Marcus Garvey

Civil Rights Activist (1887–1940)

SECTION ONE

SOURCE: https://www.biography.com/people/marcus-garvey-9307319
NOTE: Images and textboxes not in the original source of this biography.

Marcus Garvey was a proponent of the Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism movements, inspiring the Nation of Islam and the Rastafarian movement.

Synopsis

Born in Jamaica, Marcus Garvey was an orator for the Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism movements, to which end he founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League. Garvey advanced a Pan-African philosophy which inspired a global mass movement, known as Garveyism. Garveyism would eventually inspire others, from the Nation of Islam to the Rastafari movement.

Marcus Garvey

Early Life

Social activist Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Jr. was born on August 17, 1887, in St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica. Self-educated, Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association, dedicated to promoting African-Americans and resettlement in Africa. In the United States he launched several businesses to promote a separate black nation. After he was convicted of mail fraud and deported back to Jamaica, he continued his work for black repatriation to Africa.

> *"A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots."*
>
> *— Marcus Garvey*

Marcus Mosiah Garvey was the last of 11 children born to Marcus Garvey, Sr. and Sarah Jane Richards. His father was a stone mason, and his mother a domestic worker and farmer.

Garvey, Sr. was a great influence on Marcus, who once described him as "severe, firm, determined, bold, and strong, refusing to yield even to superior forces if he believed he was right." His father was known to have a large library, where young Garvey learned to read.

At age 14, Marcus became a printer's apprentice. In 1903, he traveled to Kingston, Jamaica, and soon became involved in union activities. In 1907, he took part in an unsuccessful printer's strike and the experience kindled in him a passion for political activism. Three years later, he traveled throughout Central America working as a newspaper editor and writing about the exploitation of migrant workers in the plantations. He later traveled to London where he attended Birkbeck College (University of London) and worked for the *African Times and Orient Review*, which advocated Pan-African nationalism.

Founding the United Negro Improvement Association

Inspired by these experiences, Marcus Garvey returned to Jamaica in 1912 and founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.) with the goal of uniting all of African diaspora to "establish a country and absolute government of their own." After corresponding with Booker T. Washington, the American educator who founded Tuskegee Institute, Garvey traveled to the United States in 1916 to raise funds for a similar venture in Jamaica. He settled in New York City and formed a U.N.I.A. chapter in Harlem to promote a separatist philosophy of social, political, and economic freedom for blacks. In 1918, Garvey began publishing the widely distributed newspaper *Negro World* to convey his message.

By 1919, Marcus Garvey and U.N.I.A. had launched the Black Star Line, a shipping company that would establish trade and commerce between Africans in America, the Caribbean, South and Central America, Canada and Africa. At the same time, Garvey started the Negros Factories Association, a series of companies that would manufacture marketable commodities in every big industrial center in the Western hemisphere and Africa.

In August 1920, U.N.I.A. claimed 4 million members and held its first International Convention at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Before a crowd of 25,000 people from all over world, Marcus Garvey spoke of having pride in African history and culture. Many found his words inspiring, but not all. Some established black leaders found his separatist philosophy ill-conceived. W.E.B. Du Bois, a prominent black leader and officer of the N.A.A.C.P. called Garvey, "the most dangerous enemy of the Negro race in America." Garvey felt Du Bois was an agent of the white elite. [See Section Two below]

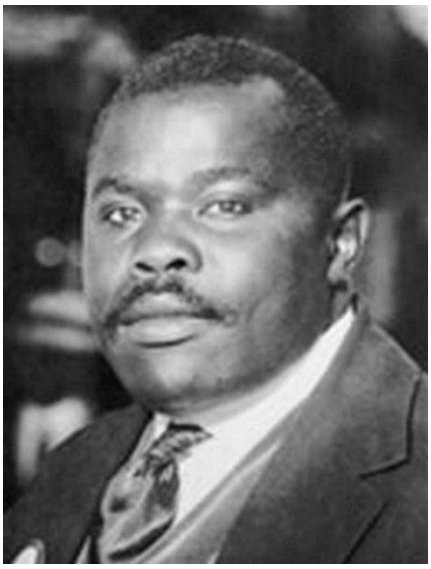
Under Surveillance

But W.E.B Du Bois wasn't the worst adversary of Garvey; history would soon reveal F.B.I. Director J. Edgar Hoover's fixation on ruining Garvey for his radical ideas. Hoover felt threatened

by the black leader, fearing he was inciting blacks across the country to stand up in militant defiance.

