

MARCUS GARVEY

The New Negro and the U.N.I.A. (1919)

Newport News, Va., Oct. 25, 1919

Stirring Speech Delivered by Hon. Marcus Garvey in the South

Mr. President, Officers and Members of the Newport News Division of the Universal Negro Improvement Association—Indeed, it is a pleasure to be with you. From the first time I visited your city I became impressed with your earnestness. Ever since I came here and went away, an impression, an indelible impression, was made on me relative to your earnestness in the great onward and upward movement engineered under the leadership of the Universal Negro Improvement Association.

Since I visited you last the Universal Negro Improvement Association has grown financially and otherwise, numerically, to the extent that tonight, this very hour, the Universal Negro Improvement Association is regarded as the strongest Negro movement in the world. [Cheers.] We have been able to force entry into every civilized country where Negroes live, and tonight the colors that you and I are wearing in Newport News are being worn by Negroes all over the world.

U.N.I.A.: Serious Movement

As I have told you in many addresses before, the Universal Negro Improvement Association is a very serious movement. We are for serious business. We are out for the capturing of liberty and democracy. [Cheers.] Liberty is not yet captured, therefore we are still fighting. We are in a very great war, a great conflict, and we will never get liberty, we will never capture democracy, until we, like all the other peoples who have won liberty and democracy, shed our sacred blood. This liberty, this democracy, for which

we Negroes of the world are hoping, is a thing that has caused blood as a sacrifice by every people who possess it today.

The Defeat of Germany

The white man of America who possesses his liberty and his democracy won it through the sacrifice of those thousands of soldiers who fought and fell under the leadership of George Washington. The French people, who are enjoying their liberty and their democracy today, are enjoying it because thousands of Frenchmen fought, bled, and died to make France safe. That America, England, and France have had peace with the world and with themselves is simply through the fact that they have defeated Germany and won for themselves liberty and democracy.

Liberty and Democracy Expensive

Therefore, you will realize that liberty and democracy are very expensive things, and you have to give life for it. And if we Negroes think we can get all these things without the shedding of blood for them we are making a dreadful mistake. You are not going to get anything unless you organize to fight for it. There are some things you can fight for constitutionally, such as your political rights, your civic rights, but to get liberty you have to shed some blood for it. And that is what the Universal Negro Improvement Association is preparing your minds for—to shed some blood so as to make your race a free and independent race. That blood we are not going to shed in Newport News, that blood we are not going to shed in America,

because America will not be big enough to hold the Negro when the Negro gets ready. But that blood we are preparing to shed one day on the African battlefield, because it is the determination of the New Negro to re-possess himself of that country that God gave his forefathers. Africa is the richest continent in the world; it is the country that has given civilization to mankind and has made the white man what he is.

What the White Man Owes the Negro

After the white man is through abusing the Negro, when he gets back his sober senses, he will realize that he owes all he possesses today to the Negro. The Negro gave him science and art and literature and everything that is dear to him today, and the white man has kept them for thousands of years, and he has taken advantage of the world. He has even gone out of his way to reduce the African that gave him his civilization and kept him as a slave for two hundred and fifty years. But we feel that the time has come when we must take hold of that civilization that we once held. The hour has struck for the Negro to be once more a power in the world, and not all the white men in the world will be able to hold the Negro from becoming a power in the next century. Not even the powers of hell will be able to stop the Negro in his onward and upward movement. With Jesus as our standard bearer the Negro will march to victory.

The Negro Rules

There will be no democracy in the world until the Negro rules. We have given the white man a chance for thousands of years to show his feeling towards his fellow men. And what has he done up to this twentieth century? He has murdered man; he has massacred man; he has deprived man of his rights even as God gave to man. The white man has shown himself an unfit subject to rule. Therefore he has to step off the stage of action.

I believe it is Shakespeare who said:

The Quality of mercy is not strained,
It droppeth like the gentle rain from
heaven
Upon the place beneath;
It is twice blessed;
It blesseth him that gives and him that
takes.

Has the white man any mercy? Not before the black man returns to power will there be any mercy in the world. The Negro has been the savior of all that has been good for mankind.

But the future portends great things. It portends a leadership of Negroes that will draw man nearer to his God, because in the Negroes' rule there will be mercy, love, and charity to all.

