



**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. SAM NUJOMA, FOUNDING
FATHER AND FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
NAMIBIA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE VIRTUAL
COMMEMORATION SYMPOSIUM FOR MARCUS
GARVEY'S 134TH BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY**

TUESDAY, 17 AUGUST 2021

WINDHOEK

I am pleased to have been invited by Professor Earle Taylor, the Jamaican Consul in Namibia, to deliver a brief remark in this Virtual Commemoration Symposium, on this occasion of Marcus Mosiah Garvey's 134th Birthday Anniversary, on 17 August 2021.

In this regard, allow me, first and foremost, to wholeheartedly convey my sincere congratulations to the family, the people of Jamaica, the global membership of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and the symposium organizers on this milestone.

Marcus Mosiah Garvey Jnr is Jamaica's first national hero and Africa's extraordinary ambassador and unquestionably one of the founding fathers and the most proactive leaders of the global Pan-African movement and alliance.

An untainted African son, born in exile in St. Ann, Jamaica in 1887, Garvey had an interesting life, starting out as a printer apprentice at the age of 13, then to become a master printer, trade union leader and later a newspaper columnist, and eventually to found his own newspaper dedicated toward the education and upliftment of Africans.

Notwithstanding his personal accomplishments and many challenges, Garvey focused on his preoccupation of righting the wrongs and injustice of history, having recognized the undignified treatment and subhuman conditions under which people of African descent were living, not just in Jamaica and the Caribbean basin but equally in the Americas, Britain and elsewhere.

The solution to this challenge became Marcus Garvey's life's mission and which sparked the beginning of his journey toward the full freedom and liberation of the African people both on the Continent and in the diaspora.

As a young boy growing up in colonized and apartheid Namibia, I heard many inspirational stories about this great Leader, and increasingly, by his great vision and eloquence, I was encouraged into positive action and later on to the leadership of the struggle as a freedom fighter to free my beloved country, Namibia.

Marcus started his international journey, first by going to England in 1912 and working and researching at the offices of the African Times and Orient Review journal under the wise leadership of Duse Mohammed Ali, the famous Black Nationalist and journalist of the time.

It is said that the African Times and Orient Review was the first political journal by and for Black people ever published in Britain. It was printed a monthly basis on the popular Fleet Street in London during 1912-1913.

Marcus Garvey returned to Jamaica from England in July 1914. With the help of an associate Enos J. Sloy and about four others, he created the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and African Communities Leagues and launched it on 1st August 1914, coinciding with "Emancipation Day" which is a day in British-ruled Caribbean.

Garvey then went on an international tour to several countries in Latin America as he wanted to see first-hand, and to validate his knowledge of the plight of the Blackman. Garvey culminated his trip in Harlem, New York, in 1916 and shortly thereafter, in May 1917 he established the branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)-ACL.

Within months, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) ACL organization registered over 2 million members from all over the United States.

By 1920, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.) had 1,100 chapters in 40 countries around the world such as the United Kingdom, Cuba, Panama, Costa Rica, Ghana, including at Luderitz Bay in Namibia.

By 1926, the membership of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.) had grown to over 11 million members. Marcus Garvey built the largest Black organization in history.

At this juncture, allow me to explain how the Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.) came to Namibia. Indeed, before the outbreak of the First World War, most West Africans in German South West Africa (GSWA), including those who became involved in the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), were male skilled labourers who received comparatively good wages within the colony.

The shipping industry employed a majority at the ports of Swakopmund and Luderitz Bay, but, by the later years of German colonialism, a number were working in mining, railways, finance, government, the restaurant industry and beyond.

Most West Africans in German South West Africa came to the colony through contracts in the German maritime industry, which handled the lion's share of trade and transport in and out of the colony.

Those labourers were West Africans, mainly from Liberia, working primarily for the Woermann-Linie, which, by the early 1900s, was under contract to handle longshore operations at the port.

For the young people listening and African brothers and sisters living in the diaspora, allow me to share some of the things Garvey said and did that influence me as a freedom fighter and Founding President of the liberated Namibia.

Due to the frustrations after the First World War and the defeat of the Germans, many Africans began to search for an alternative future. It is under these circumstances that both local and migrant Africans began to join in common purpose.

