

THE 'EFFICIENT WOMANHOOD' OF THE UNIVERSAL NEGRO IMPROVEMENT  
ASSOCIATION: 1919-1930

By

NATANYA DUNCAN

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2009

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To Ms. Alexandrina Anderson  
And in Honor of the life work of  
Dr. Whittington B. Johnson  
&  
Dr. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge Brian Ward for all his diligence and care in getting me through this process. With funding from the Florida Education Fund and the support of my committee, this has been a rewarding endeavor.

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School  
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May 2009

Co-Chair: David Colburn

Co-Chair: Brian Ward

Major: 20<sup>th</sup> Century American History

UNIA women defied prescribed notions of domestic duty; blurred the lines drawn for “true” women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century; derived their respectability through a practice of nationalist politics in public places resulting in an *efficient womanhood* that set the stage for what are now known as womanist consciousness and black feminist politics. While UNIA women helped set the stage for the development of the latter ideals and in varying ways demonstrated the virtues of the “Cult of True Womanhood” and “the politics of respectability,” their activism reached further than expressions of Victorian Motherhood and their endeavor to lift as they climbed meant leaving no person of African descent behind. At times their tactics seem to contradict their aims and the results of their efforts were not always immediately evident. Still, their all encompassing visionary approach to race progress reveals another root of the nascent Civil Rights Movement tree that is in need of both study and nurture.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

*Efficient Womanhood* examines the role of women in the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) from 1919 to 1930. It focuses on the concerns and contributions of the female lay membership as exemplified by Amy Ashwood Garvey, Amy Jacques Garvey, Henrietta Vinton Davis, the Black Cross Nurses and Laura Adorkor Kofey. While Amy Ashwood and Amy Jacques Garvey have received a modicum of attention in recent years, there has been little consideration of other key women in the organization, especially the rank and file members. *Efficient Womanhood* is a prosopography that examines the lives of these women to discuss their stories as female members of an organization whose outward appearance and whose hierarchy appeared to be male dominated.

The dilemmas that faced the lay membership included how best to pursue the nationalist aims of the UNIA and increase awareness and membership while surviving the vulgarities of discrimination and Imperialism. This dissertation centers on the interpretation of nationalist and gender concerns expressed by the female cadre of the UNIA as they stretched the definitions of respectable politics, the Cult of True Womanhood, and extended definitions of early modern Black Nationalism.<sup>1</sup> While this project maintains that the “politics of respectability” played a role in the choice of strategies among UNIA women, it also suggests that where circumstances warranted, UNIA women redefined what was respectable and political in their campaign for racial progress. This dissertation also posits that Black Nationalism, viewed through the eyes of UNIA members, correlated with Wilson Jeremiah Moses’ definition of the term as being the

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<sup>1</sup> Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 187. Brooks Higginbotham uses the phrase “politics of respectability” to define the notions of African-American church women on how behavior and appearance could best serve racial uplift aims; For more on the Cult of True Womanhood, please see Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860” in *American Quarterly*, vol. 18, No. 2, Part 1 (Summer, 1966), p. 152.

...special status by any person who is recognizabl[y] identified as having ancestral origins among the black peoples of sub-Saharan Africa or any person possessing a set of physical traits that would seem to identify him or her with black African ancestry... bound together by ties of kinship history and heritage and who believe themselves to be distinct and separate from other groups by virtue of common beliefs and ways of thinking<sup>2</sup> [.]

The credibility of the UNIA's expansive outreach efforts for reclamation of self and land becomes more evident when this definition is used to frame their actions. Within this context, UNIA women negotiated the blending of race concerns and gender concerns. In their rhetoric and action they merged race and gender in ways not previously seen before.

Because UNIA women lived in a time when white feminists did not readily receive African-American women into the fold, and African-American clubwomen employed strategies of uplift that sometimes amounted to assimilation and reinforced class prejudices in the African-American community, I argue that their brand of activism was separate and distinct from that of other groups.<sup>3</sup> Although other self-help organizations of the period employed similar strategies to those of the UNIA, and at times the UNIA appeared to merely blend strategies already in place in various African-American communities, the autonomy enjoyed by these women within the organization's hierarchical structure sets the UNIA apart from similar organizations of the inter-war period. While class distinctions did enter into the discourse of some UNIA women, the research presented in this dissertation demonstrates that the UNIA was a grassroots driven organization, where the concerns of the lay membership dominated and directed its course.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Classic Black Nationalism: from the American Revolution to Marcus Garvey* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: women and the politics of white supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Elizabeth Lindsay Davis, *Lifting as They Climb* (New York : G.K. Hall : London : Prentice Hall International, 1996); Nancy F. Cott, *Groundings of Modern Feminism* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> Increasingly, considerations of the UNIA center on it as grassroots movement with the participation of persons of varying socio-economic status. Historian Claudrena Harold noted that this approach "provides the historian with an opportunity to explore such important issues as the complex nature or diasporic encounters between African-Americans and West Indians, Garveyites' relationship with white separatists, and eh tension between the Parent

This dissertation offers a new perspective on UNIA women both in their leadership roles and in the membership body. To best illustrate their activism, the term *efficient womanhood* will be used throughout the discussion. This term was first used by William Edward Burghardt DuBois in his essay entitled “The Damnation of Womanhood” to illustrate the ways in which both the historical depiction and treatment of African-American women resulted in a

...history of insult and degradation [that] has been both fearful and glorious. It has birthed the haunting prostitute, the brawler, and the beast of burden; but it has also given the world an efficient womanhood, whose strength lies in its freedom and whose chastity was won in the teeth of temptation and not in prison and swaddling clothes.<sup>5</sup>

The history which DuBois highlighted in this essay included considerations of indigenous African women who were “held in so small esteem” and served as “all powerful helpers” to the male leaders. DuBois depicted their service as welcomed and reflective of a collective collaborative respect because “their interests [being] identical with [male leadership’s] in every particular...”<sup>6</sup> The uniformity of interests within the UNIA created a space for women to present publicly both nationalist and gender concerns to an international audience. They

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Body in New York and local branches.” Claudrena N. Harold, *The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918-1942* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 6-7. This differs from seminal works done by Edmund David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969) and Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986). In part these considerations are a reflection of the assertions made by Tony Martin in *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1976). Among most recent works that argue this point are Claudrena N. Harold *The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918-1942* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Mary G. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South, 1920-1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Jahi Issa, “The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Louisiana: Creating a provisional government in exile” (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Washington, DC :Howard University, 2005); Robert Trent Vinson, “In the time of the Americans: Garveyism in segregationist South Africa, 1920—1940” Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Washington, DC: Howard University, 2001); Rupert Lewis and Maureen Warner Lewis, *Garvey: Africa, Europe, the Americas* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1994); Peter Ashdown, *Garveyism in Belize* (Benque Viejo del Carmen, Belize: Cubola Productions, 1990); E. S. P. McPherson, *The Most Honourable-"Marcus' Upon South Africa"/Azania* (Clarendon, Jamaica: Black International Iyahbinghi Press, 1984); Randall K. Burkett, *Garveyism As a Religious Movement: The Institutionalization of a Black Civil Religion* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1978).

<sup>5</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois “The Damnation of Womanhood” in *Darkwater: W.E.B. DuBois, with an introduction by Joe R. Feagin* (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2003), p. 116.

<sup>6</sup> Damnation, pp. 112-113.

accomplished this through a variety of stratagems. Their efforts reflected an efficient womanhood that sought the progress of the entire race of Africans and their descendants. They are not to be confused with feminists or clubwomen, who, while expressing similar aims, did not have similar motives.<sup>7</sup> As this dissertation demonstrates, UNIA women sought to have men stand in the forefront of the quest for self-empowerment, and believed in the value of the contributions of all people of color regardless of socio-economic status and engaged in a public battle to accomplish their aims.

### **Black Nationalism in the 1920s**

Although historians have yet to definitively date or periodize Black Nationalism, it is generally agreed that varying types of Black Nationalism converged or diverged in degrees throughout the African-American freedom struggle. Political scientists have even entered into this fray by positing their own means of categorizing Black Nationalism. The lack of periodization, a fixed definition and an inconsistency in practice among African-Americans has created some difficulty for the researcher. Still, contributions to this effort made by historians Alphonso Pickney, Rodney Carlisle, Edwin S. Redkey, John R. Bracey and Wilson Jeremiah Moses defined and discussed motives for the practice and belief in Black Nationalism, while signaling that the ideology evolved over time. Their considerations are useful in understanding

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<sup>7</sup> For an in-depth look at discussion of early feminists and club women please see, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2008); Alice Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History. The working class in American history* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Charles M. Payne and Adam Green, *Time Longer Than Rope: A Century of African-American Activism, 1850-1950* (New York: New York University Press, 2003); Deborah G. White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999); Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson., *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1998); Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reed, *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible": A Reader in Black Women's History* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Pub, 1995); Alice Kessler-Harris, *A Woman's Wage: Historical Meanings and Social Consequences* (Lexington, Ky: University Press of Kentucky, 1990); Nancy F. Cott, *Groundings* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1987).

the Black Nationalism of the 1920s. Their assertions are also supported by the work of political scientists Robert A. Brown, Todd C. Shaw and Michael Dawson.

As previously noted, Wilson Jeremiah Moses' definition of Black Nationalism linked all persons with a black ancestry as having a common "history and heritage." His definition helps explain what the words black and nationalism meant within the organization. Alphonso Pickney provided a definition of Black Nationalism that can also be used to further an understanding of UNIA ideology. According to Pickney, Black Nationalism is best described as a three-tier belief system that included the notion of unity or solidarity among African peoples, pride in cultural heritage, a commitment to "black consciousness," and a belief that African-American liberation from all forms of oppression was essential.<sup>8</sup> The UNIA's focus on promoting self-awareness, developing economic self-sufficiency programs, and attempting both a literal and a figurative repatriation to Africa also correlated with Pickney's assertions.

The activities of the UNIA, including its grand parades, the formation of a male and female military corps, and the designation of titles of nobility based on service to the race, also fit well into Rodney Carlisle's view of Black Nationalism as operating under the presumption that a black nation existed alongside the American nation.<sup>9</sup> Edwin Redkey found that there were specific political, social, and cultural goals which resulted from their "political and physical withdrawal into their own society."<sup>10</sup> Here too the UNIA fits the description as much of the organization's rhetoric centered on Africa's history as the cradle of civilization and parent to all modern societies. In 1925, for example, in a speech entitled "African Fundamentalism" Garvey explained to listeners that

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<sup>8</sup> Alphonso Pinkney, *Red, black, and green: Black nationalism in the United States* (Cambridge [Eng.] New York : Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Rodney Carlisle, *The roots of Black nationalism* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1975), p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Edwin S. Redkey, *Black Exodus; Black Nationalist and Back-to-Africa Movements 1890-1910* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1969), p. 14.

when we were embracing the arts and sciences on the banks of the Nile their ancestors were still drinking human blood and eating out of skulls of their conquered dead; when our civilization had reached the noonday of progress they were still running naked and sleeping in holes and caves with rats, bats and other insects and animals. After we had already fathomed the mystery of the stars and reduced the heavenly constellations to minute and regular calculus they were still backwoodsmen, living in ignorance and blatant darkness.<sup>11</sup>

Within the historiography of the UNIA, strict adherence to a single consistent set of Black Nationalist ideals, which John Bracey, August Meyer and Elliott Rudwick described as “an ideology whose core tenets are black political, economic, and cultural autonomy either within or from white America,” was not always apparent. Aside from Garvey’s meeting with members of the Ku Klux Klan’s hierarchy, Amy Jacques Garvey struck deals with various Anglo-Saxon clubs throughout Virginia to help establish the UNIA’s Liberty University.<sup>12</sup> The UNIA often entered into relationships of cooperation with white nationalists and segregationist groups in hopes of furthering its own nationalist goals and serving the more immediate aims of self preservation.

Some UNIA divisions had to negotiate with local white law enforcement agencies and white nationalist groups in order to exist. These negotiations did not always allow the division to strictly adhere to the philosophies of the organization. Regional differences and distance from the New York headquarters resulted varying interpretations of UNIA ideology and practice at the local level. As the UNIA expanded, some of its objectives were masked to support the practices it sought to end. This was due in part to the flexibility of the UNIA, as its constitution did not call for the approval of the New York headquarters before implementing a program under the organization’s name. Once a division had a charter, they were free to address the concerns of the

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<sup>11</sup> Marcus Garvey, “African Fundamentalism: A Racial Hierarchy and Empire for Negroes” in *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa* ed. John Henrik Clarke (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 157.

<sup>12</sup> Barbara Bair, “Renegotiating Liberty: Garveyism, women, and grassroots organizing in Virginia” in *Women of the American South : A Multicultural Reader* ed. Christie Anne Farnham (New York : New York University Press, 1997), pp. 222, 226-227.

community using strategies they deemed most appropriate. In both the North and the South, the formation of a UNIA group was often met with mixed emotions and at times strained relationships in communities. However, in the United States, with few exceptions, the members of the UNIA were able to adhere to the ideals of the organization's program undisturbed by oppositional forces.

The singularity of the UNIA was further enhanced by its ability to incorporate local needs and objectives under the auspices of an international organization. Examples include the Black Cross Nurses, a women's auxiliary that functioned differently in Belize, Louisiana, and Los Angeles. While it yet carried the same name, and allegedly sought to accomplish similar goals, it functioned in Belize as a colonial agent, in Louisiana as the only medical alternative for some parishes, and in Los Angeles as both a social status symbol and training program.<sup>13</sup> Unlike other organizations of the day, UNIA branches were founded with an "elastic clause." This provision was as much strength as it was a weakness.

While adherents in the U.S. closely followed the UNIA program, some of their Diasporic counterparts were not quite as successful.

At times the tolerance of government-based groups served to neutralize some of the organization's aims. This became the case with the Belizean Division's Black Cross Nurses. Historian Anne Macpherson found that in Belize rather than operating as symbols of "...purity and nobility" that combated "white racist stereotypes of African-American women as morally

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<sup>13</sup> Anne Macpherson, "Colonial Matriarchs: Garveyism, Maternalism, and Belize's Black Cross Nurses, 1920-1952," *Gender & History*, Vol. 15 No. 3 November, 2003: pp.507-527; Leah Seabrook "Service in Green and white: The Activity and Symbolism of the Universal African Black Cross Nurses" (MA Thesis, University of California, Irvine, 2006); Jahi U. Issa "The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Louisiana: Creating a Provisional Government in Exile" (PhD Dissertation, Howard University, 2005); Clauderna Harold, "The rise and fall of the Garvey movement in the urban South 1918 to 1942" (PhD Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2004); Mary Gambrell Rolinson, "The Garvey Movement in the Rural South, 1920-1927," (PhD Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2002).

wanton” the Black Cross Nurses worked to maintain stereotypes and furthered economic disparities on the island.<sup>14</sup> Macpherson noted that the Belizean Division, comprised of middle-class elites, served as colonial agents who compounded class segregation on the island while using the UNIA name.<sup>15</sup> The use of Black Nationalism by groups within the African-American community and the UNIA to reinforce de facto and de jure segregation and imperialism reflected what political scientists Robert Brown and Todd Shaw refer to as “community nationalism.”

Brown and Shaw described two types of nationalists, the first being community nationalist and the second being separatist nationalist.<sup>16</sup> While their study was conducted using present-day respondents, it indicates how and why the “Back to Africa” portion of the UNIA program, in particular, was viewed literally by some of the membership and figuratively by others. The political scientists argued that among “more affluent blacks,” as was the case in Belize where the educated middle-class attempted to control and limit the agency of the poor working class, there was an exercise in a “community nationalism [that] advance[d] strong black community control and autonomy.”<sup>17</sup> This practice revealed what Brown and Shaw call a “separatist nationalism” which “touts national sovereignty and an actual or symbolic secession” from white control.<sup>18</sup>

No matter how various scholars choose to define Black Nationalism, they would probably all agree with Brown and Shaw’s assertion that “this ideology is multi- dimensional and thus [had] the potential to mobilize very different black constituencies” at varying times during

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<sup>14</sup> Bair, “Renegotiating”, p. 226.

<sup>15</sup> Anne Macpherson, “Colonial Matriarchs: Garveyism, Maternalism, and Belize's Black Cross Nurses, 1920–1952” in *Gender and History* Vol. 15 No. 3 (2003): p. 508.

<sup>16</sup> Robert A. Brown and Todd C. Shaw, “Separate Nations: Two Attitudinal Dimensions of Black Nationalism” in *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (Feb., 2002): p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> Brown and Todd, p. 23.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

the long march for civil rights and social justice.<sup>19</sup> While the UNIA readily fits all of the definitions mentioned, it adds another layer when the lives and activities of its female members are considered.

Although not plainly stated by academics, Black Nationalism is often depicted as the sole domain of black men.<sup>20</sup> Historian Carole Boyce Davies found that Black Nationalism and the global extension of its ideals, Pan Africanism, are often presented as

‘totalizing discourses’ which can tolerate no different articulation and operate from a singularly monolithic construction of an African theoretical homeland which asks for the submergence or silencing of gender, sexuality or any other ideological stance of identity position which is not subsumed under Black/African nationalism.<sup>21</sup>

*Efficient Womanhood* posits that, within the rhetoric of UNIA gendered concerns often merged with nationalist concerns. In this way Black Nationalism was fashioned by these women to address their concerns.

UNIA women came to view the progress of the race as based in part on the progress of their gender and openly argued that the progress of the race would be measured through the progress of its women.<sup>22</sup> UNIA women asked African-Americans to better themselves, not simply to improve their individual economic or social status, but for the betterment of the race as a whole. This vision was pursued neither strictly in search of equal rights for women in the public sphere nor through their dominance in the private sphere. It did not require women to acquiesce to their husbands and male leadership, nor did it call for direct public challenges. Their activism was guided both by an awareness of their gender and their race. Influences on

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Aimee M. Glock, “Two steps forward and one and a half steps back : Maria Stewart and Mary Ann Shadd Cary's fight for inclusion into early Black nationalism, 1803-1893” (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of California Los Angeles, 2001), p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Carole Boyce Davies, *Black women, writing, and identity migrations of the subject* (London ; New York : Routledge, 2003), pp. 49-50.

<sup>22</sup> *Negro World*, June 24, 1919.

these women included the realities of Jim Crow and the establishing of self-help organizations which included the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB) and fraternal orders.

In their attempts to alleviate the challenges of the era, UNIA women established a standard that was driven by economic, political, and social goals for all people of the Diaspora. While on the surface these women appear to be re-fashioning white middle-class social mores, the standard they strove for asked that one's status be measured in relations to one's service to the race. Although Victorian images of respectability did appear to influence some of the women in the organization, particularly those living in the South, this dissertation will demonstrate that this was not the dominant sentiment among UNIA women. Through the Ladies Division, the Black Cross Nurses units, and participation in other less formal UNIA sponsored auxiliaries, UNIA women attempted to change "the consciousness of individuals" so that a "social transformation of political and economic institutions" would be possible.<sup>23</sup> This dissertation will evaluate them on their own terms and demonstrate how nationalist rhetoric became the vehicle through which these women expressed both gender and race concerns.

### **A Brief Assessment of Scholarship on African-American Female Activism**

Over the past twenty years a marked increase in historical works centering on the role of African-American women activists in struggle for racial and social justice has brought women to the center of considerations of the long freedom struggle. Specific works on late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century women reformers by Paula Giddings, Dorothy Salem, Darlene Clark Hine, and Deborah Grey White have demonstrated the complexities African-American women faced in

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<sup>23</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. 221.

combating prejudice.<sup>24</sup> Their work also speaks of the creation of an idealized sense of an autonomous community many women activists of the period strove for. Although some of these works included minimal considerations of Amy Jacques Garvey, women of the UNIA were absented from these narratives. Still, this scholarship presented historians with new questions and answers for a group of historical actors who were previously silenced by the absence of a written record of their existence. The new questions and answers also presented a framework that resulted in the inclusion of UNIA women in the discourse.

Although there are many recent publications on African-Americans and specifically African-American women who actively combated the evils of segregation, many focus primarily on educated middle-class elites. Depictions of these women can be found in Paula Giddings' *When and Where I Enter*, which focused on the maneuvering of middle-class African-American women to become a part of mainstream through politics, social mores, and education. Her work featured the lives of Mary Church Terrell and Mary McLeod Bethune.<sup>25</sup> Both of these women were key figures in the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), worked as educators, were regularly featured in mainstream and African-American newspapers, engaged in broadly cooperative if often tenuous alliance with white women reformers, and left a collection of personal papers that highlight their background and contributions to reform. While their activities impacted African-American women of every background, historical treatments of their lives give little attention to the variety of responses they received from the women they attempted to serve.

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<sup>24</sup> Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Morrow, 1984); Dorothy C. Salem *To Better Our World: Black Women in Organized Reform, 1890-1920* v. 4. (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Pub, 1990); Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson. *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1998); *White Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999).

<sup>25</sup> Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Morrow, 1984).

Some indications of the complexities of the leadership of Terrell and Bethune are apparent when considered alongside the lives of Nannie Burroughs and Ida B. Wells. Both Burroughs and Wells worked as activists and were in close contact with Terrell and Bethune at varying points. However, historians have found that their relationships were often strained. Historian Sharon Harley found that one of the reasons for the strain in relations with Burroughs was that she came from a “background, lifestyle, religion, and ideology [that] situated her more firmly among the masses” of everyday people.<sup>26</sup> Nannie Burroughs’s ability to speak for those who shared her background, while also acknowledging the contributions of the more elitist club movement, provided early indications of a cadre of women who sought the progress of many as opposed to maintaining the privileges of a few. Burroughs stated, “The Negro must unload the leeches and parasitic leaders who are absolutely eating the life out of the struggling, desiring mass of people.”<sup>27</sup> She advised that the day of such types was long gone by 1934. She took specific aim at those who were “...in the church as preachers, in the schools as teachers, in the ward as politicians...” as they had become “luxurious, expensive, unworthy...”<sup>28</sup> These sentiments were first expressed by Burroughs in 1903 when she took a very daring aim at clubwomen, accusing them of being “secular clubs existing under the good name of charity [which were] only agencies to bring together certain classes at the exclusion of the poor.”<sup>29</sup>

Although many clubwomen fit Burroughs’ description, there are some indications that within the group an awareness of a self-designated and self-defined sense of importance existed. Fannie Barrier Williams who wrote in 1900, for example, that “The club movement is well purposed...born out of the stress and pain of a hated past,” but was also only “gradually”

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<sup>26</sup> Sharon Harley, *The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Morrow, 1984)., “Nannie Burroughs: The Black Goddess of Liberty,” *The Journal of Negro History* 81 (Winter-Autumn, 1996): 63.

<sup>27</sup> *The Afro-American* April 7, 1934 in Nannie Burroughs Collection, Box 331, Library of Congress.

<sup>28</sup> *The Louisiana Weekly*, December 23, 1934.

<sup>29</sup> *Washington Bee*, December 12, 1903.

becoming “conscious of the fact that progress includes a great deal more than what is generally meant by the terms, culture, education and contact.”<sup>30</sup> The “gradual” awareness of the clubwomen was not swift enough for Ida B. Wells-Barnett, whose tumultuous involvement with the NACW is often cited as one example of how the clubwomen often disagreed over strategies and objectives.

Wells-Barnett’s placement on the sidelines by Margaret Murray Washington and others in the organization’s hierarchy also reflected the group’s unwillingness to publicly engage in battles that undermined both white and male authority figures. Wells-Barnett’s brashness and steadfast international campaign against lynching, while bringing much attention to one of the most horrid injustices of Jim Crow, resulted in her being branded a trouble maker by the clubwomen. Her sense of urgency for her cause, combined with her public challenges to male and female leaders and her repeated defiance of Jim Crow laws and mores led conservative club women to berate her actions. Although she worked arduously to help establish the organization, she never served as an executive officer.<sup>31</sup> In her diary and in the analysis of her biographers, Wells-Barnett’s willingness to speak for the race as a bi-gendered, heterogeneous collective, to speak up for men who were silenced by segregationist mores, and to speak *to* men, encouraging them to take what she deemed was necessary action, indicated the shift from the practice of respectable politics to a more nuanced and aggressive activism.

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<sup>30</sup> Fannie Barrier Williams, “The New Black Woman” in *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* ed. Gerda Lerner (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), pp. 575 - 576.

<sup>31</sup> Wells-Barnett noted that NACW women “shunned ‘boisterous denials of accusations, controversy, or notoriety.’” Quoted in Patricia Schleicher, *Ida B Wells and American Reform*, p. 242. For more on Ida B. Wells please see Paula Giddings, *Ida : a sword among lions : Ida B. Wells and the Campaign Against Lynching* (New York, N.Y. : Amistad, 2008); James West Davidson, *They say: Ida B Wells and the Reconstruction of Race* (New York : Oxford University Press, 2007); Patricia Ann Schleicher, *Ida B Wells Barnett and American Reform* (Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Linda McMurry Edwards, *To keep the waters troubled: the life of Ida B. Wells* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1998); Ida B Wells Barnett, *The Memphis diary of Ida B Wells with Miariam DeCosta-Willis* (Boston : Beacon Press, 1995); Dorothy Sterling, *Black foremothers : three lives* (New York: Feminist Press, 1979).

Wells-Barnett's defiance of Victorian mores and desire to speak freely was evidenced as she became famous for angrily walking away from those who disagreed with her, wishing them "good riddance."<sup>32</sup> In fact, her quest for an arena that best suited her style of activism and leadership was in part what brought her to the UNIA in 1920.<sup>33</sup> Wells-Barnett encountered both a receptive and tolerant audience in the UNIA. Despite her apprehensions about Garvey's purchase of ships for the Black Star Line, she remained an ardent supporter and member of the organization throughout its heyday. As with women in the organization's hierarchy and lay membership, Wells-Barnett's allegiance to the UNIA's program appears to have taken precedence over sentiments of loyalty to or agreement with Garvey himself. That the UNIA transcended Garvey was also evidenced, as this research shall discuss, in the shift in leadership activity by women in the organization during his incarceration for mail fraud in 1925.

Yet, seminal works on African-American women do not paint this complex picture. The works of Darlene Clark Hine and Deborah Grey White, for example, expand Giddings' focus on middle-class African-American women's activism. In *A Shining Thread of Hope*, Hine attempted to chronicle the activism and lives of middle-class African-American women from the colonial era through the late 1970s. Her work errs on the side of celebration as the narrative centers on how these women overcame injustices and prejudice in America while neglecting to examine the complexities of that success. Within the narratives of both texts, there is little or no discussion of working-class or women on the lower end of the socio-economic scale, although such evidence exists in a variety of organizations in which women participated. One of the organizations missing from this consideration is, curiously, the UNIA.

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<sup>32</sup> Linda O. McMurray, *To Keep the Waters Troubled: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 247-249, 253, 257.

<sup>33</sup> Her daughter noted that Wells-Barnett felt "Garvey had hit upon a scheme that for the first time served to unite our people." Quoted in Cheryl Gilkes, "Interview Alfreda Duster" in ed. Ruth Edmonds *Black Women Oral History Project* (Westport, CT: Meckler, 1991), p. 7.

This approach is further replicated in Hine's edited volume, *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible*. While the essays by various scholars span across time periods, continents, class lines and socio-economic boundaries, it continued the trend, with only one notable exception, of centering women's activism among educated middle-class leaders. Among the informative essays on women's reform efforts during the 20<sup>th</sup> century is Sharon Harley's essay "When Your Work Is Not Who You Are: The Development of a Working Class Consciousness among Afro-American Women."<sup>34</sup> This essay presented, the "highly differentiated" ways in which African-American women viewed themselves in the quest for racial progress.<sup>35</sup>

Deborah Grey White's *Too Heavy A Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves (1884-1994)* provided another perspective in her examination of the NACW and the National Council of Negro Women (NACW). In her focus on middle-class women, class conflicts between middle-class and working-class women are made evident. How various groups attempted to address changes in the economic, political and social landscape for the one hundred year period is also documented. *Efficient Womanhood* is an attempt to contribute to this discussion by demonstrating how UNIA women, while neither fully accepting nor rejecting the politics of respectability and class dichotomies, forged a response to the constraints of race and gender prejudice.

### **The Historiography of the UNIA & Marcus Garvey**

Scholarly considerations of the UNIA and Garvey first appeared shortly after his 1927 deportation. Two studies focused on Garvey's dynamism and his ability to move people during a troubling period in American history. C.H Reid's 1928 master's thesis provided a descriptive

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<sup>34</sup> Sharon Harley, "When Your Work Is Not Who You Are: The development of a Working Class Consciousness among Afro-American Women," in *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: A Reader in Black Women's History* eds. Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reeds, (New York: Carlton Publishing, 1995), pp. 25-37.

<sup>35</sup> James E. Teele, *E. Franklin Frazier and Black Bourgeoisie* (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2002), p. 77.

account of Garvey's relationship to the African-Americans in the North and South.<sup>36</sup> His thesis was followed by Harold Eugene Zichfoose's in 1931 that argued for a "general unrest prevalent among the Negro people" as a key factor in Marcus Garvey's rise to prominence and determined that ideals the organization fostered would have a lasting impact.<sup>37</sup>

Recognition of this influence did not enter into scholarly circles again until 1955 with the publication of Edmond Cronon's *Black Moses: the story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* in 1955. Cronon's work served for many years as the definitive historical, albeit inaccurate, account of Garvey and the UNIA in the United States. In Cronon's analysis, the UNIA was a reactionary, escapist movement that failed to change the conditions of African-Americans in any measurable way.<sup>38</sup> Within one year of Cronon's publication, Shirley Wilson Strickland posited in her dissertation that the demise of the UNIA rested with the alleged limitless power of Marcus Garvey and the dependency of his followers on his charismatic leadership.<sup>39</sup> Her account, however, did not examine the impact of government forces and the challenges posed to Garvey by rivals.

In 1968 Amy Jacques Garvey presented *Garvey & Garveyism* in an attempt to correct the inaccuracies she found in Edmond Cronon's work. The narrative account of Garvey's life and work centered on his vision of an independent Africa and the freedom of all peoples of the African Diaspora. She followed this book with a pamphlet that argued Marcus Garvey was the forerunner of the liberation struggles then prevalent in the America. The pamphlet was entitled "Black Power in America: Marcus Garvey's Impact on Jamaica and America." Following Amy

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<sup>36</sup> C.H. Reid, "Marcus Garvey: A Social Phenomenon" (Unpublished MA thesis, Northwestern University, 1928) p.9.

<sup>37</sup> Harold Eugene Zickfoose, "The Garvey Movement: A Study Collective Behavior" (Unpublished MA Thesis Iowa: State University of Iowa, 1931), pp. i., 74.

<sup>38</sup> Edmond Cronon, *Black Moses: the story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1955).

<sup>39</sup> Shirley Wilson Strickland, "A Functional Analysis of the Garvey Movement" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation North Carolina: University of North Carolina, 1956), pp. 173-198.

Jacques' essay, historian Theodore Vincent found that the UNIA, in the hands of historians, suffered from "exclusions and distortions."<sup>40</sup> Vincent asserted that the UNIA was a multi-dimensional organization with a broad focus that included economic, national and spiritual aims. While Vincent noted that "religion had an important role in the UNIA's overall organizational structure," he underestimated the presence of "prominent Negro ministers" in the organization.<sup>41</sup>

In 1978 Randall Burkett offered two correctives to Vincent's assertions. *Redemption: Churchmen Speak for the Garvey Movement and Garveyism as a Religious Movement* which documented over 250 ministers as well as lay preachers and missionaries that were active supporters of the UNIA.<sup>42</sup> These persons, including both women and men, were advocates of "...a transcendent goal: the uplift of the Negro race and the redemption of Africa."<sup>43</sup> He also argued that pastoral involvement with the UNIA was due in part to the "...long tradition of black Christian religious reflection and experience in America."<sup>44</sup> Burkett's focus on African-American preachers suggested the magnitude of the UNIA's impact on the United States.

This impact also served as the theme of John Henrik Clarke's edited volume, *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa*.<sup>45</sup> The collection of essays, authored by Clarke, Amy Jacques Garvey, Marcus Garvey Jr, Garvey documentarian Robert Hill, and others presented analysis of various periods in Garvey's life along with his complete speeches from 1914 through his death in 1940. Because of the volume's select focus, it still left the membership body silent as it featured the words of Garvey and specific considerations of him.

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<sup>40</sup> Theodore Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (Rampart Press: San Francisco, 1971), pp. 13-30.

<sup>41</sup> Vincent, *Black Power*, p. 18.

<sup>42</sup> Randall Burkett, *Black Redemption: Churchmen Speak for the Garvey Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1978); *Garveyism as a Religious Movement* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1978).

<sup>43</sup> Randall Burkett, *Black Redemption: Churchmen Speak for the Garvey Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1978), p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa* ed. John H. Clarke (New York: Vintage, 1974).

A chronicle of the activities of the membership and Marcus Garvey followed Clarke's edited volume in 1976. Tony Martin's *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* attempted to dispel accusations that Garvey was guilty of "buffoonery and Charlatanism."<sup>46</sup> Martin's work benefited greatly from the discovery of UNIA Central records by Harlem residents in the late 1960s. With these records he pieced together episodes previously omitted by other scholars, resulting in a clearer depiction of the UNIA's global impact. Martin's work was the first to list the names and membership numbers of each UNIA branch on all seven continents. The documents he used along with correspondences, excerpts from the *Negro World* newspaper, rare documents, and government records have been used to create a ten-part volume series, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, by historian Robert Hill. The first volumes appeared in 1983 and the next volume is due in late 2009. The first six volumes are arranged in chronological order and the last four are arranged geographically and thematically.<sup>47</sup>

With the wide availability and accessibility of the *UNIA Papers*, the possibility of furthering considerations of the UNIA and Garvey's impact increased. Most recent works on the UNIA have been case studies that present how, according to historian Mary Gambrel Rolinson, "...political, social and economic inequalities..." contributed to the development of the UNIA in both rural and urban Southern States.<sup>48</sup> She found that large numbers of African-American rural workers joined the UNIA to protest racial injustices they endured from hostile whites in their

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<sup>46</sup> Tony Martin, *Race First*, p. ix.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Hill, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* vols. 1-7 & 9-10. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983-2008).

<sup>48</sup> Mary G. Rolinson, "The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Georgia: Southern Strongholds of Garveyism" in ed. John C. Inscoe, *Georgia in Black and White: Explorations in the Race relations of a Southern State* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1994), pp. 202-221; "The Garvey Movement in the Rural South, 1920-1927," (PhD Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2002).

communities, specifically in Georgia, Arkansas and Mississippi.<sup>49</sup> Her focus on the rural South provided a framework for observations of the UNIA in Southern urban areas. Her study was followed by Claudrena Harold's class analysis of the UNIA in New Orleans, LA, Miami, FL and Hampton Roads, VA which revisited contentions made by Judith Stein in *The World of Marcus Garvey*. Both Harold and Stein argued that the organization failed to transform existing power relationships for working-class African-Americans.<sup>50</sup> However, Harold still maintained that the UNIA "...strengthened ordinary folks' confidence in their ability to effectuate social change."<sup>51</sup>

Those "ordinary folks" consisted of both women and men. This dissertation is an effort to highlight the contributions of women served to assist their communities "in times of need."<sup>52</sup>

### **Women in the Historiography of the UNIA**

In 1922, on the last day of the UNIA's August Convention, the women of the UNIA took the floor to ask the general body to amend the UNIA constitution. They noted that while the organization provided opportunities for equal participation of the sexes, at times, women did not have an equal voice.<sup>53</sup> In the ensuing discussion, women from various parts of the country expressed concerns about how their efforts were perceived both inside and outside of the organization. Among those concerns, for example, was the ability of women who were active in recruiting members to be designated as official officers within the organization. Women who travelled as unaccompanied organizers and "field workers" were not included in the selection process for formal offices within the organization's hierarchy. While the end results of this attempted "coup" remains open for debate among historians of the UNIA and of Garvey, the

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<sup>49</sup> Mary G. Rolinson, "The Garvey Movement in the Rural South, 1920-1927," (PhD Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2002).

<sup>50</sup> Claudrena Harold, *The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986).

<sup>51</sup> Harold, p. 27.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> *Negro World*, September 2, 1922.

rhetoric used by these women was most revealing. What became immediately apparent, for example, was that the women placed a marked value on their work within the organization and were determined that it receive equal recognition. These concerns, in part, were fueled by regional locations. Women from the South expressed concern over working to solicit membership without the company of a male. Women in the North, on the other hand, did not find it necessary to be accompanied by anyone. The existence of varying degrees of real or perceived racial injustices also affected the willingness of UNIA women to engage in the politics of respectability. Also worth noting, is that this eleventh hour debate occurred while Garvey was not on the convention floor. This event was one of the first signs that the UNIA and its women members had begun to see the organization and its programs as separate from Marcus Garvey the man.

In 1924, on the last day of the August Convention, The Daughters of Ethiopia (DOE) petitioned the general membership to become a formal auxiliary of the UNIA. Unlike the Ladies Division, there was no constitutional provision for The Daughters of Ethiopia. They were not an official part of the UNIA tree, yet membership was bestowed on those who displayed “exemplary service to the race” through their participation in the UNIA.<sup>54</sup> To establish themselves as such, Maymie De Mena and others asked the membership for an official designation as an auxiliary so that they might “better serve the race.”<sup>55</sup> Garvey had instituted the practice of rewarding persons for their promotion of the organizations goals and race progress by granting titles in a fictive African Royal Court of the Nile. The DOE was established in part to that end. That the women couched their request as a means of extending recognition for work they were already engaged in made this event noteworthy. However, what is also notable is that

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<sup>54</sup>*Negro World*, September 16, 1924.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

in so doing, the women found another avenue to extend and expand their opportunities for leadership and voice within the organization.

UNIA women demonstrated that they were “self-defined, self-reliant individuals” who confronted “...race, gender, and class oppression” as a means of bettering themselves and the race.<sup>56</sup> This was true for women in Garvey’s inner circle and women in the lay membership. To illuminate how UNIA women selectively engaged the politics of respectability while combining gender and race concerns I have examined the lives of Amy Ashwood, Garvey’s first wife and the first Secretary General of the UNIA; Amy Jacques Garvey, Garvey’s second wife who held no official office, but acted as a leader while Garvey was in prison; Henrietta Vinton Davis who served in three official offices and remained loyal to the UNIA until her death; and Laura Adorkor Koffey who, like Amy Jacques Garvey, held no official UNIA office but who demonstrated a style of leadership and loyalty to the aims of the UNIA which endured long after her assassination. The lay membership also carved leadership status for themselves through their participation in the Black Cross Nurses (BCN), an auxiliary that helped formalize community self-help health and medical practices. When taken together, the lives of these women, and their activism before, during, and after their affiliation with the UNIA demonstrated a widespread approach to racial progress, much like what DuBois termed an “efficient womanhood.”

According to historian Barbara Bair, the UNIA “developed a very strong women’s auxiliary, in which women formed their own leadership and carried on their own functions.”<sup>57</sup> These women have been missing from the pages of 20<sup>th</sup> Century American history in part because of thematic-driven considerations of Garvey. Narratives that either deal exclusively

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<sup>56</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. 221.

<sup>57</sup> Barbara Bair, “‘Ethiopia Shall Stretch Forth Her hands unto God’: Laura Kofey and the Gendered Vision of African redemption in the Garvey Movement.” *A Mighty Baptism: Race, Gender and the Creation of American Protestantism*. eds. Susan Jester and Lisa McFarlane (Ithaca: Cornell University press, 1996), p. 39.

with Garvey the man or present the UNIA as a mere extension of Garvey's own racial pride have served to silence the women of the organization.<sup>58</sup> This has resulted in the overshadowing of other major events and persons within the organization. One such example of this rests in considerations of Amy Ashwood Garvey.

Until most recently there was no independent consideration of her life's work, and most works on the UNIA and Garvey merely referred to her as his first wife, a drunk, and a woman of questionable morals. Historian Tony Martin's biography, *Amy Ashwood Garvey: Pan Africanist, Feminist and Mrs Garvey No. 1 Or, A Tale of Two Amies* attempted "...not to cause any more inconvenience to her memory than has been necessary to tell her story...", while demonstrating Ashwood's significance to the story of the UNIA, Diasporic movements and women's activism.<sup>59</sup> Her neglect by other historians of the UNIA resulted from the focus on the *Negro World* as the primary source of archival information on the organizations and its officers. After her divorce from Garvey in 1921, Ashwood simply ceased to appear on its pages. She reappeared in the *Negro World* in 1924 as testimony given in Garvey's trial pointed to her as the source of pilfering in the organization. Men in the hierarchy in fact, attempted to make Ashwood a scapegoat.

Amy Jacques married Garvey in 1922, after Garvey left Ashwood. Jacques would edit and author two seminal books that included his speeches, philosophies and excerpts in service to

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<sup>58</sup> At times the central focus of historians on Garvey as a charismatic and dynamic figure serves to silence the contributions of others to the organizations or opposing view points. Examples of this include Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986); Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1976); Edmund David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969). Randall Burkett, *Garveyism As a Religious Movement: The Institutionalization of a Black Civil Religion* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1978); Examples of thematic considerations of Garvey's philosophies include Randall Burkett, *Black Redemption: Churchmen Speak for the Garvey Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978).

<sup>59</sup> Tony Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey: Pan Africanist, Feminist and Mrs Garvey No. 1 Or, A Tale of Two Amies* (Dover, MA: The Majority Press, 2007), p. xi.

Garvey and the organization. She also bore him two sons. Through Garvey's trial and subsequent incarceration and eventual deportation, Jacques, with the help of Henrietta Vinton Davis of Baltimore, Maryland and Maimed De Mena of Nicaragua, Central America, strove to defend Garvey, and also to keep the programs of the UNIA running. These programs included the founding of Liberty University in 1926 and the reformation of the fledgling shipping enterprises. Amy Jacques faced challenges from the men in the UNIA's hierarchy not only because she held no official office, but also because she was a woman, and because she seldom waited for their consensus or consent before acting. Historian Ulla Taylor labeled Jacques' efforts to mobilize women in the UNIA as a "community feminism" that "...resembled a tug-of-war between feminist and nationalist paradigms, but it also provided a means of critiquing chauvinistic ideas of women as intellectually inferior."<sup>60</sup>

Neither of the Mrs. Garvey's, who both lived into the 1960s, (Ashwood passed on May 11, 1969 and Jacques passed on July 25, 1973), appeared to consider themselves feminists nor did either align themselves with groups using the moniker. Still both women can be seen as a part of what Patricia Hill Collins defined as a Black Feminism. Both women

...laid a vital analytical foundation for a distinctive standpoint on self, community, and society and, in doing so, created a multifaceted, African-American women's intellectual tradition. While clear discontinuities in this tradition exist---times when Black women's voices were strong, and others when assuming a more muted tone was essential---one striking dimension of [their] ideas...is the theoretic consistency of their work..<sup>61</sup>

One of the theoretical consistencies in the work of both women was their quest to promote the self-help and economic self-sufficiency goals of the UNIA while also promoting and

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<sup>60</sup> Ulla Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment Second Edition* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), pp.2-3.

maintaining Marcus Garvey's legacy of race pride and self determination. That both women resembled what twentieth century and twenty-first century scholars defined as feminist implies the significance of their contributions in shaping African-American women's activism. However, use of the term to characterize their work only serves to limit the realities of their lives and the times in which they lived. Both Amy Jacques and Amy Ashwood also included in their life work the progress of the Diasporic masses along with the specific promotion of men at the head of that effort in partnership with women. The use of the word "feminism" seems misappropriated when referring to them or their UNIA peers. The severity of segregation and its distinct lines of power during the early twentieth century also become muted by the use of the term. *Efficient Womanhood* is a term offered in recognition of that marked difference.

Consistency was also a defining characteristic in the life of Henrietta Vinton Davis who came to the UNIA in late 1918 at age 49 from the Shakespearean stage and remained a member in its various incarnations until her death in 1941. She too sought the promotion of race progress and went to great lengths, as this research will show, to bridge gaps within the African-American community based on color and class prejudices. While Davis is featured heavily in narratives that focus on the UNIA and Garvey which have been mainly informed by the Bureau of Investigation's detailing of the UNIA, there has yet to be a comprehensive treatment of her life. Considerations of Davis, within the scholarship on Marcus Garvey and the UNIA, centers on her friendship with him and both his wives as well as her role in rallying membership for the organization. Scholarship on her impact and significance are brief. Historian Judith Stein, for example, questioned Davis' role as Black Cross Nurse Organizer, noting that as she had no formal training as a nurse. She did however, have professional training as a teacher.<sup>62</sup> As this

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<sup>62</sup> William Seraille, "Henrietta Vinton Davis and The Garvey Movement" in *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* (Afro-American Historical Association of the Niagara Frontier, July 1982), p. 13.

dissertation will prove through the use of Davis' own words, although she had a middle-class background, she used her roles as a teacher and actress to bridge the gap between the classes and the varying hues of African-Americans. Still, on the surface Davis appeared to fit the middle-class mold Stein somewhat erroneously argued dominated the UNIA. These included

... ambitious artisans, small businessmen, and uprooted workers. Its methods and visions were simultaneously shaped by fatalism of the powerless, the utopias of hustlers and charlatans, the promise of mass movements and the ideologies generated by the new social transformation of World War I and the 1920s.<sup>63</sup>

That the members of the UNIA were ambitious is a fact. The middle-class assertions of the UNIA, however, were based on the desire to obtain economic self-sufficiency and independence. Middle-class pretensions that were believed to provide access to white society were not the main motivations of the quest for middle-class status among UNIA membership. As this dissertation will show, members of the UNIA were encouraged to engage in educational and entrepreneurial endeavors to better themselves, and to improve the overall status of the race. Through an examination of UNIA women, specifically those in the Black Cross Nurses auxiliaries, Judith Stein's assertion regarding the motives of the membership becomes questionable. Middle-class African-American women, as was the case for Henrietta Vinton Davis, joined the UNIA in part because they viewed its programs as a means of bridging economic gaps in their communities.