Man Created for a Purpose

I want you colored men and women in Newport News to realize that you form a great part in this creation, for God has created you for a purpose; that purpose you have to keep in view; that purpose you must live. God said through the Psalmist that Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto him and that princes shall come out of Ethiopia. I believe fervently that the hour has come for Ethiopia to stretch forth her hands unto God, and as we are stretching forth our hands unto God in New York, in Pennsylvania, in the West Indies, in Central America, and in Africa and throughout the world I trust that you in Newport News are stretching forth your hands unto God.

Endless Chain of Negroes

There is an endless chain of Negroes all over the world, and wherever Negroes are to be found this day they are suffering from the brutality of the white man, and because Negroes are suffering all over the world we feel that the time has come for the four hundred millions of us scattered all over the world to link up our sentiment for one common purpose—to obtain liberty and democracy.

Africa Must Be Restored

I want you to understand that you have an association that is one of the greatest movements in the world. The New Negro, backed by the Universal Negro Improvement Association, is determined to restore Africa to the world, and you scattered children of Africa in Newport News, you children of Ethiopia, I want you to understand that the call is now made to you. What are you going to do? Are you going to remain to yourselves in Newport News and die? Or are you going to link up your strength, morally and financially, with the other Negroes of the world and let us all fight one battle unto victory? If you are prepared to do the latter, the battle is nearly won, because we of the Universal Negro Improvement Association intend within the next twelve months to roll up a sentiment in the United States of America that will be backed up by fifteen million black folks, so that when in the future you touch one Negro in Newport News you shall have touched fifteen million Negroes of the country. And within the next twenty-four months we intend to roll up an organization of nearly four hundred million people, so that when you touch any Negro in Newport News you touch four hundred million Negroes all over the world at the same time.

Liberty or Death

It falls to the province of every black man and every black woman to be a member of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, because there is but one purpose before us, which is the purpose of liberty—that liberty that Patrick Henry spoke about in the legislature of Virginia over one hundred and forty years ago. We new Negroes of America declare that we desire liberty or we will take death. [Cheers.] They called us out but a few months ago to fight three thousand miles away in Europe to save civilization, to give liberty and democracy to the other peoples of the world. And we fought so splendidly, and after we died, after we gave up our blood, and some of us survived and returned to

our respective countries, in America, in the West Indies, in Central America, and in Africa, they told us, as they told us in the past, that this country is the white man's country. What is it but menial opportunities for you where you live in contact with white men? Because they have told us that in America, because they have told us that in France, because they have told us under the government of Great Britain that our opportunities are limited when we come in contact with white men, we say the war is not over yet. The war must go on; only that the war is not going on in France and Flanders, but the war will go on in the African plains, there to decide once and for all in the very near future whether black men are to be serfs and slaves or black men are to be free men.

Black Men Are Going to Be Free

We have decreed that black men are going to be free as white men are free or as yellow men are free. We have declared that if there is to be a British Empire, if there is to be a German Empire, if there is to be a Japanese Empire, if there is to be a French Republic, and if there is to be an American Republic, then there must be a black republic of Africa. [Cheers.]

The White Man Hid the Book from the Negro

The New Negro has given up the idea of white leadership. The white man cannot lead the Negro any longer any more. He was able through our ignorance to lead us for over three hundred years since he took us from Africa, but the New Negro has learned enough now. When the white man took the black man from Africa he took him under a camouflage. He said to the Queen of England that he was taking the black man from Africa for the purpose of civilizing and Christianizing him. But that was not his purpose. The white man's purpose for taking the Negro from his native land was to make a slave of him, to have free labor. Some of us were brought to the Southern States of this country,

some of our brothers and sisters were taken to Central America and others were taken to the West Indian Islands, and we labored under the bonds of slavery for 250 years. The white man never schooled us for the 250 years. He hid the book from us, even the very Bible, and never taught the Negro anything.

The Negro Made a Rush for the Book

But God moves in a mysterious way, and he brought about Lincoln and Victoria, and he said, "You must let those people free," and they did let us free. As soon as we were freed we made a rush to get the book, and we did get the book. We got the Bible first, and we began to sing songs and give praise to God, and that is why the Negro shouts so much in church. But after he was through with the first he got hold of the school book and went from his A B C to Z, and what has happened in fifty years? There is not a white man so educated that you cannot find a Negro to equal him. None in France, none in England, none in America to beat the Negro educationally, and because we stand equal with him we say no longer shall the white man lead us, but we shall lead ourselves.

