

# Marcus Garvey

In the fourth article in an exclusive series to The Pittsburgh Courier of "My Experiences in America," Marcus Garvey, the most spectacular figure of his time, vividly describes the first convention of the Negro peoples of the world in 1920.

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August 1st, 1920, was the red letter day for the Negro peoples of the world, in that on that day at 9:30 a. m. there assembled in Liberty Hall, New York, 120-1440 W. 138th street, 5,000 representatives of the race from every known part of the world. They came in groups of one hundred, in scores, dozens, tens and in units.

We had them from Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Liberia, West Africa, from Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa, and from East and Central Africa, from every known Island in the West Indies, including Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, Barbadoes, Trinidad, Grenada and all the groups of the Leeward and Windward islands. They came from South and Central America; from Europe and from Asia. Contingents of thousands came from Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, Cincinnati, in the United States, and from every other nook and corner of the republic.

It was at this hour that the famous Black Star Line band of 25 pieces, under the leadership of Prof. Isles, and the celebrated Liberty Hall choir of 100 voices, under the leadership of Prof. Arnold Ford, struck up and sang the celebrated Negro hymn: "O Africa Awaken."

"O Africa Awaken":  
The morning is at hand.  
No more art thou forsaken.  
O bounteous motherland.  
For far thy sons and daughters  
Are hastening back to thee,  
Their cry rings o'er the waters  
That Africa shall be free."

After the singing of this celebrated hymn, the mighty procession of the robed officials of the Universal Negro Improvement Association from all parts of the world started up the aisle in Liberty Hall; the whole congregation singing another celebrated Negro hymn, "Shine On, Eternal Light."

"Shine on, Eternal Light.  
To greet our souls this day;  
Dispel the gloominess of night,  
And drive our doubts away."

The singing of this hymn was enough to inspire the most mute soul. It was an occasion that could not fail to stir, and everybody there among the 25,000 was stirred. When the procession reached the celebrated Liberty Hall platform that accommodated 200 persons the picturesque-

ness of it was marked. It reminded one of the great ceremonials at the courts of Europe, or one of the coronation celebrations at Westminster Abbey, London. The people were greatly impressed—the thousands inside of Liberty Hall, and numerous thousands peeping through the windows on the outside.

The morning service at Liberty Hall on this day opened the day's celebrations at New York. Speeches were made and the official sermon preached by the Rev. J. W. Eason, who was then acting chaplain general of the organization, and who was subsequently at the convention elected leader of the American Negroes.

After the morning display at Liberty Hall there was the parade and review throughout the streets of Harlem, in which 50,000 members of the organization, along with the legionary and uniform ranks, including Black Cross nurse motor corps, Juvenile and African Guards marched. The military spectacle of these auxiliaries was wonderful. Eighteen

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bands of music were in line and marched.

Fully 30,000 people saw the parade from the streets and homes in Harlem. The demonstration was of such as never seen in Harlem before and probably not to be seen again.

The parade started at 1 o'clock and ended at 4 o'clock. Those who marched in line made a circuit of Harlem from the headquarters, 35 W. 135th street, where the first line marched off from, taking in Lenox avenue up to 145th, to Seventh avenue, to 125th street, down Lenox avenue, back to 35 West 135th street. When the first line of the parade returned to 135th street the last line was just leaving the same spot to make their circuit in the parade.

The great excitement of the day was climaxed with the mass opening of the convention, at the old Madison Square Garden at 12th and 14th street at night. At 3 o'clock every available seat in the garden was taken. Fifteen thousand people were seated inside and another 10,000 were found accommodations in other ways. It was at the garden that night that the auxiliaries of the Universal Negro Improvement Association came into full play. The wonderful review took place, in which every unit of the organization was in line. It was wonderful to see the coloring effect of the Legions, Black Cross Nurses, African Guards and other auxiliaries. The New York and Philadelphia contingents of auxiliaries took the first prize; but sections like Boston, Cincinnati, Newark and Cleveland came in for good second places.

It was said in reviewing the history of the old Madison Square Garden, by a writer in the New York Times, that the thirteenth great historical feature in the garden in all its years was the historical opening of the convention of the Universal Negro Improvement Association in 1920.

It was at the Madison Square Garden that I made the famous speech that brought me into the limelight of the political world. At 11 o'clock that night I made the official speech in opening the convention, in which I declared in the height of my enthusiasm that: "Four hundred million Negroes were sharpening their swords for the next world war." Among all the things I said those words were taken out and cabled to every capital in Europe and throughout the world. The next morning every first class newspaper proclaimed me as the new leader of the Negro race and featured the unfortunate words I used. Words which have been making trouble for me ever since 1920. Despite what I said otherwise then and often after as a manifestation of my good faith, I am still held as a dangerous man. It is because of this danger why France closed her doors against me in Africa; and Italy and Portugal also and England became so scared and America watched me at every move.

(To Be Continued)