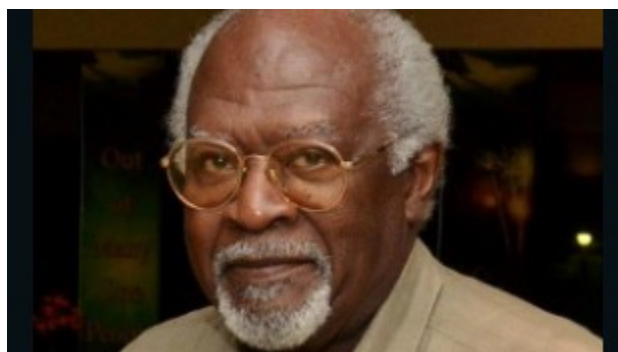


# Up You Mighty People

by

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My father's aim was to create a world in which Africans could live with self-respect which was sustainable and which while meeting the human needs, did not degrade nature, which was our source. This was a very African vision, based on our original understanding of right order – Ma'at that's in the original civilization of Africa, present from the first time, which was called "Zep Tepi" by our ancestors. This was a normal vision, based on

values that put humans first, and was not dependent on the logic of intellectual assumption, materialistic ideologies, or the logic of industrial capitalism.

Of course, before we speak of a vision, we need information and that information of our history and the present situation had to be unbiased. As Marcus Garvey said, "A people without a knowledge of their history and culture is like a tree without roots". If the info is missing, incomplete or distorted, then the model that is designed to implement the vision will be wrong. And the implementation will be misdirected and the process will miss the goal of the vision.

Marcus Garvey in 1910 travelled throughout central and South America seeking information about the condition of the lives of Africans in the diaspora. From 1912-14 he travelled throughout England and Europe to study and understand the European and Colonial powers at home. He also learned about Africans on the continent from Duse Muhammed Ali who was an Egyptian living in England and had a monthly magazine – the *African Times and Orient Review*. He met many African students, sailors who travelled to African from English ports and he read voraciously.

With this info, he concluded that African civilization had been destroyed by European and Arab invasions and that it needed to be reconstituted. On his way back to Jamaica he also read “*Up from slavery*,” by Booker T. Washington and this helped to ignite his imagination. While aboard ship, it came to him, lying on his back, that it was his job to inspire Africans to redeem Africa. He had his moment, when he met his Creator and he was told what he had to do. Africa for the Africans, those at home, and those abroad. Shortly after landing in Kingston Jamaica, July 1914, he formed the *Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League*.

During his lifetime he defined Pan Africanism and led the largest mass movement outside the continent of Africa. At its height, the organization had a membership variously estimated at between 6 million and 11 million, with 1200 division in 40 countries from Africa to Zambia. The organization's paper – the *Negro World*, was the largest Negro weekly in the United States. And was published continuously from 1918-1933. It was printed in 3 languages – English, Spanish and French. Even though banned in many colonial territories, it penetrated them all. From Kenya in the East, to South Africa, and to Senegal in the West. His main principles of organizational effort were:

1. To unite all African people in a fraternal bond based on a common identity, common descent, common beliefs, history and culture.
2. To develop a nation state in Africa that would lead to the future freedom, independence and unity of other African states
3. Self-reliance. The paradigm to development was African. It was not European. It was communal, it was inclusive, it was cooperative and it was socially just. The economic policy was to regulate the use and flow of capital for the greatest good. There was no “free market,” and there was no “invisible hand.”
4. He said “we’re going to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery because whilst others might free the body – none but ourselves can free our minds.” He recognized that Emancipation began with the spiritual essence of the human being, and this had to be nurtured in order to guide scientific materials, which, on its own, was heading to chaos and disaster.
5. He saw culture as the milieu in which people developed, and as such could be used as an instrument to change the dependent psychology of the previously enslaved and colonized African person

His use of titles, symbols, images, propaganda and parades were unparalleled in the motivation of the African. His social and political philosophy was a major impetus for the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s, and he had a similar influence on the Caribbean in the 1930s.