Stein's other assertions, that they were driven by a "fatalism" and misled by "hustler and charlatans," have also been revisited. Narratives of both rural and urban UNIA Divisions featured in the works of Jahi Issa, which focused on the Louisiana Division and its belief that the

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<sup>63</sup> Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), p. 6.

UNIA and Garvey symbolized a “government in exile” as well as Claudrena Harold and Mary Rolinson whose case studies on the UNIA demonstrated the “obvious popular appeal of Garvey’s calls for race pride, racial separatism and Negro nationalism” along the South Eastern Seaboard of the Mason Dixon Line.<sup>64</sup>

These historians demonstrated not only why people were attracted to the UNIA in the South, but that they brought with them ideas, attitudes, and strategies that membership in the organization helped to give voice and credentials to.<sup>65</sup> Although these case studies serve to highlight the motives, actions, and activities of the lay membership, all three fail to give any lengthy consideration to the roles women played in their respective divisions. Throughout his narrative, Issa pays special attention to the spouses of UNIA men. While providing some detail on the BCN in Louisiana (Harold and Rolinson also refer to UNIA women in the same vein), he failed to highlight and/or analyze the role of women within the division. In Emory Tolbert’s seminal work, *The UNIA and Black Los Angeles: ideology and community in the American Garvey Movement*, he focused on key women organizers in detail. The women’s perceptions of the UNIA and/or Garvey become linked with their participation in the organization. This resulted in a distinct and nuanced account of the Los Angeles Division.

Emory Tolbert’s focus on journalist Charlotta Bass’ role in forming the Pacific Coast Negro Improvement Association (PCNIA), a UNIA rival faction, after a falling out with the New York Headquarters over the use of funds, remains the first historical depiction of the

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<sup>64</sup>Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism : the Universal Negro Improvement Association in the rural South,, 1920-1927* (Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p.13; Simialr ideas are expressed by Jai Issa in “The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Louisiana: Creating a Provisional Government in Exile” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Howard University, May 2003).

<sup>65</sup> Claudrena N. Harold, *The Rise and fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918-1942* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Mary G. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism : the Universal Negro Improvement Association in the rural South,, 1920-1927* (Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

complexities of membership in the organization.<sup>66</sup> It also served to demonstrate that the appeal of the UNIA program was so strong and distinct that rather than abandon it altogether, individuals at odds with Garvey simply amended the name and continued to follow the philosophies and tenets of the program. One of the tenets, which appeared to resonate with all of the membership regardless of their geographic locations, was self-sufficiency. To achieve this goal, the PCNIA also formed its own BCN and continued to extend healthcare education and create employment opportunities in the field of healthcare for its members.

Although the Black Cross Nurses and Henrietta Vinton Davis appear as frequently in the historiography of the UNIA, they are given sparse consideration. Their mention is confined mostly to their appearance in UNIA parades. In the late 1990s historians began to move beyond Theodore Vincent's assertion that the BCN comprised "[f]ew [women who] were trained nurses, but many were doing the work of nurses at a servant's wages."<sup>67</sup> Recent work by historian Winston James points to the need for a full consideration of these women and the reality of their work as formal and informal nurses.<sup>68</sup> Historian Barbara Bair also notes that the work of the BCN "[i]n bolstering black health and helping black families to better thrive...directly countermanded what UNIA members saw as a white supremacist plan of genocide directed against African-Americans."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> For further insights on the life and work of Charlotta Bass both inside and outside of the UNIA please see Ann D Gordon, Bettye Collier-Thomas, et al., *African-American Women and the Vote, 1837-1965* (Amherst : University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); Anne Barbara Rapp, "A Marginalized voice for racial justice: Charlotta Bass and oppositional politics, 1914-1960" (Ph. D. Dissertation University of California, Santa Barbara, 2005); Marti Elizabeth Tippens, "Talking Back: how publisher and activist Charlotta Bass challenged inequity through the California Eagle" (MA Thesis, California State University, Northridge, 2001).

<sup>67</sup> Theodore G. Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (California: Ramparts Press, 1976), p.102.

<sup>68</sup> Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-century America* (London; New York: Verso, 1999).

<sup>69</sup> Barbara Bair, "Renegotiating Liberty: Garveyism, women and Grassroots Organizing in Virginia" in *Women of the American South: A Multicultural Reader* ed. Christie Anne Farnham (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 226-227.

None of the recent case studies argued as did Martin Summers in his comparative study of the UNIA and Black Masonry that the "...Black Cross Nurses represented a tradition of black women's community work and provided Garveyite women the space in which to assert their capacity as co-equals in community and national development."<sup>70</sup> The assertion of co-equal status resulted from the opportunities the UNIA presented, the leadership models of Garvey's wives and Henrietta Vinton Davis, and their own significance to the UNIA's program. However, not all women were able to assert their value within the organization peacefully especially when they expressed uneasiness with the hierarchy of the UNIA.

While there are many disturbing episodes throughout the UNIA's nascent period, none is more disturbing or under documented in the historiography of the organization than the assassination of African Princess Laura Adorkor Kofey on March 8, 1928 in Miami, Florida. In works centered on Garvey, she is presented as a nemesis who allegedly defrauded the organization and was banished from the pages of the *Negro World*. The only full consideration of her life, albeit based on limited sources, focused on her as a religious charismatic figure who became involved in the UNIA through revival-style meetings.<sup>71</sup> Within the limited treatments of Kofey, a portrait of a woman whose significance transcends the organization and served to bridge all points of the Diaspora becomes evident.

Laura Kofey was one of the few native Africans to become involved with the organization's lay membership. Her migration to the U.S. was by choice. She joined the UNIA with the specific intention of assisting in repatriation efforts and establishing a trade agreement between the organization and her community in West Africa. This dissertation argues that

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<sup>70</sup> Martin Summers, *Manliness & Its Discontents: The Black Middle-class & The Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 138.

<sup>71</sup> Richard Newman, "'Warrior Mother of Africa's Warriors of the Most High God': Laura Adorkor Kofey and the African Universal Church" in *Black Power and Black Religion: Essays and Reviews* ed. Richard Newman (Connecticut: locust Hill Press, 1987), pp. 131-145.

Kofey's brief interaction with the UNIA, her physical and spiritual connections to Africa, and the legacy she inspired qualifies Kofey as a significant historical figure. Although the early Black Atlantic period commentarial ends in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kofey's traversing of continents and her prominence among persons of the Diaspora placed her within this framework.

Kofey, like Ashwood, was banned from mention in the *Negro World* and thus was silenced in historical works that focused on the *Negro World*. Despite this absence, she was "the most successful organizer of new UNIA divisions in Alabama and Florida..." and warrants consideration in discussions of the organization and its female cadre.<sup>72</sup> Kofey's willingness to continue to galvanize members for the UNIA, even after being declared *persona non grata* by Garvey, further illustrated the willingness of persons drawn to the organization to adhere to the program in spite of disagreements with the organization's hierarchy. Here again the complexities faced by women in the organization as they strove to be seen and heard were repeatedly demonstrated.

Despite the obstacles, women in the organization continued to publicly and privately influence, shape, and re-define the UNIA brand of Black Nationalism. Their efforts did not go unnoticed by observers both inside and outside of the organization.

According to labor activist Sylvia Woods, her father, a roofer, joined the organization when she was just ten years old in 1919. He would take her to weekly UNIA meetings in New Orleans and encouraged her to listen to the speaker, a woman, who opened the meeting every week. Mr. Woods wanted Sylvia to "hear every word" said so that she would "...be able to speak like that woman." He believed that "[w]e have to have speakers in order to get free."<sup>73</sup> Sylvia's recollection and her subsequent life's work of grassroots activism presents several

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<sup>72</sup> Barbara Bair, "Renegotiating Liberty", p. 224.

<sup>73</sup> Sylvia Woods, "You Have to Fight for Freedom" in *Voices of a people's history of the United States* ed. Howard Zinn & Anthony Arnove (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2004), p. 114.

questions about the role of women in the UNIA and Black Nationalism more broadly. In relaying this episode from her childhood Sylvia Woods presents the researcher with two key questions. First who was the speaker? And second, what was so compelling in her speeches that prompted Mr. Wood to have Sylvia recite her speeches verbatim each week “with [the woman’s] same voice, all of her movements and everything”?<sup>74</sup>

As Sylvia Woods grew up to become an activist and speaker in her own right, a third question surfaces based on her recollection: how did the women of the organization as role models on a local level present the membership with a formula for national and international activism? Lastly, as this scenario played out in many UNIA Divisions throughout the Diaspora, the chiding of many fathers to their daughters may have also taken place. As the UNIA has been historically viewed as a male dominated organization, Mr. Woods’ desire to have his daughter become a “speaker in order to get free” contradicts that assertion and presents a final question, how did the UNIA create a public space for African American women to engage in and promote black liberation?

Efficient Womanhood is an attempt to answer these questions.

### **Outline of the Dissertation**

Chapter one provides a brief description of the activism of Amy Ashwood and Amy Jacques. Their work during their tenure in the organization and their lives immediately prior to and after the UNIA’s hey-day are also discussed. The lives and challenges faced by these women will be used to delineate the dilemmas and triumphs of the UNIA’s efficient women. Their rhetoric and daily actions, as witnessed by the lay membership, are also examined as a way of measuring their influence and their ability to mirror and address the needs of the female members.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

The second chapter centers on Henrietta Vinton Davis, who was the confidant of Ashwood, Jacques and Garvey. Her life prior to the UNIA is discussed briefly to illustrate the actions of women attracted to the organization. Her efforts to solicit funds for the Black Star Line (BSL) and establish a relationship with Liberia on behalf of the UNIA is also highlighted to demonstrate how efficient women stretched the boundaries of respectable behavior, while piloting themselves into roles heretofore dominated by men. Davis' disenchantment with Garvey after twelve years with the organization is also examined to illustrate the complexities of personal relations in the UNIA. As with all the women featured in this dissertation, their loyalty to the UNIA program consistently trumped loyalty to Garvey.

While soliciting monies for the BSL, Davis also worked arduously to have women join the Black Cross Nurses auxiliary of the UNIA. Chapter three focuses on the fruits of this effort. The ways in which the BCN auxiliaries served their respective communities is highlighted to show how the use of efficient womanhood increased educational opportunities for women and served to decrease healthcare disparities in communities throughout the Diaspora. The expansiveness of the UNIA's program is further illustrated by the BCN of Belize, which revealed how a decentralized program was manipulated to serve conflicting purposes.

Chapter four of *Efficient Womanhood* centers on a woman who presented no real challenge to the UNIA's programs but who objected to some of its money-raising schemes and through her charisma was seen as a threat to Marcus Garvey's power. Laura Adorkor Kofey's influence on both women and men of the UNIA, as a native African, revealed the expansiveness of the UNIA's program. The discussion of her short two-year affiliation with the organization leading up to her murder, purportedly by members of the UNIA, lays bare the difficulty women faced within the organization.

Chapter five revisits the points made in the previous chapters. It focuses on how the women of the UNIA recognized that they were the “burden bearers of their race” and suffered from a “...lack of appreciation” for their efforts.<sup>75</sup> This chapter discusses the ways in which UNIA women participated in shaping its goals, recruiting its membership, working to ensure its economic solvency, and finding ways to promote the legacy of its program and founder. Their participation and activism, while guided by both the UNIA program and Marcus Garvey, was adjusted at times to achieve what these women saw as the ultimate good--- the progress of the race. Paradoxically, their belief in the UNIA program and respect for Garvey’s core ideals about economic uplift and psychological and cultural empowerment sometimes caused them to act in what appeared to be direct conflict with Garvey personally. However, as far as research has demonstrated, these women never wavered in their commitment to the goals of the UNIA program---which they had, in fact, done much to articulate.

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<sup>75</sup> *Negro World*, January n.d., 1927.

CHAPTER 2  
MRS. AND MRS. GARVEY: THE TWO AMY GARVEYS

**The Roles of Amy Garvey**

The contributions of Amy Ashwood Garvey and Amy Jacques Garvey to the furtherance of the UNIA's goals throughout the Diaspora have recently taken center stage in biographies on their lives. Tony Martin's *Amy Ashwood Garvey: Pan-Africanist, Feminist, and Mrs. Marcus Garvey Wife No. 1, or, A Tale of Two Amies* on Ashwood in (2007) and Ula Taylor's *The Veiled Garvey: The Life & Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (2003) portray not only the difficulties of being married to a man whose first commitment was to an organization, but also the ways in which each woman contributed to the formation of the ideals and philosophies that organization espoused. Martin's consideration of Amy Ashwood Garvey served to extend the work of Lionel Yard, who published a biography on Ashwood in 1980.<sup>1</sup> Both Martin's and Yard's work depict a complex woman whose efforts to establish the Universal Negro Improvement Association and Commercial League in 1914, had previously received minimal attention.

Ula Taylor's biography of Amy Jacques also highlights Ashwood's contributions to the organization and her quest to be recognized as the "real" Mrs. Garvey. Biographers of both Amy Ashwood and Amy Garvey discussed their tenuous relationship after Ashwood's divorce from Marcus Garvey in 1920. Nevertheless, the lives of these women continued to intersect until the times of their deaths. While the two Amys never stood in the same room after Ashwood moved to London in 1924, their life stories indicate shared ideals, philosophies, and ultimately disillusionment with Garvey as a man and a leader, if not with the core ideals of the UNIA.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey: Pan-Africanist, Feminist, and Mrs. Marcus Garvey Wife No. 1, or, A Tale of Two Amies* (Dover, MA: Majority Press, 2007); Ula Y. Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life & Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Lionel M. Yard, *Biography of Amy Ashwood Garvey, 1897-1969: Co-Founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association* ([S.I.]: Associated Publishers, 1980).

<sup>2</sup> Tony Martin, "Amy Ashwood Garvey: Wife No. 1" *Jamaica Journal*, 20:3 (1987): p. 33.

Contemplations of Amy Ashwood's life also revealed her expansive efforts, while living in England, to assist African students in obtaining a Western education and her contribution to labor and nationalist organizing efforts throughout the Diaspora. At the same time, they stressed how she expounded the ideals she had helped Garvey formulate and how she came to challenge or modify those ideals. All three life chroniclers present evidence of Ashwood as a Black Nationalist and Pan Africanist.<sup>3</sup> Similar evidence and arguments were deployed by historian Ula Taylor in her work on Amy Jacques Garvey.

Through a close examination of Jacques' life's work during the nascent UNIA period in the mid-teens and the post-Garvey era, Taylor found evidence by 1929, of a "community feminism" where gender concerns were expressed in connection to race progress throughout Jacques' public career. Taylor argued that Amy Jacques used her gender after Garvey's death to enter into discussion of Diaspora concerns with the man whom Marcus Garvey engaged in a bitter war of words with up until his death, William E.B. DuBois.<sup>4</sup> Editorials and essays authored by Jacques during Garvey's trial, incarceration and subsequent deportation, between 1924 and 1927, not only indicated a transition of power within the organization, from male to female hands, but also demonstrated her staunch advocacy of UNIA programs.<sup>5</sup> In so doing she asserted the value of female participation in the organization's hierarchy and established more defined roles for women to ensure the organization achieved its aims.

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<sup>3</sup> Most specifically it is interesting to note that Ashwood attended every Pan Africanist conference between 1921 and 1945. She shared a podium with the likes of W.E.B. Du Bois, a foe of Garvey's presence in the United States during the UNIA's active period, George Padmore, C.L.R. James and Jomo Kenyatta. For additional insights please see Martin, "Amy Ashwood Garvey: PanAfricanist", pp. 84-85, 89, 123 & 134-136.

<sup>4</sup> Ashwood also entered into a close relationship with DuBois as both participated in the Pan African Congresses held in Manchester England throughout the 1930s and 1940s.

<sup>5</sup> Amy Jacques edited a column entitled "Our Women and What They Think" as well as the "Women's Page" of the *Negro World*. In that capacity she not only offered advice to women their role in the home as mothers and wives, but also on how those duties carried over to their public interactions. "Our Women and What They Think" ran for three years. "The Women's Page" started by Jacques in 1922 was a regular feature until the paper folded in 1934.

Amy Jacques' contributions to the UNIA, her life's work after its highly active period in the 1920s and 1930s, included establishing Marcus Garvey's written legacy by editing and publishing some of his key writings and speeches, and resulted in some prominence in UNIA historiography.<sup>6</sup> By contrast, Amy Ashwood's various contributions to the UNIA have not been explicitly recognized even in works that do examine key female figures within the organization. Indeed, Amy Ashwood's obscurity has resulted in the false impression that neither of Garvey's wives ever held formal positions of power within the organizations hierarchy although, Ashwood was listed as Secretary General during the 1919 Madison Square Garden Convention in New York City.<sup>7</sup>

This chapter reexamines the impact of both Mrs. Garveys, and in particular, discusses how Amy Ashwood, together with Garvey himself, helped to create the unusual space for female social, economic, and political activism within the UNIA. This chapter also seeks to illustrate how Jacques, along with the lay membership, stretched the limits of that space to create a gendered lay hierarchy. In so doing, women in the organization developed leadership skills that assisted them in influencing the Diaspora world at large. While the *Negro World* is the main primary source for restoring the history of the UNIA's lay membership, it is not a sufficient source for following the personal and public lives of either of Garvey's wives. To fill this gap, the papers of these women, their biographies and self-authored works will be used, along with newspaper interviews each gave in the latter part of their lives. It is in the humble beginning of

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<sup>6</sup> Amy Jacques Garvey published the two volumes of Marcus Garvey's speeches entitled *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for the Africans* (New York City: Universal Publishing House, 1925) and *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or Africa for the Africans* vol 2. (New York: Universal Pub. House, 1926) during his stay in the New York Tombs Prison in 1925 and while he served his sentence in the Atlanta Penitentiary in 1926. In later years she authored *Garvey and Garveyism* (New York: Collier Books, 1970) and co-edited with John Henrik Clarke, *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa* (New York: Random House, 1974) *More Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* (London: Cass, 1977) with Essien Udosen Essien-Udom. The first volume of Garvey's was translated into French by Adolph Edwards, *Marcus Garvey, un homme et sa pensée* (Paris: Editions Caribéennes, 1983).

<sup>7</sup> This historic meeting was chaired by then International Organizer, Henrietta Vinton Davis.

the organization, in the parlor of Amy Ashwood's parents, that the beginnings of the UNIA's efficient womanhood can be found.

### **The Imprint of Amy Ashwood Garvey**

Only two people were present at the conception of the UNIA in Jamaica in 1914, Marcus Garvey and his then friend and future wife Amy Ashwood. The organization, originally called the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities Imperial League, was established when Garvey named Ashwood secretary and she appointed him president.<sup>8</sup> Although her biographer, Lionel Yard, described Ashwood as a founding member of the UNIA, based on testimony from Ashwood and others in the organization's hierarchy, this contention was later disputed.<sup>9</sup> In the last twenty years accounts of the founding of the UNIA have come to acknowledge that Ashwood was co-founder of the organization.<sup>10</sup>

On July 8, 1915 the *Jamaica Times* carried an announcement for a meeting of the UNIA which was to be held at the home of Ashwood's parents.<sup>11</sup> The use of the Ashwood home for the UNIA's earliest meetings attests to the level of involvement of not only Amy Ashwood, but to some extent her family. Ashwood's activism appears to have been encouraged by her parents who, by their willingness to facilitate the group, also appeared to agree with the principles for which the organization stood. This announcement, along with the papers of Amy Ashwood Garvey and her unpublished manuscript "Marcus Garvey – Prophet of Black Nationalism," led historians to argue for Ashwood's significance at the very beginning of the UNIA.

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<sup>8</sup>Yard, *Biography of Amy Ashwood*, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup>Tony Martin, *Race First*, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Tony Martin, *Race First*, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Barbara Bair " "Ethiopia Shall Stretch Forth Her Hands Unto God": Laura Kofey and the Gendered Vision of Redemption in the Garvey Movement" in *A Mighty Baptism: Race, Gender, and the Creation of American Protestantism* eds. Susan Jester and Lisa MacFarlane. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 39; Ula Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey* (North Carolina: UNC Press, 2002), p. 23.

<sup>11</sup> *Jamaica Times*, July 8, 1915.

Despite such evidence, Garvey biographer Tony Martin long remained skeptical about the nature and extent of Ashwood's influence in establishing the organization. However, his 2007 biography of Amy Ashwood presented a slightly different take on the matter. Although Martin still maintains that Ashwood at age 17 could not have contributed much to the founding of the Universal Negro Improvement and Conservation Association and African Communities League (UNI&CA&ACL), he does concede that her involvement helped Garvey gain access to "some of Jamaica's social and powerful elites" who helped fund UNIA-sponsored programs.<sup>12</sup>

On the surface, throughout 1914 and 1915, prior to Garvey's trip to America, the organization performed functions similar to many of the social or fraternal organizations on the island. In the early years, it sponsored several community based endeavors to assist poorer Jamaicans. These programs included providing dinners for the poor through the sale of "flowers and bouquets to the members, friends and well-wishers of the association..." while fundraising for a Tuskegee-like industrial school and establishing an industrial farm to help feed the poor.<sup>13</sup> The organization also served as an employment agency for persons seeking work both on and off the island of Jamaica and hosted debates on social issues.<sup>14</sup> As these were the main activities of the organization and Garvey was still in what historian Rupert Lewis called his "Booker T. Washington phase," the involvement of Amy Ashwood's family is, according to Martin, credible. For him, her influence and input ended once Garvey went to America in 1916 and became more "radicalized" in his approach.<sup>15</sup>

However, a close examination of both the political and cultural atmosphere in Jamaica during the period presents a more nuanced understanding of Ashwood's involvement.

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<sup>12</sup> Martin, *Race First*, p. 33; Tony Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey: Pan Africanist*, pp. 22-27.

<sup>13</sup> *Jamaica Times*, November 15, 1915; *Daily Chronicle*, December 4, 1914; *Daily Chronicle*, November 5, 1914, November 14, 1914, November 19, 1914 & November 28, 1914.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*; *Jamaica Gleaner*, January 15, 1915 & January 19, 1915; *Jamaica Gleaner*, January 25, 1915.

<sup>15</sup> Rupert Lewis, *Marcus Garvey: Anti-colonial Champion* (New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1987), p. 42.

Ashwood's participation in public speaking contests that centered on the very ideals subsequently written into the UNIA program indicates that she could have easily brought her own ideals to the early stages of the organization's program. Furthermore, as Ashwood had just returned to Jamaica from the Panama Canal Zone in 1914, where she was exposed to the harsh and sometimes immoral realities of limited wage work opportunities for women, the degree of her influence was larger than Tony Martin alleges.

The Ashwood family was a part of the influx of West Indians who participated in the Panama Canal construction in the mid-1900s. Women worked just as hard as men although earning lower wages for their work. While the work force was male dominated, women carved out niches for themselves as cooks, laundresses and lay nurses while caring for make shift homes. Some women actually worked as a part of the construction teams on the canal. Records indicate that officially over 31,000 men and women from neighboring Caribbean islands were brought to the Canal Zone and another 150,000 to 200,000 migrated on their own during the second phase of construction between 1904 and 1914. Of that number only 20,000 were said to be actually on the canal payroll at any given time.<sup>16</sup>

At the start of the second phase of construction, in 1905, managers of the canal project attempted to specifically solicit women workers to come into the zone. They believed there was as much need for women in the work force throughout the area as there was for women as "companions" to the male workers. However, this soon led to allegations of a "government sanctioned" prostitution ring, and the efforts were dropped. The women continued to come on their own, often paying their own way to take jobs and were doing "auxiliary work".<sup>17</sup> Seeking

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<sup>16</sup> Michael L. Connif, *Black Labor On White Canal: Panama 1904-1981* (Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh press, 1985), p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 36; Trevor W. Purcell, *Banana Fallout: Class, Color and Culture Among West Indians in Costa Rica* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies Publishers, 1989), pp. 32-33.

the economic opportunities the canal presented, Ashwood's father moved the family temporarily to the Canal Zone where he established a bakery.<sup>18</sup> The family returned to Jamaica in 1914, and Amy Ashwood made her public speaking debut at the East Queen Street Baptist Church in Kingston. Ashwood presented an essay entitled "Morality Does Not Increase with the March of Civilization" and impressed Marcus Garvey who was in the audience.<sup>19</sup>

Ashwood's topic implies that she, at the age of 17, had developed an awareness of the world through her Panama experience. The limited employment possibilities for women at the expense of their morals and integrity were foremost in her thoughts. During the early 1900s Nationalist organizations, notably the Peoples Convention of 1900, were pervasive in Jamaica and undoubtedly influenced Ashwood. In this organization women openly debated the role of women in Jamaican society and the need to encourage race consciousness among black Jamaicans.

Historian Honor Ford-Smith links the Convention, founded by Bahamian Dr. J. Robert Love an ordained Protestant Episcopal Church minister, to a climate of "feminist "activism on the island at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Dr. Love had worked in Haiti for ten years and became the first African American man to be ordained by the Florida Diocese after spending a short period of time in Jacksonville, FL. Before his death in 1914 (the year Ashwood returned to Jamaica from Panama) Love's organization provided a platform for early Caribbean nationalist and Pan-African activists Catherine McKenzie of Jamaica and Henry Sylvester Williams.<sup>20</sup> McKenzie was married to a United Fruit Company worker named James Alexander. The United Fruit Company would, in later years, serve as the launching pad for Garvey's career as a labor

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<sup>18</sup> Tony Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey: Pan-Africanist*, p. 35.

<sup>19</sup> Martin, *Race First*, p. 27; Martin, *Amy Ashwood*, p. 42; Yard, p.7.

<sup>20</sup> Honor Ford-Smith, "Women and the Garvey Movement", in *Marcus Garvey His Work and Impact* eds. Rupert Lewis and Patrick Bryan (New Jersey: African World Press, 1994), p. 72.

organizer in the Canal Zone. McKenzie was an ardent advocate of women's rights in the Caribbean. In her 1902 speech, "Women's Concerns and Organizational Activities" she stated before a mixed crowd

The rights accorded to women have left much to be desired. Just why woman has [been] denied all the rights accorded to man is one of the unexplained relations of life, except it be that it is man alone who has made the laws denying her such rights; for on examination, it can be easily proved that her claim to the possession and the enjoyment of equal rights under all circumstances, are as clearly made out as that of man.<sup>21</sup>

Love, along with Henry Sylvester Williams, founder of the Pan African Association in 1901 is credited with continuing to emphasize the importance of enfranchising women and the need for furthering educational opportunities afforded them.<sup>22</sup> Love's adherence to the ideals of McKenzie is particularly significant as Amy Ashwood read one of her poems at his funeral.<sup>23</sup> That Ashwood was aware of the rhetoric of Love and others who blended nationalist and anti-imperialist concerns is evident. Robert Love appeared to echo sentiments expressed by Edward Blyden, Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and others when he wrote in the *Jamaica Advocate*,

[t]he destiny of the Negro Race depends upon the elevation of the women of the race. The conditions in which the Black people of the British West Indies are found today is due in fact that no effort has been made to lift Black women up and put her on the plane that woman ought to occupy in society.<sup>24</sup>

Ashwood returned to Jamaica from the Canal Zone with her attitudes reshaped by a political and cultural environment that encouraged women to become active in the nationalist organizations as a means of promoting race progress. In Jamaica, Ashwood "borrowed" money from her mother's purse to print pamphlets about Garvey entitled "A Talk with Afro-West

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<sup>21</sup> Linette Vassell, *Voices of Women in Jamaica: 1898-1939* (Kingston, Jamaica: Department of History, University of West Indies, 1993), p. 35.

<sup>22</sup> Honor Ford-Smith, p. 72.

<sup>23</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, December 4, 1914.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Rupert Lewis, *Marcus Garvey: Anti-Colonial Champion* (New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1988), p.28.

Indians: The Negro Race and Its Problems by Marcus Garvey, Jnr.” that listed the objectives of the organization:

- To Establish a Universal Confraternity among the Races,
- To Promote the Spirit of race Pride and Love
- To Reclaim th[e ] Fallen of the Race.
- To Administer to, and help the Needy.
- To Assist in Civilizing the Backward tribes of Africa
- To strengthen the Imperialism of Bas[u]toland, Liberia, etc.
- To Establish [C]ommissionaries in the Principal Countries of the World, for the Protection of All Negroes, Irrespective of Nationality.
- To Promote a Conscientious Christian Worship among the Native Tribes of Africa.
- To Establish Universities, Colleges and Secondary Schools for the Further Education and Culture of our Boys and Girls.<sup>25</sup>

Donations in support of the proposed school and other benevolent programs were to be sent to 121, Orange Street and 34, Charles Street Kingston, Jamaica, W.I.. This was the address of Amy Ashwood’s parents. Through the use of her parents’ funds and her civic connections, the pamphlets were printed and distributed to both Jamaica’s elites and manual labor workers.

The debate over Ashwood’s contribution to the UNIA at its inception is, in some ways, a minor issue. Recognizing her influence on the tenets and structure of the fledgling organization, however, is a much more serious matter. The distracting debate over her “founder” status has nevertheless contributed to a lack of historical consideration of her activism as a UNIA advocate both during her personal relationship with Garvey and afterwards. By fixating on this

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<sup>25</sup> The exact date of the publication of the pamphlet is not known. The pamphlet itself is simply dated July-August 1914. A series of pamphlets authored by Garvey in 1914 carry the same date. Robert Hill, *Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* vol. 1 (Berkeley: university of California Press, 1983), pp. 55-70.

foundational moment or on her marriage to Garvey, historians neglected Ashwood's broader contribution to the organization's efforts of racial progress, economic independence, and educational advancement. Ironically, for all his unwillingness to accept Ashwood's significance to the founding of the UNIA, Tony Martin has been part of this reawakening of interest in her as he does at least attempt to illuminate Ashwood's continuing work as a Black Nationalist after her divorce and disappearance from the pages of the *Negro World* after 1923.

Ironically, while Ashwood was not featured heavily in the pages of the *Negro World* even when married to Garvey, without her the organization, and its newspaper may never have reached the international stature that it enjoyed. Ashwood's participation in the UNIA and her activism as a nationalist began in small but significant ways. As previously mentioned, her parent's home served as a major site for the UNIA's planning and fund raising for the UNIA while it was still based in Jamaica.<sup>26</sup> Flyers and newspaper announcements listed her parent's Jamaica address as the site for correspondence to be mailed to on behalf of the UNIA.

Despite her troubles with Garvey and the scorn she endured from members of the UNIA after Garvey alleged that she had an affair, Ashwood continued her quest for both personal and communal empowerment.<sup>27</sup> Her mission became "to work in a more intimate fashion in order to help Afro-American women to find themselves and rise in life."<sup>28</sup> Her activities after leaving the UNIA validate her commitment to a black female activism that was dedicated to equal rights and opportunities. By 1926 she had co-written and produced two successful plays that toured the United States and Europe. She used the funds from the shows along with proceeds from her two night clubs to assist Nigerian students in their educational pursuits. One of Ashwood's

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<sup>26</sup> Yard, *Biography of Amy Ashwood*, pp. 16-20.

<sup>27</sup> *Negro World*, January 2, 1921.

<sup>28</sup> Amy Ashwood Garvey, "Marcus Garvey: Prophet of Black Nationalism." Unpublished Manuscript in Amy Ashwood Garvey Papers, National Library of Jamaica.

intentions was to see both women and men go beyond prescribed gender roles. To further that aim, she often masked her quest for equality in terms of a quest for greater education opportunities and was thus able to speak publicly on the need for improved conditions for people of the Diaspora and the continent of Africa while soliciting funds from mixed audiences.

Ashwood continued to be very public in her nationalist endeavors upon leaving the UNIA. As apart of her commitment to its ideals and to Black Nationalism, she participated in the Pan African Congress Conferences from 1921-1945. By 1945 she was presiding over the meetings that ranged in focus from concerns about the plight of all people of color to the urgency of the Italo-Ethiopian War.<sup>29</sup> Amy Ashwood became an international citizen of the Diasporic world. She joined others of the period who found new perspectives on race and gender in Europe and sought to have those ideals cross the Atlantic. The call to arms for people of the Diaspora evidenced by W.E.B.Dubois' demand for an international organization that worked to "beat back the organization of lies which meets the coloured man wherever and whenever he attempts to better his condition."<sup>30</sup> Ashwood's presence as chair of the meeting implies that she too desired to contribute to such an organization. As the organization sought to speak to the concerns of all "coloured" people further indicates the vastness of Ashwood's activism.

Other considerations of Amy Ashwood's life, while recognizing her as Garvey's first wife and her contributions to the UNIA, place emphasis on her Pan Africanist involvement with Africans and West Indians throughout the Diaspora.<sup>31</sup> Hakim Adi and Fitzroy Baptiste in their recent works on Pan Africanism have documented Ashwood's work as both as a Pan Africanist

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<sup>29</sup> *Guardian*, October 25, 1985 p. 15.

<http://archive.guardian.co.uk/Repository/ml.asp?Ref=R1VBLzE5ODUvMTAvMjUjQXIwMTUwMQ==&Mode=Gif&Locale=english-skin-custom>

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in the *Guardian*, October, 16, 1945 p. 6.

<http://archive.guardian.co.uk/Repository/ml.asp?Ref=R1VBLzE5NDUvMTAvMTYjQXIwMDYwNw==&Mode=Gif&Locale=english-skin-custom>

<sup>31</sup> Hakim Adi, *Pan-African history: political figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787* (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 87-120.

and a labor organizer during World War II.<sup>32</sup> Hakim Adi located Ashwood in England in 1924 working with Nigerian students to form the Nigerian Process Union. Through her association with the organization, she came to see flaws in Garvey's ideology. This was the beginning of an ideological departure from her previous considerations of Africa. Ashwood reasoned that,

Mr. Garvey's idea of an African Kingdom was a geographic blunder. There are too many tribes, each differing from the other in custom [so] that it is quite impossible to form them into a single people. What is more they want no Afro-Americans or West Indians as rulers over them. They want no kings or dukes or earls created over here sent there.....

I would like to be quite fair to Mr. Garvey, though, he has done one thing. He has awakened the race consciousness of the negro...and created the desire in him to raise his status.<sup>33</sup>

Consistent with her commitment to equal participation of the sexes, Ashwood went on to declare "Which is where I come in...I am going to do the pioneer work and when I have done that I am appealing to the sportsmanship of the Englishman to give a fair chance to the natives of [these] territories."<sup>34</sup> In her view the "natives" included both men and women of the Diaspora.

Ashwood believed that her travels throughout the Caribbean, Europe, Africa and the Americas, would serve as an example of the potential of the race to Imperial governments and colonized people. She gave lectures until the end of her life on the need for unity among the descendants of African slaves and the necessity of independence for African nations.

Further evidence of her resolve came between 1943 and 1945, when Ashwood vehemently opposed the male gender-biased recruitment of seasonal labor into the United States. She took exception to the specific exclusion of Jamaican women and West Indian women. To

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, pp. 117-120; Fitzroy Andre Baptiste, "Amy Ashwood Garvey and Afro-West Indian Labor in the United States Emergency Farm and War Industries' Programs of World War II, 1943-1945"

[http://www.africamigration.com/archive\\_02/f\\_baptiste.htm](http://www.africamigration.com/archive_02/f_baptiste.htm)

<sup>33</sup> *Jamaica Gleaner*, September 25, 1924.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

address the concern, Ashwood launched a two-part scheme to draw international attention to the issue.

First in 1944, she formed a political party in Jamaica that was supported in large part by women. Ashwood became "President of the Jag-Smith Party" and ran as its candidate for the Jamaican House of Representatives.<sup>35</sup> Also in the spring of 1944, Ashwood made her way to the United States on a non-immigrant medical visa claiming that she needed follow up care for surgery she had to "remove an abdominal tumor."<sup>36</sup> She never met with medical professionals on that trip and had an entirely different purpose for coming to the United States. According to historian Fitzroy Andre Baptiste, Ashwood arrived in the U.S. to "make a public statement that Jamaican and West Indian women must have equal consideration with their men in American and British schemes for work in the United States."<sup>37</sup> That she was a candidate for political office in Jamaica also helped her obtain the visa as by all indications she would return to participate in the election. She convinced consulate officials of her sole interest in Jamaican local politics and asserted her lack of interest in international political concerns by being on the ballot.<sup>38</sup>

Her arrival in the U.S. made public the real intentions of her trip. Prior to leaving Jamaica, she and other members of her political party implied that her trip sought to get "25 Jamaican women...going to the United States as domestic servants."<sup>39</sup> Although this assertion was launched in part via rumor and innuendo, Ashwood's letter to the U.S. Vice Consul in

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<sup>35</sup> The Jag-Smith Party' was the Jamaica Democratic Party led by J.A.G. Smith, a veteran politician.

<sup>36</sup> RG 59: 811.504BWI/63, dispatch # 602, April 27, 1944 from the US Consulate, Kingston to State Department.

<sup>37</sup> Baptiste, p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> RG 59: 811.504BWI/63, dispatch # 602, April 27, 1944 from the US Consulate, Kingston to State Department.

<sup>39</sup> *Jamaica Gleaner*, April 4, 1944.

Kingston on March 30, 1944, asking for “ten women” to join her, underscores her aims.

Ashwood wrote:

There are about ten women over there, for whom I have work here. Please tell me what I should do. I understand that if their prospective employer will offer a years agreement, together with Bankers reference, stating the salary, and also income tax returns, they can leave. Their tickets would also be sent to them. Please be good enough to reply to me at your earliest date. I have been given wide publicity here in my efforts to help the women of my Country, and large numbers of white ladies have phoned me, and are calling on me at my Hotel to help them. I am an outdoor patient, and my doctors say I must loose fifty more pounds before I can stand an operation, so I will be getting an extension. I would like to help all I can before I take my operation, it may be my last act of Service.<sup>40</sup>

Amy Ashwood’s assertion to officials that the trip was for medical purposes was a ruse.

In fact, up until her death in 1969 she received medical treatment outside of Jamaica only once.

She was seen by Canadian doctors for severe abdominal pain in 1920.<sup>41</sup> The historical record clearly indicates that Ashwood’s goal was “in the interests of obtaining jobs for 50,000 Jamaican women workers as domestics in the United States...” according to Federal Bureau of

Investigations chief J. Edgar Hoover.<sup>42</sup> Hoover went on to warn the State Department that

Ashwood had to be stopped

as any success she may have in causing the importation of these Jamaican workers may be used to advantage by the U[niversal] Negro Improvement Association as a device to augment their membership and increase its influence upon the members.<sup>43</sup>

Although Marcus Garvey died in 1940, and the organization had become dormant by 1944, Amy Ashwood’s presence continued to alarm in intelligence circles. While the *Negro World* editors and others in the UNIA had ignored Ashwood, she was still considered a person of interest and influence among governmental officials who sought to quell the UNIA.

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<sup>40</sup> RG 59:811.504BWI/63, dispatch # 602, April 27, 1944 from the US Consul, Kingston to the State Department.

<sup>41</sup> Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey: Pan Africanist*, p. 153.

<sup>42</sup> RG 59: 811.504BWI/61: J. Edgar Hoover to Adolf Berle Jr., Assistant Secretary of State, State Department. April 17, 1944.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

The plight of Jamaican women was only one of Ashwood's concerns. She toured the West Indies speaking to groups, including former members of the UNIA, on topics that included the role of women in developing their island nations and the roles of fathers in the home.<sup>44</sup> Inspired in part by the role women played in building Liberia, in the mid- 1950s, she attempted to complete work on a three-part historical narrative of that state.<sup>45</sup> She entitled her work, the "Mother Africa Series." The first projected volume was titled "Liberia, Land of Promise: A Factual Survey of the African Republic"; the second centered on the encounter of Africans and whites on the continent and was titled "Africa Speaks"; the third professed to be "an intimate biography of Marcus Garvey" in which "Garvey looms as the protagonist." Ashwood intended this volume to be called "Black Man of Density." The three volume series was never published. However, a pamphlet with the introduction and a preview of the first volume was published in 1953.<sup>46</sup> Amy Ashwood intended to publish the series with private backers under the name of the Universal Publishing Company.<sup>47</sup>

This series on Africa was not Ashwood's first attempt at compiling a history of the continent. She lived in West Africa for three years from 1946 to 1949 and helped to establish fifteen women's organizations throughout Ghana and the Ivory Coast during that period.<sup>48</sup> While there, she familiarized herself with women of various tribes and documented their

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<sup>44</sup> *New Daily Chronicle*, July 24, 1929 p. 5 & August 5, 1929 pp. 5-6; *Barbados Advocate*, March 21, 1953; *Barbados Recorder*, March 16, 1953; *Port of Spain Gazette*, May 28, 1953; *Aruba Mid-Weekly* April 22, 1953.

<sup>45</sup> E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *Liberia: Land of Promise, By Amy A. Garvey. Preview by Sylvia Pankhurst* (Port of Spain: Port of Spain Gazette, [ca. 1953] p. 8.

<sup>46</sup> E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *Liberia: Land of Promise, By Amy A. Garvey. Preview by Sylvia Pankhurst* (Port of Spain: Port of Spain Gazette, [ca. 1953] p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> Amy Jacques Garvey first published *Philosophies and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* using the name Universal Publishing House. The company was listed as one of the subsidiaries of the UNIA. Ashwood's selection of a name that resembles that of the UNIA publishing company reflected her continued affinity for and claims to a place in UNIA history. "Black Man of Destiny" was also the title of an unpublished biography Ashwood wrote about Garvey in the late 1920s.

<sup>48</sup> Hillal H.J. Nadji, "Á Garvey Comes Home to Africa" *Chicago Defender Magazine*, August 6, 1949 p.19; *Jamaica Gleaner*, May 6, 1948.

customs.<sup>49</sup> Ashwood intended to publish an “honest” collection of essays that gave “to the world the true background of not only the African but the African woman of whom the Western world [knew] little.”<sup>50</sup> Her travels in Africa detailed in her unpublished manuscript “The Black Woman” presented what Ashwood viewed as the needs of African women. She found that their “present needs” included:

1. [a] leader to relieve them from the prevailing male domination
2. a new concept of herself as a human being equal to man
3. a right to make a free choice of mate
4. [the] right to be the only wife of one husband
5. [the] right to live in a unit family without dictation from elders
6. political rights equal to those of men.<sup>51</sup>

Ashwood also gained new insights into the needs of African Americans on her visit. She found that “Africa offer[d] a wonderful challenge to the Western World” and encouraged that the challenge be accepted as “[i]t’s one which we must answer if we are to retain our self-respect. Africa is sweeping like a cyclone; no one can stand in the way of the inevitable destiny of the African people but the Africans themselves.”<sup>52</sup> This trip also resulted in another proposed manuscript, “Mother Africa” that would “establish a national background for the Negroes of the New World, a birthright they lost when they were forcibly abducted from their native lands.”<sup>53</sup> Her sentiments came on the heels of de-colonization movements throughout the continent and further expressed a sense of African nationalism. While it was nearly forty years since the

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<sup>49</sup> Ashwood spent time with various groups in and around West Africa but spent a large amount of the time in the Gold Coast and Nigeria. In her travels she interacted with indigenous peoples from the region including the Ibo, Tchad, and Bundi.

<sup>50</sup> Nadji, “Á Garvey Comes Home to Africa” *Chicago Defender Magazine*, August 6, 1949, p.18.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey: Pan-Africanist*, p. 228.

<sup>52</sup> Nadji, “Á Garvey Comes Home to Africa” *Chicago Defender Magazine*, August 6, 1949 p.19.

<sup>53</sup> *Jamaica Gleaner*, December 19, 1949 [NP]; *Cavalcade Magazine*, November 19, 1949[NP].

founding of the UNIA, the ideals of Marcus Garvey and the program he initiated had begun to bear the fruit of an independent Africa and a unified Diaspora. Ashwood's words also marked the longevity of the UNIA's efficient womanhood as with the changing tide she found yet another avenue to pursue the goal of race pride and self sufficiency for all Africans.

Aside from her direct involvement with the continent, Ashwood also worked to better the lives of Africans living in the West. While living in England from the 1930s through the mid-1940s, she opened a restaurant called the "Florence Mills." The restaurant became known as a place where "race intellectuals from all parts of the world [were] wont to gather."<sup>54</sup> These intellectuals included Pan Africanists George Padmore, C.L. R. James, and Eric Williams. She was heralded in the Gold Coast "as a mother of African and West Indian students" who "opened a restaurant and club for them" to have as a place of refuge.<sup>55</sup> It was also at her restaurant that C.L.R. James organized the International Friends of Abyssinia (IAFA) and held its meetings. The group was formed in response to Italian aggressions in Ethiopia from 1935 though 1936. Ashwood was one of the first members of the group and was on hand to greet Emperor Haile Selassie when he arrived as a refugee in England in 1936.<sup>56</sup>

As a member of IAFA, Ashwood spoke at a rally in London's Trafalgar Square in 1935. Before a large crowd of native Africans and African decedents, Ashwood declared that "No race has been so noble in forgiving, but now the hour has struck for our complete emancipation."<sup>57</sup> She admonished imperial powers for claiming that Africans were brought from homelands to "Christianize [them],...but the only Christianity you gave us was three hundred and more years

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<sup>54</sup> *Chicago Defender*, October 5, 1935, p. 24.

<sup>55</sup> *Ashanti Pioneer*, February 15, 1947.

<sup>56</sup> S.K.B Asante, *Pan African Protest: West Africa and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis* (London: Longman, 1977) p. 45.

<sup>57</sup> *Jamaica Gleaner*, September 11, 1935. [NP]

of enslavement.”<sup>58</sup> Ashwood publicly challenged the British government for which C.L.R. James lauded her as a “militant anti-imperialist, . . . [a] woman of tremendous force of personality” who played a “prominent part” in the IAFA.<sup>59</sup>

Ashwood’s speaking tour in the Caribbean, her time in England and her travels on the African continent served to illustrate her commitment to the goals of the UNIA. Her deliberate movement throughout the Diaspora earned her a receptive transnational audience as she continued to promote Black Nationalist ideals. That the doctrine she penned in 1914 dominated her life’s work until the time of her death also served to further qualify her significance to the organization’s beginnings. Her failure to publish works that documented the span of her involvement accounted for her absence from considerations of the organization. The result is a truncated depiction of Ashwood restricted mostly to her time spent as Garvey’s lover and wife.

