

Aspirations of Statehood and Race: Marcus Garvey, Black Nationalism, and the Shaky Rhetoric
of Unity

by

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Abstract

Marcus Garvey was one of the largest speakers in the Harlem Renaissance Movement, and he represented the black nationalist movement during that era. However, he was also a political theorist who was very interested in international movements. His interest in these movements led to various attempts to get those movements and other nationalist entities on his side. Among these were the Irish Independence Movement, Zionist Movement, and the Japanese nation. However, Garvey was never able to fully realize these planned alliances because of the complexity that race and racialization played in his larger ideology. When faced with the successes of other movements, Garvey continually reevaluated their movements through race and was unable to continue the alliances that he had attempted to build. This dichotomy is seen in how Garvey's rhetoric developed over the course of his career.

Marcus Garvey is one of the most notable black political theorists in American history if only because of the sheer size of his movement. He founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association, and used it as the center of his “Back to Africa” Movement. While other Harlem Renaissance speakers focused on improving equality for black Americans, Garvey championed a much more nationalistic approach and argued that black Americans must return to Africa in order to gain equality on the global stage. Garvey shared much more in common with the teachings of other nationalist movements across the globe at this time than he did with his Harlem Renaissance rivals such as W. E. B. Du Bois. This fact was not lost on Garvey, and his push to gain support where he felt isolated characterized much of his career.¹

Marcus Garvey was not solely satisfied to talk about the issues of Black Americans, which meant that he began to form rhetoric around many other nationalist movements that had

¹ For the whiteness of the Irish during the Harlem Renaissance, see Bruce Nelson, “Negro Sinn Feiners and Black Fenians: Heroic Ireland and the Black Nationalist Imagination” (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), Alison M. Kibler, “THE MINSTREL SHOW AND THE MELEE: Irish, Jewish, and African Americans in Popular Culture and Politics” (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), Matthew Pratt Guterl, “The New Race Consciousness: Race, Nation, and Empire in American Culture, 1910-1925” (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999), and Bruce Nelson, “The Irish Are for Freedom Everywhere: Eamon de Valera, the Irish Patriotic Strike, and the Last White Nation deprived of Its Liberty” (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012). For the life of Marcus Garvey, see Colin Grant, *Negro with a Hat : The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), E. David Chronon, *Negro Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955), and Tony Martin, “Garvey, Marcus Mosiah (1887-1940), pan-African nationalist leader.” (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). For Marcus Garvey’s racial rhetoric, see Amy Jacques Garvey, *Garvey & Garveyism* (London: First Collier Books, 1963) and Tony Martin. *Race First : The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976). For Claude McKay and the Irish, see Lee M. Jenkins. “Black Murphy’: Claude McKay and Ireland” (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003). For Garvey’s similarities to Zionism, see Sabrina Zerar. “Marcus Garvey’s Nationalist Discourse: Its Hegelian Origins and Zionist Resonances” (No 7, 2010), and Desmond Jagmohan. “Between Race and Nation: Marcus Garvey and the Politics of Self-Determination,” (*Political Theory* 48, no. 3 June 2008), 275. For Japan’s ties to the Harlem Renaissance, see Yuichiro Onishi, *The New Negro of the Pacific: How African Americans Forged Cross-Racial Solidarity with Japan, 1917-1922* (Chicago: Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Inc., 2007), and Gerald Horne, *Facing the Rising Sun: African Americans, Japan, and the Rise of Afro-Asian Solidarity* (New York: New York University Press, 2018).

also sprung up in the wake of World War I. Much of his career was defined by attempts to build solidarity with other nationalist movements, using other nationalist movements as examples for how the UNIA could succeed, and using any built solidarity to bolster fundraising for his goals. These are not mutually exclusively, of course, and Garvey would often pursue all three goals over the course of his rhetoric. However, despite Garvey's pursuit of support, examples, and monetary gain, any goals of his were superseded by his views on race and skin color, even as his rhetoric danced around his beliefs.

In order to explore this dichotomy of Garvey's push for nationalist support and wariness of movements that were white, I have chosen to look at his rhetoric on three different nationalist movements. First, I look at how Garvey sought to gain allies with the Irish Nationalist Movement following the Easter Uprising. This is best used to establish how Garvey would shape his movement based on the influences of others, and yet cracks would show in his support as he was forced to contend with the whiteness of the Irish. Secondly, I look at his support for the Zionist movement to demonstrate how quickly and drastically his rhetoric would break down once it was forced to contend with his ideas of race. Further, the way Garvey talked about Zionism betrayed his misunderstandings on what nationalist success must look like. Lastly, I analyze Garvey's ideas of Japan because it shows his views on race plainly, and makes it much easier to understand his failure to reconcile the two streams of rhetoric. Although Japan was already an established country at this time, much of Garvey's goals for nationalist solidarity can be seen in his treatment of their plights, especially because the country was very nationalist at the time.

The study of Marcus Garvey is a fascinating story because of how it was stunted at the outset because his legacy was largely ignored and passed onto others, such as when W. E. B. Du

Bois was lauded as the “father of Pan-Africanism.”² Additionally, Garvey’s impact on black Americans was belittled by historians, as shown by E. David Chronon’s 1955 book entitled *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*. Chronon sought to prove that the nationalistic zeal of Garvey’s movement had left black America and that by the 1950s “there remain[ed] little practical significance as a fitting monument to his labors.”³ He felt that although Garvey had numerous impressive accomplishments, he was forgotten because his movement had no lasting impact on American discourse.

Through historians trivializing Marcus Garvey’s achievements, Amy Jacques Garvey wrote and quietly published *Garvey & Garveyism* to a largely uncaring audience.⁴ Although not a direct reply to Edmund Chronon, Garvey attempted to counter many of his accusations. Amy Jacques Garvey’s main goal with the book was to ask that the legacy of her late husband be recognized. She lists his accomplishments, his rhetoric, and his living impact, volunteering her own experience visiting Ghana and, as Marcus Garvey’s widow, being treated with respect and admiration.⁵ Although Garvey had to release her book quietly, its impact did not remain quiet for long. Less than a year after her book, Marcus Garvey’s ideas were once again brought into the light as a central force in the Black Power Movement.⁶ Although the Black Power Movement

² Colin Grant. *Negro with a Hat : The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 452.

³ E. David Chronon, *Negro Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955), 223-224.

⁴ Grant, *Big Hat*, 453.

⁵ Amy Jacques Garvey, *Garvey & Garveyism* (London: First Collier Books, 1963), 302.

⁶ Grant, *Big Hat*, 453-454

began to decline in the mid 1970s, Marcus Garvey's impact on black America was now undeniable. In this context, Tony Martin released his book *Race First: The Ideological and Organization Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*. Martin was freed from the constraint of proving why Garvey was still relevant, and instead focused on why Garvey's rhetoric on race was so alluring.⁷ He also explored the fall of Garvey's movement, and the enduring idea of Garvey. Weaving these elements together, Martin proved to be one of the first historians to give a more complete picture of Garvey's legacy.

The study of Garvey's rhetoric was later explored by Matthew Pratt Guterl in *The New Race Consciousness: Race, Nation, and Empire in American Culture, 1910-1925*. Rather than comment on Garvey specifically, Guterl instead shows how Garvey's rhetoric changed the world's perspective on race, and on nationalist solidarity. Focusing on the racialization and nationalism of the Irish, and Garvey's connection to those ideals, Guterl criticizes historians that claim Garvey made no action to forward the cause of Irish self-determination.⁸ Guterl opened the study of Garvey's rhetoric towards the Irish and the opportunity was seized by Bruce Nelson in his book *The Making of the Irish Race*. While Colin Grant wrote the singlemost comprehensive biography of Garvey, titled *Negro with a Hat*, Bruce Nelson looked at Garvey from a different lense. Exploring Garvey from the Irish perspective, Bruce Nelson uses Garvey's rhetoric as an example for the larger solidarity between black and Irish nationalism, and further addresses Garvey's respect for Irish martyrs.⁹ A few years later, in 2015, M. Alison Kibler continued this

⁷ Martin, *Race First*, 23-37.

