

Akin Gump

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June 18, 2021

The Honorable Joseph Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of Dr. Julius Garvey and the other descendants of Mr. Marcus Mosiah Garvey, I am writing to formally request a posthumous presidential pardon for Mr. Garvey, a recognized civil rights leader who was unfairly targeted by the Hoover Administration and persecuted for his work to uphold racial justice and promote economic equity. After serving nearly three years in a federal penitentiary, Mr. Garvey's sentence was commuted by President Calvin Coolidge, but to this day, the stain on our nation's history remains. We urge you to rectify a wrong that continues to weigh on the Garvey family and countless other civil rights advocates across the country.

Mr. Garvey's influence on numerous social justice leaders, such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela, is well documented. As a charismatic orator, Mr. Garvey used his organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities' League (the "Organization"), to assemble over 2,500 delegates from all over the world to develop the first-ever International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World. During the meeting, leaders drafted and adopted the Delegation of the Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World, which provided a foundation used by other civil rights leaders to further racial justice initiatives. Mr. Garvey also used the Organization to launch the Black Star Line Shipping Company, the Liberia Project and the Negro Factories Corporation, which established thriving businesses in black communities, employing over 1,000 people in Harlem, New York alone. Mr. Garvey's vision of racial justice and anti-colonialism has been honored by governments around the world. The 32 member nations of the Organization of American States unanimously passed a resolution naming its hall of culture in his honor in 2008. Moreover, his native country, Jamaica, has designated him as its first "national hero," and his likeness appears on the nation's currency.

Unfortunately, Mr. Garvey's passion for racial justice and his critique of U.S. political structures and ideologies rendered him a target for the Hoover Administration and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Mr. Garvey's organization and his community initiatives were subject to government surveillance, disruption, and sabotage. Despite these efforts, the government was unable to build a compelling case. The government's efforts culminated on June 18, 1923, when Mr. Garvey was wrongfully convicted of mail fraud in an unjust prosecution in which the only

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evidence against him was an empty envelope, presented by a perjured witness who was unable to remember its contents. And, while President Coolidge commuted his sentence, he was immediately deported back to Jamaica in 1927.

The effort to exonerate and restore Mr. Garvey's reputation has lasted for more than thirty years. Dr. Garvey and his brother, Marcus Jr., testified before the House Judiciary Committee in 1987 alongside several historians such as John Henrik Clarke, Tony Martin, Robert Hill, and Judith Stein, as well as the Jamaican Ambassador Keith Johnson, all unequivocally declaring Mr. Garvey's innocence. The Honorable Charles B. Rangel, then-Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, annually co-sponsored house resolutions in order to exonerate Mr. Garvey.

In 2016, the Garvey family petitioned President Barack Obama to issue a posthumous pardon declaring his innocence, including a detailed analysis of the trial and its illegal and unjust proceedings. The petition was supported by the Congressional Black Caucus; former Ambassador Andrew Young Jr.; Mr. Ndaba Mandela, the grandson of Nelson Mandela; Professor Charles Ogletree (former President Obama's law professor at Harvard Law School); Prime Minister Andrew Holness of Jamaica; and a host of organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Bar Association, the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the International Black Women's Congress, the Society of American Law Teachers, Black Psychiatrists of America, Inc., Institute of the Black World, 21st Century and many others. The petition was sent to Robert A. Zauzmer, Acting U.S. Pardon Attorney and addressed to President Obama by the late Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., of Akin Gump and was supported by a number of Democratic Members of Congress. During the previous administration, a coalition of Black GOP Congressional leaders submitted a petition, which received favorable consideration but unfortunately was denied, marking another missed opportunity to correct a racial injustice left too long lingering unaddressed.

Your recent visit to Oklahoma to mark the 100 years since the systemic destruction of the town of Greenwood, also referred to as "Black Wall Street," rectified a glaring oversight in American history, where racially-motivated violence to decimate an economically vibrant, affluent, and independent African American community remained unacknowledged. In that spirit, the Garvey family was particularly heartened by your observation that "only with truth can come healing and justice and repair." These words capture their reality as they continue to grapple with the legacy of Mr. Garvey's false conviction and imprisonment, all of which were designed to destroy his reputation and undermine the Organization he created to further African American economic empowerment. For that reason, I urge you to correct the injustice that has

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plagued Mr. Garvey's memory and restore the esteemed reputation of a man who was wronged by our criminal justice system.

A full posthumous pardon to Mr. Garvey to exonerate his wrongful conviction would give hope to the countless communities, nations, and international bodies that continue to honor Mr. Garvey's memory and impact, and would represent a memorable commemoration of our Nation's first National Caribbean-American Heritage Month, which you've recently proclaimed. More than 100 years after the imposition of this injustice, it is time to pardon Marcus Garvey and let history reflect the true nature of his legacy.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Anthony T. Pierce
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Anthony T. Pierce

cc: Dr. Julius Garvey
Professor Justin Hansford