Despite the limited consideration she has been given her impact was enormous. When the organization moved to New York, Ashwood’s ability to barter with printers and paper suppliers secured the printing of the UNIA newspaper *The Negro World*. To ensure the paper’s success, she hand delivered free copies of the paper door to door between Brooklyn and Manhattan during the early morning hours, until it became self sustaining and reached a circulation of 100,000.<sup>60</sup>

*The Negro World* was used to enlighten members on topics ranging from world politics to home life. It was also used by Garvey to vent his frustration with other black leaders of the day and anyone he saw as a threat to him. Ironically, in 1920 Amy Ashwood, who had done so much

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> C.L.R James, *Beyond A Boundary* (London: Hutchinson, 1963), pp. 249-250.

<sup>60</sup> Yard, *Biography of Amy Ashwood*, pp. 44-45; Martin, *Race First*, p. 10.

for the UNIA and the launching of the *Negro World*, became a threat. She too found her name among those on Garvey's despised list during and after the dissolution of their marriage.<sup>61</sup>

Ashwood served as secretary of the Ladies Division of the UNIA, which she had established as a separate entity in the organization's constitution. The Ladies Division was not an auxiliary (meaning a secondary or supporting body) of the UNIA, but a hierarchical unit that each branch was required by the constitution to establish in order to receive its charter. Along with her service as secretary, she also was responsible for the organization's bookkeeping. Given Ashwood's involvement in the very early days of the UNIA, she contributed to both the strengths and weaknesses of the organization. One of her most obvious successes was the UNIA's inclusion of women in its decision-making processes. While Ashwood's contributions ensured a space for women, she failed to adequately detail the characteristics of that space. Through her actions it appeared that she often blurred the lines of prescribed gender behavior. Yet, on the surface the UNIA appeared in practice, according to historian Michele Mitchell, to impose stern regulation of women's bodies and social behaviors through written policies. There were no similar written policies regulating the behavior of UNIA men.<sup>62</sup>

The conspicuous presence of a powerful female lay membership in the UNIA, led by the likes of Amy Ashwood, challenges the assertion of Mitchell and other historians who maintain that the male-based hierarchy of the UNIA constricted and limited opportunities for women. During the 1922 Convention, for example, a delegate from New Orleans, Mrs. Robinson, expressed concerns over women serving as field organizers "if they wanted to hold the proper respect of men" and lamented the ability of less than "strong" women working in the field,

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<sup>61</sup> Yard, *Biography of Amy Ashwood*, pp.67; Martin, *Race First*, pp. 180-191; *Negro World*, March 6, 1920.

<sup>62</sup> Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 225.

“lowering the morale of the organization.”<sup>63</sup> Mrs. Willis, of New York and also one of the lead organizers of the Black Cross Nurses, objected to Mrs. Robinson’s assertions, noting that she had travelled the country with Marcus Garvey on speaking tours. She believed that “the women were as competent as the men to be field representatives and they could conduct themselves in their travels to command the respect of the men.”<sup>64</sup>

Delegates from Chicago and Detroit explained that the women were not willing to “sit silently by and let the men take all the glory while they gave the advice”; nor was it permissible for women to stand behind the men “pushing” them along. While asking for access to executive offices already established in the hierarchy, they also wanted “some women put in the field as commissioners to organize women and put them to work.”<sup>65</sup> While the language seems abrasive at times, the women maintained that “it was not the intention of the women to get in the way of the men or to take the men’s places, but they wanted to be at their side.”<sup>66</sup> UNIA women desired to share a space and place with men.

The UNIA’s constitution, according to Mitchell, established “gender-specific activity” for young people that carried over into their adult membership and which “mirrored places in the home.”<sup>67</sup> She notes, as does Theodore Vincent in *Black Power and Garvey Movement*, that at the 1922 UNIA Convention women delegates expressed their desire to work with the men but announced that they “were unwilling to follow any longer” the double standards they felt inherent in the organization’s policies.<sup>68</sup> Missing from Mitchell’s consideration of gender roles in the UNIA is any mention of Ashwood. Although Vincent gave some attention to Ashwood he

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<sup>63</sup> *Negro World*, September 9, 1922.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*, p.225.

<sup>68</sup> Theodore Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (California: Ramparts Press, 1976), 124-125. Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*, p.228.

limited his analysis to her comments on Garvey and misjudged Ashwood's criticism of the UNIA's supposed failure to establish schools as evidence of a more fundamental opposition to its programs. Had he taken the time to grapple with her life's work or even interview her as he conducted his research, he may have come to a very different conclusion.<sup>69</sup>

Later research done by Barbara Bair points out that the UNIA not only established a school but that it was mostly attended by teenage girls.<sup>70</sup> Perhaps even more crucially absent from both Mitchell's and Vincent's treatment of the UNIA or Ashwood was a sustained examination of the cultural mores of the founders of the organization that might have explained their emphasis on "domestic science" an emphasis which Mitchell alleged resulted in an institutionalization and "reinforcement of gendered roles."<sup>71</sup> In other words, it is arguable that UNIA women actually contributed to the codification of the very ideals to which Mitchell believes they took exception and by which she claimed they were constrained. Moreover, they found these ideals and practices progressive, even liberating, because of the opportunities they presented for the race and to some extent, their sex.

For example, according to Ashwood's biographer, Lionel Yard, and Ula Taylor's biography of Amy Jacques Garvey the educational training these women received in the Caribbean included skills labeled "domestic science." Such skills were not only to assist in good home-making, but were also deemed vital for personal, family, and community survival. Being a seamstress, for example, was not looked down upon in West Indian culture. This type of employment allowed for entrepreneurship, one of the tenets of the UNIA program. Traditional

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<sup>69</sup> Vincent, *Black Power*, pp. 131-132.

<sup>70</sup> Barbara Bair, "Renegotiating Liberty: Garveyism Women, and Grassroots Organizing in Virginia" in *Women of the American South: A Multicultural Reader* ed. Christie Anne Farnham (New York: New York University Press, 1997), pp. 230-235.

<sup>71</sup> Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*, p.225.

gender roles, in other words, could be used in non-traditional ways as vehicles for achieving various progressive racial and gender goals.

Ashwood's absence from Mitchell's work is also surprising since she was referred to during Garvey's mail fraud trial by Llyod Werner as "(T)he power behind the throne."<sup>72</sup> According to Werner's testimony, Garvey was supposed to control the accounting for monies solicited to pay for shares in the Black Star Line, "but Miss Ashwood was dominant and wouldn't let anybody look in her books."<sup>73</sup> The Black Star Line was established by the UNIA to facilitate trade between Africa and the Americas. Garvey was brought to trial for mail fraud in 1923 when it was discovered that shares sold in the company to African Americans exceeded the number of shares issued. In fact, Barbara Bair found that the stock sales were used as payments for ships which had yet to be purchased at the time of the stock offering. Garvey and the UNIA circulated several advertisements which included pictures of ships prior to completing their purchase and subsequent "legal transfer of ownership."<sup>74</sup>

Ashwood was not the only woman with access to Black Star Line monies or records. Henrietta Vinton Davis was the shipping company's most active stock solicitor and was recognized in the *Negro World* and in Bureau of Investigation records for collecting large sums of money in connection with the sale of stocks from as far away as Montreal, Canada and the Caribbean. Yet, Davis was not named as a conspirator in the mail fraud trial, nor were there any implications of wrongdoing associated with her in the trial transcript. Instead, Amy Ashwood, the women who had created the space for Davis to have access to the UNIA's records and its funds became a scapegoat, although she had never sold any Star Line stock.

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<sup>72</sup>Elton C. Fax, *Garvey: The Story of a Pioneer Black Nationalist* (New York: Dodd & Mead Co., 1972), p. 181.

<sup>73</sup> Fax, *Garvey*, p.181.

<sup>74</sup> Barbara Bair "Did Garvey commit mail fraud?" American Experience: Marcus Garvey Online Forum. [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/garvey/sfeature/sf\\_forum\\_12.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/garvey/sfeature/sf_forum_12.html)

While Werner's motivation at the trial was to try to protect Garvey and himself by laying blame for missing funds on Ashwood, he conceded that Ashwood had a higher degree of independence in the organization than any man at the time. Although it has gone unanalyzed by historians of the UNIA and Garvey, the statement makes clear that Ashwood did not limit herself to the domestic sphere: she played a major role in the financial affairs of her husband and the UNIA, and her involvement was accepted, if not always unreservedly so, by men in the hierarchy. Her willingness to cross boundaries according to Ula Taylor was also evident in her endeavors outside the organization, where Ashwood

theorized about reconnecting black diasporians to their African past not so much to take refuge within an "African genius" narrative (of which Gilroy and others are rightly critical), but as a building block toward what she believed all black diasporians were entitled to: an African national citizenship and the right to self determination.<sup>75</sup>

According to Lionel Yard, "She was not a subservient disciple owing blind allegiance to a set of inflexible dogmas; on the contrary, she modified the impractical and refined the pseudo-ideal so that her advice to her brothers and sisters may be justly regarded as Garveyism streamlined."<sup>76</sup> Other women in the organization, most notably Henrietta Vinton Davis and Laura Adorkor Kofey, embraced her example. Ashwood publicly objected to the use of funds for parades and banquets that could be used toward establishing schools, scholarships and educational programs.

Despite her criticism and her bitter divorce, Amy Ashwood continued to use Garvey's name to gain access to audiences in support of her nationalist work. She also maintained the name, it appears, as a symbol of her allegiance to the original goals and philosophy of UNIA.

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<sup>75</sup> Ula Taylor "Intellectual Pan African Feminists: Amy Ashwood-Garvey and Amy Jacques Garvey," *Time Longer Than Rope: A Century of Activism, 1850 – 1950* ed. Charles M. Payne and Adam Green (New York: New York University Press, 2003), p.180. Taylor engages the work of Paul Gilroy from *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Massachusetts.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>76</sup> Yard, *Biography of Amy Ashwood*, p.98.

Still, the usefulness of Garvey the man or of his penchant for ceremony in her life ended there. Their marriage difficulties arose over Ashwood's penchant for drinking, smoking and keeping company with other men while Garvey was not at home.<sup>77</sup> It has also been alleged that the divorce was the result of her pregnancy by another man prior to her marriage to Garvey. While Garvey accused her of fraud in their divorce papers, journalist Colin Grant and Tony Martin posit that Garvey was well aware of the pregnancy, knew who the father was, but chose to marry Ashwood anyway.<sup>78</sup> There are no records indicating that Amy Ashwood gave birth at any point prior to, during or immediately after her marriage to Marcus Garvey. Nor is there any indication that she had any children of her own, although Garvey alleged that she had several pregnancies before they were married and a miscarriage in 1920 prior to their divorce.<sup>79</sup> According to Tony Martin's research and interviews with her close associates, her miscarriages were due to her being afflicted with endometriosis.<sup>80</sup> Ashwood's drinking, in part, may have been from self-medication for the incurable and painful disease that can lead to infertility.<sup>81</sup> In her personal papers she left no indication, however, of how she dealt with the pain prior to her hospitalization in 1920. Garvey and Amy Jacques continued to defame Ashwood until their deaths.

New York State Court records indicate that Garvey and Ashwood were divorced in September 1920, with Garvey agreeing to pay all court costs and abide by any alimony ruling. According to FBI records, the divorce resulted in negative publicity that Garvey hoped to avoid. At the time UNIA was attempting to sell shares in the Black Star Line, and Garvey and his

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<sup>77</sup> Colin Grant, *Negro With a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 238.

<sup>78</sup> Grant, p. 239; Martin, "Amy Ashwood", pp. 46-56.

<sup>79</sup> "To Whom It May Concern, " September 1, 1920, Amy Garvey v. Marcus Garvey, Action for Separation, June 4, 1921 Exhibit A, Attilio Robertiello, MD 318 W. 15<sup>th</sup> Street, New York.

<sup>80</sup> Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey: Pan-Africanist*, p. xii.

<sup>81</sup> For more on endometriosis and the history of care for women with the disease please see <http://www.4women.gov/faq/endometriosis.cfm#a>.

advisors feared a divorce and alimony war would discourage potential share holders.<sup>82</sup>

According to a confidante, George Weston, the couple's troubles also stemmed from "physiological factors" that prohibited the consummation of the marriage. Garvey's initial petition for divorce on August 11, 1920 stated that Ashwood through "fraud, concealment, and misrepresentations" had caused him to marry her.<sup>83</sup>

Garvey's contention was "supported" by research done by Robert Hill and Tony Martin who recounted that Ashwood was indeed hospitalized during the marriage for gynecological problems. In fact, she signed herself out of New York's Lincoln Hospital and traveled to Montréal, Canada where she appeared to have had a medical procedure done that permanently remedied her endometriosis and retroversion of the uterus conditions.<sup>84</sup> Ashwood was barren, despite her admitted wish to have children and her willingness "to do whatever the doctor's suggested to make me get pregnant."<sup>85</sup> At the time of her initial hospital stay, the divorce proceedings were already afoot and the procedure she sought required her husband's signature. However, Garvey refused to sign until Ashwood agreed to be responsible for the hospital bill. After their divorce there is no record of Ashwood attempting to have children nor did she remarry. Whether this first visit to the hospital was a last ditch effort to save a marriage Garvey claimed he entered into under false circumstances remains unclear and may never be determined.<sup>86</sup> However, records and the accounts of informants indicate that as the marriage unraveled, Ashwood chose to remedy her painful medical condition in lieu of attempting to bare children. After the divorce was final, Ashwood contested it and accused Garvey of having had

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<sup>82</sup> "DNA, RG 65, file OG 329359. TD. Stamped Endorsements." Hill, *Marcus Garvey and The UNIA Papers Project* (California: UCLA Press, 1983) vol. 3, p. 138.

<sup>83</sup> Hill, *ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Exhibit A, Attilio Robertiello, MD 318 W. 15<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, "To Whom It May concern, " September 1, 1920, Amy Garvey v. Marcus Garvey, action for separation, June 4, 1921.

<sup>85</sup> Yard, *Biography of Amy Ashwood*, p. 100.

<sup>86</sup> "DNA, RG 65, file OG 329359. TD. Stamped Endorsements." in *Marcus Garvey and The UNIA Papers* vol. 3, p. 138; Martin, pp.11-12.

several affairs. According to her historians she felt that the financial settlement offered was insufficient.<sup>87</sup> Ashwood's inside knowledge of UNIA accounts and Garvey's personal finances may have motivated this claim.

Despite their personal difficulties, her loyalty to the ideals of the UNIA and Garvey himself never waned until her death on May 11, 1969. From the early stages of their marriage, when she was wounded by a would-be Garvey assassin, to defending him against accusations of mismanagement during his 1923 trial on mail fraud charges, Ashwood stood by Garvey. She had reason and opportunity not to do so as their divorce was final at the time of his trial and he had publicly slandered her in the *Negro World*.<sup>88</sup> Ashwood continued promoting his program in England, France and Africa from the 1930s until the mid-1960s, when ill-health limited her ability to travel; Ashwood remained "Mrs. Garvey" in name despite the presence of Amy Jacques Garvey who wished she would disappear.<sup>89</sup>

Notwithstanding her contributions to the UNIA and black women's activism, Ashwood never challenged the idea of domesticity in her speeches or writing. Her life's work indicates that she saw herself as equal to men in the organization and just as equipped to make critical decisions. Ashwood reflected the complexity of women in the UNIA and indicates that they can not easily be categorized as early feminists. For example, Ashwood encouraged women to use their influence over the home to "inspire our men to better things" as she had inspired Garvey as his companion and partner.<sup>90</sup>

Her encouragement to other women reflected the culture of true womanhood that dominated the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and paralleled the efforts of suffragists,

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<sup>87</sup> Vincent, *Black Powe*, p. 85.; Taylor, *Veiled Garvey*, pp. 34. 78 & 171; Martin, *Race First*, pp. 10-12; Hill, *Marcus Garvey and the UNIA Papers* vol. 3, p. 138.

<sup>88</sup> *Negro World*, March 28, 1920; August 15, 1920; January 2, 1921; January 4, 1921.

<sup>89</sup> Yard, *Biography of Amy Ashwood*, pp. 50-52; Martin, *Race First*, pp.11, 189.

<sup>90</sup> Taylor, "Intellectual Pan-African Feminists," p. 183.

social feminists, and radical feminists. The cult of true womanhood stated that women were to be pious, submissive, and good domestics. Ashwood and other Garveyite women discussed later in this paper appeared to agree that these attributes were worth having.<sup>91</sup> However, they also insisted that women strive for social, economic, political and racial justice. These women were perpetually navigating between the pull of traditional gender roles and bourgeois aspirations which had genuine appeal within the black community and more nationalistic impulses that urged African-American women to pursue both female and male empowerment.

From its inception, the UNIA practiced one member, one vote at the branch level elections, and women could be elected to serve as delegates at its annual convention, where they had equal status with their male counterparts including equal voting rights.<sup>92</sup> In 1922, the UNIA carefully included the word woman in its constitution. Once the U.S. Constitution explicitly acknowledged the voting rights of women, the UNIA's had to do so as well. Like social feminists of the day, the UNIA women had an agenda that went beyond the quest for the vote. Because they lived in a segregated society, having the right to vote was not enough. Education, financial stability, job opportunities, the creation of a female private space, the preservation of family and the protection of reproductive rights were essential in their definition of racial uplift. Unlike social feminists of the period, however, the majority of UNIA women were not part of the cadre of educated elites seeking to assist the poorer masses. They saw themselves as aligned with the poorer masses themselves attempting to access opportunities and employ stratagems that would benefit them and future generations.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Welter, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860" *American Quarterly* XVIII (1966), pp. 151-152.

<sup>92</sup> Vincent, *Black Power*, p. 110.

<sup>93</sup> An understanding of Social Feminism, Radical Feminism and the Suffrage Movement are discussed in Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1977); Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1987); Sara. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A history of Women In America* (New York: The Free

Their quest for access and opportunity sometimes mirrored those of radical feminists. As illustrated by Ashwood's determination in finding ways and means to promote education and self-sufficiency and through the letters of women to the *Negro World's* "Women's Page", UNIA women shared in the idea that sexual difference was less important than common humanity."<sup>94</sup>

While they reflected some of the ideals of social and radical feminists, UNIA women did not go so far as to call for women to be released from the home in order "to make a broad human contribution rather than a narrow feminine contribution to society." The UNIA women were largely poor working class women and they did not have the luxury of being "trapped" in their homes serving their husbands.<sup>95</sup> UNIA women were, in fact, trapped in the homes of other women and sought to free themselves. Their strategies for achieving their goals included encouraging their husbands to gain better employment, entrepreneurship, working for established UNIA companies, working as private care givers, and/or working from their homes as seamstresses and laundresses for example.

The esteem ascribed to UNIA women stemmed in part from Garvey's own view of them as mothers of the race. Because of their standing, they derived responsibility for not only overseeing their individual homes, but the homes of black people throughout the Diaspora. The weight of their responsibility was expressed by Garvey in his poetry. On February 28, 1927 Garvey expressed his reverence for women in a poem entitled "The Black Woman," when he wrote "Because of disunion you; /became mother of the world; Giving tinge of robust; /color to

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Press, 1989), pp. 93- 174; Anne Firor Scott and Andrew MacKay Scott *One Half the People: The Fight for Woman Suffrage* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

<sup>94</sup> This idea is first expressed by Charlotte Perkins Gillman in her 1898 work *The Economic Factor between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution*. It is a concept that inspired the above mentioned works. <http://us.history.wisc.edu/hist102/lectures/lecture14.html>

<sup>95</sup> Collins, *Black Feminist*, pp. 85-121.

five continents.”<sup>96</sup> At the time this poem and others were written by Garvey between 1914 and 1927, the majority of African American women were disenfranchised. They had limited or no access to educational and employment opportunities outside of the service arena and were only occasionally invited to participate in other movements of the time. The UNIA’s creation of a female paramilitary group, the African Motor Corps and the Black Cross Nurses, provided opportunities, educational advancement, and the potential for professionalization among African-American women workers.

The women idealized by Garvey in his poems were far removed from a world where they sought equal voting rights or equal pay or maternity leave for women, but he portrayed them as objects of grandeur to be adored and respected. Partly because of this reverence UNIA women were able to engage in an open public discourse on their roles in social, political and economic developments. While accurate data of all the branches is unavailable, recent case studies done on the UNIA divisions in the South indicate that the women outnumbered the men in the lay membership. Their numbers alone suggest the deference paid to them by men.<sup>97</sup> By exercising their voice and ideas, UNIA women became involved in the formation of Black Nationalist ideology that has routinely been depicted as a male ideology.

While it is generally agreed that Black Nationalism had at its core the pursuit of uplift and self-determination, historians have presented it as exclusively male in authorship and function. This begs the question of whether or not women saw themselves as a part of the quest for self-determination and whether or not they were able to participate in this quest. The UNIA definition of self-determination included not only the establishment of a homeland for blacks throughout the Diaspora, but also civil rights for Africans where ever they lived. These rights

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<sup>96</sup> Marcus Garvey “The Black Woman” in Martin, Tony *The Poetical Works of Marcus Garvey* (Massachusetts: The Majority Press, 1983), pp. 44-45.

<sup>97</sup> See Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, pp. 204-213.

included the pursuit of economic independence and stability. Women of the UNIA were very definite in their quest for economic self-sufficiency and thus enhance our understanding of what Black Nationalism and what it meant to everyday people.

Despite their personal difficulties, her loyalty to the ideals of the UNIA and Garvey himself never waned until her death on May 11, 1969. From the early stages of their marriage, when she was wounded by a would-be Garvey assassin, to defending him against accusations of mismanagement during his 1923 trial on mail fraud charges, Ashwood stood by Garvey. She had reason and opportunity not to do so as their divorce was final at the time of his trial and he had publicly slandered her in the *Negro World*.<sup>98</sup> Ashwood continued promoting his program in England, France and Africa from the 1930s until the mid-1960s, when ill-health limited her ability to travel, Ashwood remained “Mrs. Garvey” in name despite the presence of Amy Jacques Garvey who wished she would disappear.<sup>99</sup>

After Ashwood’s divorce from Garvey, the women of the UNIA were not without a steadfast advocate for equality with access to Garvey’s ear. The second Mrs. Garvey, Amy Jacques, who had been a bridesmaid at Amy Ashwood’s wedding, left Jamaica for New York in 1919. Curiously, Jacques alleged that she had no knowledge of Garvey or Ashwood in Jamaica and, according to her biographers she claimed she met Garvey for the first time in New York.<sup>100</sup> She went to hear him speak at Liberty Hall and took him to task for weaknesses she found in the structure of the organization. Jacques stressed the need for better handling of monies that came into the office through the United States Postal Service. Garvey was impressed with her observations and requested her bookkeeping services. Her evenings became devoted to that end

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<sup>98</sup> *Negro World*, March 28, 1920; August 15, 1920; January 2, 1921; January 4, 1921.

<sup>99</sup> Yard, *Biography of Amy Ashwood*, pp. 50-52; Martin, *Race First*, pp.11, 189.

<sup>100</sup> Ashwood stated that she and Jacques went to school together and that when Jacques emigrated she resided with Ashwood at her family apartment. Yard, *Biography of Amy Ashwood*, pp. 37, 42, 60.

while her days were spent working for her father. Amy Jacques designed an intricate system of checks and balances that was supposed to keep a more accurate account of all monies coming in and out of the organization. Here again, a woman was given charge of finances, a fact unanalyzed, although documented, by Garvey's biographers. Jacques, as did Henrietta Vinton Davis, obviously benefited from Ashwood's previous work managing the organization's funds and overseeing its records. Even though she easily stepped into the role of lead organizer during Garvey's imprisonment, she too met resistance from the male cadre. Nevertheless, Amy Jacques Garvey was less than innocent and certainly not helpless.<sup>101</sup>

### **Author of a Legacy: Amy Jacques Garvey**

In the early 1980's many Garvey scholars, including Tony Martin and Judith Stein, merely mentioned Amy Jacques as the companion/wife/secretary/mother of his children. While their scholarship reduced her to a mere "domestic appendage" other scholars found Mrs. Garvey became "second only to Marcus in the UNIA."<sup>102</sup> In fact, to her credit, Jacques' role as compiler of Garvey's speeches, letters and writings has served as a primary source on Marcus Garvey. In this way, Amy Jacques Garvey's work merits consideration beyond her label as the organization's "premier propagandist" as historians Barbara Bair and Ula Taylor have delegated her.

Amy Ashwood's crafting of a Lady's Division into the UNIA constitution created an avenue for Amy Jacques to encourage other women to stand in where needed. In 1925 she asked the women of the UNIA to

Be not discouraged Black women of the world[;] put push forward, regardless of the lack of appreciation shown you. A race must be saved, a country must be redeemed, and unless you strengthen the leadership of vacillating Negro men we

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<sup>101</sup> *Negro World*, July 23, 1921.

<sup>102</sup> Mark D. Mathews, "'Our Women and What they Think'" Amy Jacques Garvey and the Negro World,," *Black Scholar*, 10, 8/9 (1979), p. 4.

will remain marking time ... and (we [will] be) forced [in]to subservience ...or extermination.<sup>103</sup>

This call to UNIA women also came with the expectation that women would prepare themselves by pursuing educational, vocational and professional advancement opportunities offered by the UNIA. She sought to inform and engage women in the pursuit of race progress.

Historian Winston James has pointed out that there were varying degrees of literacy among the membership.<sup>104</sup> Although Jacques' "Women's Page" was to serve as a designated space in the *Negro World* for women to express their concerns and pose questions to her and other women in the lay hierarchy, there were few responses to her invitations. In part this was due to the timing of the call in 1924 which occurred at the height of the fraud allegations against Garvey and the UNIA. Another reason for the scant response may have been her unwillingness to take the time to "edit" letters she received that were "...not of sufficient literary merit to warrant their publication."<sup>105</sup>

While stating that "[u]sually a Woman's Page in any journal is devoted solely to dress, home hints and love topics, (but) our page is unique, in that it seeks to give out the thoughts of our women on the subjects affecting them in particular..."<sup>106</sup> Her interest in such responses was limited. Jacques asserted that "...we are sure that it will be taken in good part if we suggest that persons who have not a common school education and who have not studied the rules of composition of prose or verse should not send contributions in prose or verse."<sup>107</sup>

Although some women did write into the "Woman's Page" of the *Negro World*, not all female members had occasion to do so and thus their views are missed by historians who focus

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<sup>103</sup> *Negro World*, October 24, 1925.

<sup>104</sup> Winston James, *Holding Aloft The Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (London; New York: Verso, 1998), pp. 143-155.

<sup>105</sup> *Negro World*, September, 13, 1924.

<sup>106</sup> *Negro World*, April 11, 1925.

<sup>107</sup> *Negro World*, June 7, 1924.

on the *Negro World* as a main source of information on the UNIA. The stories of the two Amys should only be treated as a starting point and not used as a centering point for an understanding of female interactions with Garvey and the UNIA. The first Amy only had limited contact with the organization, but, she left an imprint that was essential to the lay members and paved the way for Jacques and others to further refine the organization's course. The second Amy, through the doors Ashwood opened, worked to reconcile the demands of respectable politics with the aims of efficient womanhood.

Even as have historians celebrated Jacques as the propagandist and Garvey's great defender they also admitted that her life was with riddled with contradictions. While working eighteen hour days to run the *Negro World*, rushing to publish Garvey's *Philosophies and Opinions* and taking care of her children, she lived on the perpetual brink of nervous breakdown. She lamented Garvey's scant acknowledgment of her constant love, asking, "What did he ever give in return? The value of a wife to him was like a gold coin---expendable, to get what he wanted, and hard enough to withstand rough usage in the process."<sup>108</sup> Jacques' lament reflects the concerns expressed at the 1922 Convention, as the women expressed frustration at being underappreciated and undervalued.

The tireless selfless dedication Jacques exhibited early in her marriage to Garvey was severely tested, when after returning to Jamaica to join her husband in 1928 Jacques refused to move to England with him. Jacques' decision indicated that she, like Ashwood, had come to view Garvey's goal of repatriation and a united Africa as less than practical. Garvey made the decision to move without consulting Jacques. With two children and no stable income, Jacques became her own leader and remained in Jamaica. Just as the 1922 Convention women had declared their right to be counted in the formal decision making process, Jacques indicated her

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<sup>108</sup> Amy Jacques Garvey, *Garvey and Garveyism* (Kingston: A. Jacques Garvey, 1963), p. 169.

dismay at not being consulted about the family's move and remained behind.<sup>109</sup> The separation was enduring. She even refused to rejoin him after he became deathly ill in 1939 while living in England and was not present when he passed away in 1940.<sup>110</sup>

Until recently the recognition of women's contributions to the UNIA was hampered by the tendency to treat the UNIA and Garvey as one and the same. The consequence was that writers thought that knowing the philosophies of Marcus Garvey equaled knowing what the UNIA did. Tangled in misunderstanding, studying the UNIA's lay membership was even more problematic, as historian Theodore Vincent noted, because the UNIA "shared in the neglect accorded many organizations restricted to black members, and as an organization of working-class people acting outside traditional black bourgeois spheres the UNIA did not enjoy the intellectual respectability of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League."<sup>111</sup> Consequently, while the UNIA was on record as condemning the limitations placed on African Americans by segregation, and the *Negro World* carried articles condemning segregation, the grass roots civil rights activities of the UNIA were largely ignored by historians. Garvey's focus on building a black nation within American society strongly contrasted with integrationist programs pursued by most of his contemporaries, including Cyril Brigg's African Blood Brotherhood and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.<sup>112</sup> In the last decade as a result of case studies of branches in Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Virginia, Florida and California coupled with the biographies of the two wives, greater understanding has emerged. The result has been the re-conceptualization of the

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<sup>109</sup> Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey*, pp. 134-142.

<sup>110</sup> Despite pleas from his care giver, Daisy Whyte, Jacques refused to leave Jamaica to visit Garvey. She was living with relatives and destitute. Garvey's sons wrote to him on January 11, 1939 asking him to send money "...for food and school and movies" as they "needed lots of things." Hill, *Marcus Garvey & the UNIA Papers* vol. 7 pp. 928, 905 & 902.

<sup>111</sup> Vincent, *Black Power*, p. 15.

<sup>112</sup> Vincent, *Black Power*, p. 17.

UNIA as one focus of study with the life and times of Marcus Garvey as another, related, but not synonymous field of inquiry. With new emphasis on these local efforts of the UNIA has come a much greater knowledge of the organization's grass roots work. Moreover, slowly but surely, these local studies have also helped to restore women to the historical record.

This represents a departure from the seminal work of Tony Martin who blended the two streams of organizational and biographical study and titled his work *Race First: The Ideological Strugglers of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*. An example of this recent shift is found in the work of Ula Taylor entitled *The Veiled Garvey*. Taylor encouraged historians to re-examine Amy Jacques as a key figures of the organization and a "community feminist."<sup>113</sup> This viewpoint was first expressed by Karen Adler who called Amy Jacques, a "Feminist Black Nationalist, and the most important (if not one of the most influential) women in the Garvey movement."<sup>114</sup> Both Taylor and Adler noted that while her home life was in financial and emotional shambles, Amy Jacques continued to call on women to explore Pan-Africanist and ideals to stretch the limits of gender-based roles.

Just as Ashwood defended the core ideals of Garvey, while reinterpreting them, Jacques, who worked to free Garvey from prison and maintain the organization, came to embrace Garvey and his philosophies in similar ways. During Garvey's 1923 trial, Amy Jacques was the first witness to be called by Garvey in his defense in which he represented himself.<sup>115</sup> After his conviction and imprisonment in the Atlanta penitentiary, Amy Jacques campaigned for his freedom and established a defense fund on his behalf.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ula Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey* (North Carolina: UNC Press, 2002), p. 64.

<sup>114</sup> Karen Adler, "Always Leading Our Men in Service and Sacrifice: Amy Jacques Garvey, Feminist Black Nationalist." *Gender & Society* 6 (September 1992), p. 346.

<sup>115</sup> "Mrs. A Garvey , A.D. Pettiford & Others Testify." *New York Times*, (June 7, 1923), p. 12(3).

<sup>116</sup> "Mrs. Garvey Addresses Followers & Obtains Subscriptions To Finance Appeal." *New York Times* (June 22, 1923), p. 15(5).

According to Barbara Bair, this guidance came in many forms, some less subtle than others. Jacques challenged the UNIA to allow women “equal opportunity to fill any position in the Universal Negro Improvement Association or anywhere else without discrimination because of sex.”<sup>117</sup> This sentiment was shared by women throughout the 1920s and was most ardently expressed by the UNIA lay membership during the 1922 Convention. These sentiments were pervasive during the period, but there are but few records of everyday African American women engaging in or interpreting these ideals for themselves.<sup>118</sup>

While UNIA women believed that better days were coming for the race as a whole, they refused to sit and wait on UNIA men who, according to Amy Jacques were doing “nothing to usher in the day.”<sup>119</sup> The women threatened direct action and made demands for equality that let the UNIA men know that what they would not or could not do, the women would. This was a chiding of sorts rather than a confrontation. The women were not asking for equal rights in order to be independent of men, but to assist them in the work of the UNIA and its racial uplift program. They did not seek an equal voice to speak for themselves, they sought it to speak when they felt their husbands and sons were not speaking loudly enough or were rendered voiceless by the Jim Crow society in which they lived. In this way they differed from many early feminists.<sup>120</sup> The UNIA women wanted their husbands to be at the forefront and were willing to push them there if they had to. The men were not always willing to be pushed and this contributed to the discord that escalated during Garvey’s imprisonment.

Amy Ashwood began with Marcus Garvey on the path that would lead to his influence on the Diasporic World. Her separation from him signaled just that, a separation from him, but not

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<sup>117</sup> *Negro World*, October 17, 1925.

<sup>118</sup> Cott, *The Groundings*, pp. 152-155.

<sup>119</sup> *Negro World*, January 9, 1926.

<sup>120</sup> Cott, *The Groundings*, pp. 26-29; Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, pp. 35, 149-172; Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 47, 81, 117, 153.

from continuing to influence the organization or from continuing to promote the ideals of the UNIA. After Garvey's death in 1940, Jacques's life's work became maintaining the legacy of Garveyism through correspondences with scholars and students alike. In this way she promoted both the ideals of the UNIA and contributions of Marcus Garvey. Her biases toward Garvey, and distaste toward some women in the hierarchy, such as Ashwood and Davis who had defected by 1932, contribute to the gaps in historical treatment of the organization. While the absence of these key figures and the selective neglect of some of the lay membership reflected Jacques' flaws as a person, it did not take away from the magnitude of her work. She wrote and published Garvey's *Philosophy and Opinions* while he was in jail and engaged with the likes of W.E.B. Dubois and other Pan Africanist until the time of her death on the plight of Africans around the world.

Both Amy Ashwood Garvey and Amy Jacques Garvey had a political and social consciousness that went beyond locale and skin color and that extended itself to gender. The African-American woman played an important part in the uplift of the race through her influence over the household as well as over the men. In this way, women of the UNIA used their power and position in the domestic sphere to influence what went on in the public sphere of black activism.

### CHAPTER 3 HENRIETTA VINTON DAVIS: A LADY FOR ALL OCCASIONS

In spite of recent historical studies of Amy Ashwood Garvey and Amy Jacques Garvey, which demonstrate a growing appreciation of women's contributions to the UNIA and Black Nationalism, the significance of Lady Henrietta Vinton Davis, the first female president of the UNIA, remains overlooked.<sup>1</sup> And yet, while neither of Garvey's wives ever held an official position in the UNIA once it was brought to the United States, Henrietta Vinton Davis served in the UNIA hierarchy from 1919 to 1927 when Garvey was deported.<sup>2</sup>

Within the discourse on Garvey's wives, Davis appears as a yet curiously a-political figure as she was Garvey's confidant during both his marriages and befriended both spouses. In fact, she was the first to know of his plans to divorce Ashwood. Davis became the roommate of Garvey and Jacques prior to their marriage and worked to help Jacques hold the organization together during Garvey's trial, incarceration and deportation.<sup>3</sup> She traveled to Jamaica ahead of Garvey in 1927 to help prepare the Kingston Division for his arrival and was instrumental in arranging a hero's welcome for him there.<sup>4</sup> Davis was integral in helping Garvey re-organize the UNIA in 1927 with Jamaica as headquarters, and she used her name to help him obtain a printing press for the *Black Man* Magazine he attempted to publish as the periodical of the new UNIA.<sup>5</sup>

Lady Davis' official involvement with the UNIA lasted twelve years and encompassed numerous leadership positions. Her commitment to the pursuit of racial uplift and the betterment of all throughout the Diaspora lasted a lifetime. While she held many positions in the organization, her responsibilities almost always overlapped. Davis' entry into the organization as

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<sup>1</sup> Martin, *Amy Ashwood*, (2007); Taylor, *Amy Jacques Garvey*, (2002).

<sup>2</sup> AFRC, AP; prison visits or records, AFRC, AP January 16, 1926; J8, 515 (D.) D.: I.: O: 22/28. TLS, recipients copy.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Gleaner*, November 1, 1927 November 3, 1927, November 4, 1927, November 14, 1927.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Gleaner*, December 8, 1927 & December 10, 1927; *New York Times* December 27, 1927; Detective Inspector's office, Kingston, Jamaica, JA, 515 [V.]/D.: I.: O.: 36/27.

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Gleaner*, January 8, 1933.

national head of the Lady's Division in 1919 followed by her dual roles as International Organizer from 1919 to 1920 and Fourth President-General from 1920 to 1929 led to her ascent to the office of Second Director of the Black Star Line in 1919 to 1924. She maintained this title in its successor organization, the Black Cross Navigation and Trading Company from 1924 to 1929. Lady Davis never let her job description limit her ability to serve the interests of the UNIA. In her roles as a UNIA officer, Davis traveled throughout the United States, the Panama Canal Zone, Central America and Africa. She helped to establish Black Cross Nurse auxiliaries wherever she went and even signed applications for charters to establish UNIA divisions throughout the Caribbean. Lady Davis became a model by which other UNIA women judged themselves and served as a model of the ideal UNIA woman for much of the male membership.<sup>6</sup> During her time as a UNIA officer, she was the only one of the original thirteen signers (besides Garvey himself) of the UNIA Inc. to remain loyal to the UNIA programs as established in 1919.

As a role model and leader, Davis expressed an unwavering loyalty to the uplift of the race and a commitment to advancing the role of women in the pursuit of racial progress. In pursuit of these goals she displayed a never ending admiration of Garvey and men like him and demonstrated a commitment to future generations and a willingness to publicly take on obstacles that threatened the progress of the UNIA.

To date, no full historical treatment of Davis's life exists, nor is there much comprehensive treatment of her individual contributions to the UNIA. This chapter will discuss Henrietta Vinton Davis' leadership in the UNIA by examining speeches as recorded in *The Negro World*, the UNIA Convention Bulletins, her personal letters, and the Bureau of Investigation's observations of her. This chapter will also evaluate the ways in which her life prior to the UNIA shaped her style of leadership.

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<sup>6</sup> *Negro World*, August 20, 1921; "Negro Joan of Arc"

## The Making of a Race Lady

Lady Davis was a key figure in the progress of the UNIA from its second beginning in New York to her self-imposed departure in 1934. She was instrumental in galvanizing the lay membership in support of the Black Star Line, orchestrating talks between the UNIA and foreign governments, and mentoring the potential next cadre of UNIA officers. Davis' absence from comprehensive historical treatments stems in part from the focus of historians on Marcus Garvey and his wives as individuals as was previously mentioned. Aside from this, Davis' inability to fit readily into one of the dominant historical archetypes of the period which include proto-feminist, club woman or DuBois' reconfigured "Mammy" image, noted in his "Damnation" essay, served to push her further into the historical shadows of the organization itself and its leader. Further compounding the difficulties in rescuing Lady Davis from the fringes of history are misconceptions about her prominence both prior to and during her time as a UNIA official and about the motives of a woman over fifty who joined a group initially dominated by people aged forty and under. Her story is further complicated by a lack of archival records and sources on her life. Davis' entrance onto the theatrical stage in 1883 was the start of a career dominated by a spirit of perseverance which garnered her mixed reviews at times but which also caused her to be known as the lady who "put her whole soul into words."<sup>7</sup>

What is known is that after previously working as a school teacher in her native Maryland and in Louisiana and resigning her position as Recorder of Deeds in 1884, she started her own theater production company in 1893 in Chicago to produce plays with nationalist

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<sup>7</sup> *The Washington Bee*, April 28, 1883, 3; May 5, 1883, 3. *The People's Advocate* (Washington), April 28, 1883, 3; *John E. Bruce Papers*, Schomburg Collection, New York Public Library, Group D, BMS 11-21.

themes.<sup>8</sup> During this time, in 1898, she co-authored the play *Our Old Kentucky Home* with John Edward Bruce who also became a member of the UNIA.<sup>9</sup>

Historian Judith Stein argues that Davis' attraction to the UNIA "was typical of the cultural wing of the petite bourgeoisies" and that while Davis had a place "in popular culture" during the period as an actress, she "lacked secure employment."<sup>10</sup> There are other more convincing explanations for Ms. Davis' attraction to the UNIA and ultimately for Garvey's alliance with her. Her identification with Garvey resulted in significant part from the influence of her stepfather, George A. Hackett, an advocate "...for the rights of blacks during the ante-bellum period."<sup>11</sup> In 1859 he worked to defeat the Jacobs Bill which "intended to enslave the children of free Africans and deport their parents from the state of Maryland."<sup>12</sup> Hackett, a member of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Maryland, succeeded radical activist William Watkins, who argued for the education of African-Americans and opposed African colonization schemes. Historian Leroy Graham depicts George Alexander Hackett as an "energetic lay minister" in the 1840s who used his gift of oration for twenty years to address such concerns in the community as education, health care, emancipation, poor relief and the formation of benevolent societies.<sup>13</sup> Through his community work, he regularly entertained the likes of Douglass, Henry H. Garnet, Peter H. Clark, and "the noted philanthropist, Stephen

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<sup>8</sup> *John E. Bruce Papers*, Schomburg Collection, New York Public Library, Group D, BMS 11-21.; For more Davis early life please see Seraille, pp. 13-15.

<sup>9</sup> *John E. Bruce Papers Our old Kentucky home*. (1898) Sc Micro R-905 Reel #3, Schomburg Collection, New York Public Library.

<sup>10</sup> Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey*, p. 76.

<sup>11</sup> LaVerne Grant, "Amy Jacques Garvey and Henrietta Davis" in ed. J. L. Conyers *Black American Intellectualism and Culture: A Social Study of African-American Social and Political Thought Cotemporary Studies in Sociology* (Stamford, Conn.: JAI Press, 1999), p. 29.

<sup>12</sup> Graham, *Baltimore: The Nineteenth Century Black Capital* (Washington: University Press of America, 1982), pp. 154-155.

<sup>13</sup> For greater detail on George Alexander Hackett see Leroy Graham *Baltimore: The Nineteenth Century Black Capital* (Washington: University Press of America, 1982), pp. 147-198.

Smith” at his home.<sup>14</sup> It is certainly possible that Davis developed her interest in the UNIA based on her experiences in these circles.

In the 1890s and throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, opportunities for African-Americans in the “legitimate” theater were limited due in part to their inability to secure financing. One of the major tenets of the UNIA, financial empowerment, which could lead to the owning of theaters and production companies as evidenced by their ownership of a record label, presented Davis and others with the hope of practicing their craft and avoiding “race based” type casting. Davis’ inability to secure a backer, according to *New York Age* editor T. Thomas Fortune, hindered her success on the stage. He argued that Davis’ lack of widespread success was due in part to her lack of a “...manager with plenty of money behind him” which he believed would be the surest way for Davis to achieve “...fame and fortune on the *regular* stage,...”<sup>15</sup> The UNIA provided a form of steady employment albeit with limited pecuniary benefits and a modicum of fame. However, her time in the organization was not a role in a play or a means for gaining personal popularity. Lady Davis’ record of service indicates that she was devoted to the causes of the UNIA, a homeland for African-Americans, economic independence and stability for African-Americans, and in the first instance at least to Marcus Garvey. For these reasons she used her talents, time and connections to promote the UNIA.

Lady Davis engaged in the plethora of strategies to alleviate the horrors of segregation. For her, one of by-products of Jim Crow’s horrors was the existence of classism in the African-American community which she abhorred. Her participation in the UNIA’s grassroots organization was shunned by many of her middle class peers in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She often linked her difficulties in establishing a

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<sup>14</sup> Laverne Gyant “Amy Jacques Garvey and Henrietta Davis” p. 32; William Seraille, “Henrietta Vinton Davis and The Garvey Movement” in *from-Americans in New York Life and History* (July, 1982), p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> *New York Age*, September 19, 1891.

consistent African-American following to her failure to uphold what she perceived as assimilationist views regarding skin gradations in the African-American community.<sup>16</sup> Her affiliation with the organization from 1916 until her death served to ostracize her from the “petite bourgeoisie” as many rebuffed Garvey as a charlatan.<sup>17</sup> Garvey’s quarrels with members of the middle class elite, like William Edward Burghardt DuBois, also served to further alienate her from some of her former friends and patrons.<sup>18</sup>

Being ostracized by middle-class African-Americans and white elite patrons of the arts could be overwhelming. The dilemma Davis faced as a performer who placed race unity and collective economic self-sufficiency ahead of her career is best illustrated by comparing her to other artists of the era connected to the UNIA work of other artists such as Ethel Trew Dunlap, Zora Neale Hurston and Augusta Savage. Dunlap and Hurston contributed poems to the *Negro World* throughout the 1920s, which gained them an audience beyond the paper’s pages. Savage sculpted bronze busts of Garvey that opened doors for the display of her other works. While all these women viewed race progress as their ultimate goal, each expressed their efforts differently. These women, like many of the period, used their artistry as a vehicle to express their sentiments on both race and gender oppression. Their work spoke to and for a specific audience and while on the surface it sometimes appeared to be art for art sake, it carried deliberate ambiguous meanings for the communities they sought to represent. This use of double meanings in cultural expressions has been noted by historians Robin D.G. Kelly, Sterling Stuckey and Carey D. Wintz.<sup>19</sup> According to Kelly, everyday acts and cultural expression through clothes, music,

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<sup>16</sup> *John Edward Bruce Papers* Group A, MMS 155, Bruce Papers.

