

FOREWORD BY NTONGELA MASILELA

A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON MARCUS GARVEY'S PAN AFRICANISM

One of the outstanding scholarly features of this remarkable study is that its historical framework provides an international purview through which to understand the historical meaning and significance of Marcus Mosiah Garvey. This is no mean achievement since it required Boyd James to undertake a formidable research project that illuminates Garvey and his legacy in the triadic structure of the black world, a world made possible by the violent creative process of *modernity*: Africa and the African Diaspora of (Latin America and the Caribbean included within) and United States. This triangulation achieved by Boyd James reflects the proper dimensions of Garvey's Pan-Africanist philosophy. After all, Pan-Africanism was the quintessential black philosophy of modernity: largely a philosophy of race. It would seem that linguistic barriers were what prevented Garvey from having the same galvanizing effect in the modern black world of Latin America, especially in Cuba, Brazil and Columbia, as he had in the modern English speaking black world. In the modern black world of Latin America in the early years of the twentieth century there was a conundrum in the form of language constituting itself as a barrier to a philosophic awakening and emergence of a political consciousness. The consequence of this is that since the philosophy of Pan-Africanism in the early years of the twentieth century by-passed the modern black world of particular countries in Latin America, it has proven difficult in the closing years of the twentieth for many of the people there to give cognizance to their African ancestry and belongingness in actuality rather than in mythical representation. In Africa itself, Pan-Africanism made

visible to the continent the fundamental qualities of modernity. The theoretical and philosophic splay of Boyd James historical approach to Marcus Garvey postulates the thesis that Pan-Africanism was the fundamental black philosophy of modernity.

One of the revelatory achievements of Boyd James' study is in having traced the intellectual origins of Marcus Garvey's political awakening *within* the historical lineages of the modern cultural formation of the Caribbean. The importance of this cannot be overestimated since from the vantage point of Africa there has been a tendency to view the achievements of black Caribbean intellectuals as part of the historical experience of United States New Negro modernity. Because Caribbean intellectuals and writers such as George Padmore, Marcus Garvey, Claude McKay, just to name a few, came to be known in Africa through their intellectual and cultural itinerary in the United States, it has proven difficult for Africa to view their realized black modernistic formations as singularly a Caribbean phenomenon. The equally brilliant achievements of C. L. R. James, George Lamming, Wilson Harris, here too just to name a few, situated as they were in England, have not been able to counter act or to counter balance Africa's solipsistic view of Caribbean cultural history.

Other instances could be mentioned as giving credence to the thesis that the achievements of Caribbean intellectuals and writers from the perspective of Africa seem to germinate outside the immediate cultural geographical space of this area that has produced these exemplary intellectuals and artists: Aime Cesaire launched the Negritude Movement with Leopold Sedar Senghor (from Senegal) in Paris; Frantz Fanon established his international reputation in the context of the Algerian Revolution in Africa; and the great Cuban *conguero* Chano Pozo invented Latin jazz (actually Afro-Cuban jazz) with Dizzy Gillespie in the context of, or adjacent to, the bebop revolution in New York City. Given these seemingly external determinants of the realization of the Caribbean *genius*, Boyd James' insightful gesture of tracing and locating Marcus Garvey's intellectual and political formation (through his predecessors) within the Caribbean *before* his encounter with the historical figure of Booker T. Washington (they never actually met), from the perspective of Africa, is a majestic conceit. With this gesture Boyd James makes three things possible from the vantage point of Africa:

he makes the intellectual and cultural experience of the Caribbean in modernity much more culturally and politically visible to Africa; he connects the Caribbean directly to Africa without the mediation of United States; and lastly postulates the thesis that the real origins of Pan Africanism are located in the Caribbean rather than in United States. Henry Sylvester Williams is one of the figures brought to the discourse as supportive evidence, even if Williams proved himself to be such a failure in South Africa. The proselytizing of Pan Africanism as the black philosophy of modernity in South Africa was achieved by the major Ghanian intellectual F. Z. S. Peregrino in the first two decades of the twentieth century through his newspaper *South African Spectator* based in Cape Town.

