



**GARVEY IN THE WHIRLWIND:
THE LESSON AND LEGACY OF STRUGGLE**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

IN THIS MONTH OF AUGUST SO HEAVY WITH the history and memories of our heroes and heroines, and high points in our lives and struggles, the Hon. Marcus Mosiah Garvey (August 17, 1887) stands extraordinarily tall and carries great weight in the world. He came with the word, left with the day and promised to return in the whirlwind. Let us pause and pay homage to him who taught us so well the dignity, sacred meaning and moral obligation of being African in the world. Blessed is his name; honored and uplifted is his work and greatly valued and enduring is his legacy.

It is in his life that we find abundant lessons to learn, a spirit of possibility to absorb, models of excellence to emulate, and reason and resources to practice the morality of remembrance, honoring him and all those other way-openers and place-makers that emulated the Divine, making the non-existent, existent, and bringing enduring good in the world.

In the tradition of our ancestors, let us understand and remember his legacy by raising up and remembering him through five royal and righteous names. Indeed, it is he who inspires the Kawaida concept that there is no royalty except in righteousness, no one worthy of respect more than the doer-of-good in the world. Let us remember and praise Marcus Garvey, then, in his name first as *righteous servant of the masses*. He gave his life for love of the masses and in service to the masses. He believed in them and in their potential and capacity, “The masses make the nation and the race”, he taught. They represent and determine the measure of our success in life and struggle. Thus, we must not look down or over them, but look to them and struggle with them. For he says in spite of fictitious claims, “the only aristocracy is that acquired through service and loyalty to the people.” Likewise, he also taught us the

meaning and morality of service, i.e., self-giving, saying, “The ends you serve that are selfish will take you no further than yourself, but the ends you serve that are for all, in common, will take you even into eternity.”

Let us remember Garvey also as both *unifier and organizer of the people*, for they are inseparably linked. Thus, Garvey taught “We desire harmony and unity today more than ever, because only through bringing together the people into a mighty bond that we can successfully pilot our way through the avenues of opposition and the ocean of difficulties that seem to confront us.” Garvey was the organizer and builder of the largest movement of Africans in history, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and the millions more who supported it. As a builder of a world-wide movement, he taught us the importance of unity and power and the earnest and ongoing organization it requires. The “emancipation of the race,” he says and “the redemption of Africa” will come only thru unity and organized struggle. Therefore, he said, “show me a well-organized nation and I will show you a people and a nation respected by the world.” On the other hand, he says, “point to me a weak nation and I will show you a people oppressed, abused and taken advantaged of by others.” Indeed, “a race without power and authority is a race without respect.” Thus, Garvey concludes, “Whether in industry, society, politics or war, it is the force of organization that tells; hence I can advise no better step toward racial salvation than organization among us.”

Let us also raise the royal name of Marcus Garvey as *uncompromising advocate of self-determination*, as a political, economic and cultural practice. He stated that the UNIA advocated “self-help and self-reliance, not only in one essential, but in all those things that contribute to human happiness and well-

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being.” If we are to develop, be free or even survive, he teaches, “it must be done through our own efforts.” Garvey placed great emphasis on economic and political self-determination as interlocking goals and needs of a people, saying, “a race that is solely dependent upon others for its economic existence sooner or later dies.” Indeed, he said “take away industry from a race, take away political freedom from a race and you have a group of slaves.”

Garvey also taught that the key battle we are waging is to win the hearts and minds of our people, for he said, “propaganda has done more to defeat the good intentions of races and nations than even open warfare.” Indeed, our oppressor seeks to convert us against our will and “to destroy our hopes, our ambitions and our confidence in self.” In such a context, we need our best minds, original thinkers, intellectuals and others who know there is no dignity, pride or progress in the apish imitation of White people and seek to bring forth the best in our people. For “the best in the race is not reflected through or by the action of its apes, but by its ability to create of and by itself.” As a matter of dignity and self-determination, then, he urges us, “Let us not try to be the best or worst of others, but let us make the effort to be the best of ourselves.”

Let us finally remember Marcus Garvey as a timeless *freedom fighter*, promiser of the whirlwind, who linked freedom, justice and peace and the necessity of struggle for all these goods and promised that even in death he would return in the whirlwind to continue

the struggle. He declared “so long as there is within me the breath of life and the spirit of God, I shall struggle and urge others of our race to struggle on to see justice done for Black peoples of the world.” Moreover, he stated “there can be no peace among men and nations, so long as the strong continue to oppress the weak, so long as injustice is done to other people....”

If there is no peace without justice, there can be no justice without freedom. For as Garvey says, “we were created to be free” and to realize our highest aspirations for good in the world. Thus, he urges us all to struggle on regardless of the odds against us. He calls for men and women of faith, courage and character. To have faith, he says, is “to serve without regret or disgust, to obligate one’s self to that which is promised and expected and to keep to our word and to do our duty well.” And to be courageous and have character is to be men and women “who will never say die;... never give up, never depend on others to do for (them) what (they) can do for (themselves),...who will not blame God...nature... (or) Fate for (their) condition but...will go out and make conditions to suit (themselves).” And we can honor Garvey, our people and the history and culture of struggle that brought them into being in no better way than to become his self-conscious descendants who rise in unity and struggle forming *the whirlwind of righteous and relentless resistance* in which he returns. Hotep. Ase. Heri.

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