Hoover referred to Garvey as a "notorious negro agitator" and for several years, desperately sought ways to find damning personal information on him, even going so far as to hire the first black F.B.I. agent in 1919 in order to infiltrate Garvey's ranks and spy on him.

"They placed spies in the U.N.I.A.," said historian Winston James. "They sabotaged the Black Star Line. The engines... of the ships were actually damaged by foreign matter being thrown into the fuel."



Hoover would use the same methods decades later to obtain information on black leaders like MLK and Malcolm X.

Charges and Loss of Authority

In 1922, Marcus Garvey and three other U.N.I.A. officials were charged with mail fraud involving the Black Star Line. The trial records indicate several improprieties occurred in the prosecution of the case. It didn't help that the shipping line's books contained many accounting irregularities. On June 23, 1923, Garvey was convicted and sentenced to prison for five years. Claiming to be a victim of a politically motivated miscarriage of justice, Garvey appealed his conviction, but was denied. In 1927 he was released from prison and deported to Jamaica.

Garvey continued his political activism and the work of U.N.I.A. in Jamaica, and then moved to London in 1935. But he did not command the same influence he had earlier. Perhaps in desperation or maybe in delusion, Garvey collaborated with outspoken segregationist and white supremacist Senator Theodore Bilbo of Mississippi to promote a reparations scheme. The Greater Liberia Act of 1939 would deport 12 million African-Americans to Liberia at federal expense to relieve unemployment. The act failed in Congress, and Garvey lost even more support among the black population.

> *"We are going to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery, for though others may free the body, none but ourselves can free the mind."*
>
> *— Marcus Garvey*

Death and Legacy

Marcus Garvey died in London in 1940 after several strokes. Due to travel restrictions during World War II, his body was interred in London. In 1964, his remains were exhumed and taken to Jamaica, where the government proclaimed him Jamaica's first national hero and re-interred him at a shrine

in the National Heroes Park. But his memory and influence remain. His message of pride and dignity inspired many in the early days of the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. In tribute to his many contributions, Garvey's bust has been displayed in the Organization of American States' Hall of Heroes in Washington, D.C. The country of Ghana has named its shipping line the Black Star Line and its national soccer team the Black Stars, in honor of Garvey.

> *"Do not remove the kinks from your hair - remove them from your brain."*
>
> *— Marcus Garvey*

SECTION TWO

SOURCE: https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/garvey-must-go-campaign/

The "Garvey Must Go" Campaign

When Marcus Garvey first arrived in the United States in 1916, he quickly found his way to many of New York's most prominent black radical activists and intellectuals. And, at least briefly, Garvey enjoyed their support.

But by 1920, A. Philip Randolph and other black leaders, some of whom had supported Garvey after his arrival in the United States, came to believe that Garvey's program for black advancement was unsound, and that Garvey himself was a charlatan. Though they admired his skills as a propagandist, these prominent black critics derided Garvey's proposed solutions for the problems of African Americans. They believed that his plans for black progress, including the Black Star Line and the establishment of a pan-African empire, were unrealistic and ill-advised; they considered the Universal Negro Improvement Association's grandiose titles and military regalia to be preposterous; and they thought Garvey, with his assumption of a regal posture under the title "Provisional President of Africa," to be little more than a self-aggrandizing buffoon. A. Philip Randolph, who had introduced Garvey to his first American audience on a Harlem street corner, said Garvey had "succeeded in making the Negro the laughingstock of the world."

Federal investigations into the finances of the Black Star Line, along with a blistering analysis of the shipping line by W.E.B. Du Bois in the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine, gave fuel to Garvey's black critics. Randolph personally critiqued the economic feasibility of the Black Star Line in *The Messenger* , an influential magazine he co-edited with Chandler Owen, and accused Garvey of squandering the hard-earned money of his hard-working, poor supporters.