The Negro and the Gun and Powder

If we had not a complete training in knowledge before 1914 in that we only knew the book and were only able to read and write, they of themselves gave us training and placed two million of us in the army and gave us gun and powder and taught us how to use them. That completed the education of the Negro. Therefore, tonight the Negro stands complete in education. He knows how to read his book, he knows how to figure out, and he knows how to use the sword and the gun. And because he can do these things so splendidly, he is determined that he shall carve the way for himself to true liberty and democracy which the white man denied him after he was called out to shed his blood on the battlefields of France and Flanders.

The Black Star Line Steamship Corporation

I did not come down to Newport News to talk to you merely from a sentimental standpoint. I have come to talk to you from a sentimental and business standpoint. We cannot live on sentiment. We have to live on the material production of the world. I am here representing the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation of the world. The purpose of the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation is to float a line of steamships to run between America, Canada, the West Indies, South and Central America, and Africa, carrying freight and passengers, thus linking up the sentiment and wealth of the four hundred million Negroes of the world. Every day I spend away from New York means a financial loss of \$5,000 a day; but I have sacrificed all that to come and speak to you in Newport News, because you in Newport News have a history in connection with the Black Star Line.

First Stock Sold

I want to say to you that on the 31st of this month the S.S. *Frederick Douglass* will sail out of New York harbor, the property of the Black Star Line—the property of the Negro peoples of the world. I also want you to understand that the first stock that was sold in the Black Star Line was sold in the Dixie Theatre in Newport News. [Cheers.] The first five hundred dollars that we sold was sold in Newport News. Therefore, you gave the real start to the Black Star Line, and as you started the Black Star Line we want you to finish the Black Star Line.

So that is why I took the chance of leaving New York to speak to you in Newport News. I telegraphed your President a few days ago and asked him up to a conference to let him see what New York is doing to come back and tell you. The Negroes are alive in New York and they are alive in Philadelphia also. New York is supplying its quota to the Black Star Line and so is Philadelphia. I have taken the chance to

come to Newport News to find out if you are going to supply your quota towards the Black Star Line. I want you to understand that opportunity is now knocking at your door. You know that opportunity knocks but once at every man's door. The Black Star Line is the biggest industrial and commercial undertaking of the Negro of the Twentieth Century. The Black Star Line opens up the industrial and commercial avenues that were heretofore closed to Negroes.

The Negro Must Protect Himself

Every ship, every house, every store the white man builds, he has his gun and powder to protect them. The white man has surrounded

himself with all the protection necessary to protect his property. The Japanese government protects the yellow man, and the English, German, French, and American governments protect the white man, and the Negro has absolutely no protection. And that is why they lynch and burn us with impunity all over the world, and they will continue to do so until the Negro starts out to protect himself. The Negro cannot protect himself by living alone—he must organize. When you offend one white man in America, you offend ninety millions of white men. When you offend one Negro, the other Negroes are unconcerned because we are not organized. Not until you can offer protection to your race as the white man offers protection to his race, will you be a free and independent people in the world.

ANONYMOUS

As to "The New Negro" (1920)

There is a deal of talk going on nowadays about "The New Negro." Metropolitan journals have discussed the matter pro and con. Guesses have been hazarded as to what "The New Negro" wants and what he will accomplish. But in our journals the discussion has lacked patronage.

As we are on the inside "looking out," we have considered our duty to "let the metropolitan journals in" on our analysis of the phase of newness as evident in our group since the great world war.

There is no "New Negro." The reference to the new race consciousness should not be catalogued as "The New Negro." What has actually happened is, that "The Old Negro" has found himself. Contact with the races who took part in the great conflict opened the eyes of the sleeping Negro. He realized that he was part

and parcel of the great army of democracy—an integral part of the crusaders for humanity's cause. And with this realization came the consciousness of pride in himself as a man, and an American citizen. He realized that he was an asset.

And it is this consciousness—which brooks no claptrap—that is being mistaken by our white friends for elements of "newness."

The contribution of "The Old Negro" to American civilization is as important as the race's recent contribution to the effort to make the world safe for democracy; and realizing this fact we of today have coupled these contributions in a composite whole, and are demanding that for these we be given our rightful place in the civic and political life of this, our country.

*frustrating
that articles are
without context*