⁸ Matthew Pratt Guterl. "The New Race Consciousness: Race, Nation, and Empire in American Culture, 1910-1925" (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 325-327.

⁹ Bruce Nelson, "Negro Sinn Feiners and Black Fenians: Heroic Ireland and the Black Nationalist Imagination" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 192-200.

idea in *Censoring Racial Ridicule: Irish, Jewish, and African American Struggles over Race and Representation, 1890-1930*. He focused on the relationship between black Americans, Jewish Americans, and Irish Americans, and the shifting definition of whiteness that characterized their oppression. He states that as the Irish continued to embrace whiteness, they were criticized and distanced from many Harlem Renaissance leaders, but there was not a strain on their solidarity with Marcus Garvey.¹⁰ I intend to address the solidarity between Irish and Black nationalism, because unlike Bruce Nelson, Matthew Pratt Guterl and M. Alison Kibler, I believe this solidarity was not nearly as sincere as Garvey's rhetoric implied.

While the three previous historians focused on Garvey's rhetoric on the Irish, others decided to look more closely at his rhetoric on Zionism. In 2010, Sabrina Zerar wrote "Marcus Garvey's Nationalist Discourse: Its Hegelian Origins and Zionist Resonances," in which she studied the ideological similarities between Marcus Garvey and the Zionist leaders of the time.¹¹ She looks into the ways in which both of the movements are similar to Hegelian thought, through the ways in which they intend to imagine their nation and then create the material circumstances out of that idea. In 2020, Desmond Jagohan built on that idea by looking at the ways in which Garvey's movement was built similarly to the Zionist movement from the start. He talks about a Zionist philosopher in London who was a huge inspiration for Garvey during the early years of his career.¹² Both of these historians studied Garvey's implicit links to Zionism, and the ways in

¹⁰ Alison M. Kibler. "THE MINSTREL SHOW AND THE MELEE: Irish, Jewish, and African Americans in Popular Culture and Politics," in *Censoring Racial Ridicule: Irish, Jewish, and African American Struggles over Race and Representation, 1890-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 42.

¹¹ Sabrina Zerar. "Marcus Garvey's Nationalist Discourse: Its Hegelian Origins and Zionist Resonances" (خطاب No 7, 2010), 50.

¹² Desmond Jagmohan. "Between Race and Nation: Marcus Garvey and the Politics of Self-Determination," (*Political Theory* 48, no. 3 June 2008), 275.

which the two movements grew together. My paper instead looks at the explicit rhetoric that Garvey had on Zionism, with how he used examples of Zionism in his speeches and in his search for allies.

In 2007, around the same time as the burgeoning interest in Garvey's relationship with the Irish Independence Movement and Zionism, Yuichiro Onishi wrote, *The New Negro of the Pacific: How African Americans Forged Cross-Racial Solidarity with Japan*. Onishi looked into the Harlem Renaissance as a whole and their opinions on the rise of Japan in the wake of World War I. He studied the way in which Garvey's support compared to other black political theorists of the time.¹³ Following that same line of thinking, Gerald Horne wrote *Facing the Rising Sun: African Americans, Japan, and the Rise of Afro-Asian Solidarity* about the Harlem Renaissance opinions in greater depth. Horne looked much more in depth into the rhetoric of Garvey and his peers, and the ways in which their opinions changed as Japan embraced imperialism.¹⁴ I talk about many similar topics as these two historians. My paper is different, because I compare his rhetoric on Japan with how he viewed other nationalist movements of the time.

1. Marcus Garvey on the Irish Independence Movement

Garvey's rhetoric on Irish nationalism is a strong baseline through which his larger efforts for inter-nationalist support can be understood. His efforts to reach out to the Irish Independence Movement had precedence, as can be seen with the example of Claude McKay,

¹³ Yuichiro Onishi, *The New Negro of the Pacific: How African Americans Forged Cross-Racial Solidarity with Japan, 1917-1922* (Chicago: Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Inc., 2007), 191-213.

¹⁴ Gerald Horne, *Facing the Rising Sun: African Americans, Japan, and the Rise of Afro-Asian Solidarity* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 42-43.

another Harlem Renaissance thinker, who made a trip to Ireland to recruit allies.¹⁵ Furthermore, Garvey's relationship with Irish nationalism proved extremely fruitful in establishing his base and was one of the most vital alliances that Garvey established. However, as can be seen in his matter-of-fact approach to propaganda, Garvey only used his alliance with Irish nationalism as a tool for building up the Universal Negro Improvement Association.¹⁶ This means that his rhetoric was extremely dynamic, as can be seen with how he took a vastly different strategy regarding the Irish, separating their respective movements once he felt that Irish Nationalism was no longer useful. The false solidarity in his rhetoric on Irish nationalism, the ways in which it changed to match the UNIA's needs, and the general use of racialization, make it a strong primer for Garvey's overall failures to establish the nationalist solidarity that he wanted.

The Irish Independence Movement was a nationalist movement that grew in the late 19th Century with the formation of Sinn Féin. Over the next few decades, its popularity rose until the Easter Uprising of 1916, when Ireland rebelled against the British. The uprising was quickly quelled, but from then on rebellion was on the horizon.¹⁷ There were a long series of protests in the following years, the most internationally notable of which was Terence MacSwiney's hunger strike and death in 1919.¹⁸ At around the same time Eamon de Valera, a surviving member of the Easter Uprising, toured the United States in order to fund an Irish war against the British. The War started in 1919 as well, and continued until Ireland gained their independence in 1921.¹⁹

¹⁵ Lee M. Jenkins. "'Black Murphy': Claude McKay and Ireland" (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 287.

¹⁶ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol. II, 27 August 1919-31 August 19, ed. Robert A. Hill, Emory J. Tolbert, and Deborah Forczek (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 586.

¹⁷ Bruce Nelson, *Negro Sinn Féiners*, 183.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 196.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 197-199

The Anglo-Irish Treaty which sealed the end of the War of Irish Independence left Northern Ireland under British rule. Many nationalists felt that the arrangement was unacceptable, and so a Civil War brewed in Ireland over the treaty. The Civil War eventually ended with Ireland accepting the Anglo-Irish Treaty, and abandoning their goal of full Irish Independence.²⁰

As for Garvey on the Irish, the first test of rhetoric came from the United Negro Improvement Association as a whole to see what would be supported by the general membership. At the same time as the Irish were pushing to be recognized as a race, with the Irish Race Conventions, the UNIA tried out a similar claim.²¹ A short statement by Chairlady Davis was transcribed before Garvey's anticipated speech and William F. Smart, the transcriber, took note of the audience reaction while Chairlady Davis claimed that the UNIA would "stand more firmly on the platform of this great organization that takes in all the negroes, whether he be a French negro, a Spanish negro, an Italian Negro, a German negro, (laughter), or an Irish negro (great laughter)."²² This reaction was clearly taken as an indication of the broader opinion of the Irish Race Conventions, because the terminology was never used again.

This is not to say that Garvey ever saw the Irish as a non-white race. In her memoir after his death, Marcus Garvey's first wife, Amy Ashwood described the time when Garvey separated himself from his first fiancée. Although his first betrothed was Spanish-Irish, he never got over her whiteness and in his plea for forgiveness he stated "You will be far happier with a member of

²⁰ Ibid, 243-244

²¹ Guterl, *New Race Consciousness*, 322-323.

²² *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol. I, 500.

your own race; so will I be with one of mine.”²³ He was willing to put his racial opinions aside to test possible UNIA rhetoric, but Marcus Garvey always had race on the forefront of his mind.

