

Marcus Mosiah Garvey

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed guests,

I am honoured to be with you today to celebrate the Harlem Markers Project, and in so doing also celebrate the life and legacy of Marcus Mosiah Garvey.

Marcus Garvey was born August 17, 1887, St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica, and died in London on June 10, 1940. He was Jamaica's first designated National Hero, proclaimed to be so in 1969, soon after Jamaica attained independence in 1962. We proudly consider him to be one of Jamaica's great contributions to civilization and humanity. His remains were brought back from London in 1964 and interred in the National Heroes Park in Kingston, Jamaica.

As you may have already heard, Garvey was a man before his time. Devoting his life to a fierce advocacy for black economic empowerment, self reliance, and racial pride, he did so in a world that was not ready to embrace such radical notions of the inherent equality of every human being, especially black people. Remember, the transatlantic slave trade and chattel slavery had only been abolished in the United States a mere 23 years before he was born. So of course he faced immense obstacles, even ridicule and persecution, as he sought to convince a recently enslaved peoples that they were worthy of so much more.

Marcus Garvey taught us a great deal about ourselves and the world we live in. His teachings, like the music of Bob Marley, are as relevant today as they were 100 years ago. It is therefore only right that the accolades he did not receive while he was alive are now properly accorded to him, and that his philosophy and teachings are recognized, reinforced and introduced to a new generation of scholars.

One of Garvey's most renowned statements is, ***“If you have no confidence in self you are twice defeated in the race of life. With confidence you have won even before you have started.”***

I don't know how many Jamaicans are in this room this afternoon, but we know that this in particular resonates with us. Indeed, it is this very notion of belief in self and self confidence that has propelled Jamaicans to heights not expected of a small island nation of less than 3 million people, a mere dot in the Caribbean Sea.

Jamaica, "*likkle but tallawah*", is the embodiment of Garvey's call for self confidence – this why we have produced so many greats in so many fields - in politics, sports, music, the arts, culture and, quite frankly, swagger. To use just one example, Usain Bolt, still the fastest man who ever lived, is full of swagger and self confidence and would always, as he said himself, "visualize himself winning".

There is not enough time in one day and in one ceremony to elaborate on all of Garvey's teachings and how they have impacted life on the planet even now. Indeed, academic scholarship has now embraced his teachings, with tertiary institutions curating entire university courses on his life and legacy. But I wanted to share just a few of his perhaps less well known, but particularly deep and enduring quotes, for your consideration and contemplation.

"Do not remove the kinks from your hair – remove them from your brain."

"Let the sky and God be our limit, and Eternity our measurement. There is no height to which we cannot climb by using the active intelligence of our own minds. Mind creates, and as much as we desire in nature we can have through the creation of our own minds."

Great principles, great ideals know no nationality."

Here is one you may not have heard before - "We are going to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery because whilst others might free the body, none but ourselves can free the mind. Mind is your only ruler, sovereign. The

man who is not able to develop and use his mind is bound to be the slave of the other man who uses his mind.”

“The ends you serve that are selfish will take you no further than yourself but the ends you serve that are for all, in common, will take you into eternity.”

And finally as I close, “Who to tell what tomorrow will bring forth? ... We see and have changes every day, so pray, work, be steadfast and be not dismayed.”

We honour the memory of Marcus Garvey here today with this ceremony, for which I am grateful and privileged to be a part. But to truly honour the enduring legacy of Marcus Garvey, we all must embrace his vision of us as a people and live the embodiment of his philosophy, to lift ourselves. “Up, up, ye mighty race! You can accomplish what you will.”

Let us honor him by continuing the fight for justice, equality, and the realization of his dream - a world where every man, woman and child, regardless of color, class or creed, have the same opportunities to fulfill their greatest potential, knowing that the bounties of the earth belong to all of us, without discrimination.

This is our responsibility, indeed our solemn duty, as we meet the challenges of today in a way that lays a foundation for prosperity and peace for future generations of human kind.

Thank you, Marcus Garvey, for your unwavering commitment to a better humanity. May your legacy continue to inspire generations to come.

I thank you.