<sup>17</sup> Judith Stien’s term. Used throughout her monograph to describe the group of middle class elites she argued dominated the UNIA’s membership.

<sup>18</sup> Garvey and Dubois engaged in an open battle via the *Crisis* and the *Negro World*; Gynat, pp. 32-33.

<sup>19</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley “We Are Not What We Seem”: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South.” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 80, No. 1 (Jun., 1993), pp. 75-112; Sterling Stuckey *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972); Sterling Stuckey *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and*

plays, poetry and art work contributed to an “infrapolitics” that centered not only on how people participate in politics but why.<sup>20</sup> Just as many of these cultural expressions were exercised in retaliation to Jim Crow, in the case of some UNIA women, these expressions also reflected the fragile relationship between the UNIA and some of its supporters.

For Ethel Trew Dunlap, a mulatto like Davis, the need for race unity as expressed by the UNIA was both a personal pursuit and a public battle to be won. Dunlap wrestled with the reality of her mixed heritage in front of the UNIA membership, lamenting in “If I Should Die Tonight”

If I should die tonight, perchance  
Someone who is born fair  
Might gaze into my face and see  
The line of sorrow there,  
And whisper: “She was freedom’s child;  
She loved the outcast slave.”  
And those who chided me in life  
Might have pity by my grave...<sup>21</sup>

Although she admitted to struggling with her identity in the African-American community and in mainstream society due to her light skin tones, this struggle did not dampen her racial commitment or her prowess as a poet. Her determination to be seen as a member of the race and contribute to the aims of the UNIA was illustrated in her response to a fellow poet through the *Negro World*, when she declared that “I am not black as Kedar’s tents and yet; There is a tie that binds to Afric son; And daughter that enthralls me and enchants-- So count me thou as Ethiopian.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, her literary efforts became enhanced by her commitment to the UNIA’s cause and her loyalty to Garvey. While Dunlap’s work was primarily published by the *Negro*

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*the Foundations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Cary D. Wintz *Black Culture and the Harlem Renaissance* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley “We Are Not What We Seem”: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South.” *The Journal of American History* vol. 80 no. 1 (Jun., 1993), p. 78.

<sup>21</sup> *Negro World*, September 23, 1922.

<sup>22</sup> *Negro World*, August 5, 1922.

*World*, she engaged in an open exchange with the literati as well as everyday women and men who read the paper.

In 1921, as the UNIA was gaining ground in the American South, Dunlap encouraged readers to join in Garvey's repatriation and reclamation efforts in "On, On To Abyssinia" stating that "...We should not tarry here, ; Where we are tossed about like chaff; And chased like deer?" Her words appear to echo the sentiments of Lady Davis who in 1919 admonished a Pittsburgh audience that the time had come "...for every Negro to link himself and herself up with the greatest of all movements, for united we can break the barriers that have been placed in our way...and carve our way to a brighter destiny."<sup>23</sup> Davis also iterated in Chicago, where Dunlap had first become a member. As she told her audience, "...the time is ripe, the hour is struck when the Negro should arise in his might, ... standing up in the full manhood of his strength..."<sup>24</sup> Davis also urged women to be ready to take the place of men, if the men moved too slowly. In this way she also demonstrated the urgency of the UNIA's efficient women.

Although the *Negro World* was read carefully by Garvey detractors, Dunlap appeared to have written with only the UNIA members in mind. This may have served to limit her career and also rendered her absent from the Harlem Renaissance and African-American poets. Within the UNIA, her poetic peers warned her that her critical success would be limited as she failed at demonstrating her ability to construct "... intricately arranged rhyme without apparent difficulty,"<sup>25</sup> However, the simplicity of her poetry would seem deliberate not only as she directs her poems to the lay membership of the UNIA, but also as historian Tony Martin argues,

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<sup>23</sup> *Negro World*, October 11, 1919.

<sup>24</sup> *Negro World*, October 3, 1919.

<sup>25</sup> *Negro World*, July 7, 1923.

she found that there were “...enduring qualities” to “ ‘Black English.’”<sup>26</sup> In her poem entitled “Onlys” (sometimes pronounced in colloquial language as “Onliest”), she comments on the sound of the word only when spoken by African-Americans and finds that the enunciation is “...peculiarly sweet- And so I think, I’ll let it go.”<sup>27</sup>

This celebration and promotion of the UNIA, its goals and membership, were not always readily undertaken by those who sought exposure through its pages. While Zora Neale Hurston is most noted as an author of several books, founder of the short-lived literary magazine *Fire* with Langston Hughes, and as an anthropologist, she produced during the Harlem Renaissance a series of poems that appeared in the *Negro World*.<sup>28</sup> Her prose lacked the direct attack on Jim Crow and “call to arms” of Dunlap. However, like Dunlap she appreciated the dialect of African-Americans and chose that voice for her work. Hurston was not as criticized for the use of dialect in her work. On the surface, this played into some of the stereotypes about African-Americans of the day, which the UNIA sought to undo. Whites, however, found it entertaining and endearing. Her use of dialect may be one reason for her white patrons considering her voice avant guard, while believing that their appreciation of the dialect was in keeping with the Bohemian spirit of the period.

While many of her biographers pay special attention to the plays, books and research work she completed after leaving Barnard, few have given full attention to the poetry of her early career. The *Negro World* served as a training ground for Hurston as it provided “an important

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<sup>26</sup> Tony Martin *Literary Garveyism: Garvey, Black Arts and the Harlem Renaissance* (Massachusetts: The Majority Press, 1983), p. 55.

<sup>27</sup> *Negro World*, December 9, 1922.

<sup>28</sup> For more on Zora Neale Hurston’s life and work please see Tiffany Ruby Patterson *Zora Neale Hurston and a history of southern life* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005); Valerie Boyd *Wrapped In Rainbows* (New York : Scribner, 2003); Diana Miles *Women, violence & testimony in the works of Zora Neale Hurston* (New York : P. Lang, 2003); Deborah G. Plant *Every Tub Must Sit On Its Own Bottom*(Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 1995); *Zora! : Zora Neale Hurston, a woman and her community* ed. N.Y. Nathiri (Orlando, [Fla.] : Sentinel Communications Co., 1991).

outlet for (her) apprentice writing” from which she moved on to “the bright lights of the Harlem Renaissance.”<sup>29</sup> Both Dunlap and Hurston resemble the partnership model demonstrated by Davis as each found not only a vehicle for her talent in the UNIA, but one that went specifically to racial uplift and empowerment. While both of these women had lofty aims in mind, the road of advancement was paved with challenges surrounding their own personal survival and advancement.

Dunlap found satisfaction in printing her work for the everyday African-Americans. Hurston appears to have sought a larger stage and had loftier goals in mind. She presented a series of poems that avoided questions of racial oppression and instead mused about the end of life and love. As Hurston was only 31 years of age, her choice of death as a topic may seem a bit ghoulish. Yet, as evidenced by the letters written to her and answered in the *Negro World*, she had a receptive, captivated and multigenerational audience.<sup>30</sup> Her exchange with readers revealed that the UNIA audience had more than “Back To Africa” on its mind. In one selection, “Passion,” she pines

When I look back  
On days already lived  
I am content.

For I have laughed  
With the dew of morn,  
The calm of the night;  
With the dawn of youth  
And Spring’s bright days...

And I have loved  
With quivering arms that  
Clung, and throbbing breast-

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<sup>29</sup>Tony Martin, *African fundamentalism : a literary and cultural anthology of Garvey's Harlem Renaissance* (Dover, Mass. : Majority Press, 1991), p. 27.

<sup>30</sup> For more on letters written to Hurston by the lay membership please see Tony Martin, *Literary Garveyism* (Dover, Mass.: Majority Press, 1983), pp. 20-33.

With all the white-hot blood  
Of mating's flaming rage.<sup>31</sup>

That the UNIA lay membership comprised people of all ages becomes apparent as the poem speaks not only of young love, but of the satisfaction of having lived a life of experiences. Still, even after her series of poetic publications in the *Negro World*, drew some acclaim, Hurston ridiculed Garvey in a 1924 article submitted to the *New York Age* entitled "The Emperor Effaces Himself."<sup>32</sup>

The satirical treatment included the charge that Garvey viewed himself as a Napoleon and that he was a fraud. Hurston's affront came on the heels of Garvey's trial and sentencing to five years in prison for mail fraud. Her ridicule of Garvey came as the trial of William Shakespeare and Fred Dryer began for the murder of UNIA organizer James Eason.<sup>33</sup> Hurston's piece, submitted to the controversial white author of *Nigger Heaven*, Carl Van Vechten, seemed to echo the sentiments of W. E. B. Dubois, who called Garvey a "lunatic or traitor" in the *Crisis* throughout the 1920s.<sup>34</sup> While Hurston's commitment to documenting and presenting the lives and struggles of African-American people is well noted, she sought the approval and monetary support of a larger audience during the period. Hurston, like Dunlap and Davis, separated herself from her UNIA audience, ending a budding partnership.

Still, not all women seeking a larger audience felt forced to choose one audience over the other. Such was the case for sculptor and poet Augusta Savage. The Jacksonville, Florida-native grew up making figures from clay for which her father avidly punished her. He viewed

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<sup>31</sup> *Negro World*, April 15, 1922.

<sup>32</sup> *James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection*, Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Box 1, Folder 16.

<sup>33</sup> Both men were sentenced to 18 to 20 years in prison two months before Garvey received his sentence.

<sup>34</sup> For more on Carl Van Vechten's role in the Harlem Renaissance and support of Hurston, Langston Hughes, Richard Wright and others see *Remember me to Harlem : the letters of Langston Hughes and Carl Van Vechten* ed. Emily Bernard (New York : Knopf, 2001); Leon Coleman *Carl Van Vechten and the Harlem Renaissance : a critical assessment* (New York : Garland, 1998).

her artistic expressions as a violation of biblical teachings warning against graven images. As she approached her early teens, Augusta's clay sculpture of the Virgin Mary changed her father's mind and helped launch her career. While attending high school in West Palm Beach Florida, her principle paid her one dollar a day to teach sculpting during her senior year.<sup>35</sup>

Savage gained fame in UNIA circles for her bust of Garvey and later for her bust of W.E.B. DuBois. She, like Davis, was often denied access to mainstream audiences. In 1923 Savage was denied a study trip to Fontainebleau, a prestigious art studio just outside Paris, France, because the review committee did not think she would best represent the United States abroad. Savage did not let the slight go unnoticed and voiced her despair in a letter printed in the *New York World*, where she demanded to know "How am I to compete with other American artists if I am not given the same opportunity? (as others)"<sup>36</sup> She was viewed as a "trouble maker" as a result, and white patrons of the arts simply wished her away. Savage remained undaunted and in 1927 came under the tutelage of renowned Italian American sculptor Onorio Ruotolo, who was once Dean of the Leonardo da Vinci Art School in New York.<sup>37</sup>

Her ability and distinction as a sculptor were never questioned by her critics. In fact, the *Negro World* cited racism, not her lack of ability as the cause of her rejection by the Fontainebleau. The article admonished the "committee of American artists" who "thought her dusky hue might raise the race question."<sup>38</sup> Although she had been denied acceptance at Fontainebleau, Savage still had an audience within the UNIA and the African-American community at large. Her UNIA affiliations led her to work with Zora Neale Hurston and

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<sup>35</sup> Romare Bearden and, Harry Henderson *A History of African-American Artists From 1792 to the Present* (New York:Pantheon Books (Random House), 1993), pp. 168-170.

<sup>36</sup> *New York World* May 20, 1923.

<sup>37</sup> Theresa Leininger-Miller *New Negro artists in Paris: African-American painters and sculptors in the city of light, 1922-1934* (New Brunswick, NJ : Rutgers University Press, 2001), p. 174.

<sup>38</sup> *Negro World*, May 5, 1923.

Langston Hughes in producing pieces for the magazine *Fire!!*<sup>39</sup> Her time in the UNIA also brought Savage to a life partnership in 1923 with Robert Lincoln Poston, UNIA Assistant Secretary and Liberian delegate. Poston sailed with Milton Van Lowe and Henrietta Vinton Davis to Liberia but did not survive the return voyage and died near France in 1924.<sup>40</sup>

Savage, like Davis as shall be discussed later in this chapter, had selected a life partner who was already engaged in the task of racial uplift. Poston was a Walden and Howard University educated journalist who believed fervently in the cause of African redemption. During an informal meeting with Liberian President King, he declared the UNIA colonization plan a “success” in a cable wire to Garvey. Ironically, he never lived to learn that the Liberians had backed out of a UNIA colonization plan in favor of a land contract with the Firestone Rubber Company.<sup>41</sup> Savage remained loyal to the UNIA and its aims but waned in her support of Garvey during his 1924 trial and subsequent incarceration.<sup>42</sup> Savage’s lukewarm loyalty to Garvey represents one of the many dilemmas women and some men in the UNIA faced.

Even though there was a relationship of mutual benefit between Savage, Garvey and the UNIA, and despite her marriage to the UNIA’s leading Liberian diplomat, Savage did not advocate the physical repatriation to Africa.<sup>43</sup> She did, however, believe in and worked toward increasing racial pride, economic opportunity, and self-reliance in the African-American community. In 1931 the Savage School of Arts and Crafts was opened in Harlem--- the first of

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<sup>39</sup> *Fire!!* Was published in 1926 by Langston Hughes, Wallace Thurman, Zora Neale Hurston, Aaron Douglas and Richard Bruce Nugent. The magazines were sold for one dollar a piece and never generated enough monies to cover the cost of printing. It was illustrated by Aaron Douglas and Richard Bruce Nugent.

<sup>40</sup> Robert L. Poston was a Tennessee journalist and Howard University graduate. He became a newspaper publisher and editor while in Detroit Michigan. He moved to NY in 1921 and was elected assistant Secretary-General of the UNIA, and then was promoted to Secretary-General in 1922. He and his brother Ulysses served as associate editors of the *Negro World*. The brothers co-directed the UNIA’s dramatic club in the play “Tallaboo.” Through his death UNIA members believe that the biblical prophecy. "Princes shall come out of Egypt, Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God" was believed to then be fulfilled.

<sup>41</sup> *Precious Duncan Papers* “UNIA 1924 Convention Bulletin” Gainesville, FL.

<sup>42</sup> Theresa Leininger-Miller *New Negro artists in Paris: African-American painters and sculptors in the city of light, 1922-1934* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), p.172.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

several of her Harlem-based arts schools.<sup>44</sup> While she was not in agreement with Garvey's repatriation plans, Savage, as an efficient woman, believed in the aims and programs of the UNIA took precedence, and she worked to further them in her own life.

Prior to joining the UNIA, Savage worked as a live-in domestic to finance her training as a sculptor. After the death of her husband and their child at only ten days old, Savage took a job as a laundress and began to save again toward funding her artistic endeavors. She never remarried. Savage became a UNIA sympathizer rather than an active member. Her acceptance of some but not all of the UNIA's beliefs reflects a common occurrence throughout the African-American community. The varying degrees of affiliation with the organization, which boasted that it included all persons of the Diaspora as members, was illustrated by the presence of organizers and leaders from other prominent and supposedly competing organizations as speakers at UNIA meetings. These persons included activist Mary Church Terrell. At a 1917 Harlem UNIA meeting at the Casino Palace, Terrell, one of the original founding members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and first president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Women (NACW) was a featured speaker.

At the request of Irena Moorman Blackston, one of the UNIA's early supporters and the New York Division's Lady President, Terrell was invited to speak on the role of women in the quest for racial progress. Terrell later served as a delegate to the International Women's Conference held in Paris, France in 1919 and saw herself as a citizen of the world. She determined to represent women of "non-Western countries" when she spoke on behalf of the American delegation in German.<sup>45</sup> Although few UNIA women belonged to NACW, as efficient

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>45</sup> Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "DISCONTENTED BLACK FEMINISTS: Prelude and Postscript to the Passage of the Nineteenth Amendment" in eds. Jacqueline Bobo, Cynthia Hudley et. al., *The Black Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 72.

women they engaged with other organizations that shared their desire for the progress of the race, albeit through differing strategies. Despite the distaste DuBois and other middle-class African-Americans may have felt for Garvey and the UNIA, Terrell seized an opportunity to speak to the need for unity in the fight against “humiliations of various kinds on account of race, color or creed.”<sup>46</sup>

Terrell was accustomed and willing to pay the price for her activism as she often disagreed with her sometime colleagues. In fact, she offered to resign from her position with the bi-racial organization, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), when asked to sign a petition demanding the removal of African-American troops from the German battlefield for allegedly harassing German women.<sup>47</sup> For Terrell, like Davis, Savage, the two Mrs. Amy Garveys and many other UNIA women, the concerns of the race came before considerations of gender. Still, there was a price to be paid for this and, while Terrell was able to weather the sneers of those who shunned her more radical assertions, not all women had the same fortune. Often the price of full active membership in the UNIA could not outweigh the fulfillment of life dreams and personal tragedies. For Augusta Savage becoming a sculptor meant more than the lofty aim of returning to an Africa the Florida native had never seen.<sup>48</sup> Still, as it was her husband’s desire to establish a colony in Africa, she encouraged his pursuits of the UNIA’s colonization goals, while maintaining her own opinions on the matter and developing her own talents.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 72.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p. 73; Terborg-Penn noted that Church Terrell wrote to Jane Adams and alleged that racism was behind the accusations made and offers to resign her position as a formal investigation rendered no evidence of guilt on the part of the troops. Terrell tells Adams, “The troops, from French colonies in Africa, were victims, Terrell contended, of American propaganda against Black people.” p. 73

<sup>48</sup> Savage is unable to save the money to make the trip to France as her brother, a World War I veteran dies while trying to assist during the Florida Hurricane of 1927. Her family moves from Florida to live with her in a small Harlem apartment. The following year her father passes. She ends up using the monies she saved to bury him. It was not until 1929 that she is awarded monies by Julius Rosenwald of the Sears and Roebuck Company that enable her to make the trip to Europe.

Davis, like Dunlap, Hurston and Savage came to the UNIA with creative artistic talents and a commitment to racial uplift. While these women became symbols in the organization and were sometimes used as a part of a well orchestrated publicity machine, they did not allow the UNIA to take advantage of their presence. In fact, these women and others like them, including Ida B. Wells, actually used the UNIA as a platform to help assist and promote their very specific agendas. There is a level of sincerity and commitment in these women that drew them to the UNIA and allowed them to see its usefulness in larger contexts. By participating in collective and independent partnerships the efficient womanhood of the UNIA female membership is further established. The practice of collectively aligning with like-minded persons moving in similar directions was one Henrietta Vinton Davis cultivated early in her life and caused her to develop a select group of “friends.”

Throughout her life, those she endowed with the term “friend” included Bishop Henry M. Turner, Frederick Douglass, George Myers and John Edward Bruce. All seem to have one thing in common: the progress and promotion of African-Americans. This trait guided all her interpersonal relationships with men, including her spousal choice. In early 1885, she married Thomas T. Symmons, one of the original members of the 1887 Afro American League.<sup>49</sup> He worked as a concert baritone and arranged a testimonial for Davis in 1884, which the *New York Globe* described as “one of the grandest receptions ever given to a colored lady in Philadelphia.”<sup>50</sup> Their partnership was short lived, however. This may account for why research

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<sup>49</sup> Penn, I. Garland, and Frederick Douglass. *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors* (Springfield, Mass: Willey & Co. 1891), p. 565.; Thomas T. Symmons managed the Bohemia Dramatic Club and arranged for Davis to appear at the Whitney Opera House in Detroit in April of 1894. Symmons was engaged to Davis in early 1894. (*New York Globe*, March 29, 1894) He planned to take his dramatic company on tour with Davis as leading lady. However, present research indicates that the tour never came to fruition.

<sup>50</sup> *New York Globe*, April 26, 1884.

yields no evidence of Davis ever using his name. While records are scarce, it appears that the two separated after a quarrel in which Symmons physically abused her.<sup>51</sup>

The willingness to represent the race at its best was a trait Davis also sought in her professional acting acquaintances. She toured with Alice M. Franklin and Noni Bailey Hardy; performed Shakespeare with Powhattan Beaty, and was lauded for her performances as Lady Macbeth and Rosalind.<sup>52</sup> She received positive reviews for her performances as a serious actress, but her comedic talents were considered mediocre at best.<sup>53</sup> While her alliances in the theater proved to be somewhat fruitful, her career on the stage, as noted, was one that “encompasses all of the promise and frustration experienced by black actors of (that) generation.”<sup>54</sup> She partnered with contralto singer Nonie Hardy in 1912 and toured Jamaica. While there, she managed Kingston’s Covent Garden Theater and before her departure in 1913, established the Jamaica branch of the American-based benevolent organization, the Loyal Knights and Ladies of Malachite which launched fundraisers to help school aged girls get an education.<sup>55</sup>

Davis faced many frustrations on the stage. She lamented the limited and inconsistent patronage of African-Americans, while attempting to create avenues that circumvented the limits she and other actors faced due to segregation mores in the American theater. In 1916 she expressed her dismay in a letter to John Edward Bruce, when a scheduled engagement in Yonkers, New York failed to materialize. Davis, writing from Bermuda, informed Bruce

That is alright about the recital in Yonkers. I know you did your best, but I am well acquainted with my people. I know their lack of cohesiveness---and it is that very lack that the whiteman takes advantage of. He knows the weakness of the Negro better than the Negro knows himself.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with Davis biographer and family friend Nnamdi Azikiwe, August 13, 2008.

<sup>52</sup> *Daily Gleaner*, May 2, 1912.

<sup>53</sup> *New York Globe*, May 3, 1884 “Our Dramatic Artists.”

<sup>54</sup> Erroll Hill, “Henrietta Vinton Davis: Shakespearean Actress” in *Women in American Theater* eds. Helen Chinoy and Linda Walsh (New York: Crown Publishers, 1981), p. 92.

<sup>55</sup> Seraille, p.14; *John Edward Bruce Papers* Group A, MMS 155, Bruce Papers.

<sup>56</sup> Davis to Bruce, April 30, 1916, Group A, MMS 155, Bruce Papers.

Her travels and performances outside of the United States was as an attempt to secure a receptive audience and the financial backing she needed to perform her craft.

In this way, Henrietta Vinton Davis' life mirrored that of Club Woman educator Dr. Anna Julia Cooper. Cooper was fired from her job as principal of an all-African-American Washington D.C. school in 1906 for supporting an academic-based curriculum. She was rejected by several graduate schools in the United States but went on to complete her Ph.D. at the Sorbonne in Paris in 1925 and returned to America and reclaimed her former administrative position.<sup>57</sup> While Davis and Cooper sought alternatives to the limitations of their professional development away from American soil, fellow UNIA member and Clubwoman, journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett traversed the self-help organizations of the period using both mainstream and African-American presses to simultaneously further her career and her crusade which took her to the shores of England to plead the cause of Anti-Lynching.<sup>58</sup>

Davis, like Cooper and Wells-Barnett, believed that African-Americans had a role to play in development of society at large. As Cooper channeled her activism through the pursuit of "classical" education and Wells-Barnett through the dismantling of lynching, Davis attempted to find her niche through the presidential campaign of Populist Party candidate Ignatius Donnelly in 1892. In availing herself to Donnelly, she wrote twice volunteering her services to help galvanize her "...brethren...in any part of the country" as she had a desire and "...eagerness to serve my race and humanity..."<sup>59</sup> She was so enamored with Donnelly that she unsuccessfully

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<sup>57</sup> For more on Dr. Cooper please see Anna Julia Cooper *A Voice from the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>58</sup> For more on Ida B. Wells' involvement with African-American self-help organizations please see James West Davidson *They Say: Ida B Wells and the Reconstruction of Race* (New York : Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>59</sup> Davis to Donnelly, July, 12, 1892, *Ignatius Donnelly Papers*, Archive and Manuscript Division of the Minnesota Historical Society roll 104, frame 74-75.

attempted to dramatize his novel 1891 novel, *Doctor Huguet*, which was the story of an evil white physician who took over the body of an unsuspecting black man.<sup>60</sup>

While she is most noted for her work as a Shakespearean actress, and arguably one of the first African-Americans recognized as such, Davis' body of work included plays and monologues that spoke directly or indirectly about the plight of Africans throughout the Diaspora.<sup>61</sup> Foreshadowing her involvement with the UNIA, she produced, co-wrote and/or starred in, theatrical works that reflected the possibilities of self-government, financial independence, and unity among displaced Africans of all ilks. Her selection of works for the stage revealed her concern for the plight of Africans throughout the Diaspora, her acute awareness of conflicts within the Diaspora communities regarding color pigmentation and class, and points to how prescribed gender roles factored into the application of her nationalist ideals during the period. Davis further exemplified the efficient womanhood of the UNIA as her career demonstrated the extent to which race work was life work for women of the organization.

During the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, Davis theater company produced *Dessalines* at the Freiberg's Opera House in Chicago.<sup>62</sup> *Dessalines* is a four-act play that depicts the Haitian Revolution as not only a war between the island nation and France, but as a war between mulattoes and darker skinned Haitians.<sup>63</sup> The heroine of the play is a mulatto woman named Clarisse who is the sister of the mulatto leader of the French Army. Clarisse falls in love with her brother's arch enemy, rebel leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who was depicted historically as "as violent and blood thirsty" but becomes a gentleman as he claims the title "Monsieur," which

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<sup>60</sup> *Donnelly Papers* ibid; Donnelly, Ignatius as Edmund Boisgilbert. *Doctor Huguet* (Chicago: F.J. Schutle 1891).

<sup>61</sup> Cleveland Gazette April 24, 1886 "Miss Henrietta Vinton Davis, TRAGEDINE", p.1

<sup>62</sup> Errol Hill, *A History of the American Theater*, p. 138.

<sup>63</sup> William Edgar Easton, *Dessalines, a dramatic tale : a single chapter from Haiti's history* (JW Burson Company Publishers 1893). The play was performed at the Haitian Pavilion of the Chicago World's Fair.

was a distinction normally reserved for white men and men of mixed heritage.<sup>64</sup> Dessalines is transformed by his quest to obtain his freedom by his own hand. He states,

...had the grim spectre tied me to the trammels of eternal darkness-----thy cause; the cause of liberty would have found another champion! Liberty! Eternal inspiration of heroic deeds! A principle nature implants in all her creatures! Liberty, the birthright of all mankind. For a time man may suppress thee, but thou art of eternal youth, eternal being; and when once aroused from thy dreamy slumbers, oppression meets his sternest foe! Thy armor is more strong; thy assault is greater than prejudice and racial hatred enthroned in all their power!<sup>65</sup>

His transformation is furthered by Clarisse's love and her Christian faith. As the play ends, the rebels celebrate their victory by declining to raid a church that housed a considerable amount of French gold, while Clarisse and Dessalines pledge their love to one another. Clarisse observes the change in Dessalines and notes "Thou has seen his valor, and I—I have seen that; neath his visage, dark as night—'neath the rough blunt exterior of a soldier—dwells a mind ripe for seeds of Christian good!"<sup>66</sup> Dessalines's transformation becomes complete as the play closes with his final remarks

'Tis well then, that the religion which fostered in the slave love of liberty and gave him the courage to contest the power of might—with the weapons of right, shall be hereafter—the proud heritage of every Haitien!<sup>67</sup>

Davis followed this production with *Our Old Kentucky Home*, a play she co-wrote with John Edward Bruce in 1898. Davis directed the staging and starred in the play as the heroine Clothilde, a mulatto woman who out-smarts the Confederate Army to save her master's illegitimate son and future husband Basil Knott.<sup>68</sup> Clothilde and Basil become separated during the Civil War and reunite in 1865 in Washington, DC. The language of the two lovers is far

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<sup>64</sup>Marie-Agnès Sourieau et Kathleen M. Balutansky, *Écrire en pays assiégé = Writing under siege: Haïti*. (Amsterdam; New York, N.Y.: Rodopi, c2004), p. 138.

<sup>65</sup> *Dessalines*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>66</sup> *Dessalines*, p. 102.

<sup>67</sup> *Dessalines*, p. 117.

<sup>68</sup> John Edward Bruce, *Our Old Kentucky Home* in the *John Edward Bruce Papers* Reel 3 (Schomburg Library, NY, NY).

removed from that of the two slaves who met on the Knott Plantation after Basil's father brought Clothilde home from New Orleans. In their first meeting, Basil wonders aloud "I wonder what nigger wuz made for anyhow?" To which Clothilde replies

Dat ces a vere hard question, ma'sieur. I do not despair for de future, me, I tink dat de Negre's will yet become a great race, aldo dere is now so much against it. Le bon Dieu permit some tings to be for his pu'pose.<sup>69</sup>

When the pair reunites in 1865, their exchange is written as follows:

Basil.

Come to my arms Clothilde (embraces her). You are as true as steel; thrice have you shown your devotion to my interests, and this your precious life to save mine; and now in this place, I pledge my life and my sacred honor never to forget you or to forsake you. Clothilde, you must be my wife. I love you with my heart and soul and can only be happy with you. Promise me!

Clothilde.

Basil, when I first met years ago in Kentucky, the stamp and feel of our unspoken loves was fixed upon our hearts and registered in our memory. In the eyes of heaven our souls were then united as closely as they ever can be; it needs now only the sanction of the law to bind them together indissolubly, and I am ready, dear Basil, to consecrate and dedicate my life to make your remaining years the happiest you have ever enjoyed.<sup>70</sup>

In *Dessalines* and *Our Old Kentucky Home* freedom is won through an individual's effort as a part of a collective. Not only is one's situation in life transformed, but it became easier to express the desires of one's heart as freedom also creates a new language. The tongue becomes loosed as the bonds of slavery and oppression are broken. For Dessalines, the experience is reminiscent of that of Phyllis Wheatley, who wrote "Their color is a diabolic dye.' Remember Christians; Negroes, black as Cain, May be refin'd, and join th' *angelic train*."<sup>71</sup> His refinement, like the refinement of Basil Knott, comes as both men engage in the pursuit of freedom from racial oppression, with a woman who has captured their heart. In part it is the love of the woman and the desire to be worthy of her love that pushes these men toward their transformation.

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<sup>69</sup> Bruce and Davis, *Our Old Kentucky Home*, p. 13.

<sup>70</sup> Bruce and Davis, *Our Old Kentucky Home*, p. 40.

<sup>71</sup> Phyllis Wheatley "On Being Brought from Africa" 1778.

In both plays the heroes make a point of protecting the chastity of the heroine.<sup>72</sup> The heroines become the guides for the heroes and bring out the better sides of their nature. Clarisse encourages Dessalines to have mercy on the men who ransomed her in his name by explaining that just as “Man searches his cold judicial mind for reasons; woman is guided by the promptings of her heart.” Being guided by her heart, Clothilde risks her own life by crossing enemy lines three times to save her beloved Basil by shooting down rebel snipers who were after him.<sup>73</sup> In both plays Miss Davis played the mulatto heroine who saw beyond color gradients and sought in the words of Clothilde to unite Africans of all ilks because “We po’ slavs, of whatever color or condition, must all suffer alike.”<sup>74</sup> This suffering was very real for Davis, whose ancestry was viewed as blight on her career. Errol Hill observed that Miss Davis’ light complexion made her “not noticeably different from dozens of other actresses on the stage with similar ability.”<sup>75</sup> Her features would have allowed her to pass for white as noted by one critic

Ms. Davis is a singularly beautiful woman, you know more than a brunette, certainly no talk of Venice Spanish or Italian lady in hue, with a less justly expressive eyes and a mouth molded upon Adelaide Nielsen's God....<sup>76</sup>

Although her features placed her in the company of high society, she rejected any assertion of color gradation as cause for separation within the race. For her, any separation within the race would undermine the potential for progress. Davis recognized, as did Rigaud and Lefebre in

*Dessalines,*

LeBebre

But what can we hope to gain by affiliation with the blacks? We have nothing in common. They are envious of us—literally hate us; while we—we despise them.

Rigaud

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<sup>72</sup> *Dessalines*, pp. 65-68; *Our Old Kentucky Home*, pp. 16-18, 46-47.

<sup>73</sup> *Dessalines*, p. 68; *Our Old Kentucky Home*, p. 39.

<sup>74</sup> *Our Old Kentucky Home*, p. 15.

<sup>75</sup> Errol Hill, “Henrietta Vinton Davis”, p. 96.

<sup>76</sup> *Buffalo Sunday Truth*, n. d. 1894.

Their hatred is our own making.

Rigaud

Thy prejudices enlarge upon thy fears. A common cause would make us friends indeed!<sup>77</sup>

Although hindered by de jure racism and de facto prejudice, Henrietta Vinton Davis' career in the theater reflected a conscious choice to present work that elevated not only her status as an actress but the mindset of her audiences.<sup>78</sup> That she was all too aware of who would see her work is evidenced in the few biographical sketches of her life. Her chroniclers all note that among her greatest accomplishments was the avoidance of "The Coon" circuit. While there is some indication that she may have participated briefly in one of the "coon" plays of the period, there is no other evidence to support this fact.<sup>79</sup>

Prior to her affiliation with the UNIA, she strove to be a serious actress, selected roles that were previously regarded as the exclusive domain of white actors, and promoted plays that depicted an independent, moral and self sufficient people of the African Diaspora. Her selection of colleagues just as her selection of stage work was guided by a desire to elevate the race and counter negative stereotypes. In 1902 the *Colored American* noted that Miss Davis' versatility could have led to her becoming the "natural head" of a formidable stock company had not the prejudice of the day limited her opportunity.<sup>80</sup> Although the paper had a theater company in mind, Davis would go on to become both the figurative and literal head of another kind of stock company: the Black Star Line and the Black Cross Navigation and Shipping Company, both UNIA entrepreneurial shipping entities.

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<sup>77</sup> Dessalines, pp. 21-22.

<sup>78</sup> Errol Hill, "Henrietta Vinton Davis", p. 96; See Davis' comments to Bruce mentioned earlier in text.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p. 97.

<sup>80</sup> *Colored American*, February 22, 1902.

In 1916 Miss Davis was 56 years old, and while some would expect her to be winding down, much like Anna Julia Cooper who completed her Ph.D. at age 60, Miss Davis was preparing for the largest stage any woman had performed on. She would take the world stage as the UNIA's diplomat in 1916. She was invited by Garvey to give a speech on race progress at the Casino Ballroom (later known as Liberty Hall) and by evening's end became the UNIA's most celebrated member. Along with thirteen others, Davis was one of the original signers of the Universal Negro Improvement Association at its New York incorporation. When she signed her name, she declared her unwavering loyalty to the aims the UNIA.

### **Protector and Defender of the UNIA**

On August 25, 1919 the Universal Negro Improvement Association held its annual convention meeting at New York's Carnegie Hall. Henrietta Vinton Davis served as Chair of the meeting. While her main responsibility that evening was to introduce the speakers and keep the program flowing, Davis took time to implore non-members in her audience to join the UNIA and stressed the importance of buying stock in its new venture, the Black Star Line (BSL). Davis viewed investing in the company as one of the many ways the UNIA encouraged people of the African Diaspora to invest in themselves and secure their future.

As one of the founding members of the UNIA's American incorporation, Henrietta Vinton Davis was elected to, appointed or drafted to serve on nearly every formal and informal program of the organization. As a result, many of the great successes of the organization as well as some of its many failures rested in her hands. Her status was evident in 1929 when Marcus Garvey, at his Jamaica hero's welcome celebration orchestrated largely by Davis, blamed her for the organization's disarray. Garvey revealed his dismay at finding that while Davis served as

“the Fourth President General” she had “done nothing to give new life to the organization,…”<sup>81</sup>

Although this criticism may have stemmed from Garvey’s frustration with his status as a convicted criminal deportee, who returned to his native country with little to no money in his pocket, it also implies the depths of Davis’ responsibilities within the organization. His disgrace was only heightened by his perception of the stagnation of the organization that he “intended to give (his) life to.” His assertions revealed the magnitude of power and authority Lady Davis possessed in his eyes and his criticism indicated that he felt she had not done enough with that power.

Henrietta Vinton Davis’s duties included enlarging membership rolls, selling stocks for the Black Star Line Shipping Company and serving as president. She viewed herself as “something of a diplomat” and in that capacity served to protect and further the UNIA’s program throughout the Diaspora.<sup>82</sup> Her devotion to the UNIA was limitless and even transcended her loyalty to Garvey. By 1931 she joined a rival UNIA faction, known as the UNIA Incorporated, headed by Dr. Lionel A Francis of the often troubled Philadelphia branch.<sup>83</sup> In 1934 she became president of the rival faction and maintained that the organization would continue to pursue the programs established under Garvey’s leadership as he had presented great “contribution to Negro progress ... despite his mistakes and shortcomings.”<sup>84</sup>

As her duties seemed to overlap at varying times, Davis was constantly on the move.

This brought her under the watchful eye of both the United States and British Intelligence

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<sup>81</sup> *Negro World*, August 24, 1929.

<sup>82</sup> *Negro World*, September 6, 1924.

<sup>83</sup> Davis leaves the UNIA after an August 15, 1931 editorial by *Negro World*, editor H.G. Mudgal complained that the American leadership of the now UNIA & ACL August 1929 of the World, was not being managed well by “feminine hands” and in need of a stronger leadership. The leadership at the time included Davis’ protégé Maymie De Mena and Davis herself. Garvey made no public comment on Davis’ departure and there are no archival records of her making any statements on the matter either.

<sup>84</sup> *New York Age*, August 13, 1932, 1; August 20, 1932, 1; August 27, 1932, 1; May 5, 1934, 1; August 18, 1934, 9; October 13, 1934, 3. *Norfolk Journal & Guide*, September 1, 1934, 5.

Agencies. Her exposure to audiences in the Caribbean from her touring days in 1911 and 1912 served to draw crowds. However, according to Bureau of Investigations (BI) Agent W.L. Buchanan, it was her ability as an “eloquent speaker” and “educated and able speaker” that had “personality and a forceful way of expressing her views” which endeared her to listeners and earned her the designation of a “negro agitator.” Davis managed to earn this distinction as she became known in intelligence circles for telling her listeners that the “...Negro should no longer bow down in suppression and segregation” but exert their “superiority.”<sup>85</sup>

Not only did the Bureau of Investigations (BI) and other secret service agencies note what Davis said to the public, they were also attentive to her private conversations as well. According to reports, it was alleged that Davis plotted with other UNIA officials to take over the organization from Garvey during late 1922 and early 1923. The BI also alleged that Davis and others in the Garvey’s inner circle were willing to testify on behalf of the U.S. government at his mail fraud trial.<sup>86</sup> These assertions were contradicted by Davis’ show of unwavering loyalty to Garvey and the UNIA when she testified for his defense. According to *Negro World* records and historians of Garvey and the UNIA, at no time during before or immediately after the trial did Davis publicly or privately engage in any plot to take control of the organization. Time and again, historians note that Davis remained resolute in her allegiance to the UNIA while others walked away or sued the organization.

In her capacity of BSL second vice-president and UNIA International Organizer, Davis often travelled for the purpose of selling stock in the company and establishing branches of the UNIA throughout the Panama Canal Zone. On these trips her promotion of the UNIA’s program, her loyalty to Garvey and her penchant for racial progress was clearly illustrated.

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<sup>85</sup> DJ-FBI, file 61. TD; DNA, RG 59, File 000-612, TD.; DJ- FBI, file 61 -746, TD.

<sup>86</sup> DJ- FBI, 561, TD; DJ\_FBI, file 61—50—395. TD; DJ- file 61. TD.

Allegations of mismanagement of funds were made by the Santiago Branch of the Panamanian Division causing Lady Davis to cable Marcus Garvey. She urged him to come to Santiago, warning that there was a danger of “somebody (being) lynched.”<sup>87</sup> Intervening on behalf of the organization in times of crisis to quell dissent became standard operating procedure for Lady Davis. Her intention to ensure the honesty of others and keep the organization afloat was demonstrated in the re-organization of the Kingston Branch of the UNIA in 1919. Between 1919 and 1920 Davis re-organized the Kingston Branch after “confiscating” the accounting books from the private offices of the pilfering branch president.<sup>88</sup> The International Organizer also demonstrated a capacity for detecting areas of concern and protecting the UNIA. Whenever it became apparent that a particular Division was about to break away, Garvey sent Lady Davis to help bring the members back into the fold. She was not always successful, nor was her presence always well received.

The UNIA suffered from internal dissent from its 1919 incorporation until its dormant period in the late 1930s. In some cases, within weeks of a branch and division becoming chartered, movements for secession were afoot. In 1920, Garvey faced challenges from both the Philadelphia and Los Angeles Branches. At the time, Philadelphia boasted a large membership while the Los Angeles Division was just getting started. The controversies in Philadelphia were numerous, but the most significant point of contention surrounded the use and accounting of funds. In Los Angeles, less than a year after Davis had gone there to establish the branch and set up a unit of the Black Cross Nurse Auxiliary, newspaper woman and NAACP member Charlotta Bass, Lady President of the branch, officially formed the Pacific Coast Negro Improvement

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<sup>87</sup> *Negro World*, July 30, 1921.

<sup>88</sup> JA file 12185 April 24, 1920; *The Jamaica Gleaner*, February 10, 1920, April 21, 1920, April 23, 1920; *Jamaica Times*, July 24, 1920.

Association and broke all ties with the UNIA.<sup>89</sup> Davis made concessions on behalf of the UNIA in both situations, and was successful in keeping Philadelphia in the ranks, despite “some criticism of and dissatisfaction...” among the membership who after over two weeks of her supervision began to grow weary but decided to have her remain until their reorganization process was completed.<sup>90</sup> The UNIA branch in Philadelphia felt Lady Davis’ presence, albeit at the behest of Garvey himself, was tolerable. Davis demonstrated her ability as a “clever educated woman of more than average ability” and in 1932 Philadelphia welcomed her as one who worked on the behalf of the membership and not just as Garvey’s representative.<sup>91</sup> She was not as successful in Los Angeles, where as previously noted, the division there formed its own version of the UNIA separate from the parent organization.

Lady Davis was signatory of many Division charters throughout the UNIA world, and her stamp of approval was sought by women and men of the organization at every opportunity. The women of the organization often deferred to her counsel and used her name and presence as a means of sanctioning their own agendas. Her involvement often led to the creation of spaces for women members to freely pursue the aims of the organization. These spaces often went undetected by Garvey or the male hierarchy and allowed women to interpret, extend and re-create UNIA aims in ways that best suited their local needs. An early example of this occurred with her involvement in establishing the Black Cross Nurse (BCN) Auxiliary as a part of every UNIA division. As International Organizer, she sought ways to gain support for the organization and found that encouraging women who worked as health care workers to join the auxiliary not

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<sup>89</sup> Emory Tolbert, *The UNIA and Black Los Angeles: ideology and community in the American Garvey movement* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, 1980), pp. 63-69 & 76-79.

<sup>90</sup> DNA RG 65, file OG 329359. TD, Stamped Endorsements.

<sup>91</sup> DNA, RG 65, file OG 267600. TD.

only increased the membership numbers, but also served to help women formalize their professional and community service work.

Her efforts were extended with her participation in the development of the UNIA Ladies Day Exhibition in 1922. At the August 1922 Convention, the UNIA established its first “Ladies Day Exhibition” in part at the behest of Lady Davis and others. The exhibition was designed to celebrate the artistry and home made crafts of the female membership. Aside from showcasing the talents of members, the exhibition also served as a means for encouraging entrepreneurship and cooperatives among members.

The respect of both the male and female membership and the esteem of the organization’s officials for Davis’ contributions were further evidenced in the amending of the UNIA constitution in 1922 and the establishing of the Daughters of Ethiopia as a formal auxiliary of the UNIA in 1924. In each instance, Lady Davis was designated as the designated official to oversee and guide activities of the women of the organization. Similar to the 1922 coup, women delegates from Montréal Canada, Chicago, IL, Monrovia, VA, petitioned in 1924 to have the Daughters of Ethiopia (DOE) adopted in the Constitutional By-Laws of the UNIA with Lady Davis as chairman. The auxiliary was comprised of women who were recently bestowed titles by Garvey for their service to the organization. The DOE now gave them a formal auxiliary to further their “burning desire to work for the good of the UNIA and ACL.” These activities gave testament to her status as a pillar in the organization and also points out the need for her inclusion in the historiography of the long freedom struggle, African-American women’s activism and Black Nationalism.<sup>92</sup>

Her interest in the health and well being of African-Americans was also revealed in authoring a treatment entitled “The Social Policy of the Negro.” At the August 1922

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<sup>92</sup> *Negro World*, September 6, 1924.

Convention, Garvey asked Davis to open up a discussion geared toward defining a new social policy for African-Americans. Davis began by stating that “the matter (is) one of vital importance” as African-Americans “as a people (have) neglected the social side of life in many ways and paid very little attention to it.”<sup>93</sup> Caught in the routine of daily life, “(t)he Negro was characteristically social, but, heretofore, there have been no policy as to his sociability.”<sup>94</sup>

Davis along with John Edward Bruce, Dr. Leroy Bundy, Robert L. Poston and Anna Nicholas of the New York Division were appointed as the Committee on Social Concerns. The Garvey appointed committee comprised a lady from the general membership and the only woman in the UNIA hierarchy along with three men. Their findings were printed in the *Negro World* on September 9, 1922 and stressed that

The question is largely one of geography, i.e., no fixed rules can be established to guide the people of all sections. There are forms of courtesy among all people, and they are expressed in different ways, though they mean the same thing in the last analysis. We Negro[s] should establish our own social forms and strive to impress our young people with the idea that courtesy, clean speech, [sic] good character are all the hallmarks of true ladies and gentlemen. We still believe these are matters which can be safely left in the Christian homes of our race for final solution.<sup>95</sup>

While the document was presented as being authored by the collective, Davis was the second signer after Bruce. Based on the content of their previous literary collaborations, which centered on themes of redemption and transformation the sentiments expressed can be attributed to the thinking and feelings of Davis. Her express concern was the modeling of proper mores for the upcoming generation. Although she had no biological children of her own, Davis, as an efficient woman, used her talents to address what she regarded as the needs of others.

