

Statement in Support of Posthumous Presidential Pardon of Marcus Mosiah Garvey

In recognition of his lifelong and substantial contributions to society, his efforts to uplift peoples of African descent the world over, and his work to promote economic independence as a means of social progress, Ernest J. Quarles stands in support of the descendants of Marcus Mosiah Garvey, who now seek a posthumous presidential pardon on Garvey's behalf.

Marcus Garvey lives in history as one of the first leaders of the American civil rights movement. In the early twentieth century, he was an advocate for the social, political, and economic independence of those of African descent across the world, and Garvey staked his name and his movement on the development of economic opportunity as a source of black empowerment. To unite his followers toward a common goal of social progress, Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association ("UNIA"), which at its height boasted nearly 6 million members in 40 countries. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "He was the first man on a mass scale and level to give millions of Negroes a sense of dignity and destiny. And make the Negro feel that he was somebody."

Garvey traveled the US and the rest of this hemisphere speaking and building the UNIA. A powerful orator, he did more than just talk, he organized Black cooperative businesses like grocery stores, laundries, restaurants, hotels and factories. He preached Black pride, power and self-sufficiency and paraded it up and down the major avenues of big cities. He even developed a fleet of ships, the Black Star Line, which was designed for international trade and moving passengers back to Africa should that time become necessary to escape white torture. He hosted the first All-Africa Conference in 1920 which brought 20,000 participants from around the world. It was at this conference that he unveiled the Red, Black and Green flag. He was voted President of Africa, even though he died without setting foot on The Continent.

We don't worship the man. He is not God, but certainly a Saint to many of us. His teachings and his example stand as a beacon, a map, a compass to what is both possible and necessary for us today

Because of these achievements, Garvey was viewed as a threat to the established order by the U.S. government. Decades before Dr. King would become targeted for his activism, J. Edgar Hoover led the Bureau of Investigation in its surveillance of Garvey and actively sought methods to disrupt and destroy Garvey's civil rights movement. In 1923, based on intelligence gathered from undercover agents posing as Garvey supporters and aided by judicial proceedings that have largely been condemned as factually unsound and politically and racially motivated, Garvey was convicted of mail fraud and sentenced to five years in federal prison. In partial recognition of the unsettling facts underlying the prosecution of the case, President Calvin Coolidge commuted the sentence in November 1927, but deported Garvey from the country.

The posthumous pardon petition now filed on Garvey's behalf seeks to exonerate him from the stigma of this conviction. Following the commutation of his sentence,

efforts to fully clear Garvey's name have been ongoing and concerted on the part of the U.S. Congress, civil society organizations, cities, states, and international groups. More than 90 years after the imposition of this injustice, it is time to pardon Marcus Mosiah Garvey and let history reflect the true nature of his legacy.

Sincerely,

e/s Ernest J. Quarles Esq.