As though his aforementioned scholarly endeavors were not sufficiently remarkable in their own particular way, Boyd James reexamines the relationship between Malchus Mosiah Garvey and W. E. B. Du Bois within a wider historical and conceptual canvas. The political and intellectual duel between these two great New Negro intellectuals is usually located or situated within the epistemic field of black nationalism. He spells out why he finds this to be an incomplete analytical move. This book being resolutely a historical study, in effect a Marxist perambulation of the contours of black nationalism, Boyd James locates the conflict between these monumental figures in the conceptual fields of the philosophies of natural history and that of human history, of the world view of Marxism in relation to that of nationalism, and of the dialectic of class and race. The examining of these intractable relationships at a high conceptual form compels Boyd James to enter wider domains of archival materials as well as engage with intellectual histories of Marxism and nationalism. So for Boyd James the confrontation between Garvey and Du Bois was not so much about race as about the intersection of race and class in modernity.

In other words, he is interested in looking at why slavery, the forcible removal of black people across three centuries from Africa to the New World, was such a fundamental project of modernity. Implicitly looking at the hallmarks of modernity, Boyd James examines why capitalism from the Renaissance to the Russian Revolution had to reinvent enslavement as a process of capital accumulation in order to full realize its historical mission. His reading of scholars like

his uncle C. L. R. James, Eric Williams, Robin Blackburn, Eugene Genovese and others on slavery is dazzling. This is combined with a solid grasp of the intellectual culture of Western Marxism from György Lukács through Louis Althusser to Fredric Jameson. These grasps are counterbalanced by his deep immersion in the literature of black nationalism from Alexander Crummell to Harold Cruse, and that of Pan Africanism from George Padmore to Kwame Nkrumah. It is the combination of these conceptual fields and intellectual traditions as they impinged on the dialectic of race and class that makes *Garvey, Garveyism and the Antinomies in Black Redemption* an intellectually stimulating book it is. Paraphrasing the English Marxist historian Edward Thompson in another context, it is indeed a riotous incitement to serious intellectual study. Surely, the book will be a landmark in the study of Marcus Garvey, or to go even further, it will set high standards in articulating how African people, in its most widest definition, negotiated or were forced to negotiate the triumphs and tribulations of modernity. Given such a momentous theme of how black people negotiated modernity under duress, the book's excellence in conception and realization is to be expected and demanded.

It is as a *historical study* of how African Americans negotiated modernity that *Garvey, Garveyism and the Antinomies in Black Redemption* has many exemplary lessons for Africa, especially my country South Africa, for it was this African land that so thoroughly emulated the example of the New Negro in experiencing the modern world. Calling themselves the New Africans, as an indicator of their having crossed the historical divide separating modernity from tradition, these Africans in modernity sought a sense of identification with their cousins across the Atlantic who had begun earlier than they in calling themselves the New Negroes as a mark of distinction in having accentuated the positive aspect of modernity against the negative aspect by transforming themselves from having been the objects of history to being its subjects. It was this accentuation of the positive side of modernity by the New Negroes that claimed the immediate attention of the New Africans. The emphasis on their proactive attitude towards modernity found its most spectacular cultural expression in their creation of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s. As a form of emulation the New Africans created their own Sophiatown Renaissance in the 1950s.

But beyond other forms of cultural emulation, such as, the appropriation of Negro Spirituals in the 1890s, of jazz in the 1920s, and of the proletarian (naturalistic) novel of Richard Wright by Peter Abrahams in the 1940s, the real historical lesson that the New Africans wanted from the New Negroes was how to realize their *autonomy* through the political process in modernity. It was as a builder of *social institutions* that the New Africans found Booker T. Washington much more compelling than W. E. B. Du Bois whom they perceived as a constructor of *theoretical systems*. To conservative New African modernizers such as John Langalibalele Dube, R. V. Selope Thema, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, Solomon T. Plaatje and others, who launched the New African Movement in 1904-6 and the African National Congress (ANC) in 1912, more was to be had from the "Wizard of Tuskegee" than from the great African American intellectual who has come to be known as the "Father of Pan Africanism". It was a later generation of New African intellectuals of the New African Movement in the 1940s, progressive modernizers, such as H. I. E. Dhlomo, Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, Jordan Ngubane and others who saw merit in the intellectual culture of Du Bois above and beyond the conservative political practices of Washington. In the same way that during the formation of New Negro modernity African American intellectual and political history was characterized as the struggle of choosing between Du Bois and Washington, likewise during the construction of New African modernity the history of the New African Movement was seen as defined by this conundrum, real or apparent.