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<sup>93</sup> *Negro World*, September 2, 1922.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Negro World*, September 9, 1922.

Although she had given up the stage, Davis found room in the UNIA for her training as a Shakespearean actor. She endeared herself to children and parents alike with her rendition of Paul Laurence Dunbar's "Little Brown Baby" and her use of African-American playing dolls as props which were produced by and in conjunction with the UNIA based Negro Factories Corporation.<sup>96</sup> Davis praised the doll manufacturer, Berry and Ross for "...doing so much" to inculcate "the spirit of race pride in the Negro race" through the production of these dolls."<sup>97</sup> The promotion of African- American dolls, historian Michele Mitchell argues, was an integral part of the ways the UNIA sought to ensure that "young black girls would grow into women who (neither) shunned nor opted out of motherhood."<sup>98</sup> The dolls served to signal the importance of women as nurturers and spoke directly to the UNIA's promotion of "racial purity and an acceptance of African roots as elements of children's race pride."<sup>99</sup>

Davis' poetic recitation choice of "Little Brown Baby" reveals yet another strain of UNIA efficient womanhood in that the poem itself celebrates the role of fathers in the home and in their lives of their children. Nearly all of her undertakings as a UNIA official called for a network of both men and women.

The committee on Social Concerns was not Davis' first endeavor as a UNIA official in cooperation with men, nor was it her last. Her role as BSL second vice president and board membership in the UNIA Black Cross Navigation and Trading Company (BCNTC) involved her in partnerships with men both inside and outside of the UNIA world. Under the watchful gaze of

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<sup>96</sup> *Negro World*, June 21, 1919; "Little Brown Baby" in ed, Joanne M. Braxton *The Collected Poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar* (Alexandria: The University Press of Virginia, 1993), p. 134.; Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African-Americans and the politics of racial destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press, 2004), pp. 187-196; An in-depth discussion on the history of African-American based dolls is done by Anthropologist Sabrina Lynette Thomas in "Sara Lee: The Rise and Fall of the Ultimate Negro Doll" *Transforming Anthropology* Apr. 2007, Vol. 15, No. 1: pp. 38-49.

<sup>97</sup> *Negro World*, June 28, 1919.

<sup>98</sup> Mitchell, p. 194.

<sup>99</sup> Sabrina Lynette Thomas "Black Dolls as Racial Uplift: A Preliminary Report" *Transforming Anthropology*. Apr 2005, Vol. 13, No. 1: p. 56.

the Bureau of Investigations, she travelled with Cyril Henry in 1920 to sell and issue stock certificates for the BSL.<sup>100</sup> After the BSL was dissolved and reconstituted in 1924, she was paired with Robert L. Poston and Attorney Milton Van Lowe to form the UNIA Delegation to Liberia. In her account of the trip, she alleged that President King promised her not only the land the trio was sent to negotiate for, but additional lands in Cape Mount, Liberia.<sup>101</sup>

The reception Lady Davis received throughout her travels was recounted by Amy Boaster of the Guatemala Puerto Banns Division, who wrote to the *Negro World* ensuring support from the region as “hundreds of Vinton Davises (were) ready to go out into the world.”<sup>102</sup> These sentiments were seconded by another UNIA member who wrote after Davis visited Fort Wayne, Indiana “that even the very stones would rise to pledge there must be a redeemed Africa.”<sup>103</sup> She appeared to have no less of an effect on President King of Liberia and the other dignitaries she met with in the country. In fact, when Davis travelled to Liberia and Panama, she was afforded the courtesies reserved for foreign diplomats, with official guides and transportation.<sup>104</sup>

Davis faced a backlash, however, as a result of her success in raising funds for the BSL and her participation in the BCNTC. In her role as central fund raiser for the BSL, Davis faced the obvious humiliation when the BSL folded in 1922, and Garvey faced trial for fraud associated with the over selling of stocks. She also faced public hazing from the crew and operators of the ships, as the failure of the Black Star Line was linked in part to her not knowing

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<sup>100</sup> DJ-FBI, 561 –157. TDS, Recipients copy;

<sup>101</sup> *Negro World*, September 6, 1924. Sundiata, p.33; Seraille, p. 15.

<sup>102</sup> Letter to the Editor, n.d. from women of Guatemala, Puerto Banns Division No. 34, Los Amates Division No. 212 signed by Amy Boaster, Emily Chandler and Caroline Grey *Negro World*, February 18, 1922.

<sup>103</sup> *Negro World*, July 22, 1922, 5. These sentiments are also expressed in the *Negro World*, on April 22, 1922, 8; May 6, 1922, 22; May 20, 1922, 3; For further discussion of the UNIA in the Panama Canal Zone please see Carla Burnett ““Are we slaves or free men?": Labor, race, Garveyism, and the 1920 Panama Canal Strike” Unpublished Dissertation (Illinois: University of Illinois at Chicago, 2004).

<sup>104</sup> *Negro World*, July 15, 1922, 12; Hill, vol. 4 p. xii.

“the first thing about a ship or the management of shipping business.”<sup>105</sup> In a series of articles that ran in the communist *Daily Worker* newspaper during the latter half of 1930, Davis was criticized for her alleged misuse of BSL funds. Crew members of the BSL detailed accounts of Davis of “living high and buying up all the silk in Colon” while the crew went without food and pay and UNIA members had to beg for monies to help the ship return to the United States .<sup>106</sup> Such stories were contradicted by depictions of her as sympathetic to the crew to the point of being dangerous to Garvey. In one account it was alleged that she took sick while on the ship as a result of deliberate food poisoning. The attempt on her life was claimed to have taken place, because

Ms. Davis was the only official, who displayed any sympathy towards the crew, and she took sick suddenly, the doctors claimed she was poisoned. It was whispered among the crew that Ms. Davis had been poisoned for fear that her sympathy for the crew would induce her to tell the truth of the sabotage and extravagance of the high officer[']s.<sup>107</sup>

There is no evidence to substantiate claims regarding the attempted poisoning. The conflicting depictions of Lady Davis by the crew are further complicated by claims that monies were collected at each port of call, and yet the BSL was never a solvent enterprise. While this financial situation became obvious by 1922, many still bought stock in the company. It appears that participation in the shipping company stock sales presented several avenues for resistance to Jim Crow and the limitations of prejudice. These sentiments outweighed any concerns about the BSL’s solvency. For many, the potential of owning stock in a shipping company that would remedy the poor segregates travelling accommodations, while enabling trade throughout the Diaspora and providing a means of ensuring wealth for future generations appeared to transcend

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<sup>105</sup> “Account of Black Star Line by Cpt. Hugh Mulzac” *Cleveland Gazette* October 6-27, 1924.

<sup>106</sup> *Daily Worker*, November, 1, 1930 & August 4, 1930.

<sup>107</sup> *Daily Worker*, November 4, 1930.

the reality of stalled ships in New York's harbor. Davis continued to support the purchasing of vessels and the sale of stock even as the ships were literally and figuratively sinking.<sup>108</sup>

Although Garvey publicly deferred to her on matters pertaining to both the BSL and the BCNTC, it is surprising that researchers of the BSL have overlooked her role in the enterprise.<sup>109</sup> Because Davis played an integral part in the collection of money and signed stock sale slips, she must carry some of the responsibility for the failure of the BSL. While Garvey was brought up on charges of overselling stock and using the U.S. Postal Service to solicit funds under false pretense, Davis was never indicted or officially questioned by the Bureau of Investigations for her part in the matter. UNIA members also appeared indifferent to her role as official records were silent on their feelings regarding her involvement. The demise of the BSL did not stop Garvey from attempting another shipping venture. Davis was also undeterred as she became one of the directors of the revamped enterprise. Although her persistence speaks of the depths of Davis' commitment to repatriation and open trade with the African continent, the absence of self-critique or the critique of others on her culpability in these endeavors merits further investigation.

When it became apparent that the UNIA Liberian Delegation was not as successful as Robert Poston was led to believe, Garvey again deferred to Davis to render an accounting of the trip during the August 1924 convention. Davis, however, had not yet returned from a trip to British Honduras. Although Milton Van Lowe had given a report to the officials of the parent

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<sup>108</sup> Seraille, p. 19; Yekutiel Gershoni "Common goals, different ways: The UNIA and the NCBWA in West Africa - 1920-1930" *Journal of Third World Studies* Fall 2001.

[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3821/is\\_200110/ai\\_n8959678](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3821/is_200110/ai_n8959678);

<sup>109</sup> For further insights on the BSL please see Ramla Marie Bandele "Diaspora movements in the international political economy: African-Americans and the Black Star Line." (Unpublished Dissertation Illinois: Northwestern University, 2002).

body earlier in the day, Garvey decided that he must “appeal to the patient convention until Lady Davis comes here, so that she and Mr. Van Lowe...” can render their report.

Garvey’s willingness to wait for Davis’s return reflected his trust and respect for her. Her consistent public defense of Garvey and the organization, even after her departure from the original UNIA, in speeches, newspapers and actions, combined with her insistence that all descendents of the transatlantic slave trade should work for the betterment of Africa and all its people earned her not only the respect of UNIA members and non-members alike, but also won her many comparisons to warriors and great spokesman. Of these, the most illustrative was her being dubbed the Negro Joan of Arc first in Latin America and then later by Garvey.<sup>110</sup> By 1921 Henrietta Vinton Davis was affectionately referred to as Joan of Arc in Cuba, Panama and Harlem.<sup>111</sup> For her untiring devotion to the UNIA and her resolute commitment to the programs Garvey pursued. The President-General first compared Davis to Joan of Arc while introducing her at the August 1920 Convention.<sup>112</sup> Davis highlighted the urgency for African-American based business ownership to her audiences at every opportunity. Much like Joan of Arc, she combined her faith (in this case a belief that despite opposition, poor and/or limited funding and even broad based business acumen) with a militancy that electrified listeners.

In many of her speeches during the inter-war period, she reminded her audience of the valor of soldiers throughout the Diaspora and especially “...the brave black boys who fought for America and with their blood watered the tree of freedom in the vine-clad valleys and the snow-

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<sup>110</sup> Joan of Arc was a French woman who claimed she was guided by visions of God that motivated her in battle against the English during the Hundred Years War. She ignored the apprehensions of French commanders and led a siege that ultimately resulted in the crowning of Charles VII. On May 16, 1920 Joan of Arc was canonized by the Catholic Church for her work.

<sup>111</sup> *Negro World*, February 12, 1921, May 7, 1921; June 4, 1921; July 2, 1921.

<sup>112</sup> For more details on the life of Joan of Arc please see Mary Gordon *Joan of Arc* (New York: Viking, 2000); Joan of Arc was canonized in 1920 and her story was widely publicized in Newspapers of the period.

caped mountains of France.”<sup>113</sup> She reminded the UNIA and non members in her audiences that “[T]he Negro has fought every battle but his own” and admonished them that the “...time has come, the time is at hand, the hour is near, and the Negro must fight for the Negro.”<sup>114</sup>

Reflecting the sentiments of the New Negro movement of the period, Davis called all of the people of the Diaspora to the cause of African redemption.

Henrietta Vinton Davis displayed a special sensitivity to African-American troops. She often reflected, as did many of her contemporaries, on how the descendents of African slaves were engaged to fight for imperial powers in World War I that sought to maintain control over African lands. Men who served on the battle fields of France, in particular, were held in high esteem in 1919. These soldiers became immortalized in the poetry of Ethel Trew Dunlap when she penned “He Sleeps in France’s Bosom.”<sup>115</sup> Lady Davis capitalized on these feelings while serving as UNIA Convention Chair. In 1919 she included in her opening address:

the Negro has come into the ideal of his own solidity, the ideal of his own unity, no matter what country he may have been born in, no matter what flag may have floated over him, the Negro, although patriotic and loyal and faithful to all flags under which he has served, yet he feels the time has come when he must stand forth and ask, in fact he must demand his rights in this reconstructive period.<sup>116</sup>

For Davis, the Black Star Line, the Negro Factories Corporation and other UNIA programs were swords to be used in the battle against segregation to demonstrate the “organized

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<sup>113</sup> *Negro World*, June 28, 1919 \* She also comments in the same speech on the “Jamaican Negro Troops who volunteered for the war, and who (with) their charges over the hot Palestinian desserts and up the Mesopotamian Mountains made it possible for the Jewish dream of a restored Jerusalem to become a reality.”; *Universal Negro Improvement Association Convention* August 25, 1919 reprinted in the *Negro World*.

<sup>114</sup> *Negro World*, June 14, 1919, June 28, 1919, October 3, 1919 October 11, 1919, July 4, January 23, 1922, February 4, 1922, September 9, 1922, September 6, 1924 ; *Universal Negro Improvement Association Convention* August 25, 1919; *Favorite Magazine*, July 4, 1920; *Chattanooga News*, August 6, 1927; *Chattanooga Times*, August 6-8, 1927; DNA, RG 65, file BS 198940. TD. Copies sent to Washington, DC, Chicago and New York; DJ-FBI, File 61 –746. TD.; DNA, RG, file OG 374877.

<sup>115</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

determination for the general advancement of each and every one within the race.”<sup>117</sup> In Davis’ words “each and everyone” meant both women and men. She complimented African-American women during the Washington D.C. race riots for their “fearlessness in the face of brutal and unprovoked attacks.”<sup>118</sup> She was also mindful when relaying the “founding” story of the UNIA in New York to stress that it was “a few Negro men *and* women” who started the organization. She observed that after only two months in New York State the organization had “7,500 members [with] branches in 25 states... every Central American and West Indian country and on “the great continent of Africa.”<sup>119</sup>

Just like Joan of Arc’s valiant defense of Charles VII, Lady Davis staunchly defended Marcus Garvey and the UNIA. Although her official titles changed throughout her tenure in the UNIA, her role as UNIA protector/defender and Marcus Garvey advocate remained constant. The Bureau of Investigations labeled her an agitator for her support of Garvey. Her almost blind allegiance to Garvey, evidenced when she led efforts to quell dissension and confronted Garvey’s rivals in Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Cuba, was considered her one great flaw by her friends and critics alike.<sup>120</sup> For her unquestioned loyalty and service, Garvey bestowed the title Lady Commander of the Sublime Order of the Nile in 1921. Davis as well as other UNIA officials had titles bestowed upon them, argues historian Edmund Cronon, as a “reward for past service to the race” that came with “added responsibility...”<sup>121</sup> While Cronon is not specific on what the added responsibilities may have included for Lady Davis, she continued to press forward in expanding the goals and aims of the UNIA.

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<sup>117</sup> *Negro World*, October 11, 1919.

<sup>118</sup> *Negro World*, July 27, 1919.

<sup>119</sup> *Negro World*, October 11, 1919.

<sup>120</sup> Letter from Davis to George Myers January 26, 1899 in the *George Meyer Papers* (Columbus: Ohio Historical Center Archives Library).

<sup>121</sup> Edmund Cronon, *Black Moses: the Story of Marcus and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p. 69.

Her ability to extend the aims of the organization to help meet the needs of the membership was not only found in her work as BCN organizer, but also in her accessibility to the membership. At the 1922 Convention, the women of the organization took the floor on a late August afternoon near the end of the session to request changes in the constitution. Victoria Turner, a delegate from St. Louis began:

We, the women of the UNIA and African Commercial League (ACL) know that no race can rise higher than its women. We need women in the important places of the organization to help refine and most public sentiment, realizing the colossal program of this great organization, and as we are determined to reclaim a homeland, Africa, we have resolved to submit the following recommendations:

1. That a woman be the head of the Black Cross Nurses and Motor Corps and have absolute control over those women that they shall not conflict with the (African) Legions.
2. That a woman be given more recognition by being placed on every committee, so that she may learn more of the salient workings of the various committees.
3. That more women be placed in the important offices and fieldwork of the Association.
4. That women be given initiative positions, so that they may formulate constructive plans to elevate our women.
5. That Lady Henrietta Vinton Davis be empowered to formulate plans with the sanction of the president general so that the Negro women, all over the world can function without restriction from the men.

The wording of the petition called attention to the realization that women were not often selected for positions of authority within the formal hierarchy. Lady Davis appeared to agree with the women and reinforced their declaration by reminding readers of the *Negro World* in 1925 that,

If our men hesitate then the women of the race must come forward, they must join the great army of Amazons and follow a Joan of Arc who is willing to be burned at the stake to save her country. Africa must be saved!<sup>122</sup>

The results of the petition have been debated by historians as Garvey's presence at the end of a nearly four and a half hour debate appeared to taint the original petition. When the amendments were out to a vote a watered down version of the petition was ratified. However, the discussion that ensued further revealed the intricacies of the lay membership and Lady Davis' role.

Some of the women delegates found the idea of females on the frontlines as organizers and recruiters troublesome. Influenced by the images and rhetoric of respectability and Victorian Motherhood espoused by club women of the era, not all of the delegates were in favor of women traveling, particularly those living in the South, if "they wanted to maintain the respect of the men."<sup>123</sup> Still others from the Midwest and the North felt that "women were as competent as men to be field representatives" and were not in favor of "women standing behind and pushing the men." They demanded that women "be placed in some executive positions" that would allow them to operate as field commissioners organizing women so that they could "put them to work."<sup>124</sup>

The differences in opinion seemed to stem from the realities of life in the various regions of the Negro world. Garvey maintained that the UNIA was the only organization with a woman on its executive council and "that if there was any difference made in the local divisions..." it was the "fault of individuals" and not the express intent of the UNIA.<sup>125</sup>

By the end of the debate the resolution was amended so that women would be "encouraged to formulate plans" and that "women while functioning without restriction" would

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<sup>122</sup> *Negro World*, October 17, 1925.

<sup>123</sup> Mrs. Robinson of New Orleans Afternoon Session "The Unity of Our Women" *Negro World*, August 30, 1922.

<sup>124</sup> Mrs. Willis of New York *Negro World*, August 30, 1922; Mrs. Morgan of Chicago, *Negro World*, August 30, 1922.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

not be used to “mean a severance of the men from the women in the work of the organization.”<sup>126</sup> The woman truly desired “to be at (the) side” of men working for the liberation of the race and in 1924 found yet another way to ensure that they had a space to do so.<sup>127</sup> Three days before the close of the August 1924 UNIA Convention, Maymie DeMena, Davis’ protégé, begged the ear of the Convention on behalf of the women “who possess moral integrity, ability and a burning desire to work” for the “good of the UNIA and ACL.” She asked for the following

Be it resolved that:

- (a) The ladies of the royal court of Ethiopia becoming international auxiliary of the UNIA can be (encroached) as such in its constitution.
- (b) Branches of the ladies of the royal court of Ethiopia, to be known as the daughters of Ethiopia, be established in each division.
- (c) That the president general and high executive Council recommended a continuous expansion of the work heretofore done by the ladies of the royal court of Ethiopia. Along the lines formally pursue and along such lines as they making useful to the body at large.<sup>128</sup>

After some discussion the motion was seconded, and it was decided that Lady Davis would serve as chairman of a gender inclusive committee to draft the rules and regulations to govern the newly encumbered auxiliary.<sup>129</sup>

In both 1922 and 1924 the women waited until the near close of the convention to present their grievances and stratagems for resolving them. The timing of their action was a tactical measure and reveals the savvy of the lay membership. In the first instance Garvey was not on the Convention floor at the start of the Mrs. Turner’s pronouncement, and in the second instance Garvey’s trials dominated the convention and enabled the women to assert themselves without

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Mrs Hall of Chicago, *Negro World*, September 6, 1924.

<sup>128</sup> *Negro World*, September 6, 1924.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

much opposition. Garvey was very aware of the membership's displeasure with him and attempted to assuage their concerns. More significantly and heretofore never discussed, these exchanges speak of the need for sanctioning of the women by Lady Davis. In both 'coups,' the women were sure to include her at the helm in their assertions for written defined power within the organization. Her work and the work of others, already exemplified their power base as efficient women. Still the women sought explicit recognition of their many contributions to the organization. The examination of Lady Davis' life only begins to unravel the intricacies of that work.

The convention delegates also used Davis to assuage Marcus Garvey. While the President General fell out of favor with various cadres of the membership at different points during Davis' twelve-year tenure, their affinity for her, while not always constant, remained in tact. Lady Davis was just as much Garvey's emissary to the masses as she was theirs to him. At times, she became conflicted in her dual role as her efforts on behalf of the membership at times threatened to encroach upon her loyalty to Garvey. Although Garvey's race pride and persistence had endeared him to Davis, her ultimate allegiance was to the UNIA and its programs, and this would lead to her departure from Garvey's inner circle by 1931.

In 1923 Henrietta Vinton Davis served as witness for the defense in the trial of Marcus Garvey, Ely Garcia, George Tobias and Orlando M. Thompson for mail fraud.<sup>130</sup> She also presented herself as an expert witness before the court in Belize in the estate case of Isaiah Mortar. Her defense of the UNIA led to her being named in a law suit filed by former UNIA Potentate George O. Marke against the association's land holdings in Kingston, Jamaica to

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<sup>130</sup> Marcus Garvey \_v.\_ United States, no. 8317, Court of Appeals, 2d Circuit, 2 February 1925.

recover unpaid salaries.<sup>131</sup> In each legal proceeding, Lady Davis faced the challenge of serving the organization first or defending Garvey. Her decision was telling.

During Garvey's trial, Lady Davis, presented a less than favorable picture of the man she compared to Fredrick Douglas and Chief Justice Dawson of the Liberian Supreme Court.<sup>132</sup> Lady Davis' curt responses that amount to a series of "I don't know" and "I can not recall" resulted in her becoming a "...far better witness for the prosecution than for the defense."<sup>133</sup> While Garvey argued that the faults Davis revealed about him, proved that "(he) did not fix up any testimony" and that Davis merely "told what she knew."<sup>134</sup> Nevertheless, her testimony lacked the fire and enthusiasm which she exuded before audiences at UNIA meetings and rallies, where she encouraged patrons to "Stand by the UNIA! Stand by Marcus Garvey!" and warning nay-sayers to "Beware ye stumbling blocks, for Marcus Garvey is coming!"<sup>135</sup>

By the time of her testimony in June 1923, Davis had already become aware of her salary suspension by Garvey.<sup>136</sup> As the organization struggled to stay solvent, Garvey attempted to assuage criticisms from the lay membership by suspending the salaries of all officers. This was a tactic he had also employed at the August 1922 Convention when he tendered his resignation, and Lady Davis and others followed suit. Lady Davis was subsequently re-elected to office (as was Garvey) after a landslide victory over Buffalo, New York BCN organizer Lillian Wells.<sup>137</sup> It appears that Lady Davis was not fazed by the 1922 ordeal as she continued to work feverishly for the UNIA and continued to encourage African-Americans to seize upon the "...this opportunity of showing to the world our ability..." as "(i)t will never come back to us again."

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<sup>131</sup> Marke, GO vs. UNIA, Inc. Kingston, Jamaica August 13, 1929.

<sup>132</sup> *Negro World*, April 21, 1928; *Negro World*, September 6, 1924

<sup>133</sup> *Kansas City Call*, June 22, 1923.

<sup>134</sup> "Closing Address to the Jury by Marcus Garvey" *Negro World*, June 23, 1923; Reprinted in *Philosophy and Opinions* ed. Amy Jacques Garvey vol. 2: 182-216.

<sup>135</sup> *Negro World*, February 4, 1922; DJ-FBI, file 61 ---746. TD.

<sup>136</sup> *Negro World*, August 26, 1922.

<sup>137</sup> *Negro World*, September 2, 1922.

She implored the throngs gathered in Brooklyn, New York, St. Louis Missouri and Chattanooga Tennessee to “...resolve to fight and die for the great principles of ...” the UNIA.<sup>138</sup> She herself did no less.

The loss of “salary” in 1923 may have affected her testimony as monies she received over time from the UNIA add up to a paltry sum. In 1922 the salary for the Fourth Assistant President General was set at \$2,000, which, according to historian and Garvey chronicler Robert Hill, the membership believed to be insufficient. Records indicate that in the course of twelve years Davis received far less salary than the calculated \$16,000 to which she was entitled to.<sup>139</sup> In fact, Lady Davis received only \$275 in salary for 19 weeks of work as of March 29, 1926, another \$230 while sailing on the maiden voyage of the SS Goethals and yet another paid \$20 while on another organizing trip to British Honduras.<sup>140</sup> How Lady Davis managed her daily expenses is unclear. That she was of a middle-class background implies that she may have had access to family monies to live off. On one of the poorly financed trips to the Caribbean, Lady Davis met Isaiah Mortar of Belize and signed the charter establishing the UNIA Branch in then British Honduras. Her involvement in this matter led to her testimony during his estate hearing and in part also led to her severing ties with Garvey.

Isaiah Mortar was described by Garvey as “a cool, calculating type, a man unmoved by passing sentiment or wild emotion” that bequeathed “the bulk of his estate to the Universal Negro Improvement Association.”<sup>141</sup> The British government disagreed with this characterization, and the colonial island government contested the provisions of Mr. Mortar’s

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<sup>138</sup> *Negro World*, January 24, 1922; *Chattanooga Times*, August 8, 1927

<sup>139</sup> In her testimony at the Mortar trial Davis states that the convention voted her a salary of \$6,000.00. This amount was considerably higher than the salaries voted for men in the hierarchy, including Garvey. It was decided that there would be a salary scale increase for all officials and if Davis were granted the pay proposed by the lay membership the scale would become disproportionately skewed.

<sup>140</sup> *Negro World*, March 29, 1926; *Negro World*, April 10, 1924; Mortar Case Exhibit D.

<sup>141</sup> *Negro World*, August 9, 1924.

will because Garvey and the UNIA were considered disruptive elements on the island. For her part, Davis's testimony, much like her testimony at Garvey's trial, served to protect the UNIA, spared her any personal liability, and further revealed the nature of her relationship with Garvey.

Under cross examination, Lady Davis declared "I do not subscribe to all the opinions of Marcus Garvey" and that his opinions did not reflect the opinions of "members of the UNIA as published."<sup>142</sup> Davis may have been attempting to rescue the UNIA from the scandals that plagued the organization after Garvey's trial and she may have been attempting to remove the "Negro Agitator" from the minds of the court officials who would decide whether or not a half million dollar plot of land would be given over to the UNIA. Whatever her motives, there is no written record of any backlash from Garvey or his inner circle for her statements. That the bequest would have remedied many of the organization's financial problems and provided the means to accomplishing many of the aims of the UNIA appears to have weighed heavily on Davis. By 1926 the UNIA had already begun to transcend Garvey, the man and the myth, and Davis' comments merely voiced that shift.

In both trials Lady Davis gave testimony on the mission of the UNIA, her relationship with Marcus Garvey, and monies spent and collected. Davis presented a most specific description of her interactions with the UNIA and Marcus Garvey as separate and distinct relationships. In the case of *George O. Marke vs. The Universal Negro Improvement Association*, she did not have the same opportunities. In Marke's suit for back pay, Davis was never called as a witness. By the time the dust cleared, only Garvey and Davis remained "...to reimburse the people" and "...to carry on the work of the organization..."<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> *Negro World*, April 10, 1926.

<sup>143</sup> *Negro World*, August 23, 1924.

To ensure that the work continued, Lady Davis invested time in the talents of others. To that end, she became mentor to Maymie Leona Turpeau De Mena of Nicaragua, who would serve as Assistant International Organizer of the UNIA in 1926, Fourth Assistant President General in 1927, and Officer in Charge of the American Field in 1930. Throughout her time with the organization, which lasted until her death in 1953, De Mena served as a translator on tours of the Spanish speaking Caribbean, maintained a close correspondence with Garvey while he was in prison writing to him from places as far apart as Cincinnati, Ohio and Mobile, Alabama.<sup>144</sup> De Mena visited Garvey while he was imprisoned at the Atlanta Penitentiary and was credited with recruiting members as well as invigorating the lay membership with a cadre of new and younger persons. Her travels, just like those of Davis, came under close scrutiny by the United States and British Colonial governments. While Davis, according to British Military Reports boasted that she "...had some very influential friends in Washington who aided..." her in obtaining a passport when the U.S. government had declined to give her one, De Mena had to be a little more clever.<sup>145</sup>

Historian Robert Hill documented the travels of Maymie De Mena in and out of the United States and noticed that on her passports, her nationality changed over time. At times she presented herself as white of Spanish descent, at others as simply a West Indian on her British passport.<sup>146</sup> This was done for political expediency and not because Madame De Mena, as she became known for her "distinguished, selfless..." commitment to the UNIA, had any misgivings about her identity or alliances.<sup>147</sup> In fact, her commitment to the organization can be measured along the same lines as that of Davis, as both women selected husbands who they believed

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<sup>144</sup> Hill, *Marcus Garvey and the UNIA Papers*, v. 6. p. 116.

<sup>145</sup> DNA, RG 165, file 10218-362-16. TD, Recipient's Copy.

<sup>146</sup> Hill, v. 6, pp. 117-118.

<sup>147</sup> Winston James  *Holding Aloft The Banner of Ethiopia*  (London; New York: Verso, 1999), p. 196.

shared their love of race progress and were willing to work for it, both women separated from their husbands when the conditions of the relationship would no longer support their work, and both women invoked a militant persona in the promotion of the UNIA program and Garvey.

As Davis got older she developed health concerns that sometimes limited her ability to travel as she once did. In keeping with her commitment to fostering the progress of the race, she had begun to groom Maymie De Mena to assist when she was not physically able. Madame De Mena's place next to "The Negro Joan of Arc," was made apparent for all to see during the 1929 UNIA of the World Inc, August Convention. Madame De Mena led the parade on "...a white charger with drawn sword," through Edelweiss Park in Kingston, Jamaica before a crowd of spectators said to only rival "the exhibition marking the celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897."<sup>148</sup> A new Queen of sorts was crowned that day, as the display solidified De Mena's place in the UNIA. Davis and De Mena differed in that De Mena was the mother of one daughter.<sup>149</sup> She managed to travel the world on behalf of the UNIA with a teenager in tow. In fact her daughter Bertina, was one of the first graduates of the UNIA's Liberty University (an school for students of all ages) in Virginia.<sup>150</sup> Here the UNIA efficient womanhood truly comes full circle as Bertina extended the activist work of her mother and the UNIA women throughout her life.

When Henrietta Vinton Davis and the other original UNIA officials took their oath of office in 1919 they solemnly swore,

... in pledge before Almighty God and this convention here assembled that our will, to the best of my ability and was true devotion, served the UNIA and the Negro peoples of the world. The interest of this association shall in all my public duties come first to me, and, should I fail his course, may the almighty architect fail me in the course of life being

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<sup>148</sup> Hill, v. 7, p. 23.

<sup>149</sup> Hill, v. 6, p. 118.

<sup>150</sup> Barbara Bair "Renegotiating Liberty", p. 222.

in full possession of my senses and knowing full well the penalty of treachery, disloyalty and deceit,...<sup>151</sup>

She took these words literally and adhered to them strictly. As Fourth president General she filled the role of UNIA defender, protector and Marcus Garvey advocate. Her endeavors, although not always appreciated as previously noted, garnered her much respect and adulation from the UNIA hierarchy, Garvey's wives, the lay membership and for the most part, from Garvey himself. This adulation, however, was not sufficient to keep her loyal to the reconstituted UNIA Garvey established in 1929.

In 1930 Davis made one last attempt to re-unite the membership of the UNIA, when she met with William Ware, President of the Cincinnati Division and Garvey's legal nemesis at that time. The organization remained embroiled in legal proceedings with the Belizean courts over the estate of Isaiah Mortar that would not be favorably resolved until 1939, when the American-based UNIA was given the rights to the land by the British Supreme Court.<sup>152</sup> At the time, the UNIA, headquartered in New York, was the recognized defendant in the case against the colonial government which attempted to block their acquisition of the land. When Garvey maintained that the headquarters of the organization was wherever he resided, Davis had some choices to make. As late as November 1930, she was listed as Secretary General under Garvey in a letter to His Imperial Majesty Haille Selassie. She also used her name to assist Garvey in purchasing a printing press in Jamaica to start the short lived *Black Man Magazine*. Lady Davis ended her friendship and affiliation with Marcus Garvey in August 1931 over his disloyalty to her. Davis' departure was met with silence by Garvey.

The editor of the *Negro World* (published by a faction still loyal to Garvey) ran an editorial on August 15, 1931 and September, 19, 1931 asking Garvey to select new leadership as

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<sup>151</sup> *Negro World*, September 9, 1922.

<sup>152</sup> Hill, *Life and Lessons*, p. 384.

the “feminine hands” at the helm were a bit too delicate to tussle with the various attacks from within and without. Maymie De Mena, Garvey’s “Officer in Charge of the American Field,” became enraged by this. She was disappointed with Davis for visiting with William Ware as she found it gave an appearance of disloyalty to Garvey. Davis’ silence in response to the *Negro World* article only strained things further between the two. As she had proven in the past, Davis was ultimately most loyal to the UNIA itself. On December 21, 1931 William Ware wrote to the U.S. government stating that “...Lady Henrietta Vinton Davis” is one of two “national officers of the American Corporation” who can “verify our statements...”<sup>153</sup> She remained loyal to the UNIA until her death on November 23, 1941.

Lady Davis outlived Marcus Garvey by eighteen months. Unfortunately, while her UNIA peers had declared that “...when the history of this giant movement” is written, her name would be “...emblazoned in letters of gold as the lady, the stateswoman and the diplomat” the bullion has yet to be melted.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> DNA, RG 59, File 811.108G191/61.

<sup>154</sup> *Negro World*, August 20, 1921.

CHAPTER 4  
MARCHING FORWARD: THE UNIVERSAL AFRICAN BLACK CROSS NURSES

**Ready for Service**

The Black Cross Nurses of the Universal Negro Improvement Association was formally chartered in 1921 as a collective of auxiliaries for the purposes of providing education, medical aid and community service. No gender requirements were stated for membership or participation. According to historian Rosalyn Terborg-Penn organizations like the Black Cross Nurses (BCN) auxiliary of the Universal Negro Improvement Association served to extend the ongoing development of a variety of survival strategies that encouraged self-help through both fictive kin and creative networks among African-American women in their continuous struggle for equality and social justice.<sup>1</sup> Through participation in the BCN auxiliaries, historian Barbara Bair found that UNIA women instituted necessary public health services where few existed.<sup>2</sup> In so doing they served as both literal and symbolic combatants against the malevolence of de jure and de facto racism. They provided services that aided in decreasing infant mortality, promoted proper sanitation, and increased both formal and informal educational opportunities for African-American women. As figurative combatants they stood ready to "...bring succor to male soldiers on the future battlefields in Africa, in the struggle to free Africa from colonial rule."<sup>3</sup> While on the surface this would appear to be among the list of thankless jobs African-American women were already involved in, this kind of service was more than its own reward in the UNIA.

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<sup>1</sup> Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "African Feminism: A Theoretical Approach to the History of Women in the African Diaspora" in *Women in Africa and the African Diaspora: A Reader* Second Edition eds. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn and Andrea Benton Rushing (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1996), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Bair, "Renegotiating Liberty: Garveyism Women, and Grassroots Organizing in Virginia" in *Women of the American South: A Multicultural Reader* ed. Christie Anne Farnham (New York: New York University Press, 1997), p. 226.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

As a result of their participation and commitment to the BCN, African-American women who stood to gain a place in the “Ladies of the Royal Court of Ethiopia,” as happened to one of the leading BCN organizers, Isabella Lawrence, was awarded the title of “Lady of the Distinguished Service Order of Ethiopia” for her “Faithful and Distinguished Service to the Negro Race.”<sup>4</sup> Service in the BCN, therefore, increased opportunities to serve the race, publicly signaled a commitment to the UNIA program, and indicated a deliberate affront to social mores that belittled the work of African-American women.

This chapter examines how both the formally and informally trained nurses of the Black Cross Nurses auxiliaries, enhanced the status and value of the work of Diaspora women. Early analysis of the BCN depicted the auxiliary as homogenous and its presence as a symbolic reflection of “a much-needed uplift in status and pay for all engaged in housework and nursing” as “(f)ew were trained nurses.”<sup>5</sup> The auxiliary was formed in part due to the limited access of African-American women to the few nursing schools available in the United States. The chapter will also discuss the rather reductive, homogenizing treatment of the BCN throughout the United States and the English-speaking Caribbean as formally and informally trained nurses and activists mobilized for the betterment of the human condition. Too often, the BCN of New York City is mistakenly taken as the only BCN auxiliary, when in actuality each UNIA Division had a BCN of its own. A vast majority of the women who participated in the auxiliary invisible have gone unnoticed as a result.

Although the BCN appears throughout the historiography on Garvey and the UNIA, been mention is largely limited to accounts of the auxiliary’s participation in parades and social gatherings. A call for a study of the BCN was first explicitly made by historian Winston James

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<sup>4</sup> *Negro World*, August 30, 1924; Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth Century America* (London and New York: Verso, 1998), p. 98.

<sup>5</sup> Theodore Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (California: Ramparts Press, 1976), p. 102.

in *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth Century America*. In stressing the importance of women to the success and extension of the UNIA, he noted “We still have much to learn about the operation of all-female auxiliaries like the Black Cross Nurses and the Universal Motor Corps, which had memberships that must have run into tens of thousands in the United States alone.”<sup>6</sup>

With the exception of Leah Michelle Seabrook’s unpublished Masters thesis “Service in Green and White: The Activity and Symbolism of the Universal African Black Cross Nurses” and Anne Macpherson’s article, “Colonial Matriarchs: Garveyism, Maternalism, and Belize’s Black Cross Nurses, 1920-1952,” little has been written about the BCN within the broader context of African-American women’s activism or within the history of nursing and nurse education in the United States or the Caribbean.<sup>7</sup>

Through careful examination of the *Negro World*, Seabrook wrote

more important than their function as healthcare providers, the Black Cross Nurses occupied a certain space that ignites not only the ever changing memory of the Garvey Movement, but, in their time served to evoke a tailored reaction to their honor, professionalism, and commitment to duty.<sup>8</sup>

Seabrook’s assertion that the BCN influence extended beyond their function as healthcare providers in the United States underscores the arguments of Mary Gambrell Rolinson in *The Universal Negro Improvement Association In the Rural South 1920-1927* and Jahi Issa’s unpublished dissertation “The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Louisiana: Creating a provisional government in exile.” Both historians depict the BCN as physical and spiritual

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<sup>6</sup> Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, (London and New York: Verso, 1998), p. 137.

<sup>7</sup> Leah Michelle Seabrook, “Service in Green and White: The Activity and Symbolism of the Universal African Black Cross Nurses,” (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of California Irvine, 2006); Macpherson, Anne. “Colonial Matriarchs: Garveyism, Maternalism and Belize’s Black Cross Nurses, 1920-1952” *Gender and History* 15:3 Nov. 2003, pp. 507-527.

<sup>8</sup> Seabrook, “Service in Green and White”, p. 2.

caregivers in rural and urban communities alike.<sup>9</sup> It is precisely to fulfill the role of caregiver, according to the BCN charter, that the auxiliary was established. However, as with many of the UNIA programs and edicts, there was always room for local improvisations to meet immediate needs. While this flexibility was one of the strengths of the organization, it also left the UNIA open to dissent and confusion over specific goals and appropriate activities.

In her focus on the BCN of Belize, Anne Macpherson found that the “commitment to duty” of the BCN in colonial Belize, included acting as agents of the British Empire.<sup>10</sup> The membership in Belize consisted of middle-class Creoles who “opposed autonomous working class mobilization for labor rights, universal suffrage and national independence...”<sup>11</sup> This contrasts sharply with the independence exemplified by the New Orleans BCN, for example, which established a nurse training program, a home for the aged and an adult night school.<sup>12</sup> These depictions also move far beyond early assertions that the BCN was merely a vehicle for Garvey’s race pride pageantry, comprising of women who were simply continuous parade marchers dressed to impress for the purpose of recruiting others and raising monies for various UNIA causes.<sup>13</sup>

By examining the “Division News” sections, the names of women in the auxiliaries, their rank, and positions become clear. This information does not appear in the chronicle of the UNIA, *The Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, or in any of the works on Garvey or the UNIA. While Mary Rolinson’s *Grassroots Garveyism* does provide the names of female

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<sup>9</sup> Mary Gambrell Rolinson *The Garvey Movement in the Rural South, 1920-1927* (North Carolina: UNC Press, 2007), pp. 122, 183; Jahi U. Issa “The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Louisiana: Creating a Provisional Government in Exile” (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Howard University, 2005), pp. 177-181.

<sup>10</sup> Anne Macpherson, “Colonial Matriarchs: Garveyism, Maternalism and Belize’s Black Cross Nurses, 1920-1952” *Gender and History* 15:3 Nov. 2003, p.507-508.

<sup>11</sup> Macpherson, “Colonial Matriarchs”, p. 508.

<sup>12</sup> Issa, pp.178-180.

<sup>13</sup> The BCN are given their first historical consideration by Theodore Vincent in *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (California: Ramparts Press, 1976).

members, she limits her consideration to lady presidents and secretaries in the rural South and does not examine the Black Cross Nurses as a part of her study.<sup>14</sup> Included in the “Division News” are narratives of the BCN corps that have gone unrecognized by historians and biographers of the movement.

The “Division News” reveals not only the service activities of the BCN, but also its fund raising activities and use of plays to promote health and nationalist education. Although historian Tony Martin notes that the BCN put on plays, there has been very little discussion of the content or purposes of their performances.<sup>15</sup> Performance for the BCN was not limited to the stage as the “Division News” section reveals.<sup>16</sup>

### **Black Women & the History of Nursing in Brief**

Although African-American women had been engaged in caring for the sick, infirm, newly born and nearly dead since their arrival in the New World in 1619, no formal training school for nurses of any creed or color was established in the United States until after the Civil War. The American Medical Association (AMA) determined in 1869 that a nurse should be a “woman who possessed so many positive traits that she was virtually perfect.” Her perfection was to be evidenced by her ability to endure sleepless nights, to exercise Biblical patience, to practice humility at every turn, to be self sacrificing, and to demonstrate that she was literate. Women between the ages of 22 and 35 were deemed best suited to fit this mold. Additionally, once trained, nurses were required to detect the nature of an illness based on the patient’s physical demeanor and to be astute in the application of “leeches, blisters, bandages and other

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<sup>14</sup> Appendix D Named Black Cross Nurses.

<sup>15</sup> Martin, pp. 25 & 43.

<sup>16</sup> For the purposes of this discussion, all units within a state will be discussed together.

dressings.” Last but not least, the committee required that all nurses be “proficient in making up beds, changing sheets, and handling patients exhausted by disease and injury.”<sup>17</sup>

The AMA made its recommendations as a result of the deplorable conditions soldiers and volunteer nurses of the Civil War faced due to a lack of trained nurses, scarcity of medical supplies, and the absence of proper hospitals for their care. This call for the formalization of the nursing profession was mirrored in Great Britain when the Crimean War found Florence Nightingale and thirty-eight women volunteers tending to thousands of soldiers on foreign soil.<sup>18</sup> In both cases African-American and white women voluntarily went to the battlefields to assist. The fissure between the two groups of women began as treatment facilities, like regiments, were segregated and, as was exemplified by the experience of Mary Grant Seacole, assistance from African-American women as nurses was not always welcomed.

Mrs. Seacole was known in her native Jamaica as “the Doctress” for her benevolent care of the sick through the use of homeopathic remedies at her rooming house in Kingston as early as the 1830s. With no formal training, as none existed at the time, she also served in Panama and Cuba during the cholera and yellow fever epidemics and contracted yellow fever herself.<sup>19</sup> Her care to her patients was well noted by the soldiers and officers of the crown as diligent and astute. In 1854, when Mrs. Seacole learned that regiments she was acquainted with in Jamaica had been sent to the Crimea, she wrote to the British government requesting permission to join Florence Nightingale there. It was reported that yellow fever claimed more lives than bullets at the start of the war, and Mrs. Seacole felt she was well equipped to assist based on her

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<sup>17</sup> “Report of the Committee for the Training of Nurses,” *Transactions of the American Medical Association* 20 (1869), pp. 161-173.

<sup>18</sup> Mary Elizabeth Carnegie, *The Path We Tread: Blacks in Nursing 1854-1984* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1986), p. 2; Stephanie Shaw, *What A Woman Ought To Be and Do: Black Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 145-148.

<sup>19</sup> Mary Seacole, *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* (London: J. Blackwood, 1857), pp. 59-90.

experience. Her request was denied, but Mrs. Seacole travelled to the battlefield at her own expense.<sup>20</sup> Although “The Lady with the Lamp,” Florence Nightingale, held out no light for her and, according to Mrs. Seacole was less than hospitable, after attending to men at the camps in the day, Mrs. Seacole found herself working “... side by side with Miss Nightingale” at formal British hospitals.<sup>21</sup> Mrs. Seacole’s was given a medal by the British government for her service.

Mrs. Seacole’s voluntary service as a nurse on the battlefield was paralleled by the work of Sojourner Truth, Harriett Tubman and Susie King Taylor during the Civil War. All three of these women received accolades for their work during the war, and Mrs. Tubman was awarded a life pension of \$20 a month, \$8 more than that of white nurses, for her service.<sup>22</sup> In fact, 181 African-American women and men served as volunteer nurses during the Civil War at hospitals throughout both the North and the South.<sup>23</sup> This commitment was repeated during the Spanish American War of 1898 where another informally trained nurse served to open the door for African-American women in their profession.<sup>24</sup>

On July 13, 1889, Namahyoke Sockum Curtis, wife of Dr. Austin M. Curtis, surgeon-in-chief at Freedman’s Hospital in Washington D. C., was called upon by the War Department to recruit African-Americans to work as nurses.<sup>25</sup> Mrs. Curtis, who was immune to yellow fever, was called into service by the Surgeon General of the Army to New Orleans, Alabama and Florida. She registered 32 immune African-Americans to work as nurses and by the war’s end a

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<sup>20</sup> Seacole, pp. 124-134.

<sup>21</sup> Carnegie, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Carnegie, p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> Colored Nurses-Contract Nurses, 1863-1864 National Archives, Record Group 94, Entry 51.

