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The most recent edition of the fifteen-volume *Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* is the first in the prestigious collection’s five-part “Caribbean Series.” Volume Eleven begins in 1910, well before Garvey launched in Jamaica his movement for black uplift and race pride in 1914, and ends on the eve of the UNIA’s First International Convention of Negro Peoples of the World in August of 1920, the organization’s peak. Over two hundred pages of introductory material and almost eight hundred pages of primary sources, including photos, cover the British West Indian territories, Haiti, Brazil, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Panama Canal Zone, the Spanish speaking countries of Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico, and the Central American republics of Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Panama; the sole exception is Jamaica, which will be the subject of the final two volumes in the “Caribbean Series.” The volume includes contributions from forty-four scholars working under the guidance of Robert Hill, preeminent authority on Garveyism, and his editorial team. The documents include British colonial correspondences, diplomatic cables, letters from private collections, contributions to local newspapers, articles in the UNIA’s own New York-published *Negro World*, informant reports, and some of the few available records of the United Fruit Company, which operated the Central American banana plantations to which thousands of West Indians migrated in search of employment during this period. By making such archival material widely available, the much-anticipated “Caribbean Series,” which is to be the final subsection of the *UNIA Papers*, is sure to expand the study of what Emory Tolbert has called “outpost Garveyism” in the Caribbean.

This review describes the historiographical contributions made by Hill and his team of scholars before moving on to underscore the broader conclusions one might draw from exploring this volume. Though researchers will approach the mammoth text selectively and with unique questions in mind, several reoccurring themes emerge from the medley of primary sources, including the significant West Indian mobility shaping the Garvey movement, the appeal of Garvey’s call for transnational racial unity among a widely scattered people, and the *Negro World’s*
importance among the West Indian diaspora. The text is also useful beyond a strict study of Garveyism, as the Great War’s impact on the Caribbean, for example, and the wave of unrest that shook the region in the postwar period are also widely documented. The review ends by pointing to directions for further research raised by the collection.

Hill’s “General Introduction” places West Indians, both at home and abroad, front and center in the Garvey historiography, countering a scholarly tendency to regard the movement as mainly an African American phenomenon. The Caribbean focus of the final series in the UNIA Papers, he explains, “restores the important cultural and political aspects of the Garvey narrative that have been eclipsed” (p. lxxxviii). This corrective may be somewhat unnecessary for scholars of the Caribbean (including many of the contributors to this volume), who have long recognized the movement’s tremendous significance in the region during the late 1910s and 1920s. Readers may recall the 2003 special edition of this journal titled, “Garveyism in the Hispanic Caribbean.” After a substantial section specifying the ethnonational identity of the American arm of the UNIA, Hill moves on to write a comprehensive statement on the organization’s development in and impact on the Caribbean. He argues that the movement became a form of “cultural and political ethnogenesis” for West Indians abroad in that it helped crystallize a powerful “long-range Caribbean nationalism” among supporters (pp. lxxxvi, lxvii). He explains, “The Garvey movement served as a marker of West Indian group identity and became, in turn, an important means of maintaining and reaffirming a strong collective West Indian identity” (p. lxxxvi). Ultimately, Hill maintains that, of all the places where the UNIA thrived, it was the British Caribbean that experienced the movement’s greatest political impact, suggesting that West Indian nationalism had a founding father in Garvey. The documents bear out this claim, as the insularity exhibited in the early 1910s gives way, along with a growing embrace of the UNIA, to articulations of West Indian brotherhood and expressions of anti-imperialism by the latter half of the decade.

Following Hill’s introduction, historical commentaries on individual islands and nations place the Garvey movement in local context. These essays vary in coverage; some offer a general historical overview (as with Grenada, for example), others provide an analysis of the UNIA’s local character (Bermuda, Costa Rica), and a few address topics particular to a given country (labor relations in the Leeward Islands and Honduran historiography of West Indian immigration). There are some fascinating surprises here, such as Kim Butler’s commentary on Garveyism in Brazil, a relatively unexplored topic. She outlines three avenues of limited but nevertheless significant contact between the UNIA and Brazil: a short-lived attempt by the Springfield, Massachusetts chapter to launch
a colonization movement of African Americans to Brazil; *Negro World* circulation, particularly among port and ship workers, and occasional translation of its articles in the black Brazilian press; and among West Indians who had settled in the hinterland town of Porto Velho during the construction of the Madeira-Marmoré railroad. Butler’s essay, along with numerous documents, demonstrates that the movement’s impact was felt well beyond its network of formal chapters.

