homeland.

Garvey, however, was a product of New World paternal attitudes towards Africa. It is in this paternalism of Garvey's ideology that the movement found its greatest liability. Garvey was guilty of a paternalistic attitude towards Africa and its redemption. As the colonial powers that also sought to redeem Africa from outside Garvey too failed to realize that Africans were not only willing but also poised to secure their own redemption, as they consciously understood their place in relation to the more developed areas of the world.

They were Africans and believed that only they understood the multiplicity of meanings ascribed to that term. Moreover, the concept of a unified place, Africa, did not exist in the consciousness of most people native to the continent who were aware of the regional and ethnic barriers that stood to divide rather than unite them. Thus, when Garvey's racialism tried to create this universal space and nationality the movement fell apart as there was no consensus on the point of reference of what constitutes "black" and or "African." People unable to agree on common frames of reference are less able to maintain their solidarity needed to overcome dominant forces.

Garvey inherited a variety of anti-colonial positions from his Jamaican heritage and while he often did not consciously identify with these diverse traditions, he was aware of their ramifications within the colonial setting and this affected his contextual approach to questions of race. In British West Africa, another colonial setting, the intelligentsia at the forefront of agitation understood the variations in the system of colonial domination in their local setting and they possessed their own anti-colonial positions intended to bring meaningful changes in the lives of West Africans. The political variations of Garvey's racialism born out of the Jamaican colonial context were not seen as viable options. However, they could understand the economics of the Garvey movement, as they were part of the colonial economy and experienced marginalization within it.

Garvey's racialism/anti-colonialism could attract in Jamaica, but his radicalism had to be contained. His radical racialism and emigrationism could attract in Harlem, but at the cost of alienating non-radicals like DuBois. His racial pride and economics could attract in British West Africa, but his paternalism limited the attraction of both. The trajectory of the Garvey movement ultimately proves the differences in frames of reference in various areas of the black world and posits reconsideration, not necessarily of Pan-Africanism but what Pan-Africanism meant to different persons in the black world.

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