Black opposition to Garvey coalesced into what came to be known as the "Garvey Must Go" Campaign. Supporters of the campaign, known collectively as the Friends of Negro Freedom, intended to unmask Garvey as a fraud before his black supporters. They also appealed to the federal government to step up investigations of irregularities in the Black Star Line, and to look into alleged acts of violence on the part of Garvey's inner circle.

The "Garvey Must Go" Campaign gained momentum after Garvey held a secret meeting with Edward Young Clarke, the leader of the Ku Klux Klan, in June 1922. Immediately afterward, Randolph and Owen's *Messenger* magazine published an article entitled "Marcus Garvey! The Black Imperial Wizard Becomes Messenger Boy of the White Klu Klux Kleagle." Black leaders were further infuriated when they learned that Garvey, at a speaking engagement in New Orleans, remarked that because black people had not built the railroad system, they should not insist on riding in the same cars with white patrons.

The Messenger vowed to begin a vigorous editorial campaign against Garvey, and promised to "[fire] the opening gun in a campaign to drive Garvey and Garveyism in all its sinister viciousness from the American soil." The campaign from this point on was characterized by vitriolic personal attacks on both sides, and by escalating threats of violence. "Garvey Must Go" meetings were violently dispersed by Garvey's followers. A. Philip Randolph received the severed hand of a white man in the mail. It was accompanied by a note signed by the K.K.K., but Randolph believed the hand had been sent by the U.N.I.A.

On January 15, 1923, a group of eight prominent African Americans petitioned Attorney General Harry M. Daugherty asking the U.S. government to continue its prosecution of Garvey on charges of mail fraud, and to investigate acts of violence attributed to Garvey's followers -- among them, the assassination in early January 1923 in New Orleans of J. W. H. Eason, Garvey's former deputy, who had been expelled from the movement at the August 1922 Convention on charges of personal misconduct. The letter of petition ended by urging the Attorney General to "use his full influence completely to disband and extirpate this vicious movement," and imploring him to "vigorously and speedily push the government's case against Marcus Garvey for using the mails to defraud."

Garvey would eventually be convicted of mail fraud charges in 1923. He was jailed in the Atlanta federal penitentiary in February 1925, where he would serve almost three years of a five-year sentence. And in 1927, Garvey would be deported from the United States, never to return.

White supremacists have been funding black activists' 'Back to Africa' movements for centuries

By Keisha N. Blain

SOURCE: https://timeline.com/larry-mitchell-gofundme-racist-67e288094833

One man's GoFundMe dares racists to put their money where their mouth is

In a new twist on the age old racist call to "go back to Africa," a black man in Indiana just created a GoFundMe page daring racists to cover his travel expenses to the continent. "If you want me to go back to Africa," Larry Mitchell says, "I will gladly go." Telling white racists to "put their money where their mouth is," Mitchell called on members of the Ku Klux Klan and anyone else who shared their views to submit a donation.

It sounds like a stunt (and according to Mitchell it started as one), but for many years this kind of move was a real political strategy employed by black activists.