Despite abandoning the UNIA’s brief excursion into the racialization of the Irish, Garvey remained a staunch supporter of the War of Irish Independence. In 1918 he invited Irish nationalist leaders, Robert E. Ford and George McAneny to Liberty Hall to address the crowd. Neither of the men took Garvey up on his offer, but they did respond with their apologies on not being able to attend. Of these two responses, Robert E. Ford of the *Irish World* was most supportive of Garvey’s cause. He mentioned his abolitionist father and commended Marcus Garvey’s efforts to have the UNIA’s demands be heard by the post-WWI peace conference. He then implored the black nationalist leader to continue to support Irish independence.²⁴ Although this was the only time that Garvey received a degree of solidarity from the Irish nationalists in Ireland, he continued to honor Ford’s appeal for support.

Marcus Garvey would often draw parallels between his movement for a unified Africa ruled by Africans and other independence movements of the time. Along that vein, support for Irish independence held a snug spot in Garvey’s rhetoric. He would claim that although England had sovereignty over the Irish isles, the land still belonged to the Irish people. The comparison between the push for Irish independence and his own black nationalist struggle “evoked the greatest applause.”²⁵ Garvey was interviewed in the *Heraldo de Cuba* during his visit to Havana when he made the most direct comparison between his movement and Irish nationalism. When

²³ Grant, *Big Hat*, 61.

²⁴ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol. I, 287.

²⁵ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol. II, 538.

asked by a reporter if the UNIA would eventually transform into an armed struggle, Garvey matter-of-factly replied with “[o]ur problem is exactly the same as Ireland’s.”²⁶

By 1921 Garvey had placed himself wholly on the side of Irish Independence and his rhetoric had become a direct parallel. Even further, Garvey started to lay the foundation of the UNIA’s imagery as fundamentally in support of Irish independence. During an interview with Charles Mowbray White, Garvey presented his notes on the first development of the Pan-African flag which would become the primary symbol of the UNIA’s struggle for a free Africa. The colors on the flag are Red, Green, and Black. As Garvey explained to White, “the red showed their sympathy with the “Reds” of the world, and the Green their sympathy for the Irish in their fight for freedom.”²⁷

Although Marcus Garvey had pledged his full support to the Irish nationalist cause, his rhetoric in terms of the Irish as a race changed. After he dabbled in a racial parallel, Garvey took a different route and instead took measures to distance himself from the push for the racialization of the Irish. In a 1920 speech, Garvey criticized the British government for saying that the Irish weren’t able to run their own government. He made the standard parallel between Irish independence and African independence, but then he moved into the question of race. Asserting that “it is not a matter of injustice done because of race,” Garvey points to Irishmen who held respected positions in the British government as evidence that the Irish people were subject to racism.²⁸ He continued to claim that you would not find black people inhabiting similarly

²⁶ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol. XII, *The Caribbean Diaspora, 1920-1921*, ed. Robert A. Hill, John Dixon, Mariela Haro Rodríguez, and Anthony Yuen (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 159.

²⁷ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol. II, 603.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 588.

respected positions.²⁹ Interestingly this coincides with the time period where Bruce Nelson claims that Irish nationalists' attempted to brand themselves as subjugated members of the white race.³⁰ It also shows that the proposition by Matthew Pratt Guterl, that the Irish stressing their whiteness caused subsequent friction between Irish nationalism and the larger Black nationalist movement, also had its effect on Garvey's rhetoric.³¹

The Irish struggle for independence sprouted numerous martyrs who, in sacrificing themselves for their freedom, piqued Marcus Garvey's interest. He adopted the militant rhetoric that his struggle was as bloody as the Irish War for Independence, including name-dropping Irish martyrs.³² When he was first threatened with prison, Garvey claimed that his possible imprisonment was an indication that "the time had come for the Negro race of [*sic*] offer up its martyrs upon the altar of liberty even as the Irish had given a long list from Robert Emmet to Roger Casement."³³ The idea that the fight for independence from imperialism was identical worldwide had such an effect on Garvey's audience that, when asked who would die for the black race, the entire audience volunteered. A speaker who introduced Garvey, later acknowledged the wish to kindle a nationalistic love for Africa that was similar to the Irish nationalism of the same time.³⁴ Using Irish martyrs was a way that Garvey, and his allies, could

²⁹ Ibid 587-588.

³⁰ Bruce Nelson, "The Irish Are for Freedom Everywhere: Eamon de Valera, the Irish Patriotic Strike, and the Last White Nation deprived of Its Liberty" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 234.

³¹ Guterl, *The New Race Consciousness*, 328.

³² *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol. XII, 159.

³³ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol. I, 472.

³⁴ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol. II, 451.

follow the Irish model and subsequently mold a similar romanticism of Africa into the core of the Universal Negro Improvement Association.

In 1920, a Sinn Fein politician named Terence MacSwiney was jailed for his sympathy with the cause of Irish independence. During his imprisonment, MacSwiney began a hunger strike in protest, and he continued this strike until his death. During his imprisonment MacSwiney became an easy icon for Marcus Garvey to promote anti-colonialist solidarity. Thirty one days after MacSwiney's hunger strike began, Marcus Garvey sent a telegram to David Lloyd George, the prime minister of Britain. He lobbied for MacSwiney's release and referred to his imprisonment as "another blot on the history of England."³⁵ Garvey also sent a telegram to an ally of MacSwiney declaring his will that the ally would convey his sympathies to the starving politician. Just as Garvey had encountered great success in using the Irish martyrs, Robert Emmet and Roger Casement, he used the honorary martyrdom of the starving MacSwiney to appeal to his audience at Liberty Hall.³⁶

Marcus Garvey's rhetoric in support of Irish independence peaked with his first action towards their goals. An Irish nationalist strike of longshoremen was being held during the month of August and September of 1920. The strike was primarily for the release of Terence MacSwiney, and by extension Irish independence. During this strike, one of Garvey's meetings had a record fourteen Irish supporters in the audience, which suggested growing inter-movement solidarity. Several American Irish nationalist leaders spoke at the conference and they reaffirmed their solidarity with Garvey. As a result, once the meeting was concluded Garvey sent one of his supporters to the strike at the docks. The supporter convinced the black workers at the docks to

³⁵ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol. II, 649.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 649.

join in the strike. Afterwards a meeting was held between a UNIA leader and Irish nationalist leaders, and a Garvey supporter expressed his trust that the Irish nationalists would send money in response to the strike assistance.³⁷ This event is huge because it is not only the largest cooperation between Garvey's organization and Irish nationalism, but also it's the first time that Garvey put his rhetoric towards Irish liberation into practice. Just like the letter he had received from Robert E. Ford in 1918, this cooperation reaffirmed his alliance with the Irish cause.³⁸

Although it may appear to be a charitable act of solidarity, Garvey's support of the strike had more motives than his rhetoric had implied. Just as Marcus Garvey saw Irish nationalism as a strong template for black nationalism, he saw the Irish nationalists as a valuable source of income. Garvey's shipping business, the Black Star Line, had fallen on hard times and he was approaching bankruptcy. With dwindling donations from the black population in New York, Garvey's field agent expressed his expectation that Garvey "is going to keep close to the Irish in the future."³⁹ This statement casts doubt on Marcus Garvey's genuine support of Irish independence. As he turned away from the Irish nationalists in the Irish Race Conference, used the push for Irish independence as a guide for black nationalism, and pledged increased support for MacSwiney's cause as a fundraising campaign, Garvey's rhetoric towards Ireland began to appear extremely calculated.

It is unclear whether Garvey's bid for increased financial aid from Irish nationalists was successful, because through 1921 he largely did not speak on the topic. Once in his *Heraldo de*

³⁷ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol III, *September 1920-August 1921*, ed. Robert A. Hill, Emory J. Tolbert, and Deborah Forczek (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 12-13.

