

EDITORIAL / OPINION

Vantage point



Marcus Moriah Garvey

by Ron Daniels

"Up you mighty race you can accomplish what you will". These were the powerful words spoken by a charismatic leader to a downtrodden and despairing people in the first part of the 20th century. The leader Marcus Moriah Garvey. The people, the sons and daughters of Africa in America, the Caribbean, Central and South America and throughout the Africa diaspora. Marcus Garvey built the largest and most powerful mass movement and organization among Africans in the diaspora in our history. Yet most African-Americans know virtually nothing about Garvey.

Born in Jamaica in 1889, Garvey was convinced that the key to Black liberation for the masses of colonized and oppressed Africans in Africa and the diaspora was the promotion of racial pride, self-help and freedom and self-determination for the African motherland as the basis for respect and self-determination for African people throughout the world. Marcus Garvey was a nationalist, and he aspired to restore African people of the world - Africa.

To mobilize Africans to give flesh to his vision, Garvey organized the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League in 1914 in his native Jamaica. By 1916 Garvey had made a decision to move his principal base of operations to the United States. This proved to be an excellent move, as Garvey soon found fertile soil to propagate his ideas among the masses of Black immigrants from the south who were taking up residence in urban centers throughout the nation. The continuing stress and strain of race prejudice, discrimination, segregation and economic exploitation gave Garvey a ready audience for his appeal to racial pride and African redemption among the African masses in the United States.

The U.N.I.A. and A.C.L. rapidly grew to become the largest mass movement and organization that Africans in the diaspora have ever built. At its height there were chapters in England, the Caribbean, Central and South America as well as the United States and Canada. According to some estimates the U.N.I.A.'s membership numbered in excess of 10 million. The range of adherents and sympathizers to Garvey's philosophy and opinions was certainly even larger.

Consistent with his goal of transforming a nationless people into a position of nationhood and self-government the U.N.I.A. was structured like a nation and government in becoming. Garvey provided a flag with the colors red, black and green as a symbol of our suffering, historic achievements and promise for self-determination in the future. As a means of spreading the message and program of the U.N.I.A. Garvey created the Negro World which had the largest circulation of any African newspaper in the diaspora in that time or thereafter. The U.N.I.A. had its own system of schools to ensure an African oriented education for its followers. Declaring that "God is a Negro" Garvey dedicated the Universal African Orthodox Church to offer a Christian theology and religious experience rooted in our own history and traditions as an African people.

The U.N.I.A.'s economic program was grounded in the philosophy of self-help. Its ambitious projects included farms, factories, food markets and laundries. Its most highly celebrated venture was the Black Star Steamship Line which sought to bring Garvey's dream of economic interdependence between Africa, The Caribbean and Africans in America to fruition. To advance the aims of the U.N.I.A. in terms of the liberation and restoration of Africa as well as the defense of the U.N.I.A.'s structure and programs in the diaspora, Garvey created a military wing which included: The Universal African Legion; The African Motor Corps; The Black Eagle Flying Corp; and the Black Cross Nurses.

The U.N.I.A. was a powerful concept and a powerful movement. The conventions of the Negro People of the World which Garvey convened at U.N.I.A. headquarters in Harlem would draw upwards of 25,000 delegates from America and around the world. The U.N.I.A. was completely financed by money from African people, and Black people were generous in their support of an idea and movement which they believed genuinely represented the interests and aspiration of the masses. According to Garvey's wife the U.N.I.A. received contributions of 10 million from 1919 - 1921 alone.

A Black leader and movement who could inspire all this was too powerful for comfort in America. Accordingly the newly organized Federal Bureau of Investigation (the F.B.I.) and J. Edgar Hoover would target Garvey and the U.N.I.A. at the top of its hit list of "dangerous" and "subversive" individuals and organizations. The flame of hope which Garvey's oratory and organization was fueling had to be snuffed out. In 1923 the F.B.I. struck. Garvey was found guilty on a trumped up charge of using the mail to defraud.