I think here in Trinidad you had Buzz Butler and Cipriani and I think they were devotees of and around the same time as Marcus Garvey, and understood his philosophy. His philosophy and theory predate black liberation theory. He was the first one to tell Africans to take the pictures of a blond, blue eyed Jesus down from the wall and put up the picture of a dark skinned person. The person you worship should look like you, not like somebody else. He traced the genealogy of Jesus as it is written historically, which included African people, and he said the blood of all nations ran through the veins of Jesus. And of course he said that while anthropomorphically you could get a picture of a human being, God is a Spirit. And an African who's worshipping, and if he's using an image, that image should look like the African person.

There is no area of African nationhood that he did not cover in his organization's structure or philosophical teachings. Psychology, culture, education, religion, government, economics, business entrepreneurship, trade, investment, character development et cetera. He was completely dedicated to the unity and development of African people. I'll just read three verses of a poem penned in 1927 while imprisoned in Atlanta in the United States:

“Hail! United States of Africa-free!”

(This is in 1927, we still don't have the United States of Africa, but this was Marcus Garvey's vision)

Hail! Motherland most bright, divinely fair!

State in perfect sisterhood united,

Born of truth; mighty thou shalt ever be.

Hail! Sweet land of Our Father's noble kin!

Let joy within thy bounds be ever known;

Friend of the wandering poor, and helpless, thou,

Light to all, such as freedom's reigns within.

From Liberia's peaceful western coast

To the foaming Cape at the southern end,

There's but one law and sentiment sublime,

One flag, and its emblem of which we boast.”

The model was set, the implementation was incomplete and the goal had not been reached at his death in 1940, at the early age of 53. The torch was passed however, to the pre-eminent continental Pan-Africanist, Kwame Nkrumah, of Ghana.

Kwame Nkrumah said: “Long before any of us were even conscious of our own degradation, Marcus Garvey fought for African national and racial equity. I think that of all the literature I studied, the book that did more than any to fire my enthusiasm was *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*. Malcolm X said “every time you see another nation in the African continent become independent, you know that Marcus Garvey is alive.”

It was Marcus Garvey’s philosophy of Pan Africanism that initiated the entire freedom movement which brought about the independence of African nations. And had it not been for Marcus Garvey and the foundations laid by him, you would find no independent nations in the Caribbean today. Our own freedom movement that is taking place right here in America today was initiated by the work and teachings of Marcus Garvey.” Martin Luther King Jr. said: “Marcus Garvey was the first man of colour in the history of the United States to lead and develop a mass movement. He was the first man on a mass scale and level to give millions of Africans a sense of dignity and destiny, and make the African feel that he was somebody.”

Jomo Kenyatta said: “In 1921, Kenyan nationalists, unable to read, would gather around a reader of Garvey’s newspaper, the *Negro World*, and listen to an article two or three times, then they would run various ways through the forest, careful to repeat the whole which they had memorized to African peasants, which lifted them from the servile consciousness in which they lived.”

He subsequently said “when I met Garvey and listened to him in London, I became a Garveyite.”

The Pan African mantle passed to Kwame Nkrumah after the 1945 Manchester Conference. He returned to Ghana in 1947 and began his political struggle which led to the independence of Ghana in 1957. For him this was but the first step. He said: “the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is followed by the total independence of all Africa.” His watchwords were: “Africa must unite.”

I wouldn’t go further into the machinations and perturbations caused by the evil forces of neo-colonialism and globalization that Nkrumah warned us about. I only wish to say that recently in celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the African Union the chairperson of the commission told us of her dream of African Unity for 2063. Marcus Garvey had the vision in 1927. She was dreaming of 2063.

Martin Luther King Jr. told us of his dream of little black and white boys and girls holding hands and facing the future together. There is a difference between a vision and a dream. A dream is wishful thinking, and it depends on others to make it a reality. Because in actuality, a dream is not reality. We all dream at times, and then we wake up, and the dream is gone.