³⁸ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol. I, 287.

³⁹ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol III, 13.

Cuba article and once in Washington DC. In Garvey's speech at capital of the United States of America, he criticized the nationalistic spirit of his supporters in Washington. Using the Irish example once again, Garvey pushed to instill black nationalism and further criticized Booker T. Washington.⁴⁰ After that speech, Garvey didn't speak to a crowd on Irish independence until December of 1921, when Ireland attained home rule in the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

Marcus Garvey wasted no time congratulating the newly freed Irish state. Addressing his crowd at Liberty Hall, he updated his list of martyrs by adding MacSwiney, and he reiterated the assertion that the Irish cause was similar to the UNIA's cause. He then expressed his criticisms of the details of the newly achieved Irish freedom, and sent a telegram to Lloyd George insisting that he must continue to listen to the pleas of the Irish people.⁴¹ Garvey updated his rhetoric of comparing the Irish struggle and the push for black liberation in this speech. He began to detail the Irish struggle as one that lacks unity, referencing the Loyalists who fought against the Irish Republican Army. Although up to this point he had used the Irish model to point to an ideal nationalistic struggle, he now portrayed what he saw as Ireland's flaws. He then slyly compared the Loyalists to his own political enemies as he refers to the UNIA as a "battalion [that] will march on even to eternity."⁴²

By no longer portraying the War for Irish Independence as a wholly unified struggle, Garvey takes a massive step from his rhetoric that the UNIA must copy Irish nationalism. The primary reason for this is because upon achieving their freedom, the burden of his propaganda

⁴⁰ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol III, 15-17.

⁴¹ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol IV, 1 September 1921-2 September 1922, ed. Robert A. Hill, Emory J. Tolbert, and Deborah Forczek (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 259-260.

⁴² *Ibid*, 259.

shifted. Now Garvey saw fit to highlight the flaws of the Irish struggle, as a way to show that liberation was attainable for his own fracturing movement. Although the UNIA was still a dominant force in the Harlem Renaissance, a rival movement, headed by W. E. B. Du Bois, started to develop. The frictions between the two men had existed for a good bit of time but, as Colin Grant notes, the conflict escalated into more vocal criticisms.⁴³ In using the disunity of the Irish, Garvey could both claim that the goals of the UNIA would inevitably be attained and that Du Bois was, like the loyalists, one of the men who will “fall out on the wayside.”⁴⁴ Garvey’s criticisms of the feud in the War of Irish Independence was a skillful adaptation of his rhetoric, allowing him to both use the Irish model against his political opponents and drift away from Irish nationalism.

Doubling down on his emphasis on race, Garvey entered 1922 by painting the global liberation struggles along racial lines. He asserted that strong nations are made by strong races, and that weak races form weak countries that are cursed to be inevitably subjugated. Pushing through this rhetoric, Garvey highlighted the fact that Ireland pushed itself out of subjugation after 750 years of fighting and joined the world stage as a strong country. Yet through this racial rhetoric, Garvey still denied the Irish Race Conferences his solidarity, and instead avoided racializing the Irish independence struggle entirely. This racial rhetoric speech had a different purpose than it may appear, for as Garvey praised the Irish liberation movement he declared that “Ireland thinks of your suffering so long as Ireland suffers, but when Ireland ceases to suffer, Ireland forgets that you are suffering.”⁴⁵ He veiled this statement with compliments to Ireland’s

⁴³ Grant, *Big Hat*, 301-303.

⁴⁴ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol IV, 259.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 336.

strength and tenacity, but the purpose is made apparent. Garvey had built the foundations to criticize the Irish War of Independence, and now he had laid the groundwork for cutting ties with Irish nationalism. In broader terms he included all other liberation movements but, in refusing to identify Ireland in racial terms, his rhetoric changed from solidarity to self-reliance and further shined light on the idea that Ireland had fully embraced their whiteness.

And then Marcus Garvey was arrested. The arrest had been on the horizon for some time, with Special Agents like J. G. Tucker digging into Garvey's finances. Garvey himself had been "much concerned over a possible investigation by Federal authorities regarding his use of mails."⁴⁶ Now confronted with a new obstacle, Garvey abandoned his rhetoric changes and used the tools at his disposal to push for his freedom. Upon his arrest, Marcus Garvey released a prepared statement that referred to the Irish as one of the "races [that] have their peculiar characteristics."⁴⁷ In a vast shift in his rhetoric, Garvey made an appeal to solidarity with possible allies in the Irish nationalist movement by referring to the Irish in a racial context for the first time since 1918. This solidarity is short lived within this statement, when he gives his rhetoric on the Irish liberation movement a new utility. By comparing his own money gathering techniques to the Irish, Garvey claims "[t]he Irish came here and sold millions of dollars of Irish liberty bonds without even a dime's worth of securities."⁴⁸

After his arrest, Garvey's rhetoric towards the Irish became one of dual inconsistencies. The brief lip-service that he paid to the racialization of the Irish, and the subsequent criticism of the financing strategies of Irish nationalists, overturned his entire previous propaganda strategy.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 332.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 342.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 345.

This may have partially been a way to appeal to American Irish nationalists over the nationalists in Ireland. By criticizing the Irish that arrived in America to raise funds for the Irish War of Independence, Garvey further distanced himself from the liberation movement that, upon gaining its autonomy, he believes will forget the solidarity with the UNIA. Using the same ink, Garvey's racial rhetoric allied himself more closely with the American Irish nationalists that were closer geographically.

Garvey's bid for support from the Irish nationalists was met with failure and he grew more disillusioned with the Irish nationalists. Although his rhetoric with Irish liberation was calculated for fundraising and political purposes in building up the UNIA, there was at least some sincerity in his words. This sincerity becomes apparent upon analyzing his outrage and feelings of betrayal after 8 months of court proceedings. Addressing the crowd in Liberty Hall, Marcus Garvey shifted his public opinion of the Irish tremendously, proclaiming:

If any other race was agitating the cause that we agitate, the whole world would pronounce the righteousness of it. If Irishmen were agitating for the cause we are agitating, the whole world would believe it righteous: if the Jew were agitating for the cause we agitate, then the world would believe it righteous. But because we are Negroes the world THINKS IT A JOKE.⁴⁹

The whiteness of the Irish had finally made itself at home in Garvey's rhetoric, and he spoke on the privileges that he felt that the Irish liberation movement held. His propaganda was laid bare and, in his rage, Garvey cast aside his solidarity with the Irish nationalists of both America and abroad.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 848.

This shift in Garvey's rhetoric was quickly patched up by the standard use of Irish liberation as a model to visualize the UNIA's goals of a free Africa. The comparison was no longer Garvey's favorite to pay lip service to, as he only mentioned their liberation once until his arrest.⁵⁰ However, the damage had already been done, and Garvey's supporters now used the Irish struggle as a way to petition for Garvey's release. One of many efforts to lobby for Garvey's freedom was a list of reasons for his innocence. Written by Garvey's attorneys, Armin Kohn and Maurice Nagler, it lists the Irish movement's fundraising as an inconsistent ruling, just as Garvey had.⁵¹ With the perceived privileges of the Irish nationalists as a primary method for Garvey's legal defense, any brief mentions of solidarity became hollow. The UNIA itself made few references to Ireland in this time, and Garvey's movement completed its disconnect from Irish nationalism.

At long last, in 1927 Garvey was released from prison and promptly deported to Jamaica. Although he didn't give up on politics, Garvey became considerably less active for a few years. He lived with his family during this time and "Garvey's niece, Ruth, recalled this as a happy period, with Garvey acting as a surrogate father to her."⁵² However, Garvey's political aspirations never died down and in the beginning of the 1930s, he ran for office in Jamaica. He'd been exiled from America, his area of most influence, and so he needed to start fresh. Returning to the easy rhetoric of Ireland, despite his personal opinions, Garvey attempted to kindle

⁵⁰ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol V, September 1922-August 1924, ed. Robert A. Hill, Deborah Forczek, Devra Weber, Michael Furmanovsky, Robin Dorman, and Diane L. Hill (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 291.