Garvey was sent to prison, and though he was pardoned and deported in 1927, the damage had been done. Thereafter the flame and fire of Garvey and the U.N.I.A. was only a faint glimmer of what it had once been. Eventually Marcus Moriah Garvey, the greatest mass leader in our history would also fade from our collective national memory as a African people in America.

KANSAS CITY RACISM

There is an old axiom that the way of the midwest sheds light for the rest of the United States. Kansas City, Missouri is a thriving city and is often referred to as a barometer of how well the pluralism of this society is working. It is therefore noteworthy on a national level when there is a substantive allegation of systematic racial discrimination in Kansas City.

A lawsuit has now been filed in the Federal District Court in Kansas City that alleges institutionalized racism and racial exclusion in the city's school desegregation plan. A particular focus of controversy is the denial of access of African American school children to the city's academically enriched magnet schools.

There are approximately 35,000 students in the schools and seventy-five percent of them are African American or Hispanic. Attorney Steven R. Miller who represents the parents who have filed the suit stated, "These black students can't get into magnet schools this year. For children, a year is a long time in their educational life that puts a kind of urgency to it."

Back in 1984, federal Judge Russell G. Clark found that the State of Missouri and Kansas City had illegally segregated the local schools. Judge Clark ordered a desegregation plan that called for improvement in the quality of education for all students and for capital improvements of schools that had historically served African American neighborhoods.

Although, the magnet schools have many vacancies and low student-to-teacher ratios, African American student applicants to these magnet schools have been assigned to non-magnet schools while their names have remained on waiting lists for many months. Ms. Threquita Thompson who is a plaintiff in the suit said she believes the issue is both challenging racism and seeking quality education. Ms. Thompson in referring to her daughter, who is in high school, stated, "I'm trying to get her into a school that will better educate her for her life as an adult."

Kansas City's magnet schools are being transformed into specialized schools that stress mathematics, computer development and foreign languages. Judge Clark had ordered that each magnet school have an enrollment of at least sixty percent racial and ethnic and forty percent white. Yet, today many of these magnet schools are increasing their enrollments of whites while excluding African American students.

FORGOTTEN CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER REMEMBERED IN MISSISSIPPI

Medgar Evers the NAACP organizer who rose to fame in the late 50's and early 60's was honored with a statue in the city where he was murdered over 26 years ago.

On June 4, 1988 at the annual Medgar Evers Homecoming Banquet, a very special lady named Mirtes Gregory suggested that Evers be remembered with a statue in Jackson. And in October of that year the Medgar Evers Statue Fund became a reality. Gregory explains, "We felt that Medgar Evers was a forgotten soul, in the history of the Civil rights movement. A statue was the least we could do to remember this martyr and innovator."

At the present time \$50,000 is needed to meet the proposed deadline of 1990, when the statue will be dedicated. Also a scholarship fund will be started after the completion of the project, "Medgar Evers was an avid student," states Gregory, "and attended Alcorn College in 1946 to study business administration. He was listed in the Who's Who Among Students and became a successful business man after graduation. He soon joined the NAACP and in 1954 became the first NAACP field secretary in Mississippi. Add to these accomplishments his outstanding service during World War II, and you can see the importance of remembering him as an example for black students."

Several celebrities have added their names to the effort, most notably B.B. King and Kris Kristofferson. Gregory said, "We have had an amazing amount of interest in this statue, be we need the help of the press to educate the nation about the life of Medgar Evers and the funds to make this dream a reality."

Employee Rights Win Protection

Oregon Gov. Neil Goldschmidt has signed into law a measure passed recently by the state legislature that protects employee privacy and rights in and out of the workplace. The law prohibits employers from subjecting employees or job applicants to lie-detector tests, genetic screening, psychological stress tests or unwarranted breathalyzer testing.

The law also makes it illegal to discriminate in the hiring of people because they smoke. Employers are prohibited from requiring workers or job applicants to abstain from smoking or using tobacco products off the job.

ADL REMEMBERS CONG. MICKEY LELAND

Abraham H. Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, issued the following statement on the reported death of Mickey Leland:

"There is a special Jewish word which describes Mickey Leland, 'mensch'--it means 'a real human being.' The Anti-Defamation League has been privileged to know and work with him on black-Jewish relations, on the separate concerns of the black-Jewish communities and those concerns affecting all people alike."