The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) branch in Luderitz Bay, founded in June 1921, showed the first promising signs of improving the lives of local workers. While the Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) focused on higher wages and better living conditions, it remained confined primarily to Luderitz Bay.

It was, rather, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which came to the colony in the same year, that melded local anti-colonial grievances and yearning for communal improvement with a global vision for African unity and liberation.

In 1920, mounting political pressure in the Union of South Africa pushed the new Administration in South West Africa into removing the major inhibitions to the active exploitation of the colony.

These changes, in turn, increased pressure on the indigenous population, accounting for increased resistance to the colonial state in the early 1920s. On the heels of such policies, which further disadvantaged Africans, Garveyism came to South West Africa. The group was referred to by Rhenish missionaries as the 'Monrovia' movement in South West Africa.

Garveyism in the colony spanned ethnic divides, with membership including not only West Africans but also West Indians, Cape Coloured people, Herero, Nama and Ovambo. Being black transcended all other identities.

It became a tool of grievance, with Herero and Ovambo, in particular, joining West Africans in using the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) to voice complaints against the new South African regime.

By October 1921, the organisation spread from Luderitz Bay to Windhoek, then to other urban centres and lastly to the bush and jungles of Southern Africa for guerrilla warfare. The movement initially grew through the region's railways and then by word of mouth via members to smaller African settlements.

The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) would have an important role in early 1920s South West Africa. Its effects were diverse, ranging from supplying the ideological framework for the development of subsequent Namibian nationalism to petitioning the League of Nations for South West Africa self-governance.

For the entire month of August 1920, Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.)-ACL organization held its first international convention in New

York City, which was attended by an estimated 25,000 Black people from all around the world. Delegations from 25 African countries were in attendances as well.

The convention adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World which was one of the earliest and most complete document advocating human rights and detailing the abuses against Black people worldwide.

Garvey's ultimate dream was for the independence of all African Countries and the creation of a United States of Africa. Thus, he was the father of Pan-Africanism who played a crucial role in fostering unity and pride among people of African descent.

He believed that people of African descent could establish a great independent nation in our ancient homeland of Africa and stressed black pride, racial unity among people of African descent, and the need to redeem Africa from white rule. Hence the slogan "Africa for Africans, those at home and those abroad".

Garvey's message of Black Nationalism and a free black Africa inspired many African-American leaders such as W.E.B. DuBois, who organized a series of Pan-African congresses around the world and was elected as Chairman of the Fifth Pan-African Congress in 1945, that took place in Manchester, England.

For example, the Fifth Pan-African Congress in 1945, Manchester, England was attended by those who later became significant in the independence movements of their respective countries and Founding Fathers of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) on 25th May, 1963 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. These were, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere of Tanzania, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Nnamdi Azikiwe of Ghana, among others.

When I went to petition before the Sub Committee of the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly for the first time in June 1960, and before the Committee on South West Africa on 5 July 1960, giving my first-hand account of the Windhoek Uprising and massacre on 10th December 1959, I found the Ghana Mission to the United Nations very helpful and benefited greatly from their advice.

Apart from the Late Mburumba Kerina with whom I stayed in New York, I also stayed with Herbert Whiteman, an African-American, very highly politically conscious, being one of W.E.B. Du Bois's followers.

But before we were able to have our own representatives at the UN, we were greatly helped by Marcus Garvey's African Pioneer Movement, and by George Houser of the American Committee on Africa, who remained our friends through-out our long and bitter struggle for Namibia's freedom and genuine independence, which we attained on the 21st of March 1990.

As you can see, the Late Dr Marcus Garvey played a significant role in the independence of Namibia and of Africa as a whole.

I therefore pay my highest tribute to this undying Legend for his steadfast and visionary leadership and inspiration not only as a Jamaican but as a celebrated Pan-Africanist.

Once again, allow me to extend hearty congratulations to Marcus Garvey's immediate family, extended and spiritual African family, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) members, Jamaica and all the organizers of this landmark virtual symposium to commemorate his 134th Birthday Anniversary on 17 August 2021.

I thank you.