



**EMULATING MARCUS AND AMY GARVEY:
LESSONS IN LOVE AND STRUGGLE**
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Each August, the month of Marcus Garvey's birth, we focus on lessons he has left us, and in these times of stress, strain and troubled togetherness for so many Black men and women, lessons gleaned from his life of love and struggle in partnership with his wife, Amy Jacques Garvey, offer us urgently needed insight. The relationship of Marcus and Amy Garvey provides us a model of excellence we can emulate, reflects a spirit of possibility we sorely need and yields lessons of love, life and struggle which are priceless and promise us a rich and rare good, if we embrace and emulate them. We link lessons of love and struggle, for love is enriched and expanded in struggle, not only in the larger struggle for free space in society so we can live and love freely. But also, our love is deepened and developed by the small and constant struggles we wage in numerous ways to make it work, keep it real and move it beyond initial interest and attraction, uninformed infatuation or undisciplined desire.

To talk of the relationship of Marcus and Amy Garvey is to talk of a love born, based and flowering in struggle. They meet and marry in struggle, work and weather storm and stress in struggle, and thus left us a joint legacy of lessons in love and struggle. Likewise to talk about them and their relationship is to talk about a struggle rooted in love of African people and love of each other.

The first lesson the Garveys leave us is that love, as Kawaïda teaches, evolves from an increasingly depthful emotion and mindset that flowers in mutual commitment and investment in each other's happiness, well-being and development. And this ultimately and unavoidably means a self-conscious and committed practice of valuing

each other as sacred, an image of the Divine, secured against violation, degradation and devaluation.

This, in turn, yields the lesson of a relationship rooted in shared vision, values and work. At a minimum, this means building what Amy Garvey calls a "co-partnership" of mutual respect, equality and interdependence. Indeed, she taught that the needs and urgencies "of the present age require that women take their place beside their men", and that they self-consciously present themselves as "intelligent, independent human beings (able) to assert and maintain their rights in co-partnership with their men", demonstrating they "are great thinkers as well as doers".

This co-partnership, at its best, will and should become a friendship, a deep-rooted commitment to the good of the other and sharing of good with each other. Marcus and Amy Garvey worked together, planned together and traveled together. She writes of Garvey and her traveling together not only to be with each other, but also because the people "were anxious to see and hear me". Here she describes the people's desire for her presence and voice as wife, woman and co-worker, as a balanced presentation of the composition and self-conception of the UNIA and her thoughts and feelings about being African and woman in the world.

Central also to a rock-strong relationship is an ethics of service which cultivates and reveals an expanded sense of self, rooted in a profound appreciation of our relatedness and shared responsibility for good in love and life. Garvey taught that "the ends you serve that are selfish will take you no further than yourself, but the ends you serve that are for all, in common, will take you even to eternity". And this holds true in love and life. As a member of the

UNIA, the largest organization of Africans in history and one initiated by her husband, Amy Garvey expressed her commitment to serve saying “I only live to perpetuate the ideas of my husband, just as (millions) of other (Blacks) imbued with his spirit have vowed to do”.

In letters during his political imprisonment, Garvey writes of Amy’s bearing equal burdens and responsibility in the struggle and his love and devotion to her. He says of his and her equal sacrifice, “I counted the cost years ago, but the responsibility is not all mine, but equally that of the one whom I love with great devotion and fondness”. However, he confesses that he has not served his wife as well as he has the Movement, saying that he “neglected and cheated her for the cause that I love so much”. And he asked the members of the UNIA “to continue to shield and protect her” as is “due a faithful and devoted wife who gave up her husband for the cause of human service”, i.e., to struggle for African liberation.

Finally, there is the lesson of steadfastness or faithfulness in love and struggle under stress and strain of various degrees and kinds. Amy Garvey criticized her husband for neglecting family for cause, but she never wavered in her commitment to Garvey and the Movement. She also used this as an opportunity to call on all Black men to be more attentive and responsible in issues of family and community and

courageous in struggle. Likewise, she reminded Black women to avoid passivity and superficiality, and shoulder shared responsibility at home and in the world as “co-equal with their mates”. And Garvey called for a faithfulness in love and struggle which “is a wholeness of belief overshadowing all suspicion, all doubt, admitting of no question; to serve without regret or disgust, to obligate oneself to that which is promised or expected, to keep to our word and do our duty well”.

Like her husband Marcus Garvey, Amy Garvey urged that as we look for models and inspiration, we “turn toward Africa”. It was both a call for physical and cultural return, but we of Us stress with Malcolm, cultural return and thus understand Africa as our moral and cultural ideal and grounding. This requires a profound confidence in the equal dignity, cultural capacity and human possibilities of African people. And this confidence in *ourselves* and *the good*, Garvey tells us, must be at the heart of our love, work and struggle for African liberation and good in the world. For he says, “Our cause is won because of our confidence; it is lost because of our lack of faith; but by our actions we know that Ethiopia will triumph and Africa will be free”, not only as a continent, but also as a world African community. And in the fullness of this freedom, we will be able to shape and share a love and life we can now only imagine and continue to struggle for.