The first instance of the search for autonomy was the establishing of Ethiopianism in 1892 by the political and religious constellations that preceded the inauguration of the New African Movement. In the immediate sense Ethiopianism was the separation and rebellion initiated by Africans to form independent institutions of African Christian Churches from the hegemony of European (white) Christian Churches. In the longitudinal historical sense, this was perhaps the first national movement beyond regional social organizations that preceded it that wanted political autonomy, albeit in religious matters. Retrospectively, it seems clear that Ethiopianism constituted the beginnings of African nationalism in South Africa. The formation of African nationalism as a movement seeking to unify the country as whole was in the context of religious matters not in

the political sphere per se. Ethiopianism, a religious ideology, was the central strand in the launching of the politics of African nationalism. This is the reason that religion played such a central role in the launching of the African National Congress; this also explains why many of its early leaders were reverends of the Church. There were oppositions to Ethiopianism among the Africans themselves. This religious ideology of African nationalism triggered many contradictory responses among New African intellectuals, religious as well as secular. Although it was the founding ideology of the incipient forms African nationalism, John Langalibalele Dube, the first president-general of the African National Congress, was a vociferous opponent of Ethiopianism, preferring a permanent alignment with European Christian Churches, yet among the first New Africans to establish the principle of autonomy by founding Ohlange Institute in 1901, in direct emulation of his master, Booker T. Washington, who launched the Tuskegee Institute on July 4, 1881. The first real and consequential autonomous act by a New African intellectual was the founding of the *Imvo Zabantsundu* (African Opinion) newspaper by John Tengo Jabavu in November 1884.

One fundamental consequence of the intertwining of religiosity and African nationalism at the founding of the African National Congress was the conservative modernity the organization sought to construct in early decades of its existence as made evident by the hegemonic power it gave to the African Chiefs over and above New African intellectuals and political leaders concerning political decisions and organizational matters. All of this makes clear that separatism was not necessarily synonymous with progressivism let alone radicalism. From the moment of the founding of the African National Congress there ensued within the New African Movement a war of position regarding whether conservative modernity or progressive modernity or revolutionary modernity should be the primary object of national construction. This contention of choice was reflected in the ideological struggles within both institutions across several decades; in both because they were inseparable from each other, given that the African National Congress was the political instrument of the New African Movement and the latter was the cultural expression of the former. It was at the historic crisis symbolized by the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 that they were forc-

ibly separated from each other through political repression which resulted in the termination of the New African Movement and the banishing into exile of the African National Congress. But in their duration over several decades, the consequence of the choice of a conservative form of modernity was to inoculate both institutions against any form of radicalism.

It was in the context of this continuous war of position that in the 1920s James Thaele, then president-general of the African National Congress at the regional level of the Cape Province, sought to bring Garveyism within the national precincts of the political organization. Viewed by conservative modernizers who were in control of both institutions as a political radicalism of the right, they rejected it as moribund black nationalism in contradistinction to their conception of African nationalism. This political scenario was to repeat itself in the 1930s when these same conservative modernizers repulsed the attempts of Albert Nzula, Josiah Tshangana Gumede and James La Guma to bring Marxism to the organization. By rejecting both Garveyism and Marxism, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, John Langalibalele Dube and R. V. Selope Thema and company weakened the political content of the African National Congress and the cultural splay of New African Movement by inadvertently repulsing the intellectual traditions of Pan Africanism and that of Communism. The defeat of African nationalism by Afrikaner (white) nationalism across much of the twentieth century could partly be attributed to this lack of foresight. Intellectual traditions do politically matter. These intellectual traditions could have given armor to African nationalism at a precisely relevant historical moment.

Indeed, one the great lessons of *Garvey, Garveyism and the Antinomies in Black Redemption* is that the intellectual traditions of Pan Africanism and Marxism were essential to the black experience in modernity, be it in Africa or in the African Diaspora. Witness the gravitational projection of W. E. B. Du Bois across modernity from progressive liberalism towards embracing Marxism. In fact, the major intellectual who synthesized Pan Africanism and Marxism was C. L. R. James. The contrast of C. L. R. James with Marcus Garvey is telling since Boyd James makes clear that what the disciple of Booker T. Washington lacked was a critical historical sensibility. C. L. R. James had an abundant fund of it as made clear