⁵¹ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol VI, *September 1924-December 1927*, ed. Robert A. Hill, Barbara Bair, and Stephen Gil de Montes (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 533.

⁵² Grant, *Big Hat*, 426.

nationalism into the Jamaican population. Appealing to the personal experiences of Jamaica's mass emigration, Garvey uses the example of the Irish nationalists in America to show that nationalism can still arise from a displaced group. In his most direct appeal to establish nationalism, Garvey states "the Irish people have...bec[o]me living examples for others to follow."⁵³

Garvey's career in Jamaican politics did not last, and he was forced to leave due to the Great Depression and ensuing bankruptcy. In 1935, Garvey boarded a ship and traveled to London.⁵⁴ He lived out the rest of his days as a London soapbox, and his rhetoric on Ireland disappeared with his political career.

Marcus Garvey saw a great utility in using the propaganda of the Irish cause. Looking to the people of Harlem, he instilled a nationalistic zeal and rode black nationalism to prominence. By pushing solidarity with the subjugated Ireland, Garvey was able to build a vaster network of allies and sources of income. When he was in a dire state, he believed that by appealing to the racialization of the Irish, Garvey would have quick solidarity to his aid from the American Irish nationalists. But these messages were never his true opinions on the struggle for Irish liberation. By repeatedly refusing to pay any attention to the racialization of the Irish after the UNIA's first failed attempt, and his quick departure from Irish nationalism in general following their failure to show him support, Garvey makes it apparent that he only used the Irish cause as a tool for his own success. Furthermore, he was consistently aware of the whiteness of the Irish skin, which made itself apparent when arguing that he was a victim of racial oppression.

⁵³ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol VII, November 1927-August 1940, ed. Robert A. Hill, Barbara Bair, Edith Johnson, and Stephen De Sal (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 517.

⁵⁴ Grant, *Big Hat*, 434.

The Irish Independence Movement is a strong baseline in terms of Garvey's overall attempts to ally himself and the UNIA with other nationalist groups. He built much of his rhetoric using the Irish as an example, and he was the least critical of their movement than of the others that I refer to in this paper. However, despite all of the support that he had of the movement, he eventually broke away from proposing an alliance because of how they were treated as a white movement. The schism between his racial ideologies and his support for the Irish are less pronounced in this example, however it shows the various ways in which that schism can manifest itself in his rhetoric.

2. Marcus Garvey on the Zionist Movement

The early Twentieth Century coincided with an explosion of nationalist movements throughout the globe. The Irish Independence Movement was one such movement, and was a main focus of Garvey's. However, it was hardly the only movement that Garvey used for his rhetoric and recruitment. Another favorite topic of his was the Zionist movement, a movement with similar rhetoric on the reclamation of a stolen homeland. This meant that it was ripe for Garvey to use in his own rhetoric, in a way that was similar to his rhetoric on the Irish Independence Movement. However, just as Garvey's opinions on the Irish changed throughout his movement, his rhetoric on Zionism underwent a much more drastic evolution. As he was forced to reconcile his ideology on race and nationalism, Garvey quickly descended into antisemitism and a rejection of his search for potential allies.

The Zionist Movement of the early 20th Century traced its origins to Theodore Herzl, who was a renowned political theorist. He believed that Jews should not try to assimilate and instead reclaim Palestine as their homeland. His ideas became much more widespread after the Russian pogroms of 1905, when many Jews were forced to flee to Palestine and many others followed suit. After the end of World War I, there were a long series of peace talks and concession discussions. One of the major movements that was present at these was the Zionist movement, who were laying claim to the territory of Palestine. The League of Nations agreed that Palestine would be given to Britain who had pledged support to the Zionists in 1917 with the Balfour Declaration. Despite these agreements Palestine remained mainly populated by Arabs, and the Zionists did not have much control of the region at that time.⁵⁵

The ambiguity of the Palestine situation is important because it was a dynamic that Marcus Garvey misunderstood completely. Once again, he used a nationalist movement as an example and he wrote extensively on the Zionist strategies and successes. He did not realize that Zionism had not yet taken full control over Palestine, and this lack of realization ended up causing significant friction between Garvey's attempts to support the Zionist cause and his envy with the statehood that he believed they had already achieved. In terms of Garvey's larger effort to reach out to potential nationalist allies, Zionism presented by far the most drastic change in his rhetoric on nationalist groups. This is because of the way in which Garvey saw statehood as the most important achievement a race can have, and the way in which a race achieves white identity.

Marcus Garvey began to talk about Zionism later in his career as a Harlem Renaissance orator, around the beginning of 1921. For Garvey, the Zionist movement presented a good example of how to secure self determination in a way that his movement would be able to

⁵⁵ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Zionism," accessed April 19, 2021.

follow. In February of 1921, he finally laid out his views on the Zionist movement, and larger Jewish movements globally. Garvey compared the historical struggles of Jews in Europe to the difficulties that black Americans had faced. He describes how antisemitism that was rampant in Europe was very similar to the barriers that restricted black Americans.⁵⁶

Garvey does not use this comparison as an opportunity for outreach, as he had done with the Irish, and he instead asserts that antisemitism was in the past and that Jews had overcome that struggle. Garvey describes how, by using financial strategies, Jews in Europe were able to secure powerful positions in every European government. He even went so far as to claim that the Bolshevik revolution was a Jewish plot, and that Leon Trotsky pushed the revolution to uplift Jews internationally. This was clearly an antisemitic conspiracy theory that Garvey wholeheartedly believed, but unlike most who believed the conspiracy, he viewed it as a virtue. Even further, he urged his audience in the UNIA to follow the example of the racial solidarity that he thought Jews were demonstrating in Europe.⁵⁷

An important thing to note for how Garvey viewed power dynamics, is that he specifically talked about how Jews had won World War I by securing control of Palestine. Although Garvey drew comparisons between the Jewish and the Black struggle, he made sure to list them in the past tense. For Garvey, the Zionists had already succeeded in their nationalist aspirations, and that meant that they no longer had to face oppression. Furthermore, Garvey uses language that describes Jews as a “race” but he abandons that rhetoric when talking about their supposed success in gaining total control of Europe. To Garvey, the Jews had achieved

⁵⁶ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol. III, 149-156.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 206-219.

statehood, which was how he defined success in terms of race. This is important to note, because it helps explain his antisemitic breakdown in the following decade.

Garvey uses Jewish power as a way to show that the goals of returning to Africa are not impossible, but avoids saying that the UNIA should emulate their strategies. Garvey believed that, because there were so many more black people in the world than there were Jews, all they needed was their combined numbers to take Africa by power.⁵⁸ He changed this rhetoric in 1922, as his rivalry with W. E. B. Du Bois intensified and he no longer believed that it was possible to have a combined army of all black people in the world. Instead, Garvey supported the idea of creating a Black Wall Street, so that they could use economic influence in the same way that he believed the Jews had achieved their power.⁵⁹

In 1922, Garvey was charged with allegations of mail fraud, which he vehemently denied. He claimed that the Irish and Jews had done the same fundraising techniques that he was employing and that he was being singled out because of the color of his skin.⁶⁰ While this marked a period in the shift of his rhetoric on Irish nationalist groups, this was also a major turning point in his rhetoric on Jews as a whole. Unlike with the Irish, Garvey did not petition for financial and rhetorical assistance from Jews, although he did receive some monetary support from some Jewish individuals. Instead, he had exclusively talked about Jewish nationalism as a blueprint for nationalist success. When the Irish won their independence, Garvey talked about how his movement would be forgotten by the nationalist group, because they had finally

⁵⁸ Ibid, 206-219.