<sup>24</sup> Linda C Andrist, Patrice K Nicholas & Karen Wolf, *A History of Nursing Ideas* (Sudbury, Mass.: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2006), p. 58.

<sup>25</sup> Carnegie, pp. 12- 13; Linda C Andrist, Patrice K Nicholas & Karen Wolf, *A History of Nursing Ideas* (Sudbury, Mass. : Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2006), p. 58.

total of 80 women African-American women had served in that capacity.<sup>26</sup> She volunteered her services in 1900 and worked with Clara Barton, head of the American Red Cross, during a major flood of Galveston, Texas and was commissioned by Secretary of War William Taft during the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.<sup>27</sup> Mrs. Namahyoke Sockum Curtis' remains were laid to rest in the Arlington National Cemetery on November 25, 1935 in recognition of her service as a nurse. Neither Mrs. Seacole nor Mrs. Curtis was formally trained as nurses; yet their service as such merited distinctions of honor from the men they assisted and the governments they served.<sup>28</sup>

Like Mrs. Seacole and Mrs. Curtis, many who served as nurses during times of war brought with them an understanding of the medicinal uses of various flora and fauna, life experience, and great care and skill in the care of soldiers and other wounded victims. Mrs. Seacole claimed that these skills were mainly passed down from family members and practiced from memory.<sup>29</sup> Many of the practices she linked to her African ancestry. Her work as a health care provider was in the tradition of Diasporic slave women who “traditionally provided primary health care services” in their communities in the form of “...number of home remedies for survival.”<sup>30</sup> These practices were passed on through word of mouth and served as the foundation for many of Mrs. Seacole's remedies. Similar traditions, as demonstrated in the *Works Progress Administration Papers* of the 1930s, existed in the United States.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> J Stimson et al, *History and Manual of the Army Nurse Corps* (Pennsylvania: Carlisle Barracks Medical Field Service School) 1937.

<sup>27</sup> Carnegie, p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Carnegie, p. 12; Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Women in White: Racial Conflict and Cooperation in the Nursing Profession 1890-1950* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 28. While refers to Curtis as a nurse, there is no known documentation that supports the belief she had any formal training. It is more likely that as wife and helpmate to her husband she gained medical knowledge that qualified her to act in the capacity without having a diploma.

<sup>29</sup> Seacole, pp. 5-9.

<sup>30</sup> Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, “African Feminism” *Women in Africa and the Diaspora: A Reader* ed. Rosalyn-Terborg-Penn and Andrea Benton Rushing (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1996), pp.15-16.

<sup>31</sup> The practice of folk healing was prevalent throughout the Caribbean and North America amongst former slaves and their descendents. Evidence of this tradition can be found in the Works Project Administration Slave Narratives Project, Georgia Narratives, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division,

Following the AMA's decree the first nursing schools in America appeared in 1873 in Massachusetts, New York and Connecticut. By 1923, there were over 1,700 such schools in America which had graduated 17,000 nurses by 1925. Of the 17,000 very few were African-American as Northern nursing schools imposed a quota system that permitted only one African-American woman and one Jew to be admitted per year.<sup>32</sup> In the South, the Supreme Court's 1896 decision Plessey v. Ferguson legitimated the de facto practice of segregated public facilities for African Americans and whites. Despite limited access, Mary Eliza Mahoney graduated from the New England Hospital for Women and Children in Boston in 1879 with a diploma, although by 1899 only five other African-American women had been able to join her.<sup>33</sup> This figure represents meager progress. However it also indicates the degrees of resistance to African-Americans in professional roles and dramatically underscores how under-served the four million African-Americans living in the United States at the time.<sup>34</sup>

Concerns over hygiene and sanitation plagued the African-American community as evidenced by high infant mortality and morbidity rates. An early response to the healthcare needs of African-Americans occurred when in the Freedmen's Bureau attempted between 1866 and 1890 to establish 50 makeshift hospitals. By 1900 only one of these institutions remained in

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<http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/044/266262.gif>; Louise Oliphant, "Work, Play, Food, clothing, Marriage etc.," Compilation Richmond County Ex-Slave Interviews, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Augusta, Georgia Works Project Administration Slave Narratives Project, Georgia Narratives, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, <http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/044/359355.gif>; "Mistreatment of Slaves," Library of Congress, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, <http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/044/295291.gif>; "Folk Remedies and Superstitions," Compilation Folklore Interviews – Richmond County, Georgia, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, <http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/044/286282.gif>; <http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/044/295284.gif>; <http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/044/295285.gif>; <http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/044/295286.gif>; M.B. Stonestreet, interview with Adeline Willis, vol. 4, part 4, WPA Slave Narrative Project, WPA Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, <http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/044/286282.gif>; Amanda McDaniel, interviewed by Edwin Driskell, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Georgia Narratives, <http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mesn/043/074071.tif>.

<sup>32</sup> Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Women in White: Racial Conflict and Cooperation in the Nursing Profession 1890-1950* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> Hine, p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> The 1890s Census was destroyed in a fire in the early 1920s. Accurate nurse to patient ratios are thus unavailable.

the nation's capital.<sup>35</sup> To fill the gap, the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary (later Spelman College) with the assistance of John D. Rockefeller, established a department of nursing in 1886. The program devoted only one year of a student's four-year academic study to the field of nursing. Due to financial concerns the program was closed on December 15, 1927.

Other nursing programs for African-Americans were instituted in Chicago, Hampton, VA Tuskegee, Alabama, Washington, D.C., Raleigh N.C., New Orleans, Louisiana, Nashville, Tennessee, Durham, North Carolina and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Of these programs, five were affiliated with schools and the remainder with hospitals. The number of schools and hospitals designated for African-Americans increased exponentially by the mid-1920s, and 1928 the number of African-American women with a nursing diploma rose to 2,238.<sup>36</sup>

There was a desperate need for African-American nurses throughout the United States. In the South, where Jim Crow ensured limited access to education and healthcare, segregated and unequal facilities and care were norms. The need for nurses in the community was compounded by the scarcity of financial resources to build medical facilities and the distance rural residents had to travel to get to existing institutions. One of the ways African-Americans addressed the problem was through the continued practice of homeopathy and lay healing. As the possibility of becoming a formally educated practitioner presented itself through training schools like The Dixie Hospital Training School in Hampton, VA or the Tuskegee Institute nurse training course, the desire to belong to the cadre of formally trained women in white grew exponentially. The potential for formal training while presenting prospects for the creation of healthcare facilities also served to encourage the extension of community-based lay practices in anticipation of gaining formalized training. As a result, African-Americans refined and perpetuated the

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<sup>35</sup>Hine, *Black Women In White*, pp.8-13.

<sup>36</sup>Hine, p. 9.

homeopathic tradition, creating a distinctive system of lay healthcare as they continued to seek access to modern systems.

Participation in the Universal African Black Cross Nurses satisfied that need in part and provided recognition for the work many of these women were already engaged in despite a lack of formal training. According to Martin Summers, the auxiliary “represented a tradition of black women’s community work [while providing UNIA] ...women the space in which to assert their capacity as co-equals in community and nationalist development.”<sup>37</sup> As a result, many UNIA women were afforded new opportunities. Amy Jacques found the BCN to be just one of the ways UNIA women could “participate effectively in guiding the destiny of the nation and race.”<sup>38</sup>

### **Credit for What We Do: The Black Cross Nurses**

Although the BCN existed in many UNIA Divisions prior to its formal chartering in 1921, they operated as a service corps in times of need. With its 1921 formal incorporation the auxiliaries began to define efforts more clearly and specify requirements for membership. These efforts, when taken together, exhibited one form of participation in the efficient womanhood of the UNIA and reflected the combined efforts of African-American doctors, nurses, and lay practitioners to assist in providing quality healthcare and healthcare education. Within the auxiliary, careful instruction was provided to each member, in most cases by either a trained nurse or doctor. At the end of courses that lasted from six months to a year, a graduation ceremony was held and diploma issued prior to the donning of either the all-white uniform worn in public events or the green and white uniform worn while at work, which each member had to purchase personally. This practice was similar to requirements of other nursing programs that

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<sup>37</sup> Summers, p.138.

<sup>38</sup> Amy Jacques Garvey, “Women as Leaders, Nationally and Racially,” transcript, 24 October 1925, Box 5, Fol. 9, MGMC.

asked students for a deposit at the start of the course. This was done as a means of ensuring the students' commitment and to assist in offsetting the costs of those who would be sent home prior to completion.<sup>39</sup>

When the BCN from both northern and southern states met at the 1921 UNIA convention, they had one definitive purpose. They sought to bring uniformity to the organization. Prior to 1921, the donning of specific dress was not prevalent nor was there unilateral dissemination of healthcare information. While some UNIA Divisions stressed the importance of proper pre-natal and early childhood care, they often neglected to stress care of the women's body after birth or the necessity of male participation in the care of both the women and the child. After 1921, all BCN auxiliaries were equipped by Mrs. Isabella Lawrence with written pamphlets that addressed these matters and a wide range of healthcare topics including birth control, malnutrition in teens and adults to name a few. This formalized professional information resulted in stricter regulation and created a sense of sisterhood and solidarity among the BCN. This consistency and strict discipline are reminiscent of the stratagems espoused by Florence Nightingale, the AMA and the American Red Cross. In this way, with some exceptions, this international organization of black nurses was very much in line with the prescriptive design for nurses of their day. Not only did they follow many of the same regulations, they also wore, for public demonstrations similar white uniforms.

The 1921 meeting of BCN nurses produced "The Universal African Black Cross Nurses' Rules and Regulations."<sup>40</sup> This document stipulated requirements for membership, administrative duties at the local and central level, the collection and use of revenues, uniforms and the wearing of emblems. This document also revealed a cadre of women who contrasted

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<sup>39</sup> Hine, *Black Women in White*, pp. 49-62.

<sup>40</sup> See Appendix B.

sharply with the image put forth by Bureau of Investigations agent Frank C. Higgins: “.... a squad of opulent Black Cross Nurses, most of whom looked as if they had just stepped out of the familiar ‘Aunt Jemima Pancake’ poster.”<sup>41</sup>

This uniformity of dress in the BCN auxiliaries was the cause, to a large degree, of their individual anonymity in the historiography of the UNIA. For example, many newspaper references to the auxiliary fail to refer to the BCN as individual units that belong to respective divisions. Each UNIA division was called upon to have its own Black Cross Nurses auxiliary. To ensure that each division understood the importance and necessity of the auxiliary, Henrietta Vinton Davis, early in her association with the UNIA, was assigned the task of visiting branches within various state divisions to help establish their BCN units.

As organizer and champion of the BCN, she campaigned to increase the numbers of BCN units throughout the world. Armed with pamphlets and instructions from the international president of the BCN Belizean Registered Nurse Isabella Lawrence, Mrs. Davis, provided instruction on how the tasks and purposes of the BCN auxiliary were to be achieved. When Ms. Davis reached many of the UNIA branches on her organizing tours in 1920 and 1921, women already engaged in the work of nursing both formally and informally constituted her core audience. While Ms. Davis herself was not a nurse Garvey apparently banked on her stature as an activist and actress to draw an audience. Her efforts, many Garvey historians argue, helped swell the ranks from Nova Scotia to California between 1920 and 1923.<sup>42</sup>

Due in part to the success of Ms. Davis’ campaigning, Black Cross Nurse auxiliaries were not only established but units from Louisiana, California, Chicago, Alabama, Virginia, New Jersey, Panama, Georgia, and New York were represented at the 1921 UNIA Convention.

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<sup>41</sup> Hill, vol. 5, p. 569.

<sup>42</sup> William Seraille, “Henrietta Vinton Davis and the Garvey Movement” in *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* July, 1982 p. 9; Hill, *Marcus Garvey & UNIA Papers* vol. 4, p. xii.

Representatives from the afore mentioned localities created a constitution for the auxiliary and established their organization as a separate and distinct auxiliary within the UNIA.

The majority of known photographs of BCN depicted the nurses either marching or in militaristic stance regaled in their white uniforms. The images implied that they were ready to serve in battle against oppression as nurturers of the spirit and caretakers of the body. Based on these photos, many historians have portrayed the BCN as a collective, which remained nameless and faceless, although they were said to have more symbolic significance. The BCN stood as a symbol of UNIA womanhood ready to serve on the fictive battlefield to reclaim Africa.<sup>43</sup> These interpretations undervalued the full significance of individual BCN units and the BCN as a whole.

The serious nature of the BCN is apparent in the statement of objectives that established the auxiliary which included "... to carry on a system of relief and to apply the same in mitigating the suffering caused by pestilence, famine, fire, floods and other great calamities, and to devise and carry on measures for preventing same," to be prepared and ready to be dispatched [by Garvey as President-General] wherever needed and to promote the general public well being through the use of "... pamphlets which will tend to educate the public to the use of safety devises and prevention of accident; to instruct in sanitation for prevention of epidemics; and to instruct in First Aid."<sup>44</sup> Some historians, including Robert Hill and Theodore Vincent, argued that these objectives were similar to those of the Red Cross. In their view, this diminished their significance as they appeared to mimic an already existing organization. However, as previously noted, formal nursing programs and organizations did not readily invite or allow African-

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<sup>43</sup> See Appendix B; Vincent, pp. 102-103, 113-114; Martin, pp. 25, 34, Stein, pp. 180, 224, 242, 258; Rolinson, p. 58.

<sup>44</sup> See Appendix B; Hill, vol. 3, p.766.

American women to participate. Thus many were forced to create a space of their own.<sup>45</sup> In so doing they signaled their determination to be recognized as nurses and, in turn established the importance of their work by volunteering to heighten their visibility.

That these women were volunteers further aligned them with the development of formal nursing programs. In fact many of the programs for African-American women and white women during this period sent their students out on private duty to offset the costs of maintaining training facilities and to provide them much needed training in combating various diseases and providing patient care. The bulk of the monies generated from private duty service seldom reached the individual who performed the service. This practice was employed by programs affiliated with hospitals and schools alike. In this way the schools and hospitals were able to continue to provide care and training even for those who were unable to pay for services.

Nursing students were expected to tend to their cases away from the school and also maintain their end of communal “housekeeping” duties in the program. As a part of their training, nurses were required to become adept in food preparation and sanitation. Students traded one week rounds preparing meals, tending to laundry and cleaning the facilities. This allowed the programs to save on their already meager budgets as students doubled as service and maintenance staff. Their private duty cases also served to encourage trust of hospitals as patients saw them as a part of their own communities. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, hospitals were mainly frequented by the poor, and service conditions reflected the limited abilities of their

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<sup>45</sup> As previously noted by the mid 1920s there were formal training programs for African-American nurses throughout the country. However, access to these programs was also limited as age discrimination and literacy requirements precluded many lay practitioners from applying. For additional discussion on this occurrence see, Stephanie J. Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Women in White: Racial Conflict and Cooperation in the Nursing Profession, 1890-1950* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Mary Elizabeth Carnegie, *The Path we Tread: Blacks in Nursing 1854-1984* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1986.)

patients to pay. Through outreach the nursing students came to symbolize change and progress, with nurses serving as ambassadors for their programs and the profession itself.

Other similarities among the BCN and other nursing organizations, like the AMA, included the specification of literacy for members.<sup>46</sup> While on the surface this requirement may seem exclusionary, the aim of the UNIA was that of uplift and in keeping with that, literacy was stressed through all possible channels. Nurses were required to know how to read and write in order to best assist in patient care. The BCN's 'Rules and Regulations' also stipulated an age requirement, with an age range from sixteen to forty-five.<sup>47</sup>

The age criteria in African-American and white nursing programs was based on the belief that younger women were easier to teach and more flexible in their habits.<sup>48</sup> In the BCN, the participation of younger women was encouraged as it ensured the continued growth of the organization. Many of the women who joined in the later 1920s came from the BCN's juvenile auxiliary. As opposed to the age 35 cut-off for other nursing programs, the BCN accepted women up to age 45 in the belief that those between 35 and 45 had great experience and should not be denied their nursing privileges. In this way, they provided an avenue for these women to become formally trained nurses, promote the continuation of homeopathy, while ensuring that lay practices would be employed in conjunction with modern medicines. In this way they bridged generational and educational gaps within various African-American communities.

Another similarity between BCNs and other programs was the practice of segregation. Only UNIA women of African heritage could join the BCN, although a UNIA man could become an honorary member upon payment of "... one dollar or more annually."<sup>49</sup> African-

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<sup>46</sup> Hill, vol. 3, p. 768.

<sup>47</sup> Appendix B, Article III, Section 1.

<sup>48</sup> Carnegie, p. 13; Hine, p. 54 .

<sup>49</sup> Appendix B, Article III, Sections 1& 4.

American women who wished to participate with the BCN, but who were unable to join the organization due to personal time constraints or an inability to consistently attend regular training sessions, could also become honorary members, but were not permitted to don the full regalia of the BCN.

Some Divisions pooled resources to obtain the uniforms for individual members. Many other nurses, though in menial jobs, took pride in purchasing their own uniforms, a decision which signaled their own professionalization. In 1921 the uniforms were designed based on strict details issued by the Central UNIA office in New York. By 1922 uniformity of dress was further established as the BCN required all members to purchase uniforms from the UNIA Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) in New York.<sup>50</sup> Uniformity of dress for all UNIA auxiliaries was emphasized as it served to promote the ideal of black nationhood and professionalism of the all female nurses.<sup>51</sup>

Similar to nursing programs that required a deposit from students upon entry, the BCN and the DLI required that a deposit be paid when making an order and that the balance be paid upon completion of the order which was estimated to be fifteen days from the date of receipt.<sup>52</sup> The sheer numbers of women in white, estimated at nearly 20,000 throughout the world, indicated that the wearing of the uniforms as an expression of membership in the auxiliary and the UNIA was extremely important to auxiliary participants.<sup>53</sup> For them, argues Michelle

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<sup>50</sup> *Negro World*, March 11, 1922; March 18, 1922.

<sup>51</sup> It is often noted that Garvey patterned the UNIA after the Irish Republic which was given “government in exile” status. This concept is most recently explored further by Jahi Issa’s unpublished dissertation “The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Louisiana: Creating a Provisional Government in Exile” (PhD Dissertation, Howard University, 2005).

<sup>52</sup> *Negro World*, March 18, 1922.

<sup>53</sup> While accurate figures are not available as all the branch records for each UNIA division on the globe are not easily accessible, this figure has been compiled based on available documentation of uniforms sold, the membership rolls that included listings of the BCN, oral history accounts and documented BCN participation in parades in their respective Divisions. Of those accounts in both mainstream newspapers and the *Negro World*, the smallest number of BCN in public demonstrations was 200 and the largest number was 325 at individual events excluding the

Seabrook, "... it was almost as if the arrival of the shipment stamped Garvey's approval on the Division, and on the nurses themselves."<sup>54</sup> The purchase of uniforms, sewn at the UNIA's Negro Factory Corporation in New York, also served to further the organization's economic self-sufficiency goals.

Although Garvey's leadership and goals figured largely in the minds of BCNs, the organization had its own hierarchy that placed women at the head of the international and local levels of the UNIA. Article IV Section 1 of the 'Rules and Regulations' established a Central Committee that consisted of the President-General, a Universal Directress, "who shall be a graduate Nurse of at least three years experience," a Surgeon-General of the UNIA, and the Presidents of the local Divisions.<sup>55</sup> On the local level it specified that each unit should have "a Matron, who shall be Lady President of the Division and Superintendent of the Auxiliary", a Head Nurse, who shall be President of the unit; a secretary and treasurer.<sup>56</sup> The authority women had over the BCN and its programs contrasted strongly with other nursing programs for African-American women where women administrators had limited autonomy.<sup>57</sup> The 'Rules and Regulations' not only detailed the functions of the BCN but also illustrated how Black Nationalism was practiced by the UNIA women through the BCN.

Another revealing source of the group's brand of nationalism can be found in the irregular contributions of two of the BCN Central Presidents in the *Negro World*. Although present research has yielded little about the lives of Miss Isabella Lawrence and Mrs. Clara Morgan, their tenures as central heads of the BCN produced some of the only surviving

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Convention Parades; Historian Winston James estimates the numbers to be considerable larger, although he provides no statistical data to support his assertion. James, *Holding Aloft The Banner of Ethiopia*, p. 137.

<sup>54</sup> Seabrook, p. 23.

<sup>55</sup> Appendix B, Article IV Section I.

<sup>56</sup> Appendix B, Article IV Section V.

<sup>57</sup> Women administrators had little power or say in the nursing programs in their charge. This did not change until the 1950s. See. Hine and Carnegie.

documents associated with and produced by individuals of the auxiliary. Further information about the auxiliary's practice of Black Nationalism can also be obtained through the "Division News" section of the *Negro World* and excerpts from plays the BCN units performed and promoted in connection with their objective to educate.

Isabella Lawrence was the first central head of the BCN and was instrumental in establishing the 1921 'Rules and Regulations'. In 1924 she was given the title "Lady of Distinguished Service Order of Ethiopia" in honor of her "faithful and distinguished service to the Negro race."<sup>58</sup> She was single apparently, an unusual status for a female head in the UNIA as mostly married women were largely elected to seats of leadership. It is unclear how she rose to this position within the UNIA, however. She first appeared in print in the *Negro World* of January 7, 1922 with a byline under an article entitled "New Year[']s Message to the Universal African Black Cross Nurses" and garnered special mention at the UNIA Convention of 1922 for her presentation entitled "Health in the Home."<sup>59</sup>

Clara Morgan asserted the nationalist aims of the BCNs when she wrote that their commitment to their duty would yield "a community not so gullible, that white physicians and other professionals will find it no longer a good investment to advertise in our weeklies."<sup>60</sup> Ms. Morgan's comments were in response to advertisements for liquid remedies for everyday ailments that consisted mainly of alcohol and had very little medicinal properties. Other articles dealing with ethics in the practice of medicine were penned by Ms. Lawrence. These included "The Ethics of Nursing" in which she stipulated that

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<sup>58</sup> Martin Anthony Summers, *Manliness and Its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 98.

<sup>59</sup> *Negro World*, January 7, 1922; Hill, vol. 4, p. 942.

<sup>60</sup> A transcript of her 1922 convention talk is not available, but the title provides obvious clues about the content; "What Is Good For the Body Must First Be good for the Mind" *Negro World*, January 7, 1922.

BCN ethics may be divided thusly, 1. The nurse's duty toward her patient. 2. Her duty toward the attending physician. 3. Her duty to her patient's friends or household wherein she serves. 4. Her duty toward her fellow-nurse. 5. Her duty to herself.<sup>61</sup>

Ms. Lawrence encouraged BCN units to put themselves last while on duty. This selflessness was similar to that encouraged by the Red Cross and congruent with the image of female respectability dominant during the period. Whether or not Ms. Lawrence's edicts were strictly adhered to, the delineation of a BCN ethic set a sober tone for the auxiliary.

Aside from making clear her duty, Ms. Lawrence strove to ensure there was clarity on the issue of BCN uniforms and education. In "Notice To All Divisions and Members of the Universal African Black Cross Nurses," she emphasized that "All Black Cross Nurse units must secure competent instructors to teach in first aid, community health work and home hygiene and care of the sick."<sup>62</sup> Once she established the priority of all BCNs to pass first aid requirements and literacy tests and to become fully registered nurses, Ms. Lawrence turned her attention to the BCN uniform. The structure of the article implied that education, specifically nurse education, was paramount and should be sought prior to obtaining a BCN uniform. There were obvious qualifications that Ms. Lawrence felt a Black Cross Nurse should meet before she would merit being dressed in either of the uniforms designated for members.

The BCN auxiliary's stress on nursing education, reinforced middle-class mores and reflected ideals expressed in the politics of respectability. However, it is important to recognize that the UNIA was working toward building a nation, both literally and figuratively. Service to the race came to mean not only being the best at what one did, but being able to improve one's self in order to increase the range of services performed. Amy Jacques Garvey stressed this

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<sup>61</sup> *Negro World*, June 10, 1922.

<sup>62</sup> *Negro World*, April 29, 1922 – December 30, 1922.

point to women of the organization in general as she counseled that it was “disastrous” for UNIA women to marry into the white race who she found to be in moral “decay.”<sup>63</sup>

Lawrence’s emphasis on the need for women to educate themselves further informs historians of another kind of coping mechanism women engaged in during Jim Crow. While married women preferred to have their husbands working near the home, jobs available to them did not always make it possible. Also the wages those jobs paid often did not adequately support their families. By becoming trained diploma nurses, UNIA women could not only be prepared to serve the African nation and their communities, but they could also better serve themselves and their families by commanding better employment opportunities and higher wages.<sup>64</sup> Their education also had another purpose. UNIA women were encouraged to use their education to “[h]elp” their “...less informed sisters.” The BCNs were also expected to impart what they learned to cure the disease of illiteracy in their communities. This added to the symbolic importance of their uniforms.

The designation of uniforms for public and private spaces also made Lawrence’s article on BCN ethics significant and, with the exception of Leah Michelle Seabrook’s unpublished Master’s thesis, no mention of this distinction in BCN dress has been made by historians.<sup>65</sup> This may be due, in part, to there being no known photographs of BCNs in the white uniform. However, the designation of one uniform is worth analysis.

The all-white uniform worn during official meetings, ceremonies and parades consisted of white dress, white cap, white shoes, and white stockings. The official emblem of the

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<sup>63</sup> *Negro World*, October 24, 1925; April 9, 1927.

<sup>64</sup> Many African-American men were employed as Railroad Porters, for example, or in low paying factory jobs. Often they were unable to lobby for higher wages and benefits as it would cost them those jobs. For more on the relationship between working African-American men and women and their concerns please see Melinda Chateauvert, *Marching Together: Women of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

<sup>65</sup> Seabrook, p. 38.

auxiliary, a “Black Latin Cross encircled by a Red background” with a green-field center, was worn with a button that carried a “Black Latin Cross on a red background enclosed by a Green Circle around the border.” All members were required to wear these emblems.<sup>66</sup> Juanita Warfield Proctor, daughter of a Seattle Black Cross Nurse and member of the UNIA Juvenile auxiliary detailed in a later chapter, recalled that the black cross was worn “... on the forehead, and on the arm a red, black and green sash.”<sup>67</sup> According to Mrs. Warfield Proctor, there were approximately 50 to 100 women in her mother’s BCN unit.<sup>68</sup> The duty uniform consisted of a green dress with an ivory apron, black shoes and stockings.<sup>69</sup> This color difference not only set the nurses apart within UNIA circles, but they also stood out in the public sphere as most nurses wore white to work. Present research has not yielded any photographs of BCNs in their work uniform.

That the auxiliary chose to designate a separate uniform for public and private use is significant as it speaks to the symbolic and literal functions of the BCNs. The pristine white uniforms worn in public invoked a “...strong sense of *esprit de corps* among its members,” while aiding in serving to “... wed the Negro people into a racially conscious, united group for effective mass action.”<sup>70</sup> The private duty uniforms, with green smocks, took on a very different meaning. The color green is associated with growth, renewal, health, and environment and is said to denote balance, harmony, and stability. The use of this color in the private duty uniforms of the BCNs signified their eagerness to stimulate healing, renewal, and growth in their

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<sup>66</sup> Appendix B, Article VIII

<sup>67</sup> Juanita Warfield Proctor Interview, September 22, 1975. Transcript at the Manuscripts and Archives Division, University of Washington Library, Seattle, Washington.

<sup>68</sup> Juanita Warfield Proctor Interview, September 22, 1975. Transcript at the Manuscripts and Archives Division, University of Washington Library, Seattle, Washington.

<sup>69</sup> *Negro World*, April, 29, 1922-December 30, 1922.

<sup>70</sup> Winston James, *Holding Aloft* p. 140; E. David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1955, 1969), p. 174.

communities. For them, this was a private matter as it was the collective work of the race not to be intruded on by outsiders or defined by anyone other than themselves. That the smock was worn over a white base also signified their desire to separate the public starched image from the genteel caring one they invoked while performing their duties.

While present research has failed to yield photos of Black Cross Nurses on “duty,” they were clearly engaged in patient care. The New Orleans Division 149 took the BCN ethic to its heights by endeavoring to establish a “first class medical clinic” to be run by the BCN in conjunction with a “self-supporting” charity to care for the elderly and infirm.<sup>71</sup> In this effort women in the UNIA employed practical applications of Black Nationalist self-help aims to enable “...destitute members to find aid within the organization when necessary.”<sup>72</sup>

Their efforts resulted in the opening of “The Free Community Medical Clinic” on September 16, 1928.<sup>73</sup> The clinic was headed by Dr. Logan W. Horton and Dr. J.J. Peters. Both Horton and Peters worked in the New Orleans community with little monetary compensation and had established themselves as UNIA loyalists by providing weekly lectures on healthcare to members and UNIA affiliates alike.<sup>74</sup> The hospital took on special significance as it created a space that designated care for, by, and to African-Americans.<sup>75</sup>

Aside from providing short and long term care, the hospital also served as a training school for Black Cross Nurses and was open to members from any division to attend. The doctors who worked at the Clinic came mainly from nearby Flint-Goodridge Hospital.<sup>76</sup> While the credentials of Horton and Peters and their staff have never come under review, again the

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<sup>71</sup> *Negro World*, January 21, 1928.

<sup>72</sup> *Negro World*, January 21, 1928.

<sup>73</sup> *Negro World*, September 29, 1928.

<sup>74</sup> *Negro World*, September 29, 1928.

<sup>75</sup> Shaw, pp. 146-147.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas J. Ward Jr., *Black Physicians in the Jim Crow South* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), pp. 10-12.

capabilities of the nurses they helped to train have been challenged by such scholars as Theodore Vincent and Judith Stein.

Lawrence's return installments in 1924, encouraged Black Cross Nurses to work toward "... a sound health program, specifically child health program, is becoming more insistent in various parts of the world, and it is time for our nurses to wake up to this fact. There is real constructive work waiting, yes, begging to be done."<sup>77</sup> Her words directed women to look beyond the UNIA as the training they received with the BCN created greater employment opportunities. After 1924, Lawrence's contributions sporadically appeared in the *New World* until the formal demise of the UNIA in 1931.

While the sentiments expressed by Lawrence reflected concerns espoused by many women activists of the era, both white and black, her words also indicated a sense of permanence.<sup>78</sup> Although UNIA women did not consider themselves "feminists" Ula Taylor asserts that the effects of the rhetoric and by use of similar stratagems UNIA women participated in what she dubs "community feminism." Despite assertions by other scholars like Barbara Bair and Honor Ford-Smith that UNIA women belong to the first wave feminist cadre, Taylor's assertion best reflects a race and community first ideal placing themselves last much like the BCN ethic expressed by Isabella Lawrence in 1922.

By pointing to new avenues for service and patient care, Ms. Lawrence also suggested that nursing was a career, a profession, which held no geographical boundaries. Their potential as

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<sup>77</sup> *Negro World*, August 2, 1924.

<sup>78</sup> For elaboration on First Wave feminism see Nancy Cott, *The Groundings of Modern Feminism* (New Haven and London : Yale University Press, 1987); Alice Kessler-Harris, *A Woman's Wage: Historical Meanings & Social Consequences* (Lexington: The University Press of Lexington, 1990); Gwendolyn Mink, *The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917-1942* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995); Francesca Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

nurses also offered African-American women some possibilities to represent the organization and, more specifically, demonstrated the capabilities of women of the race.

Demonstrating the BCN's commitment to children, Ms. Lawrence's successor, Clara Morgan, penned an occasional *Negro World* column where "Questions of general interest will be answered in this column on the care and feeding of infants and children."<sup>79</sup> The column first appeared on February 4, 1922. Readers were encouraged to submit questions for answer by Mrs. Morgan. In the first nine months, she received few queries as only two columns were filed with questions from the membership. In the interim, Morgan wrote on the care of expectant and new mothers and post and prenatal care. Her instruction also included advice to fathers in which she stated that

The expectant father must bear in mind that his duty is not only to pay the doctor's bill, but that he must not allow his wife to do too heavy work. He must also bear in mind that her nervous system is now highly strung and should never argue with her during this stage.<sup>80</sup>

Through this admonition to fathers, the Black Cross Nurses apparently viewed their role as more far reaching than the accepted "domestic sphere."<sup>81</sup> Mrs. Morgan's comments appear to break with social norms of the period by addressing men directly. Her willingness to do so in print suggested that the idea of a dominant male figure-head in the UNIA home was a less than accurate depiction of UNIA reality. This becomes more apparent when examining the relationship between Garvey and Amy Jacques and other women within his circle.<sup>82</sup> Recent

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<sup>79</sup> *Negro World*, February 4, 1922.

<sup>80</sup> *Negro World*, September 9, 1922.

<sup>81</sup> Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," in *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (Jun., 1988), pp. 9-39.

<sup>82</sup> Historians Barbara Bair and Honor Ford-Smith note that UNIA women tended to move beyond Garvey's ideal of womanhood. Barbara Bair, "True Women, Real Men: Gender, Ideology, and Social Roles in the Garvey Movement," in *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History* ed. Susan Reverby and Dorothy Helly (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 154-166.; Honor Ford-Smith "Women in the Garvey Movement in Jamaica." *Garvey: His Work and Impact* ed. Rupert Lewis and Patrick Bryan. (New Jersey: Free

scholarship in gender studies argues that there was often a blurring of spheres. Historian Rosalyn Terborg-Penn observed that women of the Diaspora by virtue of their participation in “the global process of capital accumulation” that devalues their body and their labor find that they “must operate” in both the public and private domains.<sup>83</sup> The practicality of the lives of BCN women becomes more apparent as historians weigh Margaret Fuller’s notion that “[T]here is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman.”<sup>84</sup> Recent scholarship by historian Nikki Brown also supports this idea as she concluded that during and immediately after World War I, African-American women became increasingly involved in “male normative institutions” much like the UNIA.<sup>85</sup>

Mrs. Morgan’s column continued its focus on the care of children and published warnings on the use of rubber diapers, which resulted in the canceling of the New York Divisions “Best Dressed Baby” competition. Because the babies were wearing rubber diapers which caused diaper rash, constriction of circulation, and presented the potential for bacteria, all contestants were disqualified from the competition and the prize withheld indefinitely.<sup>86</sup> The health of the babies came before anything else in Mrs. Morgan’s view. Motherhood was a sacred duty, argued Mrs. Morgan, and women needed to “realize that the future greatness of the great African empire” rested with individual good health that started at infancy.<sup>87</sup>

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Africa World Press 1991), p.76.; Deborah Grey White argues that while women in the club movement, for example, believed their greatest influence came as wife mother and teacher, “this did not imply notions of inferiority to man” and that many felt “woman is man’s equal intellectually.” Deborah Grey White, *Too Heavy A Load “Black Women in Defense of Themselves* (New York: Norton 1999), p. 44; This premise is also the basis for Paula Giddings *Where and When I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Morrow) 1984.

<sup>83</sup> Terborg-Penn, p. 16.

<sup>84</sup> Monika M. Elbert, *Separate Spheres No More: Gender Convergence in American Literature, 1830-1930* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press 2000), p. 116.

<sup>85</sup> Nikki Brown, *Private Politics and Public Voices: Black Women's Activism from World War I to the New Deal* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 117.

<sup>86</sup> *Negro World*, December 2, 1922.

<sup>87</sup> *Negro World*, October 7, 1922.

Anne Macpherson noted that the Belize Black Cross Nurses also held a beautiful baby contest. She argued that the contest was simply a means of reinforcing middle class mores and Caribbean color stratifications. The browner the baby, the curlier the hair, the more healthy the baby was assumed to be. Participants were also encouraged to follow dictums on health and home care that shunned traditional customs in favor of alleged more advanced modes, usually more Western in origin.

Other BCN articles appeared throughout the *Negro World*. However, the by-lines did not specifically name the authors. Clara Morgan appeared to be the most frequently featured BCN authoress. Other nurses appear in the *Negro World* as their activities are reported in the “Division News” section. Of the Divisions featured in the section, the New York City Branch of the New York Division appeared most frequently. The NY City Black Cross Nurses were closest in proximity to the UNIA headquarters and were the first individual auxiliary to be mentioned in the *Negro World*.

On December 22, 1922 in an article entitled “Black Cross Nurses Present Xmas Purse to Hon. Marcus Garvey” was a featured story in the *Negro World*.<sup>88</sup> While the article contained little information about the BCN specifically, with the exception of mentioning the gift of a silver tea set to Ms. Lawrence, it did present some clues on the multi-faceted role of the auxiliary. That the BCN of NY in 1922 could afford to present Garvey a “purse” (the amount of which was not specified) and give Ms. Lawrence a silver tea set indicated that they were able to raise considerable funds, or collectively had reserves enough to afford to make a sacrifice. The article also implied that being a BCN was an entrée to the UNIA hierarchy, something to which many of the lay membership aspired. Lastly, the article established the BCN of New York as women of status. The gift they chose for the Directress was a “silver tea set.” Readers were left

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<sup>88</sup> *Negro World*, December 30, 1922.

with the implication that to be a nurse was to be a woman of great influence and stature in the community. This notion, when combined with the BCN's emphasis on childcare and proper healthcare, further indicated the particular ways in which the BCN demonstrated the importance of the women's role in the home and emphasize the importance of the work women did as co-equals both inside and outside of the home. In this way BCN served to illustrate that efficient womanhood went beyond the domestic sphere and entered into the domain of wage work.

By 1925 many of the articles tended to reinforce Clara Morgan's encouragements to mothers to make use of medical stations in their communities and have their children see doctors regularly.<sup>89</sup> In June, for example, the NY BCN invited new and expectant mothers to "...follow up our weekly health rules and if you want more detailed information you may see us at Liberty Hall every Sunday night."<sup>90</sup> The significance placed on healthcare education demonstrated that the BCN wanted to make good healthcare accessible to everyone, and also reveals their willingness to have others join the organization. In this way their brand of nationalism, while appearing elitist, actually sought the progress of the race as a whole and not just for a select few. The use of a variety of strategies to educate and inform demonstrated a willingness to avail both members and non-members of the UNIA to their services and fulfill the potential of all African-Americans.

Other articles published in 1925 include "Heart Disease," "Special Hygiene," and "Measles" as a part of the "Our Women and What They Think Page."<sup>91</sup> Each article carried definitions of the condition, symptoms, and methods of treatment. This format fit the definition of the capabilities of a Nurse set by the AMA. The articles served as a means not only to inform the public, but also to remind all BCN auxiliaries of the standards they were to achieve.

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<sup>89</sup> *Negro World*, April 15, 1922, July 15, 1922.

<sup>90</sup> *Negro World*, June 6, 1925.

<sup>91</sup> *Negro World*, July 4, 1925, August 15, 1925, September 19, 1925.

In 1926 an essay entitled “Beauty Culture” and sought to encourage proper hygiene by mixing an appeal to the readers’ vanity with nationalistic concerns. Readers were encouraged to practice good grooming as this increased their chances of good health and assisted in the building of the Black nation.<sup>92</sup>

In July of 1926, an article authored by the NY BCN, “How to be a Good Husband,” urged men to respect their wives and children and operate with love in mind.<sup>93</sup> The column appeared next to an advertisement for a mail-order bride company, reflecting the commercial realities of printing a Black newspaper during the period. The following week an article titled “How to Be a Good Wife,” was printed in the column with the by-line, “The Red Cross Nurses of New York.”<sup>94</sup> That the BCN units sought to address the deportment of husbands and wives was of importance as it reflected their interest in strong African-American families.

The advice given to wives included reminding women that “[love] is your best weapon[.] [Y]ou conquered him with that in the first place, you can re(-)conquer him by the same means.”<sup>95</sup> The image of the woman who was able to redeem the man through love was reflective of the image of Africa as a mother. The nationalist philosophy of the UNIA viewed all Africans throughout the Diaspora as lost children, and Africa as a mother calling them home both figuratively and literally. To make their “Mother” proud, these lost children, were to make the most of themselves in the respective professions. In so doing, their talents would avail them to be of good use to her physically (through the potential use of the manual labor in the continent) and spiritually (through their accomplishments outside of the continent). Whether

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<sup>92</sup> *Negro World*, January 9, 1926.

<sup>93</sup> *Negro World*, July 17, 1926.

<sup>94</sup> *Negro World*, July 24, 1926.

<sup>95</sup> *Negro World*, July 24, 1926.

individuals actually set foot on the continent did not matter. By virtue of his/her skin color they were Africa's representative.<sup>96</sup>

The NY Division appeared in the *Negro World* ten years later when it was noted that they were "seated on the rostrum" alongside "officers of the club."<sup>97</sup> While the reference was short, it revealed that the BCN of NY remained strong in number. The BCN leadership sat on the rostrum beside officers of the meeting. While the size of the meeting room is not known, that the NY BCN sat in a place of prominence served to further signify the importance to the organization.

At this meeting Lillian Capers, the Lady President of the NY Garvey Club, argued for "funds to carry on the work of the association."<sup>98</sup> This statement highlighted the participatory nature of UNIA women in formulating and promoting the UNIA's program and Black Nationalism. Her talk differed from those quoted in earlier articles by Lawrence and Morgan, where the care and well being of members took precedence. As the organization began to see dark days, it appeared that the women of the UNIA, including those in the BCN, became more vocal in an attempt to save it.

Another insight into the nature of the BCN auxiliaries' allegiance to the UNIA was sometimes apparent from its internal competition. In 1921, the Perth Amboy New Jersey Division was celebrating its first anniversary and the Newark Black Cross Nurses were given special mention because

The Black Cross Nurses from Newark made a good appearance... A few remarks of encouragement were given by the lady president of the Newark division. We

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<sup>96</sup> This sentiment was consistent throughout the nascent period of the UNIA. In 1928 Princess Laura Kofey in one of her last speeches told her listeners that Africans needed them to be "good carpenters and masons" just as much as they needed teachers and preachers. She also made it clear that returning to Africa was a choice which was also consistent with the aims of the UNIA, to better the lives of Africans throughout the Diaspora. Princess Kofey will be discussed at length in a later chapter.

<sup>97</sup> *Negro World*, July 2, 1932.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

are sure the ladies of Perth Amboy were jealous of the Newark Black Cross Nurses and hope they will join and help form a Black Cross section.<sup>99</sup>

For a UNIA division to have a BCN auxiliary was a matter of pride and even used as proof of the Division's commitment. This desire continued even after Garvey's deportation troubles loomed. As late as 1932, the Tulsa Oklahoma Division appealed to central headquarters for permission to establish a BCN, a Juvenile Department, a Universal African Motor Corps (an all female "paramilitary" auxiliary) and a Universal African Legion in an attempt "To Make [the] Tulsa, OK. Div. Greater".<sup>100</sup> The willingness of UNIA members to press forward even after Garvey was deported illuminated their commitment to the UNIA program and the outlet it provided to address their nationalist concerns.

Even outside of the *Negro World* the BCN received attention. The Philadelphia Division's participation in an Independence Day parade was described by *The Philadelphia Record* to be "[n]oteable" as "All along the line applause greeted the 'Black Cross Society,' an organization of nurses."<sup>101</sup> The BCNs were referred to here as "an organization of nurses" which suggests that in Philadelphia the members of the BCN were considered actual nurses. Aside from this assertion, reports in 1931, from the Miss. D. C. Jones stated that "The Black Cross Nurses are doing fine work. The class is growing rapidly and the students are busy preparing for their first examination under Dr. William E. Whyte of Mercy Hospital."<sup>102</sup> Similar to the New Orleans Division, Philadelphia was fortunate enough to have a licensed medical doctor to help train Black Cross Nurses. That he was affiliated with a state funded hospital also presented potential employment opportunities for the BCN. The Philadelphia and Louisiana Divisions success at training and graduating nurses served as another example of how UNIA women came

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<sup>99</sup> *Negro World*, August, 27, 1921.

<sup>100</sup> *Negro World*, June 18, 1932.

<sup>101</sup> *The Philadelphia Record* July 6, 1921; *Negro World*, July 16, 1921.

<sup>102</sup> *Negro World*, December 5, 1931.

to define their brand of Black Nationalism. This example provided an even greater clue to their impact on the community than previously believed. While historian Judith Stein noted that “[t]he only clue that the [BCNs] was more than another social circle was its ceremonial African Legion for men and its Black Cross auxiliary for women. Both linked its members symbolically to the more advanced political culture of Garveyism...” present research indicates just as Robin Kelley pointed out in respect to working class black activism more generally, the BCN were much more than they seemed.<sup>103</sup>

In other Divisions the training of nurses rested with graduated nurses. In Seattle, Washington, Hattie Gillmore, head of the BCN auxiliary, held a training class every Wednesday and the Cleveland, Ohio Division began awarding diplomas to BCN in 1921 with Mrs. Wise as teacher, at Division-wide meetings.<sup>104</sup> The graduation usually was conducted as a part of a larger meeting, and diplomas were given out just before the featured speaker was to give an address. In this way the BCN became symbolic of progress despite the oppression of Jim Crow.

The public performance of the Black Cross Nurses went beyond their much publicized participation in marches. The BCN earned great respect for their work both inside and outside of the UNIA. Indicative of the UNIA woman’s brand of Black Nationalism, Mrs. Edna Carter of the Parnassus Division challenged the readiness of black citizens in a talk she titled “Our Slowness Must Be Eliminated If We Are To Take Our Rightful Place Among the Other Races of the World.” Her speech argued that both genders must cooperate with each other.

The BCN auxiliaries were very public in their assertion that proper healthcare and education were essential through their performance in plays, parades, funerals. Plays performed

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<sup>103</sup> Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey*, pp. 180 & 224; Robin D. G. Kelley “We Are Not What We Seem”: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South.” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 80, No. 1 (Jun., 1993), pp. 75-112.

