



Statement in Support of Posthumous Presidential Pardon of Marcus Mosiah Garvey

In recognition of Marcus Mosiah Garvey's lifelong and substantial contributions to society, his efforts to uplift peoples of African descent the world over, and his work to promote economic independence as a means of social progress, Rootz Foundation Inc. stands in support of the descendants of Marcus Garvey who now seek a posthumous presidential pardon on his behalf.

Marcus Garvey was one of the first leaders of the early twentieth century American Civil Rights movement and he was an advocate for the social, political and economic independence of those of African descent globally. In order to unite his followers around a common goal of social progress, Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL), which at its height boasted over 6-million members in 40 countries worldwide.

Garvey staked his name and his movement on the development of economic opportunity and economic self-sufficiency as the formula for Black empowerment. In the words of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "He (Garvey) was the first man on a mass scale and level to give millions of Negroes (sic) a sense of dignity and destiny and make the Negro feel that he was somebody."

Because of his "Black Nationalist" activism and his mass appeal, Marcus Garvey was viewed as a threat to the established order by the U.S. government and attracted the attention of J. Edgar Hoover and the Bureau of Investigation. Hoover and what became the FBI conducted targeted surveillance of Garvey and actively sought methods to disrupt and destroy Garvey's Civil Rights movement. This was decades before Hoover also unfairly targeted Dr. King for his Civil Rights activism.

In 1923, based on intelligence gathered from undercover FBI agents posing as Garvey supporters, and aided by judicial proceedings that have been widely condemned as being factually unsound and as being politically and racially motivated, Marcus Garvey was convicted of mail fraud "conspiracy" – all by himself - and was sentenced to five years in federal prison.

Marcus Garvey started the drive for his own exoneration while still imprisoned in Atlanta, and in partial recognition of the unsettling facts underlying the prosecution of the case, President Calvin Coolidge commuted the sentence in November 1927, but ordered that Garvey be deported from America. Following the commutation of his sentence, efforts to fully clear Garvey's name have been ongoing and concerted on the part of various international groups, civil society organizations, city councils/city commissions nationwide, a number of states, and significantly, also by U.S. Congressmen Charles Rangel and John Conyers.

Over the past twelve years Rootz Foundation Inc. has partnered with the City Councils of Fort Lauderdale and Lauderdale Lakes, Florida in hosting annual events commemorating the anniversary of Marcus Garvey's birth on August 17th 1887. During this time Rootz Foundation has repeatedly and continuously expressed its support for efforts being taken to secure a Presidential exoneration for Marcus Garvey in order to clear his name of the alleged crimes with which he was charged. Indeed, in 2013 Rootz Foundation was part of a coalition spearheaded by educator Geoffrey Philp that collected over 10-thousand signatures in an online petition seeking Garvey's exoneration.

Pardoning Marcus Garvey is therefore an idea whose time has definitely come of age. The posthumous pardon petition now filed on Garvey's behalf by Dr. Julius Garvey M.D. - son of the Jamaican National Hero - seeks to exonerate Marcus Garvey from the historical stigma of what many see as an unjust conviction. It is now more than 90 years after the imposition of this injustice and it is full time to exonerate Marcus Mosiah Garvey and let history books reflect the true unblemished nature of his enduring legacy.

Sincerely,

Priest Douglas Smith – President Rootz Foundation
Wednesday, August 9, 2016