Portrait of Paul Cuffe, LACMA

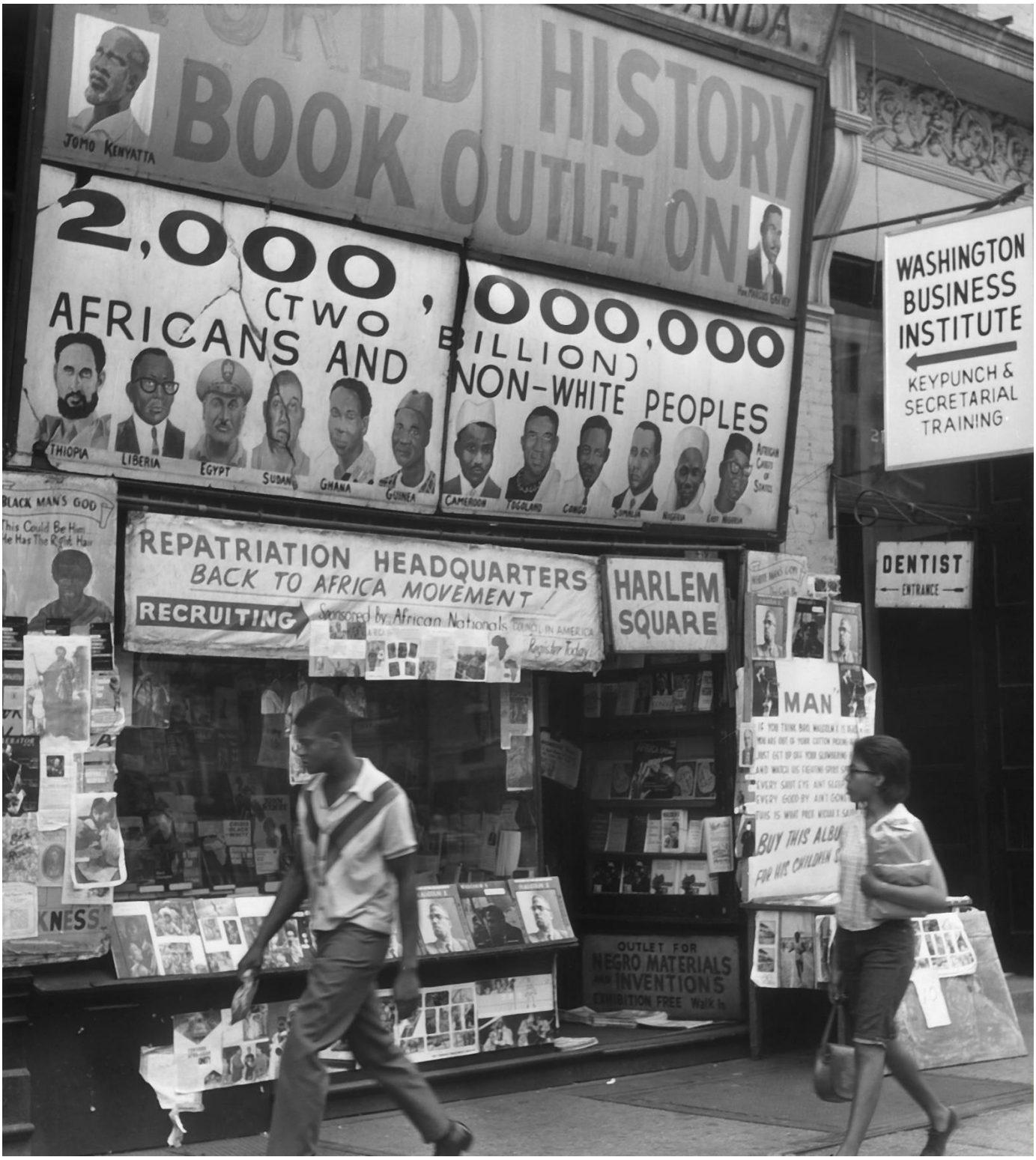
For centuries, black men and women have attempted to relocate to Africa, often maintaining the belief that black emigration — also referred to as repatriation — would reunite them with their ancestors and return them to their native land. One of the earliest efforts of this kind was led by Paul Cuffe, a wealthy African American businessman and an avid sailor who traveled extensively to and from West Africa in the 19th Century. Concerned about the welfare of people of African descent in the United States, Cuffe began to endorse emigration to Sierra Leone, where he led a group of thirty eight individuals, using his own funds to cover travel expenses.

In the years following Cuffe's death in 1817, the American Colonization Society (ACS), an organization founded by a coalition of white slave owners and Quakers, played a central role in supporting black emigration. While members of the ACS advocated the abolition of slavery, they founded the organization on the racist premise that African Americans and whites could not peacefully coexist. As a result, they actively endorsed black emigration and played a significant role in relocating African Americans to West Africa during the early to mid-nineteenth century. The organization received widespread support from prominent white Americans and — believe it or not — a $100,000 appropriation from Congress in 1819. Between 1817 and 1866, the ACS sent an estimated thirteen thousand African Americans to Liberia and established the nation as a colony for freed men and women in 1822.

