

Day 5 - 5-01 Social Studies: Marcus Garvey

Synopsis: Marcus Garvey was born in Jamaica in 1887. He became a leader of the Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism movements, which sought to give black people freedom and political power. Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League. He promoted Pan-African ideas which inspired a global movement, known as Garveyism. Garveyism would eventually inspire others, from the Nation of Islam to the Rastafari movement. Garvey died in London in 1940, and was eventually buried in Jamaica.

Early Life

Social activist Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Jr. was born on August 17, 1887, in St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica. Garvey was the last of 11 children born to Marcus Garvey, Sr. and Sarah Jane Richards. Garvey, Sr. was a great influence on Marcus. He had a large library, where young Garvey learned to read.

At age 14, Garvey became a printer's apprentice. In 1903, he traveled to Kingston, Jamaica, and soon became involved in union activities to organize workers for better pay. In 1907, he took part in an unsuccessful printer's strike. The experience *kindled*¹ in him a passion for political activism. Three years later, Garvey traveled throughout Central America working as a newspaper editor and writing about the exploitation of migrant workers. He later traveled to London, where he attended University of London.

Founding The Universal Negro Improvement Association

Inspired by these experiences, Garvey returned to Jamaica in 1914. There he founded a group called the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). His goal was to unite all African people so that they could "establish a country and absolute government of their own." Garvey later settled in New York City and formed a UNIA chapter in Harlem, a major African-American neighborhood. There he tried to promote his *separatist*² philosophy. Garvey believed that only by forming their own nation would blacks be able to enjoy social, political and economic freedom. In 1918, he began publishing the newspaper Negro World to spread his message.

By 1919, Garvey and UNIA had launched the Black Star Line. This was a shipping company designed to establish trade between Africans in America, the Caribbean, South and Central America, Canada and Africa. At the same time, Garvey started the Negroes Factories Association. This was a series of companies set up to manufacture goods in the Americas and Africa.

In August 1920, UNIA claimed 4 million members and held its first International Convention in New York City. Before a crowd of 25,000 people from all over the world, Garvey spoke of having pride in African history and culture. Many found his words inspiring, but not all.

¹*To kindle: Verb, to inspire or to alight.*

²*Separatist: Noun, a person or group who support leaving a larger group due to religion or ethnicity.*

One of Garvey's biggest critics was W.E.B. Du Bois, an important black leader and officer of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Du Bois thought Garvey was giving into white supremacists like the Ku Klux Klan by saying blacks should live separately from whites. Du Bois called Garvey "the most dangerous enemy of the Negro race in America." Garvey felt Du Bois was working for white elites³.

Under Surveillance

But Du Bois wasn't Garvey's worst enemy. History would soon show that FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover was committed to ruining Garvey for his radical ideas. Hoover felt threatened by the black leader, fearing he was encouraging blacks across the country to take up arms in order to fight for their freedom. For several years Hoover tried to find damning personal information about Garvey. He even went so far as to hire the first black FBI agent in 1919 to spy on him. "They placed spies in the UNIA," says historian Winston James. "They sabotaged the Black Star Line. The engines ... of the ships were actually damaged by foreign matter being thrown into the fuel," James claims.

Charges And Loss Of Authority

In 1922, Garvey and three other UNIA officials were charged with mail fraud involving the Black Star Line. On June 23, 1923, Garvey was convicted and sentenced to prison for five years. Garvey claimed to be a victim of a politically motivated miscarriage of justice. He appealed his conviction, but was denied.

In 1927 Garvey was released from prison and deported to Jamaica. Garvey continued his political activism and the work of UNIA in Jamaica, and then moved to London in 1935. But he did not command the same influence he had earlier. Over time he lost even more support among the black population. Death And Legacy Garvey died in London in 1940. Due to travel restrictions during World War II, his body was buried in London. In 1964, his remains were exhumed and taken to Jamaica. The government there proclaimed him Jamaica's first national hero and reburied him at a shrine in the National Heroes Park.

³Elite: Noun, a select group of people that is superior to the other parts of that society.

Quiz

1. What is the summary of the section "Under Surveillance"?

- (A) J. Edgar Hoover hired the first black FBI agent to spy on Marcus Garvey, and the FBI damaged some of the Black Star Line's ships.
- (B) J. Edgar Hoover was a bigger enemy of Marcus Garvey than W.E.B. Du Bois, and Hoover hired a black agent to spy on him.
- (C) J. Edgar Hoover could not find any damaging information on Marcus Garvey, so the FBI ended up sabotaging his company.
- (D) J. Edgar Hoover was worried about what people would learn from Marcus Garvey, so the FBI monitored him closely.

2. Which two of the following sentences from the article include CENTRAL ideas of the article?

- 1. Garvey believed that only by forming their own nation would blacks be able to enjoy social, political and economic freedom.
- 2. In August 1920, UNIA claimed 4 million members and held its first International Convention in New York City.
- 3. History would soon show that FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover was committed to ruining Garvey for his radical ideas.
- 4. Garvey continued his political activism and the work of UNIA in Jamaica, and then moved to London in 1935.

(A) 1 and 2

(B) 1 and 3

(C) 2 and 4

(D) 3 and 4

3. In the section "Founding The Universal Negro Improvement Association," W.E.B. Du Bois is introduced in what way?

- (A) as someone who opposed Marcus Garvey's ideas
- (B) as someone who was a friend to Marcus Garvey
- (C) as someone whom Marcus Garvey greatly admired
- (D) as someone who opposed African-American rights

4. Based on the article, which of the following MOST influenced Marcus Garvey's desire to fight for change?

- (A) what he learned as a child from his father
- (B) his time fighting for better pay in Jamaica
- (C) what he learned from W.E.B. Du Bois
- (D) the lesson he learned from being arrested