by the historical perspectives that were always at the center of his writings: casting a penetrative glance at Africa within the context of Haitian Revolution in the *Black Jacobins*; looking at the continent within the purview of the history of rebellions in *A History of Pan-African Revolts*; and examining the achievements and failures of Kwame Nkrumah within the optical view of socialist revolutions in *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*. These intellectual traditions of W. E. B. Du Bois and C. L. R. James might have made themselves knowable within the New African Movement had its leading lights not mistakenly identified Garveyism *tout court* with Pan Africanism. Although Solomon T. Plaatje in 1904 tried to bring Du Bois to South Africa in his reflections on *The Souls of Black Folk* published the previous year, likewise too Silas Modiri Molema attempted in his landmark *The Bantu: Past and Present* (1920) to appropriate the great New Negro intellectual as an intellectual system for the country, and lastly H. I. E. Dhlomo in 1947 wanted to make known to his New African colleagues the multi-dimensionality of Du Bois by borrowing his concept of “New African Talented Tenth” from the latter’s idea of “Talented Tenth”—all them did not succeed because Dube, Seme, Selope Thema and others made certain that politically and ideologically the propitious historical conditions would not lend themselves to the ideas of W. E. B. Du Bois in the country, despite the personal proximity of Charlotte Manye Maxeke and Alfred B. Xuma to him.

It was in the context of the aftermath of the founding of the African National Congress Youth League (1943-4) that in the 1940s and in the 1950s that these intellectual traditions (Pan-Africanism of W. E. B. Du Bois and the Marxism of C. L. R. James) had some impact or traction: A. P. Mda, Anton Lembede and Jordan Ngubane gravitating towards Pan Africanism, while Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, William Nkomo and Oliver Tambo were fellow traveling in the direction of Marxism. This was possibly one of the reasons for the fracturing of the Youth League at this time. Mda, Ngubane and Lembede never succeeded in reconciling Pan Africanism and African Nationalism in South Africa. The founding of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) by Robert Sobukwe in 1959 was the last desperate unsuccessful attempt to realize this. The fellow traveling of Mandela and others could not succeed either despite the

rapprochement represented by the Defiance Campaign (1952) and the Congress of the People (1955) because the exiling of Marxism as an intellectual system in the 1930s by the New African Movement and the African National Congress had created an irreparable rupture. Although the ostensible aim in the launching of All African Convention in 1936 was the contestation of the Herzog Bills, its undeclared aim was to make sense of the possible unity of Marxism and African Nationalism, at least that would have been the view of I. B. Tabata, the leading figure of the Non-European Unity Movement (Trotskyism). The walking away of Pixley ka Isaka Seme, then president-general of the African National Congress, from the All African Convention was the affirmation of the presumed primacy of African Nationalism over the supposed irrelevance of Marxism, at least that is how one can postulate Anton Lembede to have read this act. The famous Letter of 1948 from I. B. Tabata to Nelson Mandela arguing that the historical and ideological logic of the Youth League dictated that it align itself with All African Convention rather than with the African National Congress, was in effect an argument that an alliance between Marxism and African Nationalism as historical national projects was possible, as this was to eventuate in the 1950s. The spectacular break between Albert Luthuli and Jordan Ngubane in a long bitter exchange of disagreements in the pages of *Indian Opinion* newspaper in July and August 1956 was on this question, then one of the central issues of African intellectual and political history.

In this context therefore it can be seen that *Garvey, Garveyism and the Antinomies in Black Redemption* facilitates this new reading of this encapsulated South African intellectual and political history across the twentieth century. It would not be extravagant to claim that the power of the book makes this possible in other national contexts, especially those of the modern black world.

The political impact of *Garvey, Garveyism and the Antinomies in Black Redemption* in Africa will be at its truest when the continent takes full responsibility for its role in the reprehensible exporting of its sons and daughters to the New World. In as much as the Africans in the New World (be they in Brazil, Columbia, United States, Peru or other countries with large populations of black people) have demanded reparations from the former imperial and colonial

European countries, they are equally beginning to demand that Africans in Africa take responsibility for this tragic event. By connecting in a singular way Africa and the African Diaspora through the consequences of slavery on the theoretical plane, which was the construction and formulation of the philosophy of Pan Africanism, this scholarly work may make Africa see the *historical wisdom* in accepting this responsibility.

Were this to occur, the book would have realized one of its primary aims. This would be bestowing collective honor on this remarkable book.

Claremont [Los Angeles], September 2008.