While many race leaders criticized the racist agenda of the ACS, a cadre of black leaders welcomed the organization's assistance. During the late nineteenth century, Bishop Henry McNeal Turner of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church became one of the most vocal proponents for black emigration. Insisting that African Americans should take pride in their homeland, and convinced that extinction was the only alternative to emigration, Turner appealed to African Americans to leave the country.

> *"I regard the Klan, the Anglo-Saxon clubs and White American societies, as far as the Negro is concerned, as better friends of the [black] race than all other groups of hypocritical whites put together."*
>
> *— Marcus Garvey*

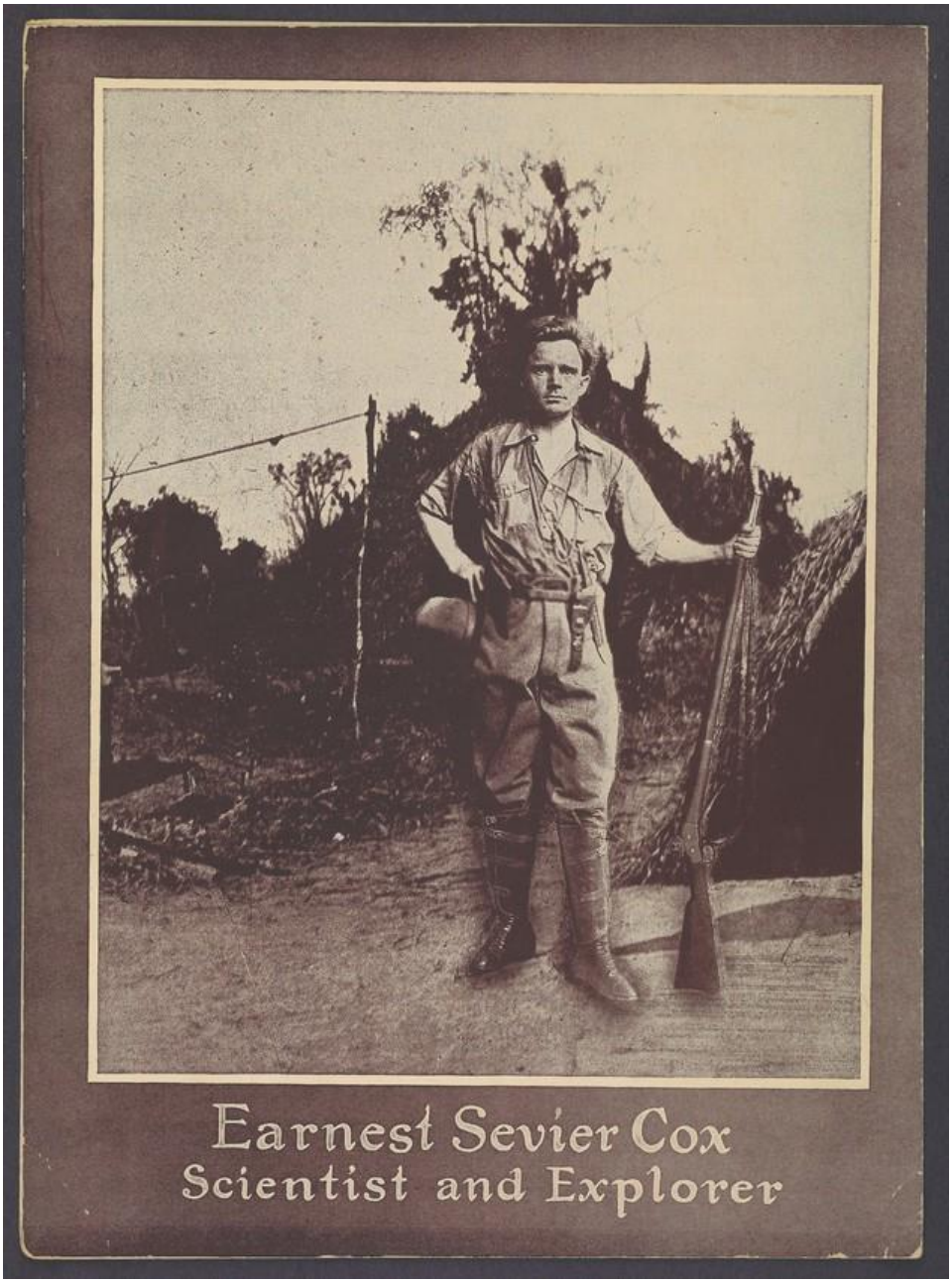
Utilizing a variety of outlets including his newspapers, *The Voice of Mission* and the *Voice of the People*, he advocated for emigration as the best means to improve the social and economic conditions of African Americans. His efforts resulted in the emigration of an estimated five hundred African Americans to Liberia during the 1890s.