Throughout the text, meticulously detailed footnotes give readers useful background on subjects far afield from Garvey’s movement, particulars such as Greek mythological gods or William Randolph Hearst’s anti-British publications as they appear in the documents. Other notes offer short, useful biographies of early twentieth-century Pan-African leaders, such as Dusé Mohamed Ali, who printed Garvey’s early writings in his London-based *African Times and Orient Review*, and Cyril Briggs with whom Garvey had a famously contentious relationship. Perhaps most importantly, however, several notes together detail the lives of local UNIA leaders whose stories have been overshadowed by prominent international organizers, lesser known figures such as R.E.M. Jack, a black schoolteacher from St. Vincent who attended the organization’s 1920 international convention in New York. While in Harlem, he was ordained in the UNIA-affiliated African Orthodox Church. He then moved to Cuba where he ministered to Vincentians, Barbadians, and other West Indians at work in the island’s American-run sugar industry before traveling between Barbados, St. Vincent, and the U.S. as a religious organizer. From primary sources, we also know that Jack headed a sizable UNIA branch in St. Vincent, advised others on the construction of UNIA chapters, advocated for compulsory education and wage increases, called himself a “New Negro,” and railed “against the British government” (p. 613). Jack’s story is emblematic of the trajectories of many local leaders who expanded the UNIA’s vision and on-the-ground presence in the Caribbean. In helping piece together the lives of such important but hitherto unknown figures, this edition of the *UNIA Papers* opens new avenues for the study of grassroots Garveyism.

Researchers interested in a variety of questions about the daily experiences of West Indians at home and abroad will benefit from *The UNIA Papers*’ latest edition. For instance, the volume gives a few small but evocative windows into the daily lives of women in the Garvey movement, such as a report revealing that the Ladies Division in Colón made shirts, ties, and pillowslips as part of their fundraising endeavors. Women’s leadership in the UNIA is also documented, as in a fascinating letter written by Bocas Del Toro Lady President, Marie Duchatellier, who describes her extensive travels as an active UNIA organizer, United Fruit Company attempts to block her movement, and multiple friendly
visits with the Panamanian President. Additionally, scholars of labor relations will appreciate the volume’s occasional documentation of wage policies, such as the Barbados Governor’s request that planters fend off unrest by raising wages, and several sources addressing the 1920 strike on the Panama Canal, led by both the UNIA and the United Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way and Railway Shop Employees.

The most prominent theme that emerges from this volume is that of the Garvey movement’s portability and symbiotic relationship with West Indian immigration. The push of economic decline in the British colonies, along with the pull of work opportunities in zones of U.S. expansion, led hundreds of thousands of West Indians abroad in the early twentieth century. These men and women, Hill explains, “served as the key vector in spreading the message of Garveyism, introducing it into whatever communities they resided in” (p. lxxi). Indeed, like R.E.M. Jack, almost every UNIA leader whose work is documented here, at the very least, had sojourned away from home. The sources reveal that most Bahamian Garveyites, for instance, actually lived in Miami; Veterans from the British West Indies Regiment (BWIR) founded Barbados’ first UNIA branch; and Bermuda’s most prominent organizer was Antiguan. Long before professional historians became interested in transnationalism and even before black intellectuals began using the language of diaspora, early twentieth-century West Indians articulated a strong sense of connection to one another and to what Garvey called “Africa abroad” (p. 175). The notion of dispersion is taken for granted in the many documents collected here, as writers addressed “friends at home and abroad” and their racial brothers “scattered all over the Western Hemisphere” in contributions to local and international newspapers (pp. 625, 420). But diaspora and migration are also the subjects of Garveyite writing. A contributor to Grenada’s West Indian, for instance, wrote of travel’s radicalizing effect: “Every young man or woman of colour who has returned to these islands… returns bigger and broader in mind, with a better knowledge of the good of unity and teamwork, and with the beautiful idea that the first of all loyalties is loyalty to his or her suffering race. The New West Indian is in the making” (p. 392). This collection illustrates that “New West Indian” was also made “broader in mind” through migration to the Hispanic Caribbean and Central America, as well as other forms of mobility, including military service.

Nothing exemplifies the importance of travel to the Garvey movement more than the UNIA shipping venture, the Black Star Line (BSL), and the widespread support the line garnered throughout the Caribbean. Countless documents in the collection demonstrate that West Indians embraced the BSL, not simply as a business opportunity, though it was that, but also as a transformative moment in black history after
centuries of forced migration and decades of economic emigration. For example, because he believed launching the BSL's S.S. Frederick Douglass “mark[ed] a great epoch in the history of the Negro Race,” one proud investor wrote a poem in honor of the ship, “Manned by Afric’s sons, no more in bond” (p. 403). Enthusiasm for the BSL also grew out of a very practical need for improvements in travel and shipping. A supporter from Dominica urged his countrymen to buy BSL shares and “help the Corporation to float as many ships as possible” because the island suffered from infrequent and irregular steamship mail and passenger service (p. 624). With its potential to transform the terms of travel in the region, the BSL appealed widely among West Indian migrants.