"He went on his first trip to Israel with me and several ADL leaders where he met with then-Prime Minister Menachem Begin and other government officials, he was tremendously helpful in rescuing Ethiopian Jews and getting them to Israel. His addresses in various sections of this country dealt candidly, as well as factually, with black and Jewish issues."

"He was a warm and close friend, a beautiful and unique person who shall be remembered with affection and respect -- and be sorely missed."

BLACK MEDIA LEADS CAMPAIGN AGAINST REGARDIE'S

The black press in the nation's capital has led a frontal attack on other members of the media for what they claim is "racism in the media." Dorothy Gilliam, a black writer for the Washington Post, started the ball rolling in what is now known as "the Regardie's campaign." Gilliam called the prominent business magazine "Racist and Repugnant" for its "overtly racist, stereotypical, condescending and arrogant" contents in the May issue. Since then, a wave of outrage has been continually expressed in the 70% black city through its media while the general media (or "Masses of the media," as Bill Reed of The Capital Spotlight newspaper puts it) have continued with business as usual. Through the broad based campaign, African-Americans have shown that they are not content with "business as usual" and are "waking up," says Elizabeth Thomas of The Positive Energy newsletter. They formed a new coalition declaring W.A.R.R.R. (Washingtonians Against Regardie's Repugnant Racism) on Regardie's and are demanding that he personally retract demeaning statements and caricatures and reverse racist policies, or he should be shut down.

In what the Black Press labels as another example of "racism in the media" and The Old Boy Network, on June 27th, the Washington Post's Tom Sherwood interviewed Bill Regardie under the caption "Publisher Turns New Leaf: Regardie Apologizes for Racial Slurs." "Upon reading Regardie's so called apology, however, one readily recognizes the insincerity and disinformation as Regardie states that he is eating crow he doesn't believe he deserves. By this statement, Mr. Regardie himself has fanned the flames of indignation and it does not seem likely that this issue will burn itself out now," said Rev. Bruce Williams of the coalition.

Rev. James Bevel, the former chief strategist to Martin Luther King and the organizer of W.A.R.R.R., was quick to respond in an interview in the June 29th issue of The Capital

Spotlight. Bevel drew an analogy between Regardie's comments and the behavior of whites after lynching a black man in the days of segregation: "After they were caught, they would stand in front of the judge and say 'We were only playing, we didn't mean to kill the nigger.' That has nothing to do with being sorry". Regardie only apologized for "offending those who support him and not for the blatant racism." It seems that Regardie's motivation "has more to do with fear of losing valuable advertising clients, rather than any genuine concern about offending African-Americans," writes Calvin Rolark of The Washington Informer and Dean of the black press. Blatant black leadership bashing is further evidenced in the July issue of Regardie's in which Mr. Regardie continues "to lynch blacks while apologizing (to his readers) in the same breath, referring to Rev. Bevel as a 'Moonie front man.' Rev. Bevel has noted in his weekly talks at the Howard Inn that this is the same tactic used by the racists during the Civil rights Movement, labeling Martin Luther King as a "communist" and any white who joined the movement as a "nigger-lover."

On July 14, the City Paper showed its true colors by joining the Regardie's lynching coalition, referring to Rev. Bevel as an "opportunist" who is "shrewdly fusing the issues of racism and Moon-bashing into one protest." Jack Shafer then expresses his condescending conviction that the poor ignorant black folk will one day become enlightened (by Shafer no less) about this.

Thus, as Bill Reed responds in The Capital Spotlight, Shafer has joined Regardie in the "height of a superior attitude" to imply that "...local blacks have no reason, or right, to respond to racism unless they have been prompted by some other force for some other purpose that is not our own."

According to publishers and editors of local Black Press outlets, the campaign is being expanded to include black publications in urban areas across the country. Also, the weekly community meetings consistently attracting 100-plus people are held at the Howard Inn. They feature a talk by Rev. Bevel and a multi-media presentation that highlights Regardie's racism.