<sup>104</sup> *Negro World*, August 27, 1921; *Negro World*, January 21, 1922.

included the North Folk, Virginia Black Cross Nurses,' *An African Convention*, the Philadelphia Division performed *The New Negro*, and the NY Division performed *Tallaboo*, all with themes that celebrated the grandeur of the UNIA and the emergence of African-Americans into global politics and the dismissing of "(t)he old Uncle Tom type."<sup>105</sup> In 1921 the New Haven BCNs put on a pageant entitled "Three Hundred Years on American Soil and Fifty years of Freedom." The production was described as follows:

In a large room on the right hand side stage there was an operating table on which lay a small girl as the patient, two doctors, and four Black Cross nurses dressed in uniform, and with their mouths muffled, stood over the little patient; on the left hand side of the room a little boy had his arm bandaged by a nurse, dressed in a Black Cross uniform. The audience greeted the participants of this scene with tumultuous applause. The last scene showed the queen of Africa on a throne, and her subjects beside her.<sup>106</sup>

The play's purpose was manifold and served as a cultural expression of very distinct nationalist aims. The BCN plays served similar functions as the previously discussed works of Hurston, Dunlap and Savage. While depicting the nurses in the line of duty, the pageant also centered on young children as patients. This was done in part to reaffirm the UNIA belief that one of the greatest roles for a woman was that of caregiver to future generations. The boy had injured his arm, but the little girl has injured her body and was in need of serious assistance as indicated by the wearing of surgical masks. The value of a woman as mother of the race was invoked here, and the need for her protection was also signaled by the final scene as the African queen is surrounded by the BCN. The same sentiment is evident in Garvey's 1927 poem "The Black Woman" which opened with "Black queen of beauty, thou hast given color to the world! Among other women thou art royal and the fairest! Like the brightest of jewels in the regal

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<sup>105</sup> *Negro World*, May, 13, 1922; January 28, 1922, December 18, 1921.

<sup>106</sup> *Negro World*, July 16, 1921.

diadem; Shin'st thou, Goddess of Africa, Nature's purest emblem!"<sup>107</sup> The importance of this theme for the BCN and the female members for the UNIA was also demonstrated in 1929 at a court reception where a statue of the "Black Queen holding aloft the torch of truth" was prominently displayed.<sup>108</sup> Self-respect as well as the respect of men appeared to have been of equal value to women in the organization.

The BCNs commitment to the proper care of its members also lent itself to ensuring that appropriate burial arrangements were made. For the funeral of Mrs. Esthrema Lynch, Mrs. Jackson Willis, who moved from Richmond, Virginia to tour the United States with Marcus Garvey and preceded Ms. Lawrence as head of the BCN Central Offices, facilitated a procession through Harlem to St. Mrs. Willis' Mary's Church.<sup>109</sup> The timed military style march of the procession drew the customary attention gathering audiences reserved for male dignitaries in the African-American community, but it also served another purpose. Here the BCN gave Mrs. Lynch a funeral befitting a fallen soldier. The public display demonstrated that her death had as much meaning as she had in life. Another function of this service was to show that there were people to mourn Mrs. Lynch's death. In keeping with their commitment to mind, body and spirit and that "women were as competent as men to be field representatives..." for the UNIA, her funeral provided one last opportunity to stress the equal levels of commitment shared by men and women in the organization as deserving of equal respect.<sup>110</sup> The commitment of the BCN to a Black Nationalism that placed women side-by-side with men was practiced from the cradle to the grave.

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<sup>107</sup> See Appendix E.

<sup>108</sup> Martin, p. 43.

<sup>109</sup> Barbra Bair, "Renegotiating Liberty: Garveyism, Women and Grassroots Organizing in Virginia" in *Women of the American South: A Multicultural Reader* ed. Christie Anne Farnham (New York: NYU Press 1997), p. 224.; *Negro World*, April 9, 1921.; Hill, *The UNIA Papers* vol. 1 p., 73; James,  *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, p. 139.; *Negro World*, April 9, 1921.

<sup>110</sup> James,  *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, p. 139.

The level of commitment was outlined between 1925 and 1927 when a plethora of articles authored by the BCN collectively appeared in the *Negro World*. The only specific BCN unit referenced in the by-line was the NY Division and none of its members are named. Whether or not this was also a part of the BCN's way of defining its form of Black Nationalism, is also unclear. Still, the articles described the activities of respective units; and thus they served as another investment in the duties and works of the BCN.

By 1927 membership in the UNIA had declined considerably, and an appeal was made to all Lady Presidents to establish Black Cross Nurse auxiliaries within their respective jurisdictions. The call was issued by the Secretary-General of the UNIA, W.A. Wallace who stated,

We are urging upon you to immediately call all the women of your division together to organize your nurse department. Those that are organized should make a great effort to increase their membership. This is one of the most useful auxiliaries in our organization and an avenue through which much good can be done...It is our earnest desire that these departments be immediately put in action everywhere, and it the special duty of the Lady President, who is matron of the nurses, to do this.<sup>111</sup>

The presence of a BCN unit was taken as a sign of stability for a division and also a source of great pride. There is no recorded evidence of dissension among the BCNs. There was also no evidence of any public displays of conduct unbecoming a nurse or expressions of disloyalty to and/or misrepresentation of the UNIA program among the Black Cross Nurses. The organization continued to facilitate the education of women aspiring to be nurses and to increase healthcare access for African-Americans into the 1960s.

The Black Cross Nurses' assertion of authority in the field of healthcare was readily accepted by women and men alike. Their efforts were seen as a part of the reclamation of the race in both a literal and figurative sense. The BCN units could speak openly of the needs for

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<sup>111</sup> *The Negro World*, January 15, 1927.

both women and men to take better care of themselves and their children in an effort to better the race. In so doing they elevated the status of healthcare workers in the African American community. They also helped broaden the conversation on self-reclamation and the reclamation of Africa. The BCN, under the auspices of their profession, could challenge notions of male dominance in the home and in the quest for race progress. Not all women in the UNIA enjoyed the same privileges. A similar message from a native African princess, also concerned with the state of the spirit and the bodies of African-Americans, was not as well received.

## CHAPTER 5

### “FOR IT WAS NOT DONE IN THE CORNER”: PRINCESS LAURA ADORKOR KOFEY

#### **Laura Adorkor Kofey: Preparations for Repatriation**

On March 8, 1928 Princess Laura Adorkor Kofey was assassinated while speaking at a UNIA meeting in Miami. She received acclaim within the organization for her ability to revive struggling UNIA Divisions in the Southeast and attract new membership. Between 1926 and 1928, she held “camp-style mass meeting” at baseball fields, public parks, church sanctuaries, and Masonic Lodge Halls such that the overflow forced many listeners to stand outside the edifices and line adjacent streets. Her message was imbued with the rhetoric of Black Nationalism of the 1920s, the tenets of the UNIA program and her experiences as an African Prophetess. What she called for was simple: African-Americans needed to make credible preparations to return to the interior of Africa.

Unlike Marcus Garvey, Kofey did not advocate repatriation to Liberia, but encouraged emigration to less developed areas of the continent. The Ghanaian Princess Kofey brought to the UNIA an African female perspective on repatriation. She presented a native woman’s voice in response to the UNIA’s “missionary” schemes outlined in the objectives co-authored by Amy Ashwood. As a campaigner for the UNIA’s programs, she also echoed the concerns of other UNIA women for the return to stricter moral codes of conduct within the organization. She also led extended discussions on the need for African-American men to work in cooperation with women to steer the course for racial progress.

This chapter focuses on Kofey’s two-year tenure in the UNIA. Her role in rebuilding the organization, while challenging Garvey and his advisors over misappropriated funds, further illustrates the dilemmas faced by women in the lay membership. Laura Kofey maintained an undaunted allegiance to the UNIA’s core program even after she was declared *persona non-*

*grata* in late 1927. Certainly, her church, the African Universal Church and Commercial League (AUC), was largely based on UNIA doctrine. The church, still active today, illustrated how Kofey transcended the UNIA and Garvey to become a Diasporic figure. The adherence of her members to the UNIA's program and their creation of a direct link and exchange with the continent of Africa are just two examples of her impact on both the organization and the Atlantic community. Her influence had as tangible and practical effect on Africa and its descendants as that of Marcus Mosiah Garvey himself.

Evidence compiled from Princess Kofey's limited appearances in the *Negro World*, her sermons, her testimony at her arraignments in Tampa and Jacksonville, FL, along with her religious talks and the testimony of eye witnesses at the trial of her alleged assassins reveals the nature of her influence in Alabama, Louisiana and Florida, specifically, and on the UNIA more broadly. Laura Kofey's public battle with men in Garvey's inner circle, and the violent solution that resulted speaks to the desperate struggle for power within the UNIA by 1928. Although, as previously demonstrated, women in the organization often only assumed overt leadership roles when they found UNIA men wavering in their pursuit of racial progress, Kofey's rise to fame within the organization was considered a direct threat to authority.

Kofey, like Ashwood, Jacques, Davis and DeMena, never publicly challenged any man in the organization and only warned Garvey about the company he kept. While her intentions may have been altruistic, her ability to draw a following threatened both the authority of the ministerial alliances that supported the UNIA, the tenuous relationships with the UNIA formed with white authorities, and the power of UNIA male leaders, notably in Florida.

This chapter highlights another way in which women loyal to the UNIA program, but at odds with Garvey himself, operated. While official recognition of her membership ceased in

1927, she remains significant to the UNIA's grand narrative. Her place in the organization's historiography despite her brief time as a member is further cemented by the organization's claims that all peoples of the Diaspora, whether dues paying members or not, belonged to the UNIA. Color and bloodlines made you a member of the organization, paying dues merely got you on the organization rolls.

Diasporic membership is often based on a "culture consciousness" that sets up polar opposites of a "here" and a "there." The there being "invoked as a rhetoric of self affirmation" and reclamation of a place alleged to be stolen or hidden from the rightful owners.<sup>1</sup> Bridging the gap between "here" and "there", Laura Kofey resembled "Atlantic Creoles" in that she spoke a pidgin English and attempted to engage in commercial business ties between the continent and the West.<sup>2</sup> Her presence in the UNIA contributed to the "...diasporic identity and its social, cultural and political manifestations" while encouraging a "re-thinking of the West." She promoted the "continual reinvention of Africa and the Diaspora through cultural work, migrations, transformations in communications, as well as the globalization of capital" within the

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Re-Writing the African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic" in *African Affairs* v. 104 no. 414, p. 41.; Zeleza goes on to define Diaspora as "The emotional and experiential investment in 'here' and 'there' and the points in between obviously changes in response to the shifting material, mental, and moral orders of social existence. Diaspora is simultaneously a state of being and a process of becoming, a kind of voyage that encompasses the possibility of never arriving or returning, a navigation of multiple belongings. It is a mode of naming, remembering, living and feeling group identity molded out of experiences, positionings, struggles and imaginings of the past and the present, and at times the unpredictable future, which are shared across the boundaries of time and space that frame 'indigenous' identities in the contested and constructed locations of 'there' and 'here' and the passages and points in between."

<sup>2</sup> Ira Berlin uses the term in reference to West Africans living in Africa who were active in the slave trade and "connected by long-standing business and personal ties to other slave traders in Africa and England." Ira Berlin, "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origin of African-American Society in Mainland North America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ser., 53 (1996), pp..251-288.; For greater detail on the significance of the Atlantic community in linking African-Americans and Africans please see Robin Law and Paul E. Lovejoy, "The changing Dimensions of African History: Reappropriating the Diaspora," in eds. Simon A. McGrath and Christopher Fyfe, *Rethinking African History* (Edinburgh: Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 1997).

organization and the Diapsora at large.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Mysterious Warrior Mother of Africa**

Laura Kofey's migration to the United States from Accra, Ghana West Africa is shrouded in mystery. Her early life recounts the difficulties women of African decent often encountered when attempting to enter the United States.<sup>4</sup> Kofey's trek to the United States occurred in phases and introduced her to audiences throughout the Diaspora from her native Africa to Canada.<sup>5</sup> Along the way, she went to the Panama Canal Zone in 1925 as the featured guest speaker at a UNIA meeting in Colon, Panama. Her experience in Colon brought her notoriety that followed her to Detroit UNIA circles in 1926.<sup>6</sup> Between 1926 and August 1927, when she visited Marcus Garvey in the Atlanta Penitentiary, Princess Kofey established branches of the Universal African Orthodox Church in New Orleans, Alabama, and Florida, while soliciting members for the UNIA and helping to revitalize fledgling branches and divisions. In this way, her work in the UNIA was similar to that of Jacques Garvey, Davis and De Mena. Kofey was heralded as a "prophet of Garveyism" while the Miami Division 286 viewed her as the "female John the Baptist."<sup>7</sup>

Historiographical considerations of Kofey by historian Barbara Bair and biographical sketches of her work in the Black Church by historian Richard Newman focus primarily on her

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<sup>3</sup> Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D. G. Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World" *African Studies Review*, Vol. 43, No. 1, Special Issue on the Diaspora (Apr., 2000), p. 13.

<sup>4</sup>For more details on governmental policy and its effects on immigrations patters and quotas among women of the Diaspora please see Nancy Foner, *Islands in the City: West Indian Migration to New York City* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 2001); Irma Watkins Owens, *Blood Relations: Caribbean Immigrants and the Harlem Community, 1900-1930* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Aimee M. Glocke "Two steps forward and one and a half steps back: Maria Stewart and Mary Ann Shadd Cary's fight for inclusion into early Black Nationalism, 1803-1893" (MA Thesis University of California, Los Angeles, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> *Negro World*, August 1926 Convention Division Reports reprinted in the *Negro World*.

<sup>7</sup>*Negro World*, June 11, 1927, July 23, 1927; Richard Newman, "'Warrior Mother of Africa's Warriors of the Most High God': Laura Adorkor Kofey and the African Universal Church." In *Black Power and Black Religion: Essays and Reviews* (Cornwall: Locust Hill Press, 1987), p. 131; Barbara Bair, "'Ethiopia Shall Stretch Forth Her Hands Unto God': Laura Kofey and eh Gendered Vision of Redemption in the Garvey Movement" in *A Mighty Baptism: Race, Gender, and the Creation of American Protestantism* eds. Susan Juster and Lisa MacFarlane (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 56.

as a religious charismatic speaker.<sup>8</sup> In these accounts Laura Kofey's contributions to Black Nationalist ideals and her role as a prominent figure in the Black Atlantic are highlighted. Her contributions to the UNIA, however, take on a new significance when the content of her speeches, the responses of the lay membership, UNIA officials and observers are combined with her legacy, her role in America, the Caribbean and Africa. That legacy is based in large part on her church and its ability to reinterpret the UNIA's objectives. It is also based on its success, albeit limited, in actualizing a repatriation scheme. According to UNIA objectives the organization sought, "To Assist in Civilizing the Backward tribes of Africa, to strengthen the Imperialism of Bas[u]toland, Liberia, etc.," and "To Promote a Conscientious Christian Worship among the Native Tribes of Africa."<sup>9</sup> Kofey proposed that the organization re-evaluate the necessity of sending preachers and missionaries to Africa and asserted that Africa was not backward in its religious or governmental beliefs. She argued that Africa was a continent with an elaborate and sophisticated array of spiritual beliefs and practices, Christian and otherwise.

Evidence of a Christianized Africa was first signaled by Henrietta Peters at a New York UNIA meeting in 1919. Mrs. Peters and her husband were missionaries of the African Methodist Episcopalian Zion church to the Gold Coast of Africa from 1915 to 1925.<sup>10</sup> In her view, the people of the interior of Africa were governed "under the most refined judicial system of law, order and authority," and contrasted sharply with the "time-honored tradition in America that the

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<sup>8</sup>Barbara Bair, "'Ethiopia Shall Stretch Forth Her Hands Unto God': Laura Kofey and the Gendered Vision of Redemption in the Garvey Movement" in *A Mighty Baptism: Race, Gender, and the Creation of American Protestantism* eds. Susan Juster and Lisa MacFarlane (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 38-61; Barbara Bair, "Renegotiating Liberty Garveyism, Women, and Grassroots organizing in Virginia" in *Women of the American South* ed. Christine Anne Farham (New York and London: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 221-240. Richard Newman, "'Warrior Mother of Africa's Warriors of the Most High God': Laura Adorkor Kofey and the African Universal Church" in *Black Power and Black Religion: Essays and Reviews* (Cornwall: Locust Hill Press, 1987), pp. 131-143.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Hill, *Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 67.

<sup>10</sup> David H. Bradley, *A History of the A.M.E. Zion Church 1796-1968. Part I, 1796-1872* (Nashville, 1956); Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church Records, 1884-1949 (Charleston, South Carolina: Mt. Zion AME Church).

Negro was a natural and rapid rapine...”<sup>11</sup> Mrs. Peters’ report was followed by that of another AME missionary, Emily Christmas Kinch. She advised in 1920 that Africa was “never in a more receptive mood for the UNIA than today” and that the time was ripe for “going back to Africa and possessing the land.”<sup>12</sup> She invoked the “here” and “there” polar opposites as she told listeners that

You think it is a wonderful thing to be in Harlem, but you have never enjoyed you[r ] manhood until you have walked in Liberia and have come in contact with the black President of that country and received invitations to come to the banquet that is prepared in the State House. You surely cannot go to Washington to one. And so, after all, I would rather be in Liberia to-night, all things being equal, without her trolley cars, without her subways, without her elevated system, and to feel and know that I am a woman for all of that. Black skins or short hair, money or no money, you are a man and have the opportunity of being the greatest person in that republic; for the only requirement of Liberia is that you re black.....<sup>13</sup>

Kinch inextricably linked the reclamation of black manhood with setting foot on African soil. Travel to Africa presented the potential for a transformation of not only status but also of the mind. In keeping with the efficient woman tradition of the UNIA, which encouraged men to take their rightful place in the pursuit of race progress, her words were geared toward men. Still, as she closed she noted that “...the only requirement in Liberia is that you are black...” indicating that women and children were also presented with new possibilities.

Just as Mrs. Peters and Ms. Kinch claimed their work was derived from a mandate from God, Laura Kofey also claimed to be doing His work. Princess Kofey presented herself to UNIA crowds as doing the work of “her Ol’ Man God” and her father, King Kenispi and elders of her African community who decided to “...endorse a mission to America and supply her with

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<sup>11</sup> *Negro World*, June 14, 1919.

<sup>12</sup> Emily Christmas Kinch travelled in West Africa from 1908 to 1910. She also worked as a missionary in Sierra Leone and Liberia where she established the Eliza Turner Primary School. She also authored a pamphlet based on her time in Africa entitled *West Africa: An Open Door*. For more on Emily Kinch please see Randall Burkett, *Black Redemption: Churchmen Speak for the Garvey Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), pp. 43-46; Robert Hill, *Marcus Garvey and the UNIA Papers* vol. 2 p. 3; *Negro World*, June 26, 1920.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

documents, credentials, and power of attorney to represent them...” along with “samples of their products and raw materials and above all she was given a MESSAGE by them to their people in America.”<sup>14</sup> Members of her family, who were held political office until the mid-1980s, continued to defend the legitimacy of her immediate ancestry. They also sanctioned the authority given to her by her countrymen to speak on their behalf in the United States. The message the people of Accra sent with Laura Kofey was to simply ask when and if African-Americans intended to return to their homeland.<sup>15</sup> She encouraged them to come “home” to build and proposed to start and import/export business with Accra to get them started. In this way, Kofey becomes a pioneering entrepreneur and a unique advocate of African-American women’s political, social, and economic activism.

Although the UNIA claimed it was in colonization negotiations with President C.D.B. King of Liberia and sent three delegations over a six-year period in hopes of achieving a written colonization agreement, King and others in Liberia’s government claimed that this was not true. During the time in which a credible agreement was supposedly reached, Liberia entered into a land contract with the Firestone Rubber Company and publicly denounced the UNIA. Aside from publicly disassociating itself for the UNIA, the Liberian government instituted measures that banned UNIA members from setting foot in the country by refusing them Visa’s and revoking privileges previously extended to anyone associated with the organization.<sup>16</sup>

Laura Kofey presented a very different strategy for repatriation. Her plans included avoiding any reliance on already established African countries and presented greater

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<sup>14</sup> *Precious Duncan Papers Private Collection* “Laura Kofey, *Mother’s Sacred Teachings*”, p. 8. Laura Kofey’s Speeches and excerpts from conversations with her congregants were reprinted by The African Universal Church in Jacksonville, FL. The date of original publication is unknown.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *New York World*, June 29, 1924; Martin Summers, *Manliness* pp. 81-83, Ibarhim Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slavery, 1914-1940* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 30-41

opportunities for individual as well as collective wealth. Mother Kofey, as she became known, advised that

...those of you who go to Africa don't go in the towns that already built up. Go in the interior and build your own towns children. Prepare to build up the old waste places. Children go way out among your people and put up your own stores, because the other fellow is going to have and isn't going to give it away to you.<sup>17</sup>

Her strategy for repatriation was reminiscent of the American pioneer experience, where families moved to the West in search of land ownership and business opportunities. Many African-Americans during the antebellum period also looked to the West where Slavery and Jim Crow had been unsuccessful. By establishing towns like Athens, Ohio, for example, they provided themselves and their progeny a base for the creation of new communities, businesses, churches and schools. They also created a space for rule by the sons and daughters of ex-slaves.<sup>18</sup> In these territories they shared space with Native Americans and whites who shared similar desires.

Although Liberia, just like the American West, presented new possibilities for former slaves and their children, it was not the only repatriation alternative. Kofey's warnings about seeking "one's own ground" may have resulted from the example set by the founding of Maryland State in Africa by the Maryland State Colonization Society in 1854.<sup>19</sup> Maryland State was "located along the coast between the Grand Cess and San Pedro Rivers" which provided

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<sup>17</sup> Kofey, *Mother's Sacred Teachings*, p. 52; For a concise review of the contents of official correspondences between Liberia, the US government, and the UNIA please see Robert Hill, *Marcus Garvey & The UNIA Papers* vol. 10, pp. 200-250.

<sup>18</sup> An example of this is Liberia's fifth president. Edward Jenkins Roye was born in Newark, Ohio the son of Kentucky Slaves who ran away to Ohio and educated at Oberlin College. He served as President of Liberia for one year and was forced out of office over a scandal involving a high interest loan from the British government to facilitate building and road improvements. Roye is discussed in great details as well as other African-American men who served as Liberian Presidents in David Smith, *The African-American Presidents: The Founding Fathers of Liberia, 1848-1904* (Atlanta: New African-American History Press, 2004); *Slaves No More: Letters from Liberia, 1833-1869* ed. Bell I. Wiley (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, c1980).

<sup>19</sup> James Hall, "An address to the free people of color of the state of Maryland" in *From Slavery to Freedom: The African-American Pamphlet Collection, 1824-1909* Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress Case H no. 122.

access to trade routes with Africa's interior and the Atlantic world.<sup>20</sup> In an effort to control the ports and maintain the control over the monies generated by those ports, Maryland repatriates declined to join with Liberia. Instead they opted for their own independent nation-state. Kofey's awareness of the Maryland example may have come through one of the churches she worked with in Kumasi, Ghana.<sup>21</sup> Kumasi is the cultural center and capital city of the Ashanti region and served as a cross \roads for the region.

Unfortunately, Maryland was unable to maintain complete sovereignty. Due to military encroachments by neighboring peoples, Maryland became a county of Liberia in 1857 after Liberia assisted the nation-state in rebuffing its enemies.<sup>22</sup> County status allowed Maryland to maintain its internal autonomy while giving it access to the military prowess of Liberia. Had not the Kru and Grebo peoples forced the need for an increased organized army on Maryland, one can infer that they would have maintained their separate "nationhood" status. Their limited success serves as an example of the kind of repatriation scheme Kofey advocated which differed from the one Garvey had in place when she first entered UNIA circles. Both approaches built on a longstanding effort by African-Americans to establish a home in Africa as early as the 1780s with the presence of Paul Cuffee in Sierra Leone.<sup>23</sup>

The views the UNIA reflected those expressed by Martin Delaney, Alexander Crummell, Henry McNeal Turner and Edward Wilmot Blyden who approached Africa with "Europeans as

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.; Smith, "The history of Mason and Dixon's Line: contained in an address delivered by John H.B. Latrobe of Maryland, before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, November 8, 1854." in *From Slavery to Freedom: The African-American Pamphlet Collection, 1824-1909* Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress Case H no. 122; *Maryland in Liberia / drawn under the superintendence of Com. Lynch, U.S.N., at Wm. Sides Office, Balt.* In Library of Congress Map Collections Washington, D.C.: U.S. Senate, 1853.

<sup>21</sup> Richard Newman, "Laura Adorkor Kofey Research Collection, 1926-1981" Box 1, Folder 8 at Schomburg Research Library Letters from the Ghana Finance Minister 1974 (New York: New York).

<sup>22</sup> "The history of Mason and Dixon's Line : contained in an address delivered by John H.B. Latrobe of Maryland, before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, November 8, 1854." in *From Slavery to Freedom: The African-American Pamphlet Collection, 1824-1909* Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress Case H no. 122.

<sup>23</sup> For more of Cuffee's efforts please see Sheldon H. Harris, *Paul Cuffee: Black America and the African Return* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972).

the bearers of civilization of universal and normative values that Africans should emulate.”<sup>24</sup> In so doing these men “came to [view] Africa with cultural arrogance and a sense of superiority, just like the Europeans, and they objectified Africans as primitives who lacked the capacity for self-enhancement.”<sup>25</sup> Kofey took issue with this viewpoint, arguing that Africans not only had their own culture, forms of government and standards, but that these institutions were not in need of repair. Her account supported the recollections of Henrietta Peters and Emily Kinch. The interpretations of Africa and African repatriation from the viewpoints of these women appear to have a different slant than the men credited with championing the idea.

Not only was Laura Kofey reformulating African colonization efforts, but she was one of the few recorded African women inviting African-Americans to return to their homeland. While African-American s and various colonization societies in America and England raised funds and devised plans for the return of slaves and their descendents to Africa, there were few recorded formal invitations to former slaves and free people of color to return to Africa. Laura Kofey’s assertion that she was sent from Africa to ask African-American s if they wanted to “... come home” to “... let us know: and if you don’t want to come, let us know” served as a formal invitation by a native born African to their geographically distant relations.<sup>26</sup> In this capacity she served as Accra’s diplomat.

Kofey’s self-professed role as a diplomat was similar to that of Lady Davis. While Marcus Garvey noted that it “...would be entirely improper to send a lady delegate” to the U.N. as ladies were never chosen as members of diplomatic missions, from the start of her tenure with the organization, Davis was received in international circles as *the* delegate of the UNIA.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Tunde Adekele, p.25.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Kofey, *Mother’s Sacred Teachings*, p. 17.

<sup>27</sup> *Negro World*, August 12, 1922.

Whether Laura Kofey was aware of this is not clear. In some ways, Kofey's assumption of a liaison status between Africa and the UNIA at a time when other formal channels had failed may have brought her under scrutiny.

What is clear is that she presented her message and invitation in terms readily understood by people of the Diaspora. In part, it is her presentation and central focus on the redemption of Africa as a means for the Diaspora to reclaim itself that struck a chord with UNIA members and non-members alike. The efficient womanhood of the UNIA was further highlighted by Kofey's ability to create both fictive and literal links with Africa and Diasporic Africans despite her disagreements with UNIA officials. Her message resonated with the membership to such a degree that she was perceived as a threat and attempts were made to discredit her in both the *Negro World* and mainstream press.

Despite the *Negro World*'s declaration that she was a "fake," her message drew massive crowds. She continued to receive speaking engagements, contributions to her church flowed uninterrupted and people throughout the Florida and Alabama allegedly demonstrated their support by buying passage on ships she attempted to purchase from the Japanese for a voyage to the Gold Coast.<sup>28</sup> While Garvey and other UNIA officials, particularly UNIA lawyer and Garvey confidant J.A. Craigen, sent "directives" to branches throughout the state banning Kofey from meetings and expelled her supporters, people continued to gravitate toward her. Garvey's response to Kofey was guided in part by a visit from Miami Division President Claude Green to the Atlanta Penitentiary in September 1927.<sup>29</sup> Along with ministers in UNIA, Green disagreed with the lay membership's assessment of Kofey as "...marvelous" and as responsible for the fact that "...Garveyism (was) spreading like wild fire" as she had "...done untold good and [was]

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<sup>28</sup> *Negro World*, October 22, 1927; Kofey, *Mother's Sacred Teachings*, p. 41.

<sup>29</sup> *Negro World*, September 17, 1927; October 22, 1927.

still doing it.”<sup>30</sup> The lay membership’s adulation for Kofey appeared on the pages of the *Negro World* and circulated throughout UNIA circles for several months. However, the sentiment of good feeling was to be short lived.

### **Laura Kofey’s Vision of Africa**

Kofey’s popularity presented several problems for the UNIA and African- American ministers alike. While she aggressively signed up members for the UNIA, her campaign upset the delicate balance between local preachers and UNIA officials as her Sunday afternoon meetings and all-week rallies left church empty and collection plates empty. Her popularity had burgeoned as she held meetings in baseball fields and “without the benefit of public notices, people (would) line[d] the streets long before opening hour” to hear her. Many of her speaking engagements became “standing room only” events.<sup>31</sup> Moreover some of her speech themes directly criticized both local ministers and UNIA officials caused a great stir. Her admonitions against “do nothing preachers” and men who used the UNIA for their own “personal self-interest” did not go unnoticed.<sup>32</sup>

Miami Division President Claude Green made an appearance before Garvey one month later to answer Kofey’s charges and discredit her claims. As Garvey sat in prison, the idea that someone outside the inner sanctum was drawing crowds that rivaled in number the participants in UNIA parades and convention meeting events posed as a threat to his leadership.

During her camp style meetings, Kofey encouraged the audience to “Enroll your names with your Mother, children. If you don’t have but one drop of black blood in you, and know you

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<sup>30</sup> *Negro World*, June 11, 1927; July 23, 1927.

<sup>31</sup> Kofey, *Mother’s Sacred Teachings*, p. 23; Barbara Bair, “Ethiopia”, p. 55; *Negro World*, May 7, 1927, May 14, 1927; *Mobile Register*, August 18, 1926.

<sup>32</sup> Kofey, *Mother’s Sacred Teachings*, p. 9

cannot pass for white, enroll your name with Mother.”<sup>33</sup> The immediate response to her call indicated the extent of her popularity. In the month of April 1927, Kofey single-handedly registered 1,000 new members for the UNIA. As her popularity rose, rather than earning accolades she earned new enemies.<sup>34</sup> Although the UNIA praised Laura Kofey for her efforts, it shunned her for them. Still, Kofey, like Ashwood and Davis, continued to maintain an unwavering allegiance to the organization’s ideals and sought ways to have those programs ideals become a reality.

Laura Kofey is another example of the uniqueness of UNIA women and their approach to racial uplift. Her life illustrated the ideologies and practice of racial uplift that blended nationalist trends of the 1920s and the ideals expressed in the women’s movement of the same period. Black Nationalism during this period has been defined as a belief that black powerlessness could be overcome by “setting up mechanisms of self-determination.”<sup>35</sup> It has also been defined by Wilson Jeremiah Moses as more than a mere “a dissatisfaction with conditions in the United States.”<sup>36</sup> The dissatisfaction felt by many African-Americans during the 1920s translated into an “impulse toward self determination among Africans transplanted to the New World by the slave trade.”<sup>37</sup> Their goals were defined as “racial goals,” as race was central to the environment in which they lived.<sup>38</sup> These goals were well packaged by the UNIA. It was also internalized and reinterpreted by UNIA women.

As noted throughout this dissertation, women in the organization were anxious to see the UNIA’s programs actualized. One such program as expressed in the UNIA objective “To

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<sup>33</sup> *Miami Herald*, March 12, 1928; Kofey, *Mothers Sacred Teachings*, p. 44; *The Church: Why Mother Established the Church and What It Stands For* (N.p.: Jacksonville, FL, N.d.).

<sup>34</sup> *Negro World*, May 14, 1927.

<sup>35</sup> Rodney P Carlisle, *The Roots of Black Nationalism* (New York: Kennikat Press Corp., 1975), p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Wilson J. Moses, *Classical Black Nationalism: From American Revolution to Marcus Garvey* (New York: NYU Press, 1996), p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Wilson, *Classical Black Nationalism*, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6.

Establish Universities, Colleges and Secondary Schools for the Further Education and Culture of our Boys and Girls” led to in the formation of Liberty University.<sup>39</sup> The pursuit of education as a form of liberation, much like repatriation projects, was long held throughout the Diaspora as a means to overcoming imperialism and racism. Just as Kofey advocated a literal approach to repatriation that included building new towns in Africa and establishing trade with existing native-run entities, she was also a staunch supporter of an ethnic-based education that would “enlighten” her listeners to the realities of an Africa well “managed by native people.”<sup>40</sup> She encouraged all peoples of the Diaspora to equip themselves to help build stronger nations in Africa in cooperation with their native brothers and sisters. This differed slightly from the UNIA’s approach to education which sought to train boys and girls for service on the continent of Africa.

The UNIA’s popularity in Virginia was due in large part to pre-existing programs that attempted to remedy the evils of Jim Crow to varying degrees.<sup>41</sup> The founding of Liberty University, really the purchasing of Smallwood-Corey school, was heralded as one of Garvey’s early achievements in establishing a formal training school. Garvey’s original intention was a Tuskegee-like institution in Jamaica that would “... in time furnish competent men and women as technical missionaries to be sent to the mother country ---Africa.”<sup>42</sup> It was also used to promote a figurative and literal link with Africa, as the school’s site was alleged to be “the spot where Negro slaves landed in 1622” and near the disembarking point of “the first cargo of (American)

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<sup>39</sup> The exact date of the publication of the pamphlet is not known. The pamphlet itself is simply dated July-August 1914. A series of pamphlets authored by Garvey in 1914 carry the same date. Robert Hill, *Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 55-70.

<sup>40</sup> Kofey, *Mother’s Sacred Teachings*, p. 18.

<sup>41</sup> Claudrena Harold, *The Rise and Fall*, p. 91; Bair, *Renegotiating Liberty*, p. 223.

<sup>42</sup> Amy Jacques Garvey, *Garvey and Garveyism* (1963; reprint, New York: Octagon books, 1978), pp. 13, 173; *Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* vol. 6, pp. 338 - 39; According to historian Barbara Bair, the Tuskegee connection was also a link with Virginia because of Booker T. Washington's training and Hampton Institute.

slaves in 1619.”<sup>43</sup> By buying this land, the UNIA attempted to reconnect themselves with the past and the history lost during the Middle Passage. The president and vice-president of the Smallwood-Corey School and members of the UNIA, Caleb Robinson and Dr. St. Clair Drake contended:

because of the history of the place and its sacredness to (our) group we are deciding to make it the Southern Headquarters of the Garvey ‘Back to Africa’ movement, and have there a great school to teach and train boys and girls, men and women of African descent <sup>44</sup>

The training offered was to enable students “...to live in Africa” and “...be an asset and not a liability.”<sup>45</sup> To highlight the importance of their asset status the *Negro World* described the school to readers as the development of a

distinct school for Negro people, in which they may learn something about themselves and their race, and about Africa, their Motherland, which they could not learn in other race schools, nor in the white schools open to them... To be taught that the Negro has as many rights as any other racial group and that he needs a country and a flag of his own in order to make effective his rights, is something new in Negro education.<sup>46</sup>

While UNIA officials stressed the importance of fostering a generation ready to serve and work in Africa, the Africa Kofey portrayed was not in need of missionaries, nor did it suffer from a lack of educated and able people. Kofey depicted Africa as a continent of landed peoples with an infrastructure that was ready and willing to receive those willing to come. She proclaimed that

... it is the natives, who, in many countries of Africa, own and control their homelands. And since they owned and controlled their homelands it is in the Africans themselves who carried on industries and commerce of their own

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<sup>43</sup> Caleb Robinson to John Powell, March 26, 1926, John Powell Collection, Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

<sup>44</sup> Caleb Robinson to John Powell, March 26, 1926, John Powell Collection, Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

<sup>45</sup> Caleb Robinson to John Powell, March 26, 1926, John Powell Collection, Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

<sup>46</sup> *Negro World*, January 8, 1927.

countries, selling their raw materials to the markets of the world and in turn buying all kinds of manufactured goods.<sup>47</sup>

Kofey's depiction of Africa spoke of "cities operated and managed by African people."<sup>48</sup> Many of these cities had "every modern convenience---of black mayors, city authorities, houses of legislature of Natural Rulers, kings and leaders."<sup>49</sup> Instead of sending missionaries to Africa or preachers, Laura Kofey asked her listeners to work *with* natives. She asserted a need for skilled laborers and encouraged the honing of skills to help Africa develop further.

According to Kofey, what it took to make life livable in the Americas was no different than what it would take to develop Africa's interior. The skill sets honed as sharecroppers, day laborers, factory workers, educators, journalists, and entrepreneurs were all deemed essential in Kofey's repatriation schemes. The membership accepted her words as a direct message from Africa. According to Mrs Adel Jennings of Jacksonville, FL, listeners were "taken with her plain folk approach" and heard in her words their potential to play "an active role in African redemption."<sup>50</sup> Through her, they could do more than simply buy stock in fledgling enterprises or stage figurative battles of reclamation through parades and land purchases. She depicted an Africa that was very real, reachable, and desirous of their return.

As Garvey and the UNIA staged parades "through the streets of Harlem, boldly claiming those streets as (African-American) political territory," Laura Kofey encouraged her listeners to take a trip to Africa and established themselves there. After doing so, she claimed they should "make the trip back over here. You will say me smell something stink."<sup>51</sup> The stench in the air

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<sup>47</sup> Kofey, *Mother's Sacred Teachings*, p. 18.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, p. 27.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p. 18.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 62-64.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p. 67.

of the Americas for Kofey was the rot of racism, low self concept, gender bias, and ignorance that kept people of the Diaspora disconnected from the continent and their potential.

While Laura Kofey established churches in the United States, she only did so in the hopes that those churches would serve as links to West Africa. In looking at her travels in each city where she established a church, there was a connection to major ports or other modes of transportation. This was not an accident. In keeping with the goals of her diplomatic mission, Kofey appeared to seek ports of call where trade and transport of goods could occur. Her Florida converts claimed that the choice of Jacksonville as her home in America was due in large part to the city's relative proximity to Africa.<sup>52</sup> Kofey's intention was to ship and receive goods between the two continents, thus creating a 20<sup>th</sup> Century triangle of trade run for and by Africans and their Diasporic cousins.

Kofey's desire to establish a trade business brought her to the ports of Jacksonville. She was also guided, as mentioned earlier, by her belief that Jacksonville was the closest place literally and figuratively to Africa.<sup>53</sup> At the time of her notoriety, Jacksonville, FL was plagued by lynching and acts of terror which led her to suggest that

Negroes, learn to help yourselves, create your own jobs, build your own enterprises. Clean up your lives--- love one another, patronize one another. If you don't learn to help yourselves and build industries and commerce with your Motherland Africa you are doomed and done for.<sup>54</sup>

Keeping Africa at the forefront of the minds of followers was essential to the UNIA program. The greatness of Africa was often spoken of and many UNIA officials, including Provisional President General Marcus Garvey, held fictive leadership positions that linked to the

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<sup>52</sup> Kofey, *Mother's Sacred Teachings*, p. 69.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p. 35.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p. 60.

continent.<sup>55</sup> Africa was not presented to the UNIA lay membership as a series of independent countries, but instead as one large occupied state. Kofey's assertion of mayors, legislatures, and councils in Africa served to present a more nuanced and credible view, albeit exaggerated at points.

Her credibility in making these claims of a civilized Africa, was bolstered by her appearance. Unlike Garvey, Kofey never crafted a vision of a regaled Africa dressed, paradoxically in European-style uniforms and plumbed hats. Instead, she was described by her followers as a "beautiful brown-skinned woman of medium height in her early 30s with a head full of lovely hair, but not straightened," who wore at all times "only plain Western-style dresses and except for harboring an African-made gold broach, there was no jewelry seen on her."<sup>56</sup> Her choice of dress also served to endear her to listeners. She looked like them. The efficient womanhood of the UNIA became more detailed through Kofey's style of dress and her mannerisms, which included a "light quick step and a presence that seemed to command respect and intense admiration."<sup>57</sup> Efficient women like Kofey were approachable, celebrated people for who they were, and saw a place in the fight for racial progress for everyone regardless of educational background or economic status.

Eyewitness accounts of her rallies described her message as being one of "good news and glad tidings" from Africa. In these speeches she reiterated three key points. She began by offering greetings and reminding the audience that they had been away from home a long time. Secondly she asked "why have you not made preparations to come home?"; and her last point

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<sup>55</sup> Within the UNIA hierarchy, Garvey bestowed titles that reflected the government in exile status the UNIA claimed. He was Provisional President, and had appointed a "Leader of the Negro people in America" and a "Leader of the People of the People of the West Indies" as well as a host of other fictive officers in anticipation of a winning a battle for control of the continent. For greater detail on the UNIA's government in exile please see Jahi Issa, "The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Louisiana: Creating a Provisional Government in Exile" (Ph.D. Dissertation: Howard University, 2005).

<sup>56</sup> Kofey, *Mother's Sacred Teachings*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p. 16.

was to assure listeners that “in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) there is a door open (to all Africa) to you and a hearty welcome waiting you there.”<sup>58</sup> She asked that they begin to purchase “machinery and tools” to send to Africa instead of sponsoring trips for “preachers who know nothing else to do but preach.”<sup>59</sup>

The jobs women and men already performed in UNIA-based projects, such as the Negro Factories Corporation and Millinery, the community-based vegetable gardens sponsored by the Black Cross Nurses, and the UNIA run restaurants made them assets to Africa. The “free labor” women gave to the organization, as secretaries, lay organizers, cooks, nurses, elocutionists, and businesswomen provided skills and abilities that would carry them far in helping to build Africa. The efficient womanhood of the UNIA became just that, a means of always finding new avenues of “doing” to help advance the race.

Through the blending of strategies and expansion and re-fashioning of ideals prevalent in the period, Kofey and other UNIA women lived a distinct form of activism. As a result, a record of what can be described as more than feminist, more than black radical, less than elitist, and equal to the contributions of the male contemporaries remains. The uniqueness of Kofey in particular and of the lay membership in general remains to be included in discourses centered on the intersections of race, gender and class. Historians of club women often argue that the women kept themselves both emotionally and often physically distant from the masses.<sup>60</sup> They find them to be less in touch with the masses of persons they sought to assist and more in tune with a personal quest to prove themselves to society at large. Within this group, however, there were

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p. 49.

<sup>60</sup> Shirley J. Carlson, “Black Ideals of Womanhood in the Late Victorian Era” *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 77, No. 2. (Spring, 1992), pp. 61-73.; Dorothy Schneider, *American women in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920* (New York : Facts on File, 1993); Dorothy Sterling, *We are your sisters : black women in the nineteenth century* (New York : W.W. Norton, 1997); Dorothy Sterling, *Black ForeMother's : three lives*. (New York: Feminist Press, 1979.)

women and men who spoke very specifically of the type of uplift they sought for their race regardless of social status or economic background. Such persons existed in the UNIA and Laura Kofey was one of them.

As a native of Africa, Kofey believed that Diaspora blacks needed to know more about their heritage and the lives of persons living in Africa.<sup>61</sup> She proposed to initiate an import/export relationship between the UNIA and her father's kingdom in Accra. At the time of her death, it was believed that King Kinespi of Accra would come to the United States to have her murder investigated. This never occurred, however.<sup>62</sup> Her connection with Accra and King Kinespi has generated some debate both during her lifetime and among historians since. While the UNIA began the rumor of her forged ancestry to discredit her, it also urged government officials to deport her in December of 1927.<sup>63</sup> In recent years the contention over her authenticity as an African appears to have been settled by Richard Newman, where correspondence with her family and church followers has substantiated the legitimacy of her claims.<sup>64</sup>

Relatives of Kofey were still in governmental positions as late as 1973 and provided letters from Kofey's church where she served as a medium (the equivalent to a prophetess in this country) and from the government registry attesting to the birth and lineage of Laura Adorkor Kofey of Accra, Ghana, West Africa.<sup>65</sup>

The rift between Kofey and the UNIA and the ministerial alliance occurred for several reasons. First, she presented herself as a lay preacher directed by God at a time when women in

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<sup>61</sup> Richard Newman, "Laura Adorkor Kofey Research Collection, 1926-1981" Box 1, Folder 8 at Schomburg Research Library Letters from the Ghana Finance Minister 1974 (New York: New York).

<sup>62</sup> "Negro King Coming on Murder Inquiry." *New York Times*, (March 21, 1928), 13(2).

<sup>63</sup> *Negro World*, December 27, 1927.

<sup>64</sup> Richard Newman, "Laura Adorkor Kofey Research Collection, 1926-1981" Box 1, Folder 8 at Schomburg Research Library Letters from the Ghana Finance Minister 1974 (New York: New York).

<sup>65</sup> Richard Newman, "Laura Adorkor Kofey Research Collection, 1926-1981" Box 1, Folder 8 at Schomburg Research Library Letters from the Ghana Finance Minister 1974 (New York: New York)..

the pulpit were not readily accepted. Although the UNIA had canonized “the Virgin Mary and depicted her as the ideal black woman” at the behest of female delegates Hannah Nichols and Carrie Minus at the 1924 UNIA Convention, the organization appeared unprepared for a woman who openly defied organization conventions. Kofey spoke out against fundraising events that included dancing and liquor. She also objected to the African Legion and the African Motor Corps running drills on Sundays. Many UNIA branches met in churches and held meetings and drill practice after church. For Princess Kofey, however, this was sacrilege as it constituted work on the Lord’s Day. Kofey’s exception to these practices was not unique and reflected not only the sentiments of women in the organization, but was also a theme of many African- American women and men preachers alike throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>66</sup>

The involvement of some 250 preachers and missionaries, men and women, in the UNIA has been documented by Randall Burkett in *Garveyism as a Religious Movement* and *Black Redemption: Churchmen Speak for the Garvey Movement*. There is no documented evidence of any of the preachers taking similar stands on the presence of dancing and alcohol at UNIA fundraisers. Some of the female missionaries, including Emily Kinch, expressed a disdain for the atmosphere at some of the UNIA fundraisers.<sup>67</sup> However, many male preachers did take exception to Kofey’s ability to sway members and became alarmed at her rapid rise to prominence. As the people moved, so did their tithes and offerings. While the UNIA posed a financial threat, ministers aligned themselves with the organization in part to bridge the gap in their collection plates. To offset losses, many assessed rental fees for the use of the church halls.