Office of the Back to Africa Movement in Harlem, New York, 1965, with a sign featuring portraits of African heads of state.

In the decades to follow, several black activists and intellectuals would lead the fight for black emigration, often relying on the assistance of white supremacists and ardent segregationists eager to rid the country of black people. During the early twentieth century, Marcus Garvey, the charismatic black nationalist leader of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), became one of the leading proponents of black emigration.

Similar to Bishop Turner, Garvey and his supporters reached out to white segregationists — including Earnest Sevier Cox of Richmond, Virginia — in an effort to solicit financial and political support for the UNIA's Liberia plan. In a controversial decision that generated widespread criticism, Garvey later held a meeting with Edward Young Clarke, acting imperial wizard of the KKK, in 1922.



To be sure, Garvey did not solicit financial support from the KKK, and his decision was largely motivated by his concerns over growing violence towards UNIA members. But Garvey's meeting with the KKK, similar to Turner's willingness to work with the ACS, highlights how a particular kind of ruthless political pragmatism informed black leaders' responses to white supremacy in the United States.

Several black nationalist leaders followed suit in subsequent years, reaching "across the aisle" in an effort to support black emigration to Africa. During the 1930s, Mittie Maude Lena Gordon, founder of the Peace Movement of Ethiopia (PME), collaborated with individuals like Mississippi Senator Theodore G. Bilbo and launched a massive letter-writing campaign to solicit support from white supremacists and segregationists to help advance her pro-emigration campaign. Her efforts yielded a few hundred dollars. During the 1940s, Pan-Africanist leader Amy Jacques Garvey also reached out to white supremacists, including Bilbo and Cox, to ask them to match their separatist views with tangible resources, including money, to facilitate emigration to Africa. Her requests fell on deaf ears.

> FOLKS, YOU MAY WISH TO NOTE THAT NONE OF THE PROMINENT BLACK LEADERS WHO CHAMPIONED THE "BACK TO AFRICA" MOVEMENTS EVER CHOSE TO GO TO AFRICA THEMSELVES, TO SETTLE THERE. HYPOCRISY? IN REALITY, WE MUST SEE THESE MOVEMENTS AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE ROMANTICIZATION OF AFRICA, WHICH IN TURN WAS AN IDEOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO THE SEVERITY AND SEEMING UNASSAILABILITY OF RACIST OPPRESSION IN UNITED STATES. NOW, CHECK THIS OUT: IN ONE OF THOSE FASCINATING IRONIES OF HISTORY, ONE OF THE PROMINENT BLACK LEADERS WHO HAD OPPOSED GARVEY'S "BACK TO AFRICA" MOVEMENT HIMSELF ENDED UP MIGRATING TO AFRICA (SPECIFICALLY GHANA; HE LIVED THERE UNTIL HIS DEATH AND IS BURIED THERE). SO, WHO WAS HE? NONE OTHER THAN W.E.B. DU BOIS!
>
> *--INSTRUCTOR*

W.E.B. Du Bois

More than sixty years later, Larry Mitchell has made the same kind of appeal for racists to "put their money where their mouth is" on his GoFundMe page. At the time of writing this article [2016], he has raised more than $1700 — an indication that some white supremacists are more than eager to take him up on his offer. In reality, Mitchell has no intentions of actually leaving the United States, as he recently admitted. If he raises

the $100,000, he plans to go on vacation somewhere in Africa. His appeal, however, sheds light on the controversial political strategies black people have employed in their efforts to combat racism and discrimination. The individuals who inspired Mitchell's request serve as a bitter reminder that old racist views die hard.