A vision is your personal creation and it is your responsibility to achieve the goal. President Obama says that we shouldn't give up hope, and this he said to Ta-Nehesi Coates who is a young African writer who is shaking up America right now, with his documentation of what it is like to be in a black body, living in the United States without freedom. And he visited the White House to President Obama and that's what President Obama said to him: "Don't give up hope."

Hope is no substitute for the will and courage it needs to implement your vision. Hope is the opiate of the masses, served up by apologists for the status quo. Did hope die in South Carolina with the murder of nine African Americans by a white supremacist? Did our dream cease with the fragile psyche of a black woman manhandled by a white racist cop over minor traffic violations in Texas?

The reality is that we still cling to a system that is the product of a materialistic culture that has led Europe to attempt to colonize the world, steal whole continents, and enslave a race of people, perpetrate genocide against other ethnicities, bring the world to the brink of nuclear disaster, while depleting the non-renewable resources of the planet and creating deforestation, soil erosion, toxic waste, pesticide build up and global warming. This is clearly an expression of a sub-optimal system of scientific materialism, based on dualistic thinking of "self" versus "other" that separates individuals from each other, humans from their environment and seeks to replace nature with machines and shopping malls. The essence of this is individualism, competition and control. Yet we cling to this phantasmagoria of hell on earth, because our minds have been conditioned by 500 years of European dominance and our forced dependence. Again, Marcus Garvey said in 1937, "we must liberate our minds from mental slavery."

Marcus Garvey further said: "I have an original African mind," which means that he had worked through all the lies, negative propaganda and dehumanizing assumptions to access his unconditioned consciousness. If we want to create change in the world and not just dreams in our heads, we must undergo a similar transformation. Self-transformation is hard work, but there is no other option. We face extinction, not just as African people, but as human beings on planet earth. Because that's where the current system is leading us. I've just described all the negatives.

What is it that we want for ourselves? Our children and our grandchildren? A way of life that supports humanity, enhances the world rather than exploiting and polluting it. We must be at harmony with our selves, with others and the environment. We, like Marcus Garvey, must lead by example. This work of personal transformation and societal change will not be done for us by governments and corporations. As Malcolm X used to say "the revolution will not be televised." I guess we could say it won't be tweeted or twitted either. And it won't be on Facebook. It will be done by little people like you and me working together, setting an example that will incrementally change the world for the better.

This is the only way that it can be done. We cannot sit around and wait for the next charismatic leader. This job is too big for one man, and it is too easy to assassinate, degrade, or displace our legitimate leaders. It has been done with Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Lumumba, Nkrumah, Sankara, Sekou Toure, Ghaddafi, Mugabe, Steve Biko, and on and on. The pattern is clear, and it has set us back 100 years.

We the people must rise up in our homes, in our communities, our nations, our networks. We must educate each other, create true institutions of learning, agricultural cooperatives and business enterprises that will make us self-sufficient, and independent of European capitalism and ideology. Latin America has largely turned away from European hegemony. Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Brazil, Nicaragua, Cuba, et cetera. China is providing alternative capital and engineering skills and now has a development bank. Pope Francis with his encyclical letter “Laudato Si” has called on millions of Roman Catholics and the behemoths of disaster capitalism: The World Bank, the World Trade Organization, the IMF, the co-operations and G7, to reform the system that is creating the greatest maldistribution of wealth known to man and global climate change, with its attendant disasters such as tsunamis and earthquakes. Social justice is on the front page. It’s time for us to get up and stand up. As brother Khafra is saying, it’s time to stand up.

We’re not alone. This is a critical period in world history, where power is shifting. We have to decide what we want. Not what we dream of, hope for, or ask for, but what we want – for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren. This is a vision. Then comes the implementation with the resources, labour, capital, time and commitment. It’s hard work. All these steps are needed. There is work to do. But we are not powerless. We’ve got the power. Our power lies in the rightness and order of our vision, laid down at the first time. We can change the world. Yes we can. Yes we must.

“Up, you mighty people, you can accomplish what you will.”