⁵⁹ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol IV, 818-838.

⁶⁰ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol IV, 843-850.

achieved statehood.⁶¹ He believed that the Zionists had achieved statehood before his movement had even taken off, so he did not expect any support from them.

Before he was accused of mail fraud, Garvey had only used Jews as an example of a powerful movement. After the accusation, however, his rhetoric changed drastically. Just a day after his enraged statement on the Jew's lack of support for his movement, he made a rabid antisemitic speech about how Black people in Harlem were being kept out of owning capital and political power because they have to purchase from Jewish business owners in the community. He laid out his beliefs that Black people in Harlem are relegated to a consumer and worker status, and that Jews keep them out of any sort of ownership of capital.⁶² This was a deeply antisemitic stance, and it is also a vast change from his generally respectful statements earlier about how the UNIA must emulate Jewish success.

I believe it is only possible to explain this shift by looking at how Garvey's rhetoric changed about the Irish after they had received a state. After Ireland gained their freedom, Garvey believed that they would no longer support the UNIA because they did not have a common struggle anymore. In a similar way, Garvey thought that the Zionists were successful in their efforts to obtain Palestine, and so he believed that their achievement meant that they would not support him. Even further, because he believed that they already had a state to reside in, he thought of Jewish presence in Harlem as exploitative. To Garvey, Jews had attained whiteness and used that privilege to extract money from the Black residents in Harlem and all over America. Garvey was very wrong in this aspect, but it is important to understand Garvey's misconceptions to track his rhetoric in this period.

⁶¹ Ibid, 332-339.

⁶² Ibid, 858-873.

In 1923, the accusations against Garvey became more serious and he got into hefty legal trouble. After he was sentenced to prison time for mail fraud, Garvey blamed the whole affair on Jews. He claimed that the mail fraud was done by a Jewish individual in his company, that the jury was mostly comprised of Jews, that his prosecutor was Jewish, and that the judge that sentenced him to the maximum penalty was a Jew. Garvey believed that there was a Jewish conspiracy to get rid of him, and was so convinced that he even stated that the government was not at fault for his punishment, but that he was being sentenced by Jews just like Jesus.⁶³ This is a ridiculous assertion as it was later revealed that the FBI was literally behind the accusations, because they saw Garvey as too subversive. Even further, some documents written in December of 1920 show that the FBI saw that Garvey had donors who were Jewish and worried that he was intentionally planted in America by Leon Trotsky, to stir up dissent against the American capitalist system. So not only was Marcus Garvey wrong in his belief that he was being attacked by a Jewish conspiracy, he was actually under attack from the government believing that he was part of a Jewish conspiracy.⁶⁴

Although it may seem strange that Garvey was convinced that he was being persecuted by Jews, it can be explained by how he saw statehood as a whole. In 1924, Garvey marched into the Klu Klux Klan headquarters and met with the Grand Wizard. They agreed upon an uneasy truce, because Garvey's goals were to move all Black Americans back to Africa to create an African state, and so he was aligned with the KKK's goals of a white America. Garvey believed that his goals were the same as the racist American state, because of his efforts to create a

⁶³ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol V, 365-367.

⁶⁴ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol. III, 106-108.

homogenous ethnostate.⁶⁵ This is made even more apparent when he outlined his plan for the KKK, “Let the Jew and the Catholic fight the Klan. I think it is all right to let the white groups fight amongst themselves.”⁶⁶ He did not realize that Black Americans were used as a cheap labor source in America, and that the goals of racists were not a racially homogenous country, but instead a country of white supremacy. Because Garvey thought that Zionists had secured Palestine, but Jews instead chose to have power within America instead of going to Palestine, he saw them as opposed to his goals. He saw them as the group that was most opposed to him, because he thought they had secured a state, but then chose not to move there and create racial homogeneity.

By the end of 1924, Garvey was fully committed to the idea that Jews were launching a conspiracy to end all racial revolutions, and that is why they were attacking him. He claimed that the Bolshevik revolution was the Jewish revolution, and that there was an international conspiracy to prevent any others from occurring because it would disrupt the dominance that Garvey believed Jews had. He then makes a speech about capitalism, but instead uses Jews as a synonym for capitalist oppression, and wholly embraces his idea that the two were synonymous.⁶⁷

After 1925, Garvey does not talk about his opinions on Jews for quite a long time. This coincides with his imprisonment, deportation, and brief retirement in Jamaica. However, starting in 1933, Garvey wrote a long series of articles on the topic of Jewish nationalism for the magazine, the *Black Man*. Specifically Garvey wrote about Hitler’s rise to power, and how he

⁶⁵ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol V, 768-772.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 771.

⁶⁷ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol VI, 42-48.

felt that it was the comeuppance that Jews deserved for gaining power in countries that were not the ethnostate that he still believed that the Zionists had. Once again, Garvey used the Jews as an example for his remaining black supporters, however instead of saying they should be emulated, he used them as a cautionary tale. He talked about how it is impossible to gain any black power or black capital in America, because as long as they are a minority in a country, their power is never secure. Garvey believed that the only way to achieve political whiteness, is by being the majority race within an ethnostate and that is what he was pursuing with the UNIA.⁶⁸

Garvey undergoes a shift in his antisemitism in this time as well. At first, Garvey proclaimed his support for Hitler, saying that Hitler was just trying to secure the German state for German people after Jews had taken it from them. However, as the violence within Germany intensified, Garvey renounced his support for Hitler and began to pepper his articles with well wishes for German Jews.⁶⁹ He still almost exclusively uses them as an example for what a black movement should avoid, but he stopped overtly supporting Hitler. It is unclear if this was due to criticism, or if he changed this rhetoric on his own.⁷⁰

Then in 1936, Marcus Garvey finally learned that the Zionists did not have control over Palestine and that there was an ongoing conflict in that region. He continued his rhetoric that Jews were trying to prevent racial solidarities, and that they were running a conspiracy, but he also threw himself completely into support for the Zionist cause. He claims that they should have been putting all of their effort into Zionism in the early 1920s, and that all of their hardships are a result of what he claims was “The Age of the Jew.” His support for Zionism underwent one last

⁶⁸ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol VII, 566-568.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 666-668.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 628-637.

rhetoric change in 1937. He starts talking about the situation in Palestine in detail, and even refers to Arabs as a “coloured race.” He grapples with the racial aspect, after completely missing the complexity of the situation for so long, and begins to support a two state solution in Palestine. Garvey claimed that the only reason for a race to have a state is so that they can establish official relations with other states. This was Garvey’s definition of whiteness, and he has great difficulty rationalizing his support for Zionism as well as his much stronger and outspoken support for non-white peoples.⁷¹

Unfortunately, Garvey did not have the chance to change his rhetoric regarding Jewish nationalism again. His last article on the subject was in 1937, and he did not publicly grapple with the subject again until his death in 1940. Marcus Garvey had a deeply complex relationship with Jewish nationalism, and it can be seen in his rhetoric on the subject. Much like with the Irish, Garvey was torn between his support for their nationalist cause and his deep envy that they achieved what he had not. Furthermore, he struggled with the racial aspect, as he continually referred to Jews as both white and a separate Jewish race. However, unlike with Ireland, Garvey was convinced that the Jews had already secured their state before his career began and he was deeply misinformed on the issues of Jewish nationalism. These two elements were a disastrous combination for his rhetoric, and as a result his supposed support for the Zionist veered into vehement antisemitism. Because of this, Garvey failed to build a nationalist coalition with Zionists, and his rhetoric was not nearly as successful in garnering support as it had been when about Irish Nationalism.

