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## UPLIFTING THE LEGACY OF THE HON. MARCUS GARVEY: THE GLOBAL STRUGGLE FOR HIS EXONERATION

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**T**HE GLOBAL STRUGGLE TO SECURE THE EXONERATION of the Hon. Marcus Garvey is an urgent and compelling one. It is a struggle to be strongly embraced and actively supported, not only by African peoples throughout the world African community, but also by other persons, organizations, institutions and peoples all over the world who love justice, cherish truth, respect and defend human rights and oppose injustice everywhere, whether in its “legal” or illegal forms. Our organizations, The African American Cultural Center (Us) and the National Association of Kawaida Organizations (NAKO), stand and work in active solidarity and support of this global initiative and urge others everywhere to do likewise.

Indeed, this global campaign and struggle must be waged and won for several cogent and compelling reasons. These reasons include: the urgent and imperative need to achieve overdue justice for the Hon. Marcus Garvey; to achieve justice for African people against whom this shared injustice was also done; to resist racist uses of the law to criminalize and suppress rightful resistance; to seize the pen of history and correct the historical record; and to understand and pursue this struggle as part and parcel of our overall struggle for reparations and liberation.

The struggle is first to exonerate the Hon. Marcus Garvey from the false and falsified charge and wrongful conviction for mail fraud in 1923. It was a political trial so obviously based on trumped up charges that the U.S. attorney general questioned it and Pres. Calvin Coolidge commuted Nana Garvey’s sentence after a massive organizing effort of the people in 1927. Still determined to disable and destroy him and his work, the FBI (then the Bureau of Investigation), set in motion a plot to “deport him as an undesirable alien.” And in 1927, they deported him to his country of birth, Jamaica. The need here is for the U.S. government to acknowledge this injustice and correct it as the petition to exonerate him seeks and demands.

Furthermore, the global struggle to exonerate the Hon. Marcus Garvey is at the same time a struggle to exonerate ourselves as a world

African community. For indeed this injustice committed against Nana Garvey is not only committed against him, but is a shared injustice also committed against us, the world African community. For justice, like freedom, for us, is indivisible and anywhere and anytime any African is denied their rights and due respect, all of us are somehow denied and injured. As Nana Haji Sekou Toure taught, it is as if a person cuts their finger, “the finger itself does not feel the pain alone, it is the whole body of that person that registers it.” Thus, each and all of us feel the pain of this injustice, suffers it and seeks to overcome and end it.

This is especially true in a context of systemic racism where crime is racialized and whole races are criminalized, especially the Black race, i.e., African peoples. Also, the global struggle to exonerate Nana Garvey from these false charges and this wrongful conviction is to resist racist uses of the law to criminalize and suppress rightful resistance. The Hon. Marcus Garvey was a pan-Africanist liberator and leader, a teacher, a global organizer of the largest number of Black people in history, an institution builder, a journalist and writer, and a speaker of liberating and uplifting truth. His central message and mission was African redemption, African self-determination, African liberation and upliftment from unfreedom and oppression. His battle cry was “Up you mighty race. You can accomplish what you will.” He stressed education and organization of the masses of our people in self-reliant, self-authorizing and cooperative projects and practices. For him, African liberational redemption was a collective project and practice in which all Africans should self-consciously participate.

Teaching against vulgar individualism and self-seeking at the expense of the people, he said, “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 into eternity.” Such a liberative, redemptive, dignity-affirming, and life-enhancing message, messenger and mission should not be criminalized and suppressed. And we are morally

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obligated to engage in righteous and relentless resistance to this.

To join and wage the struggle to exonerate Nana Marcus Garvey is also to seize the pen of history, rescue African history from the falsification imposed on it by colonialists, imperialists, racists, genocidists and other oppressors of all kinds. It is to set the record straight; correct the distortions and falsifications they literally thrive on. Such is the case with the political trial, trumped-up charges and wrongful conviction of the Hon. Marcus Garvey. And it is a similar story with our people, our other liberation leaders, and other peoples and resistance leaders around the world. Our oppressors thrive on a falsification of history that indicts the oppressed and exonerates the oppressors. We must, then, through righteous and relentless struggle, seize the pen of history, lived and written history, and rewrite truthfully the real history of our people and leaders and humanity as a whole and thus, set the record straight. For in this new history, struggled for, rewritten and achieved, not only will Nana Marcus Garvey, our other leaders and our people be exonerated and free in real and relevant ways, but also the whole of humanity.

Finally, the global struggle for the exoneration of the Hon. Marcus Garvey must be understood and pursued as part and parcel of our overall struggle for reparations and liberation. Here Nana Garvey's concept of African redemption can be understood as a reparative and uplifting liberation. This calls for a reparative justice for great and grievous injury, i.e., the Holocaust of enslavement, the savagery of segregation, and continuing systemic racism. Certainly, the criminal injustice system that racializes crime, criminalizes the Black race and practices mass incarceration of us as public policy and socially sanctioned practice is in dire need of both radical repair and replacement with a system meticulously respectful of the principle and practice of justice and human rights as a whole.

The global struggle for the exoneration of the Hon. Marcus Garvey has a long history of ongoing efforts by his family and the UNIA. Its

latest initiative was launched on February 1, 2022, to coincide with Black History Month and strives to collect 100,000 signatures during the 30-day period, ending March 2 and deliver them to Pres. Joe Biden petitioning for an exoneration. Dr. Julius Garvey, son and principal keeper of the legacy of his father, poses a challenge to Biden to do justice as he promised. Dr. Garvey told the *Washington Post* that "President Biden has made statements in his inaugural address about the dream for justice not be denied any longer. We will take him at his word. Racial injustice was done to my father more than 100 years ago. He committed no crime. What he was trying to do was elevate the status of African Americans and Africans across the world." You can support this historic and critical effort by: signing the petition; urging others and your organizations, institutions and professional networks and social media networks to do likewise. To join the campaign and receive updated and vital information, please visit [justice4garvey.org](http://justice4garvey.org) and sign up.

**I**N A LETTER FROM ATLANTA PRISON DURING his political imprisonment, Nana Garvey calls on us to continue the struggle, to be "co-workers in the cause of African Redemption" and to not lose hope, be dispirited or diverted from the struggle. Indeed, he says that even if it seems our oppressors and the enemies of human freedom "have seemingly triumphed for a while," we must continue the struggle, for "the final battle when staged will bring us complete success and satisfaction." Thus, he concludes his letter from Atlanta urging us to, "Hold fast to the faith. Desert not the ranks. But as brave soldiers march on to victory" through righteous and relentless struggle. For he says a redeemed and liberated Africa has a vital role to play in reconceiving and rebuilding the world. Africa will pose, he asserts, a new "way to life and peace, achieved not by ignoring the rights of our brother (and sister) but by giving to everyone (their) due." Indeed, "the hand of justice, freedom and liberty shall be extended to all (hu)mankind."▲