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<sup>66</sup> For more on African-American women and the blending of the prophetic tradition and nationalism please see Kathy L. Glass, *Courting Communities: Black Female Nationalism and “Syncre-Nationalism” in the Nineteenth Century North* ( New York: Routledge, 2006); Gayle T. Tate, *Unknown Tongues: Black Women’s Political Activism in the Ante –Bellum Era, 1830-1860* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2003); Shirley Wilson Logan, *‘We Are Coming’ The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Black Women* (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999).

<sup>67</sup> *Negro World*, August Convention 1925 reprinted in the *Negro World*.

Laura Kofey's rise to prominence, while solely based on her work as a UNIA organizer, presented no possibilities for gaining additional revenues for local ministers. That people would follow her, whether she was in the organization or not, implied that she could take monies away from the UNIA pot.

By 1926, as Garvey faced deportation, Amy Jacques Garvey along with Henrietta Vinton Davis became the de facto "head" of the UNIA. Their leadership was heavily contested. Laura Kofey took center stage during this period of turmoil in the organization. The timing of Kofey's ascent provided the context for the fierce opposition she encountered. Garvey's trial identified many inadequacies of male officials, most of whom resigned from office at the start of the BSL crisis. Concurrent with Garvey's imprisonment was a heated discussion in the African-American community and society at large over the appropriateness of women preaching from the pulpit. In 1924 the Episcopal Church voted down by 191 to 49 a resolution that called for the "womanhood of the church" to be "represented in the church councils equally with the manhood of the church..."<sup>68</sup> The phrasing of the resolution mimicked what UNIA women asked for and received at the 1922 Convention.

UNIA women, already sensitized to discussions of women's place, began to assert themselves again in 1924, as they watched women in the U.S. and Great Britain seek leadership in churches. They noticed that men had begun to let "the copyright on Christianity run out" and sought to re-establish its relevance in their communities.<sup>69</sup> African-Americans of the period came under internal and external criticism for falling prey to the many vices of the 1920s. UNIA women found that many preachers were not doing enough to protect their families from evils, like alcohol, gambling and fornication and sought ways to have them become more vocal. This

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<sup>68</sup> *Negro World*, November 1, 1924.

<sup>69</sup> *Negro World*, November 20, 1926.

atmosphere, when coupled with columns in the *Negro World* entitled “The Exigencies of Leadership” authored by Lady Davis, noted that women were ready and prepared to act if their men continued to procrastinate. In response to rumblings among some of the male hierarchy regarding the sentiments Davis expressed, Amy Jacques Garvey issued an apology of sorts. Jacques apologized for wanting “equal opportunity to fulfill any position” in the organization and was regretted that this offended any “old fashioned-tyrannical feelings” of those who continuously spoke of a better day coming “while they did nothing to usher in that day.”<sup>70</sup> Not only did Kofey speak of a brighter day, she intimated that the day had dawned as Africa awaited the return of her children.

### **Laura Kofey Persona Non Grata**

Aside from their discontent with the limitations they faced within the organization and those the church placed on them, Kofey and other women also expressed dissatisfaction with the role of Christian nations in the abuses of Third World countries and the failure of the church to engage in a program of progress.<sup>71</sup> They referenced the monies that flowed into churches on Sunday, while the jobless and penniless saw little or none of it. The church needed to do more, and the UNIA presented itself as a means of doing so.<sup>72</sup> Laura Kofey also agreed that more needed to be done, but did not live long enough to realize her ambitions. The challenge, however, was taken up by her followers who not only formally incorporated her church, but established a Swahili dictionary to teach the language to members and sent four missions to Africa to set up schools and establish ties with the government in hopes of carrying out her

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<sup>70</sup> *Negro World*, October 17, 1925; January 9, 1926; October 24, 1925.

<sup>71</sup> For more on African-American women and their discontent with the church please see Evenly Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 122, 146-147, 185-229.

<sup>72</sup> *Negro World*, September 5, 1925; October 10, 1925; October 31, 1925; June 12, 1926.

import/export endeavors.<sup>73</sup> Unlike the UNIA, Kofey's African Universal Church implemented practical stratagems, albeit with limited success, to redeem the Diaspora.

The second reason for Princess Kofey's "persona non grata" status in the UNIA was that her popularity "threatened to dilute the hero worship that sustained Garvey's power..."<sup>74</sup> Followers of Kofey were not hers alone, but members of the UNIA. Her first and foremost call to listeners was to turn to Africa to redeem themselves and their Motherland. The redemption of Africa was not solely grounded in what the Diaspora could literally do for the continent, but in what the people of the Diaspora could do for themselves. She claimed "my God, call me out of Africa to come over here and tell you what He would have you to do," and although she claimed to be reluctant to answer the call because she was a woman, she went on to explain that God only intended to use "me until He find a man."<sup>75</sup> Not only did her statements imply her divine connection, but also suggested that no man alive at the time was capable of the task. This was most damaging as Garvey had very few male allies left in the United States and infighting among Division leaders and the headquarters played out publicly in the African-American press. Still, Kofey never publicly denounced Garvey nor specifically named any of the UNIA men or ministers who attempted to defame her.

Like Ashwood, Jacques and Davis, Kofey enjoyed a degree of notoriety throughout the UNIA world. However, the most favorable responses to her presence came from the Southeast.

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<sup>73</sup> Newman, p. 140; Richard Newman, "The Origins of the African Orthodox Church" Introductory essay in *The Negro Churchman: The Official Organ of the African Orthodox Church* (Millwood: Kraus reprint Co., 1977), pp. iiii-xxii; --- African Orthodox Church. *The Negro Churchman*. Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus Reprint Co, 1923. For more on the success and failures of some of Kofey's followers please see Peter F. Anson, *Bishops at Large*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1964); Newman interview with Reverend John Dean, Dania Florida, July 28, 1973, Interview with the Most Reverend Carey Harold Jones, Accra Ghana, July 1, 1971 & Interview with Robert E. Keyes, Jacksonville, FL, July 25, 1973 in Richard Newman. Laura Adorkor Kofey Research Collection, 1926-1981 The New York Public Library Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture b. 1 f. 8 Correspondence, 1972-81.

<sup>74</sup> Bair, "Ethiopia" p. 56.

<sup>75</sup> Kofey, *Mother's Sacred Teachings* p. 41.

The limitations in exposure Kofey faced, in part, may rest with her inability to establish a direct connection to Garvey himself. Laura Kofey was an outsider. Although she was honored with a banquet for her efforts to capture “the hearts of the people,” for the expansion of UNIA ranks in Florida and Alabama, and the re-birth of branches in New Orleans and Georgia, she was never part of Garvey’s inner circle as were Davis and Garvey’s wives.<sup>76</sup> Still, her willingness to follow the UNIA’s program spoke to her willingness to overlook Garvey’s flaws in deference to the goals he established. Her allegiance to Garvey was further demonstrated when she gathered 1500 signatures and sent them on behalf of the Jacksonville Branch with a letter to President Calvin Coolidge petitioning for Garvey’s release.<sup>77</sup> Kofey is said to have collected the signatures easily. Not only were people gathering to hear her, they were doing as she asked. Despite her disagreement with some UNIA policies, like its fundraising techniques, Kofey’s participation in UNIA efficient womanhood led her to champion Garvey’s freedom just the same.<sup>78</sup>

The third reason for Kofey being ostracized stemmed from her relationship with whites in law enforcement. Laura Kofey was arrested twice in the state of Florida after prompting from ministers and UNIA officials in each community. Her first arrest was in St. Petersburg and her second was in Jacksonville. In both instances she was bailed out of jail by her followers in a matter of hours.<sup>79</sup> In each instance she was charged with disturbing the peace. J.A. Craigen, Marcus Garvey’s attorney, was in Jacksonville at the time of Kofey’s September 22, 1927 arrest. From eyewitness accounts and articles published in the *Negro World*, Craigen’s main goal was to discredit Laura Kofey. In a telegram sent to Craigen at the Richmond Hotel in Jacksonville on

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<sup>76</sup> *Negro World*, May 7, 1927, May 14, 1927, June 11, 1927, July 23, 1927, September 17, 1927, October 22, 1927 & November 22, 1927

<sup>77</sup> *Negro World*, June 4, 1927.

<sup>78</sup> *Negro World*, August 2, 1927; *Mothers Sacred Teachings*, p. 19.

<sup>79</sup> *Negro World*, , October, 1, 1927; Kofey, *Mother’s Sacred Teachings*, pp. 25 & 30.

October 10, 1927 Marcus Garvey, then incarcerated in the Atlanta Penitentiary, Garvey

instructed Craigen to:

Insert notice in local white daily that Laura Kofey has no connection with the Universal Negro Improvement Association and Association shall not hold yourself responsible for any sums of money she may collect from the public or membership of organization for any scheme in Africa. Charter of the division that is entertaining her is revoked. Notify them of the same.<sup>80</sup>

Garvey's request was preceded by a telegram on September 20, 1927, just two days before

Kofey was arrested in the late hours of the night while sleeping, which read

I have given Mrs. Kofey no authority to collect funds for members for any kind of African Exodus. I know nothing of her proposition for sawmills and ships. I shall not be held responsible for activities in that damage. If the people have been defrauded, they have legal recourse. I authorize no one to give authority to collect funds for such a purpose. If the people are so dense as not to be able to protect themselves I can do no more. I know nothing of the affair.<sup>81</sup>

When taken in connection with Garvey's telegrams, the presence of Craigen in Jacksonville, and the results of her trial, Kofey's arrest suggested there was some white cooperation with the UNIA. Although complete court records are not available, excerpts from the trial indicated that while in police custody the Princess was stripped naked and searched to determine if she had any "roots on her body" or any markings that would indicate she practiced black magic.<sup>82</sup> According to reports, no evidence of her being anything than a human woman was found.<sup>83</sup> Judge Madison addressed Ms. Kofey as the "African woman causing all the trouble" in Jacksonville, but he dismissed her case and left her "free to carry on her program."<sup>84</sup> Judge Madison's description of Kofey as the "African woman" indicated that he viewed her as a part of a separate cadre from other blacks in Jacksonville. His dismissal of the case, which

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<sup>80</sup> Marcus Garvey to J.A. Craigen, October 10, 1927 AFRC, AP.ATG, on Western Union postal Message blank, straight telegram.

<sup>81</sup> Marcus Garvey to J.A. Craigen, September 20, 1927 AFRC, AP.ATG, on Western Union postal Message blank, day letter.

<sup>82</sup> Kofey, *Mother's Sacred Teachings*, p. 31; Hill *The UNIA Papers* v. 6, pp. 594-594.

<sup>83</sup> Newman, pp. 134-135.

<sup>84</sup> Kofey, *Mother's Sacred Teachings*, p. 34.

included allegations of fraud and misappropriation of funds, lends some degree of credibility to Kofey's efforts on behalf of African-Americans in Florida and the UNIA at large.

During Kofey's trial, J.A. Craigen appeared in court everyday with an unidentified white man. Present research has not yielded any official records that identify who he was. Eyewitness accounts state that Craigen was accompanied to court by an unidentified white man, a "body guard" and a female "secretary."<sup>85</sup> While researchers agree that Craigen was in Jacksonville to investigate Kofey, no official UNIA records or the *Negro World* specify who was in his entourage or why he would need one. Initially, it appeared that the white community supported the UNIA's desire to get Kofey quiet. However, the support was temporary as the case against her was dismissed and she was free to continue preaching throughout Florida. She was unable to enjoy this freedom for long.

On March 8, 1928, the UNIA African Legion of the Miami Branch visited Laura Kofey as she spoke at the Liberty Hall located at NW 15<sup>th</sup> Street in Coconut Grove, Miami. It was a part of their routine to heckle Princess Kofey at her public appearances. The night before, Kofey supporters and the UNIA's African Legion got into a tussle. In response the police padlocked the Coconut Grove Liberty Hall and prohibited its use by either group.<sup>86</sup> Rather than cancel the meeting, Kofey's followers decided to move to another location, Fox Thompson's Hall. As they were not in an official UNIA building, Kofey and her audience felt the African Legion would leave them alone. What neither she nor anyone else expected, however, was that a single shot would ring out, piercing her in the head and silencing her instantly. Allegedly the shot was fired from the back of the Fox Thompson's Hall, a distance of fifty feet, indicating that a person of some skill would have been the executioner.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p. 31 & 33.

<sup>86</sup> *Miami Daily News*, March 9, 1928; *Miami Herald*, March 12, 1928; *Daily Gleaner*, April 3, 1928;

Many of the men in the African Legion possessed the military training necessary to fire a gun. Historian Barbra Bair notes that many of the members of the African Legion were World War I veterans.<sup>87</sup> The men alleged to have killed Kofey were Maxwell Cook, a Jamaican who served as captain of the Miami Division's Legion, James Nimmo, a Bahamian and Colonel of the Legion, and Claude Green, president of the Miami UNIA branch.<sup>88</sup> Present research indicates that none of these men have military records. Whether they were the actual murderers remains in dispute.

Maxwell Cook was beaten to death by Kofey's followers shortly after the Princess fell dead. Nimmo escaped a similar fate as he recalled being handcuffed to the steering wheel of a police car. Neither he, nor any other eyewitness accounts indicated how he managed to get to the police car or why he was handcuffed.<sup>89</sup> Along with Nimmo, thirteen others, all men, were arrested by the Miami Dade Police with twelve being released. Only Green was held in connection with the murder. On June 28, 1928, he was indicted on the charge of first degree murder, and James Nimmo was indicted for being an accessory before the fact for "aiding and abetting" Green.<sup>90</sup>

Eyewitness accounts claimed that Nimmo received a signal from Maxwell Cook to take the shot. Disputing these accounts, Claude Green provided documentation that he was under medical care for his diabetes and was actually home that evening as per his doctor's recommendation. Nimmo presented witnesses that testified to his being at the meeting, but was actually on his way out when the shot was fired, leaving with seventy other men on the Legion

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<sup>87</sup> Bair, "True Women, Real Men" p. 158.

<sup>88</sup> Files no. 14 and 19, Criminal Court Records, Dade County Courthouse, Miami, Florida.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

roll.<sup>91</sup> The jury returned a not guilty verdict for both defendants on July 10, 1928. Judge John D. Johnson ordered both men to remain in the custody of Robert Stokes, a UNIA member on good terms with the white community.<sup>92</sup>

No subsequent investigation into the death of Maxwell Cook or any follow up investigation into the death of Laura Kofey has ever been conducted. To date, both deaths remain unsolved. After a cooling off period, James Green emigrated to Canada and James Nimmo returned to his native Bahamas. The voluntary departure of both men from Florida, and subsequently the United States, creates room for further discussion on who assassinated Laura Kofey and why. Monies for the defense of the alleged assailants were raised through donations from the UNIA membership. This was not the first time funds were solicited for the defense of accused murders within the organization. Similar strategies were employed for the defense of James Eason's killers after his fall from grace in the UNIA. Although his killers were found guilty, their sentences were drastically reduced and both assailants freed from jail.<sup>93</sup>

While Laura Kofey presented a challenge to Marcus Garvey's leadership, she did not do so to the UNIA's program. In fact, she based much of her church's philosophy and practices on the UNIA program and even used, "One God. One Aim. One Destiny," the UNIA motto as the church's motto. Her attempts to warn Garvey of the less than honest men in his circle during her penitentiary visit were not well received. Instead she was viewed as a threat. Her popularity, ability to mobilize her audiences among the grassroots, her direct link to Africa beyond Liberia, and her unwillingness to compromise her convictions despite pressures from the UNIA and the ministerial alliances made her a perceived threat.

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<sup>91</sup> Newman, p. 144 n. 12.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.; Newman, p. 133.

<sup>93</sup> Issa, pp. 124-141.; James Eason was accused by members of the Louisiana Division of misappropriation of funds and sexual misconduct.

Like Davis, Kofey severed her relationship with Garvey but not the UNIA. She continued to promote its goals. In fact, on the night of her murder she was speaking not on behalf of the church she was attempting to establish, but on behalf of the UNIA. Her tenure in the UNIA gained her much fanfare at the time of her death; however, it was only recently that her grave marker was discovered, as it was left unattended. Not only had she been neglected by the history books, but she was ignored by the community she helped to establish. Kofey represents the perfect example of the challenges many UNIA women faced while attempting to remain members of the organization. Contemplating her life is but one answer to the appeal by Jacques biographer Ula Taylor to have historians present considerations of the organization which "...challenge our understanding of Marcus Garvey and Garveyism and unveil the complicated reality of a black radical."<sup>94</sup>

### **Laura Kofey's Life and Lessons**

According to Barbara Bair, "the violent martyrdom of Laura Kofey can serve as a metaphor in examining gender politics and ideas of power and authority that imbued the Garvey movement."<sup>95</sup> Laura Adorkor Kofey's life, her mysterious entry onto the UNIA stage and her violent death presents many challenges for historians of race, gender, the long freedom struggle and the Atlantic world. Kofey established her authority whenever she spoke publicly. She would begin by introducing herself and stating that I am a representative of the Gold Coast of West Africa seeking the welfare of African peoples everywhere.<sup>96</sup>

She set out to "see Africa redeemed and my children in Africa."<sup>97</sup> Part of that redemption called for African Americans to stick together and pool their money toward

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<sup>94</sup> Taylor, *Veiled Garvey*, p. 1.

<sup>95</sup> Bair, "Ethiopia", p. 38.

<sup>96</sup> Kofey, *Mother's Sacred Teachings*, p. 44.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, p. 46.

collective events as occurred when monies raised from her viewing were used to build a church and establish homes for members. Two years later the training school she originally established in her front parlor was relocated to a building of its own. It was bought in part with investment returns from the funeral proceeds and monies donated by church members.<sup>98</sup> Kofey admonished her audiences not to believe false reports that Africans were backward or that blacks lacked the capability to establish and govern their own countries.

While encouraging listeners to “serve God, love your Motherland Africa,” she also encouraged them to aspire to become “dedicated men and women who are skilled workers such as engineers, carpenters, bricklayers, mechanics, ice men, and men and women trained and qualified in the professions” to help those already working in those capacities to build the Motherland.<sup>99</sup> Here Kofey did something interesting. She named the “blue collar” professions and as a result gave them status by noting they had counterparts in Africa. She recognized skilled trades as important and those in them but by listing these everyday jobs she signified their importance in the building of Africa and ultimately the black nation.

As demonstrated throughout this work, the UNIA’s brand of empowerment was not to be the exclusive right of educated elites or be paid for at the expense of the common black man. Kofey’s life is just one illustration that the type of empowerment the UNIA sought would not come at the expense of one economic group over another. The nation Kofey spoke of needed every profession, therefore giving every person, male, female, and lawyer and brick layer significance.

Kofey grounded her authority in her belief that she was divinely chosen not only because of her royal African blood, but also as she professed to be led by God. Although she was

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<sup>98</sup> *Jacksonville Times Union*, April 12, 1930.

<sup>99</sup> Kofey, *Mother’s Sacred Teachings*, p. 49.

received temporarily into Garvey's inner circle, she never received any of the royal titles he gave to members of the UNIA hierarchy. It is arguable that she did not need one as her direct lineage provided her one.

Kofey's idea of "Back to Africa" was both literal and figurative. She dreamed of a connection between Africa and her listeners. In her view, the strides that African-Americans made toward their own economic self-sufficiency were inextricably linked to the solvency of their African brothers and sisters. Kofey not only sought to build an Africa for African Americans, but also to establish a base where Africans could come to America. Her work as a UNIA loyalist, a prophetess, an entrepreneur, a teacher, and an activist in the American South, suggests her centrality as a Diasporic figure.

Kofey's life challenged historical interpretations of the Atlantic World. The Atlantic World framework heretofore has been largely limited to the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Kofey came from Accra to the United States via England much like travelers of the Atlantic Slave trade. She apparently even travelled back to Africa from the United States in early 1926.<sup>100</sup> She spoke of symmetry between the people she met in Florida and those she left behind in Accra. After her death, adherents of her beliefs and aspirations continued her work. In 1944 an AUC sponsored community was established in Jacksonville, FL. Its aims were to create (1) A law abiding Christian community, (2) A memorial to Laura Kofey, (3) An opportunity to educate the group's children, (4) A means for cooperation with the political state, and (5) A way to live an African-American existence.<sup>101</sup>

The community known as Adorkorville, established a school that taught African history, languages, geography and culture. The congregation and other adherents were encouraged to

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<sup>100</sup> Bair, "Ethiopia", p. 48; Newman, p. 141.

<sup>101</sup> Kofey, *Mother's Sacred Teachings*, pp. ii-iii.

speak Xhosa-Zulu, and a book with basic sentences and translated Bible passages was freely distributed.<sup>102</sup> In Alabama, church members learned to pray in Banta and were taught Xhosa group songs.<sup>103</sup> While promoting preparation for repatriation in the African-American community, the church also sought to solidify connections with Africa. In 1931, the AUC sent six men to Africa in hopes of starting schools and negotiating trade agreements. This effort was short lived as the church's finances could not maintain the efforts.<sup>104</sup> The establishment of the church and its attempts at fostering credible attempts at fulfilling UNIA goals serves as just one other measure of Kofey's impact.

Laura Kofey's life and legacy extended far beyond the UNIA. Her presence adds to Florida's Atlantic World connections and also serves as evidence of the far reaching expanses of the UNIA. Her work also speaks to the staunch adherence of many UNIA women to the melding of both gender and nationalist goals, albeit at a price no other woman in the UNIA was asked to pay.

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<sup>102</sup> Newman interview with Robert E. Keyes, Jacksonville, FL, December 2, 1975 in Richard Newman. Laura Adorkor Kofey Research Collection, 1926-1981 The New York Public Library Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture b. 1 f. 8 Correspondence, 1972-81

<sup>103</sup> *African Universal Hymnal* (Jacksonville, 1961), p. 6.

<sup>104</sup> Peter F. Anson, *Bishops At Large* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), pp. 278-279.

## CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

Garveyite women embraced a form of Black Nationalism that was influenced simultaneously by their UNIA involvement and by their gender concerns. For them, the aspirations of both the UNIA's brand of Black Nationalism and the women's movement were not mutually exclusive. This perception helped UNIA women blend the ideals of both movements to create and define their own space. The path was not easily paved and, as this dissertation has demonstrated, was blocked by obstacles emanating from both inside and outside the organization. In the face of such challenges, however, women of the organization developed a rhetoric and a myriad of related practical strategies - an efficient womanhood - which enabled them to influence, direct, and shape the organization in significant ways.

According to Lionel Yard, "[T]he cyclic rise of Garvey to fame (and ultimately the UNIA) began when he and Amy (Ashwood) organized the UNIA in 1914."<sup>1</sup> The organization's influence peaked in the United States in 1920, in part, due to Ashwood's diligence in ensuring that the organization's newspaper, the *Negro World*, reached doorsteps throughout Harlem free of charge. The paper was not only historically invaluable in promoting Garveyism, but it also remains historiographically vital for those who would try to recover the names and assess the contributions of women in the UNIA, like those who joined the Black Cross Nurses, for example. Although it has its limitations as a source, the *Negro World* is the starting point for any effort to detail the activities of women in Garvey's inner circle and those who remained on the outskirts. While Ashwood's tenure with the organization was brief, this singular contribution, establishing the circulation of the *Negro World*, helped to secure the success of the UNIA and create the major historical source for its study.

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<sup>1</sup> Yard, *Biography of Amy Ashwood*, p. 75.

The organization began to gradually decline in 1926. During its brief six-year period of ascendancy however, many African American women found voice and status within its ranks, and cultivated a brand of activism that lasted well beyond the organization's hey-day. Yet their achievements and their activism remain largely unknown to scholars and students of history. The unearthing of the names of these women and the discovery of the expansive healthcare and social networks they instituted to cure spiritual and physical ills represents a first step in reassessing the roles of everyday women in the UNIA, in the history of the long African American freedom struggle, and in the annals of Black Nationalism. While this dissertation makes no claims to be a comprehensive history of all the women within the Garveyite universe, by using local and national sources, it follows the careers of many female adherents who occupied quite different positions within the UNIA hierarchy and who worked in various communities around the United States and sometimes beyond. By exploring the lives of these women, the dissertation not only restores at least some of them to the historical record, but it also helps to raise questions for further study and offer possibilities for new research into the motivations and activities of Garveyite women. For example, there is still much to be done to uncover their work as members and their lives before and after membership in the organization.

This dissertation's examination of Amy Ashwood Garvey, Amy Jacques Garvey, Henrietta Vinton Davis, the Black Cross Nurses and Princess Laura Adorkor Kofey attempts to flesh out the multiple and diverse roles of women in the organization. It also depicts the many conflicts that these women faced within the UNIA and with themselves as they sought to improve conditions for black men and all women. Despite many obstacles and open disagreements with the male leadership and among themselves, they generally remained faithful to Garvey and the UNIA program even in the face of Garvey's shortcomings as a political leader

and as a man. Their efforts were all driven by their desire to help Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association succeed. In their minds, the organization's success was inextricably linked to the progress of the entire race. Moreover, their conception of race went well beyond the plight of African Americans in North America, extending to African-American people on all seven continents.

The travels and trials of Lady Henrietta Vinton Davis throughout the Caribbean and Africa were but one example of the desire of UNIA women to encourage the progress of the entire race. Her efforts were complemented by the Black Cross Nurses and Princess Laura Adorkor Kofey's efforts to heal the spiritual, psychological and physical scars of oppression throughout the Diaspora. The BCN, through its dedication to providing uniform healthcare policies and practices, attempted to elevate the status of informally trained healthcare workers so as to professionalize and modernize black nursing, but also worked to codify the use of homeopathic remedies. These "home made cures" were often herbal remedies passed down from generation to generation and were alleged to have African origins. The eclectic, pragmatic mix of ancient and modern, of African and African American, approaches to nursing, was typical of the ways in which notions of efficient womanhood worked among women in the Garveyite universe. This was a fluid female domain; a brand of Black Nationalism where practical needs usually outweighed doctrinal absolutism. The BCN, through its plays, also sought to extend the UNIA's affinity for Africa. In so doing they helped further the UNIA's nationalist aims.

The transnational and economic aims of the organization were given concrete direction when Laura Kofey, a native of Ghana, set out to establish an import/export business between the UNIA and her countrymen. Kofey furthered the BCN's knowledge of Africa as well as the understanding of others. She brought first-hand knowledge of the people of the continent and

their desires to UNIA audiences. Her depiction of the continent differed from what the lay membership had come to believe and presented Africa as a place of possibility and potential beyond being simply the site of missionary work and colonization schemes.

Kofey's detailing of Africa and its needs were discovered to be accurate, albeit long after her death, by none other than Amy Ashwood. Throughout her travels in Europe, the Americas, the Caribbean and Africa, Ashwood came to see both the significance of Marcus Garvey, but also the limitations of his ideals. She too noted the need for an open exchange between the continent and the descendants of slavery, but argued that it should not come at the expense of the sole independence of African nations. She came to conclude that there could never be a united Africa with one government as Garvey envisioned.

Still, his vision remains significant. Many African nations, including modern day Ghana, ironically the birth place of Laura Kofey, drew on the UNIA model when establishing their nations.<sup>2</sup> Even more significant are the ideals expressed by Garvey as they were practiced by the UNIA membership at large. In chronicling her late husband's speeches, letters and even his battles with other leaders of the period and with the U.S. government, Amy Jacques provided a window into the world of not only Garvey, but more importantly, the intricacies of the UNIA itself. In so doing, Garvey, the man and the myth, was revealed. The struggles the lay membership, particularly women members, also came to the fore.

UNIA women tried hard not to sacrifice the advancement of their gender at the expense of their racial concerns, nor to promote their race at the expense of their gender concerns. The two were inextricably linked in their minds. For many female members, their activism began prior to their participation in the UNIA. The organization helped them to hone skills that they

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<sup>2</sup> An example of this can be found in the flag and name of the naval fleet of Ghana. Ghana's Black Star Line, established in 1965 flies a red, green and gold flag with a black star in the center. It operates in Accra, the capital of Ghana, the birthplace of Laura Adorkor Kofey.

had already developed and provided them with an audience and credentials as organizers. The UNIA was one of only a few organizations during this period that allowed women and men a similar degree of autonomy.

To date, only Garvey's wives have received consideration in historiography of the UNIA and women's activism, and even then largely through their connection to Garvey,. The lives of women like Henrietta Vinton Davis, Laura Kofey and Maymie De Mena receive only passing reference in the historiography of the period. The names of rank and file UNIA women are evident only in the footnotes of recent scholarship, and they remain largely absent from the story of the UNIA.

The aspirations of women in the movement become apparent by examining the lives of women who assumed leadership roles in the organization. In addition to their allegiance to the UNIA program, the women of the lay membership supported and deferred to Amy Jacques and Henrietta Vinton Davis as de-facto leaders of the organization during Garvey's absences. While men in the organization often challenged Jacques as she was neither an elected nor appointed official, Davis enjoyed the respect of most men throughout her tenure. That the male cadre would accept leaders like Davis while they maintained tight control of the organization gives some indication of the power and influence of the female membership.

As this dissertation shows, Ashwood, Jacques, Davis and Kofey often expressed their views as a collective voice that spoke for the women of the organization. In this way the women of the UNIA distinguished themselves in their efforts to elevate the social and economic status of all persons of the Diaspora. They used their works and talents to build a self-sufficient extended community of African decedents.

Finding the voices of the UNIA lay female membership is often difficult. They have been overshadowed by a historiography that focuses on Garvey, his wives and his confidants, and on aspects of the organization that center on region or class. The women of the organization, while prevalent in the UNIA's newspaper, Garvey's trial records, and in the Bureau of Investigation files, often appear to be mere footnotes to the "real" story of the organization, or backdrops to the central drama of Garveyism in the interwar years. This dissertation suggests that by putting the lives of UNIA women center stage, the history of the UNIA becomes at once more complex and also more significant. Certainly, there is ample evidence of the historical influence of the female cadre in its influence on subsequent generations. The lives of women who joined the organization after Garvey repatriated to Jamaica, like Pan Africanist Adelaide Casely Hayford, or Trinidadian/British journalist Claudia Jones, or those who grew up in the organization like Sylvia Woods of New Orleans and Seattle Washington activist Juanita Warfield Porter, or Queen Mother Audley Moore, highlights the continuing influence of Davis, Kofey and Jacques.<sup>3</sup>

The practice of an efficient womanhood continues to resonate even today. Sister Samad of Kingston Jamaica, daughter of New York Garveyites who followed Garvey to the island, maintained in 1999 that "Without us, we, the women, there would be none of this Marcus

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<sup>3</sup> For more on Adelaide Casely Hayford please see Barbara Bair, "Pan Africanism in Process: Adelaide Casely Hayford, Garveyism and the Cultural Roots of Nationalism" in Sidney J. Lemelle and Robin D. G. Kelley. *Imagining Home: Class, Culture, and Nationalism in the African Diaspora* (London: Verso, 1994), pp. 122-145; Jaunita Proctor participated in a collection of oral history interviews the transcript of which can be found at the *Manuscripts and Archives Division, University of Washington Library, Seattle Washington*; the most recent biography of Claudia Jones highlights her mentee relationship with Amy Ashwood while the two lived in England. For more please see Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); While there are no published comprehensive works on Queen Mother Moore, for more on her speeches and activism please see Kia Issa's unpublished dissertation "Her own book: Autobiographical practice in the oral narratives of Queen Mother Audley Moore" Ph.D. Dissertation, Emory University 1999.

Garvey business you see today. It was us who kept it alive. We stayed on the men, we taught our children and now daughter we now pass this to you. Take it and run.”<sup>4</sup>

Many UNIA women went on to join other organizations and brought with them the skills, determination, and unwavering commitment they honed in the UNIA. Their inclusion in the historiography of African-American women’s activism, their participation in struggles that led up to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and their contributions to the largest mass movement in history highlights their contributions as well as those of Marcus Garvey and the UNIA to the American and African-American experience.

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Sister Samad Orange Grove, St. Andrew, Kingston Jamaica August 1999.

APPENDIX A  
HE SLEEPS IN FRANCE'S BOSOM

Ethel Trew Dunlap (1921)

He sleeps in Frances bosom!  
    The faithful, loyal slave;  
He tilled the soil and then he gave  
    His life across the wave,  
He sleeps in Frances bosom!  
    He never saw the sky  
Of Africa; for he was brought  
    To toil and then to die.  
He sleeps in Frances bosom!  
    Midway his humble grave,  
Between the land where dwelt his sires  
    And where he was a slave.  
He sleeps in Frances bosom!  
    Perchance he has a dream  
Of sires who writhed beneath the lash  
    Or peon's stifled scream.  
He sleeps in Frances bosom!  
    O wish him not awake,  
While innocence is martyr  
    To mob law and the stake.  
He sleeps in Frances bosom!  
    The colors o'er him fly;  
They were his prison stripes and then  
    They sent him off to die.  
He sleeps in Frances bosom!  
    His life was term of toil,  
By chance escaped his captor  
    To dies on foreign soil.  
He sleeps in Frances bosom!  
    Thank God he had one life;  
For if he had a million  
    They would have crazed strife.  
He sleeps in Frances bosom!  
    Peace made his bosom swell;  
It was his Afric heritage,  
    But for the mad he fell.  
He sleeps in Frances bosom!  
    His primal land not far,  
By Gihon's classic river,  
    Where Eden loaned her star.  
He sleeps in Frances bosom!  
    Columbia claimed his brawn;

France stole his ashes, but his soul  
    Goes sweeping grandly on.  
He sleeps in Frances bosom!  
    The Afric breeze comes far  
To sigh above the captive's grave  
    Beneath a foreign star.  
He sleeps in Frances bosom!  
    By yonder lonely wave,  
Where tragedy and God vowed  
    To vindicate the slave!

APPENDIX B  
RULES AND REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE UNIVERSAL AFRICA BLACK CROSS  
NURSES

The following is a copy of the “Rules and Regulations Governing the Universal Africa Black Cross Nurses” taken from *Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers vol. 3*.

“Rules and Regulations Governing the  
Universal African Black Cross Nurses

ARTICLE I

Name

This Auxiliary of the Universal Negro Improvement Association shall be named  
The Universal African Black Cross Nurses.

ARTICLE II

Object

Section I. The objects of this Auxiliary shall be to carry on a system of relief and to apply the same in mitigating the suffering caused by pestilence, famine, fire, floods, and other great calamities and to devise and carry on measures for preventing the same.

Sec. 2. To attend to the sick of the Division to which the public Auxiliary is attached and be ready for service at any time when called upon by His Highness the Potentate.

Sec. 3. To issue pamphlets which will tend to educate the public to the use of safety devices and prevention of accident; to instruct in sanitation for prevention of epidemics; and to instruct in First Aid.

## ARTICLE III

### Membership

Section I. All women of Negro Blood and African Descent between the ages of sixteen and forty-five may become members of this Auxiliary.

Sec. 2. Only active members of the Universal Negro Improvement Association shall be admitted to membership of this Auxiliary.

Sec. 3. All women of the Race not desiring active membership may become honorary members upon payment of One Dollar or more Annually.

Sec. 4. All men of the Race shall be permitted to become Honorary members of this Auxiliary upon payment of One Dollar or more Annually.

Sec. 5. All Honorary members shall be known as Annual or Sustaining members.

## ARTICLE IV

### Management- Central and Local

Section I. The management and direction of this Auxiliary shall be entrusted to a Central Committee which shall consist of the President- General of the U.N.I.A; a Universal Directress, who shall be a graduate Nurse of at least three years' experience; a Surgeon-General of the U.N.I.A [;] and the Presidents of local Divisions.

Sec. 2. The Presidents of local Divisions shall exercise over their Unites the same power of control as the Central Committee exercises over the whole Auxiliary.

Sec. 3. All members of the High Executive Council shall be ex-officio members of the Central Committee.

Sec. 4. The Surgeon-General shall be the Medical Director of this Auxiliary.

Sec. 5. Each Unit of this Auxiliary shall have the following Officers: A Matron, who shall be the Lady President of the Division and the Superintendent of the Auxiliary; a Head Nurse, who shall be President of the Unit, a Secretary[;] and a Treasurer.

## ARTICLE V

### Revenues and Incomes

Section I. The funds for the maintenance of this Auxiliary shall be known as “General and Special.”

Sec. 2. The General Fund shall be derived from such sources as Annual membership dues and Sustaining membership dues. The entire amount of dues of members at large shall be forwarded to Headquarters. Besides the membership dues, it shall be further derived from the interest of bank balances of the various units, the generous annual contributions given for several purposes from members or other individuals and the profits of sales of supplies and materials of all kinds.

Sec. 3. The General Fund shall be used for the Administration expenses at the Office of Headquarters, Maintenance of First Aid Instructions; Supplied for the Nursing Service and Women’s Classes, in home care of the sick[;]and for all expenses in connection with the pamphlets or magazines issues by this Auxiliary and which every member shall receive.

Sec. 4. The Special Fund shall be derived from special appeals made by or through the Central Committee.

Sec. 5. Each local Unit shall be privileged to raise funds among its own Community for local purposes and the appeal for such funds shall only be made in the name if the local Unit. These funds may be derived from lectures, entertainments and other social

functions of an innocent nature. The raising of such funds by a local Unit shall only be with the permission of the President of the local Division.

Sec. 6. All monies raises by a local Unit shall pass through the hand of the Secretary of the Unit to the Treasurer of the Unit. The Treasurer of the Unit shall then turn over such monies to the Treasures of the Division through the General Secretary of said Division, to be lodged to the credit of the Unit in the name of the Division at the Bank designated.

Sec. 7. All monies by this Auxiliary shall remain in the hands of its Treasurer for a period not exceeding twenty-fours hours.

## ARTICLE VI

### Soliciting and Collecting

No person or persons shall solicit or collect funds or materials in the name of Universal African Black Cross Nurses unless authorized to do so and bear credentials properly signed by the President of the local Division; the Matron of the Unit, or the signatures of the Officers of the Central Body. All such credentials must bear the Seal of Division from which the appeal is issued or the Seal of the Parent Body of the Universal Negro Improvement Association.

## ARTICLE VII

### Uniform

Each active member of this Auxiliary shall supply herself with her own uniform.

## ARTICLE VIII

### Emblems

Section I. Each member of this Auxiliary shall wear its emblems on a button as an indication of membership.

Sec. 2. The official button of this Auxiliary shall be a Black Latin Cross on a Red background enclosed by Green Circle around the border.

Sec. 3. The official emblem of this Auxiliary shall be a Black Latin Cross encircled by a Red background in this center of a Green field.”

## APPENDIX C

### DEMANDS OF THE U.N.I.A AND A.C.L. WOMEN AT THE AUGUST, 1922 CONVENTION

From *Marcus Garvey and the UNIA Papers vol. 4.*

#### “The Unity of Our Women

‘We, the women of the U.N.I.A and A.C.L. know that no race can rise higher than its women. We need women in the important places of the organization to help refine and mold public sentiment, realizing the colossal program of this great organization, and as we are determined to reclaim our own land, Africa, we have resolved to submit the following recommendations:

1. That a woman be the head of the Black Cross Nurses and Motor Corps and have absolute control over those women, and this shall not conflict with the Legions.
2. That women be given more recognition by being placed on every committee, so that she may learn more of the salient workings of the various committees.
3. That more women be placed in the important offices and field work of the association.
4. That women be given initiative positions, so that they may formulate constructive plans to elevate our women.
5. That lady Henrietta Vinton Davis be empowered to formulate plans with the sanction of the President-General so that the Negro women all over the world can function without restriction from the men.”

APPENDIX D  
NAMES BLACK CROSS NURSES

Compiled from the *UNIA Papers*, *The Negro World* and oral histories.

So many years of silence have made studying the Black Cross Nurses difficult, and more research, possibly on a more local level, needs to be done. I have compiled a list of all of the names of individual nurses that I could find, and have listed them, and their Division (when available) here.

Albrier, Frances, Berkeley, California.

Allison, Mavis, Guaro, Cuba.

Armstrong (Mrs.), Struthers.

Babbs, Agnes (Mrs.), New York, New York.

Bartlett, Sam (Mrs.), Newport News, Virginia.

Bennett, E., San Juan, Honduras

Berry, Mrs., Springfield, Illinois.

Bowers, Bessie (Mrs.), Sydney, Australia.

Bradley, Miss., Springfield, Illinois.

Branch, L. (Mrs.), New Aberdeen, Cape Breton.

Branch, Sarah (Mrs.), New York, New York.

Burrowes, C.E., Moron Division, Carnaguey, Cuba.

Burton, (Mrs.), New Haven, Connecticut.

Carter, Edna (Mrs.), Parnassus, Pennsylvania.

Cazanova, A., La Ceiba, Cuba.

Clarke, Alice May, Glace Bay, N.S.

Collins, Eva, Camden, New Jersey.

Collins, (Mrs.), Barnes, Cuba.

Crosdale, C. (Mrs.), Guaro, Cuba.

Dorsey, Cary, Camden, New Jersey.

Engleton, (Mrs.), San Juan, Honduras.

Estwick, H., New Aberdeen, Cape Breton.

Flowers, A. (Mrs.), La Ceiba, Cuba.

Gentry, Willa (Mrs.), West Chicago, Illinois.

Gilbert, A. (Mrs.), Guaro, Cuba.

Gillmore, Hattia, Seattle, Washington.

Gittens, (Mrs.), New York, New York.

Grant, Ethel (Mrs.), Belvidere.

Green, Marie, (Mrs.), Belvidere.

Griffiths, San Juan, Honduras.

Hayes, Rosie (Mrs.), Belvidere.

Holness, B. (Mrs.), Guaro, Cuba.

Johnson, B. (Mrs.), San Diego, California.

Lawrence, Isabella, New York, New York.

Lynch, Estheana, (Mrs.), New York, New York.

Macrackran, I., La Ceiba, Cuba.

Marshall, Stella (Mrs.), New York, New York.

Matthews, Alice (Mrs.), Belvidere.

McClellan, D.M., San Juan Honduras.

McNeil, Gertrude (Mrs.), Belvidere.

Morgan, Clara, Chicago, Illinois.

Newburn, Harriet (Mrs.), West Chicago, Illinois.

Nickerson (Mrs.), West Chicago, Illinois.

Nisbeth, San Juan, Honduras.

Parris, James (Mrs.), New Glasgow, Scotland.

Parris, S., New Aberdeen, Cape Breton.

Pinto, Hattie, (Mrs.), New Haven, Connecticut.

Pixley, Mrs., La Ceiba, Cuba.

Radway, F., La Ceiba, Cuba.

Roberts, Bella (Mrs.), New Haven Connecticut.

Robinson, B., Moron Division, Camaguey, Cuba.

Rose, Anneto, Jubabo, Orient, Cuba.

Russel, M., La Ceiba, Cuba.

Sargeant, I., (Mrs.), New Aberdeen, Cape Breton.

Sayers, Amelia, New York, New York.

Simpson, Edna, Guaro, Cuba.

Simpson, S. (Mrs.), Guaro, Cuba.

Shepherd, Emily (Mrs.), San Diego, California.

Sloan, Cary, Camden, New Jersey.

Sorelle, Ruby, San Diego, California.

Wallace, Griffith (Mrs.), New Aberdeen, Cape Breton.

Washington, Irno, (Mrs.), Marati, Cuba.

Whalen, B., New Aberdeen Cape Breton.

Whalen, E. L., New Aberdeen, Cape Breton.

White, Elizabeth (Mrs.), Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Williams, F.C., Moron Division, Camaguey, Cuba.

Williams, J. (Mrs.), New York, New York.

Williams, L. (Mrs.), La Ceiba, Cuba.

Willis, Lillian J. (Mrs.), New York, New York.

Wise, Julia (Mrs.), Cleveland, Ohio

APPENDIX E  
THE BLACK WOMAN

Marcus Garvey 1928

Black queen of beauty, thou hast given color to the world!  
Among other women thou art royal and the fairest!  
Like the brightest of jewels in the regal diadem,  
Shin'st thou, Goddess of Africa, Nature's purest emblem!  
Black men worship at thy virginal shrine of truest love,  
Because in thine eyes are virtue's steady and holy mark,  
As we see in no other, clothed in silk or fine linen,  
From ancient Venus, the Goddess, to mythical Helen.

When Africa stood at the head of the elder nations,  
The Gods used to travel from foreign lands to look at thee:  
On couch of costly Eastern materials, all perfumed,  
Reclined thee, as in thy path flow'rs were strewn-  
sweetest that bloomed.

Thy transcendent marvelous beauty made the whole world mad,  
Bringing Solomon to tears as he viewed thy comeliness;  
Anthony and the elder Ceasars wept at thy royal feet,  
Preferring death than to leave thy presence, their foes to meet.

You, in all ages, have attracted the adoring world,  
And caused many a bloody banner to be unfurled:  
You have sat upon exalted and lofty eminence,  
To see a world fight in your ancient African defense.

Today you have been dethroned, through the weakness of your men,  
While, in frenzy, those who of yore craved your smiles and your hand-  
Those who were all monsters and could not with love approach you-  
Have insulted your pride and now attack your good virtue.

Because of disunion you became mother of the world,  
Giving tinge of robust color to five continents,  
Making a greater world of millions of colored races,  
Whose claim to beauty is reflected through our black faces.

From the handsome Indian to European brunette,  
There is a claim for that credit of their sunny beauty  
That no one can e'er to take from thee, O Queen of all  
women  
Who have borne trials and troubles and racial burden.

Once more we shall, in Africa, fight and conquer for you,

Restoring the pearly crown that proud Queen Sheba did wear:  
Yea, it may mean blood, it may mean death; but still we shall fight,  
Bearing our banners to Vict'ry, men of Afric's might.  
Superior Angels look like you in Heaven above,  
For thou art fairest, queen of the seasons, queen of our love:  
No condition shall make us ever in life desert thee,  
Sweet Goddess of the ever green land and placid blue sea.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Natanya Duncan is the middle child of Dr. Nathan George Duncan and Sybil Joyce Duncan who migrated to the United States from Jamaica, West Indies. She was raised in Brooklyn, New York and completed her undergraduate work at Clark Atlanta University in 1996.