Zionism was uniquely useful to Garvey because of the similarity of their respective goals, and also because he saw their movement as a success story that he could emulate; this meant that

⁷¹ Ibid, 686-695.

he worked less towards building an alliance, and was more focused on describing Zionism to his supporters. However, because he was not nearly as interested in cooperation, his rhetoric showed the most pronounced change due to his racial ideology. Unlike with the Irish, he freely expressed his opinions on Jews and Zionism because he was not worried about burning any bridges. Therefore, it suggests exactly how much his ideas on race were a barrier to his hopes of nationalist cooperation.

3. Marcus Garvey on Japan Nationalism

When choosing nationalist movements to ally with, Garvey sought ones with similar struggles to his own, and so it comes as no surprise that one movement he chose was Japanese nationalism. Japan was breaking out into the world stage at the same time as the peak of the UNIA, and so Garvey saw much profit to be gained in creating rhetoric using Japan as an example. Garvey's relationship with Japan is fascinating because of how it contrasts with the rhetorical dynamic that he built with other nationalist groups. This can partially be traced to how it is a country already, but the racial dynamics at play illuminate a particularly fascinating aspect of Garvey's ideology. Garvey does not struggle with whether or not to racialize the Japanese as he had with the Irish. This non whiteness also led Garvey to be much more frank when he talked about his ideas on race. Therefore, Garvey's rhetoric on the Japanese is a clear window into how his perceived whiteness clouded the alliance he sought with the other groups I have mentioned thus far.

In the wake of World War I, the 1919 Paris Peace Conference became a staging ground for many debates and diplomatic excursions. Japan saw the conference as a way to gain the international recognition that they felt had been denied to them. Specifically, they made the abolition of racism one of their primary concerns, and even proposed its condemnation as an addition to Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points. This move brought Japan into focus as one of the nations most committed to combating white dominance on the world stage. This move led to many Black American movements seeing Japan as one of their greatest possible allies, which led to a long series of negotiations over the course of the 1920s. However, the move to use the Paris Peace Conference to gain renown was also meant to defend Japan's plans for imperialist expansion. The nation was already claiming sovereignty over many Pacific islands and several regions in China. In this way, the Paris Peace Conference defined Japan's Interwar years in terms of both its opposition to white supremacy and its embrace of imperialism.⁷²

The start of Garvey's rhetoric on the Japanese is vastly different from other nationalist groups, because the Japanese government approached Garvey first. An FBI informant on Garvey, and also his lawyer, detailed how Japanese envoys were sent to make contact with any large black organization in the United States. They intended to start a trade relationship, where Japan would sell products to black businesses without the traditional price hike that white suppliers implement. They hoped that this partnership would be profitable for both groups involved. Interestingly, this trade partnership is also very targeted at the white domination of domestic American markets. Unfortunately for the envoys, Garvey did not understand the proposal that they were offering and both parties left the meeting empty-handed.⁷³

⁷² Yuichiro Onishi, *The New Negro of the Pacific*, 194.

⁷³ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol III, 62-63.

Although a trade alliance was not created, this meeting accomplished two things: Garvey became aware of Japan, leading to more communication and rhetoric between the two groups, and the FBI became concerned that Garvey was an agent sent by Japan to disrupt the United States political system. Clearly, the FBI thought Garvey was an agent of almost every group they could identify.

In 1920, Garvey had not quite reached his career peak and the Black Star Line, his shipping company, was experiencing extreme hardships. After one of his ships crashed, Garvey was put into insurmountable debt and he was desperately searching for any escape. After he considered suicide, he instead chose to reach out to Japan in order to establish their previously discussed trade agreement. However, they were not as amicable after the failed meeting a month prior, and they refused any agreement that Garvey proposed. Unlike in the case of the Irish and the Zionists, the Japanese government personally slighted Garvey and cost him a large amount of money.⁷⁴

Marcus Garvey's rhetoric on Japan did not start until late-1921, during the height of his political career. In the global stage, the League of Nations was pushing for an international disarmament treaty and they were pressuring Japan to disarm as well. Japan refused, which caused tensions between the two groups. Garvey saw this situation as a great example of the importance of self determination. He compared the push to disarm Japan to a robber asking a homeowner to disarm, and that Europe clearly wanted easy colonial exploitation without Japan having any defense. Garvey stated that Japan having arms in the first place was the only protection they had from colonization, and that Africa needed to emulate that defense strategy.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 70-72.

Once again he focused his energy on the idea of going back to Africa, so that the black race could have a unified country.⁷⁵

Within the same speech, Marcus Garvey betrays his lack of knowledge of the complexities of Asian politics and uses Japan to explain his racial beliefs. At the same time as Japan was resisting disarmament, the country was also making movements to colonize and take control of China. The change in power dynamics from Chinese to Japanese dominance in the region, was pushing Japan to create a sphere of influence throughout East Asia. While many were wary of these moves, Garvey saw it as the natural progression of racial power. He stated that he approves of Japan's attempts to control China, and he believed that one day Japan and China would be one unified nation. He claimed that the only reason China resisted this merger was because they were being fooled by European trade.⁷⁶ For Garvey, cultural and ideological differences were also irrelevant next to race, and to have a unified racial state is the ultimate end goal of his movement.

Much like he crafted his rhetoric on Zionism, Garvey also used Japan as an example to emulate for his movement to be successful. He talked about how Japan is able to stand up to the international community because they did not surrender their arms or autonomy. Furthermore, he claims that there are some black people who did surrender their autonomy for international acceptance and that those individuals turned black people into "a race of cowards."⁷⁷ Unlike with his rhetoric on the Zionist movement, however, Garvey saw the Japanese strategy of arming

⁷⁵ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol IV, 172-190.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 172-190.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 204-213.

themselves as directly applicable to his nationalist movement, rather than just a success story to give his followers hope.

That is not to say that Garvey thought that Japanese nationalism and Black nationalism were the same, but rather that their non-whiteness gave them similar obstacles. While he saw their obstacles as similar, Garvey's goals were vastly different and they were also intrinsically tied to his view of race. In early 1922, Garvey listed the races that he believed existed: "white, yellow, and black."⁷⁸ He continued by explaining that Whiteness is linked to imperialism and conquest, and how that was the core ideology of that race. Garvey then changed his rhetoric on Japan up until this point by explaining that their race is following that core ideology of imperialism. Strangely, Garvey did not retract his previous statements on how China should accept Japanese rule, but he instead told his audience to expect each race to practice intra-racial protection. Garvey asserted that, although his movement should follow the Japanese style of racial power, they needed to reject the value of conquest. Instead he preached that once Africa became the most powerful country and race, they needed to use their power to help the global downtrodden.⁷⁹

Garvey saw one of the core tenets of whiteness as the eradication of all other races. He described how white people focused on destroying the Native American race, and now that they succeeded in their genocide they have turned their focus on Black people. Because of this belief, Garvey was uneasy about using white countries as tools for his rhetoric.⁸⁰ In early 1922, he asserted that if their movement did not want to take inspiration from white countries, the

⁷⁸ Ibid, 322-327.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 322-327.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 479-489.

Japanese Empire worked just as well.⁸¹ Unlike the careful dancing around race that characterized Garvey's rhetoric on Irish nationalism and Zionism, race was the driving force behind all of his rhetoric on Japanese nationalism. Garvey saw other nationalist movements as useful rhetoric tools for possible recruitment and tactics, but he could not escape their whiteness. With Japanese nationalism, he had a movement to emulate that did not have it easier, in his eyes, because of the color of their skin. Garvey had a model of his ideal of strength, that was not a white country.

Garvey's use of Japan as a rhetoric tool does not mean that he wholly supports the country. In much the same way he accused the country of building their power with greed at its core, he continually talks about the importance of distrusting anyone of different races. Garvey asserts that Black people need to abandon electoralism and seeking allies, and instead focus entirely on racial preservation. He also talks about how Japan and Britain are similarly wary of other races, and that fear is what keeps them strong.⁸² For Garvey, strong countries and races rule the weak ones, and Japan's pursuit of arms reveals their ultimate goal of becoming the new strongest. This rhetoric is harsh, and seems to be contradicting all he said about building support among nationalist movements around the world. However, Garvey was personally slighted by Japan early in his career, and this experience bled into his rhetoric.