PERSPECTIVES By McKinley Burt

One would gather from this column that Economic Development and Minority Business have had a rather hairy pathology. That is correct but the same is true for a Black just trying to make it through the day! All things in perspective, then, let's take a look at the possible and workable.

At the university I made it a ritual for my students to buy out of town newspapers and report on progressive economic activities in other cities. ("you will discover your selves to be in sort of a prison in Portland-some of the wardens are Black"). In 1977 I read in the Los Angeles Sentinel (a Black-owned newspaper) of a "Work/Study Program in Health Administration for minorities." This was a federally funded program that provided scores of Black college students with related employment and career development. The major study areas were biology, chemistry, pre-med, sociology, business ad, and accounting.

I called the newspaper and was placed in touch with the local sponsor, a Black female physician and a member of the nation's most active and committed medical family (Dr. Geraldine Woods). This lady provided details of the program structure, and promptly placed me in touch with the Washington, D.C. administrators-along with a favorable recommendation for \$100,000 of funding through Portland State University. approval was swift, cutting through time and budget restrictions. We may say that the program was successful-to a point.

But, pay attention. I intended for the program to be controlled through the university where there would be adequate monitoring and control. Instead, my department heads, without informing me (Black Studies), brokered out the operation to a community poverty program (PMSC) which was already plagued with problems. As a result many of my designs and expectations were not implemented.

There was a constant negative feedback from participating students, and from Washington; increasing complaints from students, and evidence of the usual favoritism and deficiencies in accounting and fund management threatened the program. I had relinquished control before I should have, part of my early learning curve in the public sector. And yours, I hope.

However, it is true that the community valued the program (few were told that I engineered it), and that the students received needed financial aid and career insights. Let us examine the secondary benefit and leverage that was lost. These operational disabilities caused the program to be divorced from another area of financial support I had developed through my knowledge of how industry intersects with the public sector.

I had persuaded several top pharmaceutical and hospital supply companies to provide several hundred thousand additional dollars of financing to extend the student slots for a full year instead of the federal 90-day parameter. But the firms backed down when the Department of Health Education and Welfare furnished adverse reports on the poverty program management style. I have contacted them again.

A regeneration of this much-needed program is among my project developments I mentioned several weeks ago. Some readers may be familiar with one element already implemented. The Portland Observer on August 26, 1987 featured on the front page the technical employment program for high school seniors that I developed at the Providence Medical Center (computerized administration as well as computerized testing and instrumentation). Also, after research and conversations with hospital administrators I project an initially small scale economic development in the area of manufacturing certain simple medical devices and supplies-having met rather favorable comment from staff.

Turning to another aspect of community economic development, one that can be just as productive today, I submit another experience-based model. In the 1970's, while teaching a course I developed ("Black Urban Economic Experience"), I was informed by those students employed by the social agencies that "it is impossible to get grants for capital expenditures i.e. buildings or larger items of equipment-these items have to be leased". At the time I was an advisor to the Black Education Center, a non-profit community organization founded by Ron Herndon and several others who had all been students together at Reed College.

Before the very eyes of the students I developed a semester-long process which demonstrated that the "no capital grant" syndrome was nothing more than a mental block-like many other barriers to economic development. Using the Black Education Center as a model, I got out twenty 1 1/2 page letters to foundations, requesting funds to "purchase buildings". Ten favorable replies quickly followed-a follow up request for funds to buy an adjacent income property to support center activities was quickly honored. The difference in my approach was that I had done my homework, researched the foundation boards of directors, their perceived attitudes, and their past complaints.

"Let us introduce ourselves...We have accomplished this, that and the other, and have done it well...If you were to grant us these facilities we could achieve much more...And we think it would be a great plus for your foundation if ten or fifteen years from now you will be able to point with pride to this valuable community asset and say, Hey, we made this possible".

It worked like a charm and the center is still there! Two students in the class used this model to gain program ownership of the large building which housed their social agency on N.E. Martin Luther King Boulevard, a mental health clinic.

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