This shift in rhetoric towards distrusting all other races happened in 1924, which was around the beginning of Garvey's fraud trials. As seen in his rhetoric on the other nationalist movements, this was a period where Garvey became extremely paranoid and pessimistic. In a later speech, Garvey talks about how nationalist movements are only successful when they have something to bargain, or a particular brand. He describes how Japan's brand is of the guardians

⁸¹ Ibid, 660-664.

⁸² *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol V, 513-520.

of the East, because white countries have to answer to them when in that region. Their brand is governmental and regional strength, of which Garvey is deeply envious. His speech devolves into him lamenting how the Black race has nothing with which to bargain, and no brand that they have built. He once again asserts that they need to get power to be on the same level as Japan, but he does not lay out any plan for obtaining that power.⁸³

While Garvey's rhetoric on Japan may have changed, he still seemed to hold Japan in high regard, as can be seen in a letter he wrote to the Emperor of Japan after an earthquake hit in 1923. He extended his sympathies as well as tried to cement a political relationship by writing "Negro peoples looked to Japan as a friend in the cause of racial justice and we at this hour mourn with you in the sad national affliction that has visited the empire unawares."⁸⁴ This is interesting because at this same time, Garvey was abandoning hope of getting support from any other nationalist movements, and his court defense mirrored that development. However, by appealing to Japan on specifically racial justice lines, Garvey shows how important he sees race even after all of the claims he made about nationalist solidarity.

Garvey's rhetoric of being wary of Japan did not seem to harm his appearance in the eyes of Japanese nationalists. In 1925, the UNIA was approached by two nationalist politicians. One was Rash Behari Rose from India and the other was Kametaro Mistukawa from Japan. They were co-authoring a pamphlet about the Black experience in America, and disseminated it in their respective countries. Kametaro was the leader of the Yuzon-sha society, an extremely nationalist organization in Japan. This showed a willingness by Japanese nationalists to work with Garvey, even after his legal trouble and organization's decline. Furthermore, by teaching

⁸³ Ibid, 536-547.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 442.

the details of racism against Black Americans in Japan, anti-racism was tied to nationalist solidarity.⁸⁵ Although this proposed alliance showed a lot of promise, it was cut short by Garvey's arrest and so the UNIA was unable to capitalize on Kametaro's offer.

After his deportation, Garvey stopped talking about Japanese nationalism in the public forum for over a decade. Unlike the way he changed his rhetoric on Jews after the events preceding World War II, Garvey did not alter his opinions on Japan. In interviews in 1937, Garvey continued to talk about how Japan needed to create one homogenous Asian nation by conquering China. He remained steadfast in his belief that was what Africa needed to do in order to compete on the world stage.⁸⁶ If nothing else, Garvey deepened his ideas on racial regionalism, as can be seen in an interview in 1938 when he claimed that all races were placed in their rightful habitat by nature. For Garvey, the original sin was when races left their regions and that was something that he sought to rectify. He laid out the way he saw racial politics by saying, "Remember that white men, yellow men, brown men and black men have their individual material work to do. All that we do to-day here is for the protection of our bodies."⁸⁷

Although Japanese nationalism is different from the Irish nationalists and Zionists because Japan was a long established country, Garvey's rhetoric on the nation provides insight on his view of race. Garvey's attempts to ally with other nationalist groups were oftentimes self-sabotaged, and his rhetoric changed to throw away all possibilities of nationalist solidarity. This is the case with both the Irish and the Zionists, but is not how Garvey treated the Japanese. Even though he was nearly bankrupted because of a failed deal between the Black Star Line and the

⁸⁵ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol VI, 297.

⁸⁶ *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, vol VII, 538-540.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 882-883.

Japanese government, this direct slight did not carry into his rhetoric. This stands in stark contrast to the way he reacted to perceived transgressions by other movements, that were not supported by the evidence. Garvey's pursuit of a web of nationalist solidarity was doomed to fail from the beginning, because his ideology of race always superseded all other rhetoric.

For Garvey, Japan presented an example of a country that was competing on the world stage, which was his goal for Africa. He hoped to gain their assistance in the development of the Black Star Line or, failing that, just to aid his movement. Furthermore, he wanted their success to show that the UNIA could achieve the same thing. What made Japan so unique, in Garvey's eyes, compared to other movements is how he used the country in both his nationalist alliance rhetoric as well as his racial ideology rhetoric. Garvey laid out what exactly his ideas on race were, and what that meant for his support for Japan. This made it very clear how race affected Garvey's opinions on other nationalist groups, and hindered his efforts to form any nationalist alliances.

Conclusion

Marcus Garvey's political thought is characterized by hyper-nationalism and racial liberation, which work in tandem in his Back to Africa movement. These two elements are not synonymous, and oftentimes can lead to contradictions within the goals of the UNIA. I have shown these tensions within Garvey's political thought through my analyses of his rhetoric on the Irish, the Zionists, and Japan. Among these movements, Garvey's rhetoric changed along a predictable pattern which I will illustrate here. Garvey was keen on gaining allies and support

from all three of the movements that I discussed. He would start by making overtures in the form of spoken support for the movements, and would encourage his followers to support the movements as well. Once that phase was done, he would adopt their rhetoric as his own, even going so far as to say that their martyrs can be similarly claimed by the UNIA. In rare cases, he would start to reach out into direct supportive action, as he did when sending his supporters to support the Irish dock worker strikes.

However, there was always a point where the movement that Garvey was attempting to court would either succeed in their goal of nationhood or pull ahead of the UNIA in some way. At that time, Garvey would instead have to contend with why exactly their movement had succeeded where the Back to Africa movement had continued to fail. Each movement succeeded in Garvey's eyes at a different time, and so his rhetoric changed at a different pace. For the Irish, it was when they had won the War of Irish Independence in the middle of the 1920s that Garvey's rhetoric began to change, and for Zionism it was the implementation of the Balfour Declaration at the end of World War I. Time differences aside, Garvey's rhetoric crumbled in much the same way in both cases, as he brought up their whiteness more often in contrast to the UNIA's blackness. After the start of this decline, Garvey would attempt to use their movements as an example for what the Back to Africa Movement should avoid. In the example of Zionism, he would even go as far as to blame their tragedies on their movement. The previous goal of alliance and cooperation would disappear until the only thing that remained was Garvey's use of their movement's rhetoric to explain race.

This pattern of the change of Garvey's rhetoric is interesting in contrast to the development of his rhetoric on Japan. Although it was fundamentally different from the other two because Japan was already a well established state, it was similar in the ways that Garvey

attempted to gain their support and build an alliance. He also talked about the ways in which Japan's policies should be emulated by the UNIA even before they had reclaimed an African nation. However, Garvey's rhetoric deviates from the pattern because he talks about his ideology of race at the same time as he attempted to gain Japan's support. Race was barely mentioned in his rhetoric on the other two groups before there was any decline in Garvey's overtures to their movements. Even beyond this, Garvey had much less pronounced of a deviation from his efforts to gain support, mainly because any examples of such were purely from his distaste in Japan's growing imperialism.

The story of Marcus Garvey is the story of a political theorist and radical racial nationalist ideologue who attempted to reconcile the two ideas in order to gain allies for his movement. However, as I have shown, Garvey was not able to fully synthesize the two ideas because of his disdain for white nations and their policies. Furthermore, any envy that Garvey had for successful nationalist movements manifested in complaints about that movement's whiteness, which were oftentimes apt but did little to endear them to the UNIA. This was one of Garvey's most fundamental difficulties in the development of his political ideology.

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