Although the volume includes numerous useful sources written “from above” such as diplomatic cables and government reports, as well as articles, speeches, and letters written my Marcus Garvey (whose writing has been published abundantly elsewhere), the real value of the text lies in the many documents written by his supporters, allowing readers to explore the UNIA’s appeal and role through the words of everyday Garveyites. The text illustrates that Garvey’s consistent call for cross-class, cross-color, transnational racial unity had a tremendous resonance on the ground in the Caribbean. As Garvey condemned “shade prejudice” and called for transnational black unity, UNIA members across the region often stressed the practical need for black racial solidarity (p. 72). A contributor to the local English-language paper in Panama City explained that he supported the Black Star Line because it united the commercial power of West Indians of different islands, African Americans, and Africans. In another example, Panamanian UNIA leader, Eduardo Morales “exhorted his hearers to drop all insular selfishness and get together, … bury all ‘Jamaicanism,’ Barbadianism,’ ‘Panamanianism,’ and all foolish names hurled at each other which were only keeping the race apart and giving its opponents the opportunity of further [oppression]” before launching a massive strike in the Canal Zone (p. 502).

The volume also documents West Indian enthusiasm for the Negro World, which circulated internationally by early 1919, as well official attempts to suppress the paper. In dozens of sources, colonial authorities claimed the paper, with its “distinctly inflammatory nature,” had a pernicious influence on British subjects and proposed its suppression as a “seditious” publication (pp. 296-297). Authorities accused the paper of promoting “racial animosity” or “direct and open incitement to inter-racial war” (pp. 329, 288). British Honduras and British Guiana moved to suppress the paper, and Trinidad, the Windward Islands, Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Kitts-Nevis, Antigua, and St. Lucia all passed ordinances directed at the Negro World. Such moves only furthered West Indian
frustration, as participants in British Honduras’ 1919 riots cited the suppression of the *Negro World* as one of their grievances and Grenadians launched protests against the Seditious Publications Act.

Because the editors have included sources giving the movement wider context, several themes not exclusively related to Garveyism emerge here. Of these, World War I figures most prominently. The war radicalized black British subjects, as West Indian attitudes evolved from crown loyalty to anti-imperialism. Sources from Port Limón, Costa Rica in 1911, for instance, reveal that a number of West Indian societies vied with one another to host celebrations honoring King George V’s coronation. Yet, by 1918 and 1919, vehement denunciations of imperial rule were much more common, as in one writer’s claim, “The Negro is tired of being ruled by the pale-faced oppressors” (p. 621). Much of this change in attitude was due to outrage over treatment soldiers in the British West Indies Regiment received during and after their service, including lower pay, shorter leave periods, and slower demobilization than their white counterparts. The December 1918 mutiny of BWIR soldiers in Taranto, Italy is amply covered in the *UNIA Papers*, as is the Caribbean League, a short-lived organization formed by noncommissioned officers. The league alarmed imperial authorities when a member claimed, “the black man should have freedom and govern himself in the West Indies and that force must be used, and if necessary bloodshed,” exhibiting a nascent anti-imperialist nationalism that appears increasingly throughout the text (p. 136).

Volume Eleven also covers the general state of unrest that permeated the postwar Caribbean, as work stoppages, riots, and confrontations with white soldiers broke out in the summer and fall of 1919. The significant paper trail generated by West Indian unrest illustrates both the extent of colonial fear (many authorities suggested landing warships manned by white troops) as well as the fact that the Caribbean was hardly removed from the global upheavals of the time. Imperial authorities and British subjects alike made frequent reference to overseas events, such as coal miner strikes in England, race riots in the U.K. and the U.S., and the Russian Revolution, as having influenced local resistance.

This most recent edition of the *UNIA Papers* raises several interesting questions for further scholarship on the Caribbean arm of Garvey’s movement. First, of the many calls for racial unity included here, some were articulated in relation to other nationalist projects. A contributor to Grenada’s *West Indian* quoted Garvey as saying, “Whether it is the Irish people, the Polish people, the Jews, or the Hindoos, everybody is looking out to protect himself and in this case wherein men are fighting for freedom, we of the Negro race cannot afford to linger behind” (p. 174). Similarly, Eliezer Cadet, appointed to represent the UNIA at the Paris
Peace Conference, claimed, “We have resolved to imitate the yellow race” (p. 150). Documents such as these should challenge researchers to explore the extent to which UNIA members identified with or even attempted to forge links with contemporaneous solidarity movements. Robin Kelley and Tiffany Patterson once called for an investigation into linkages between black radicalism and other revolutionary struggles, and some scholars such as Vijay Prashad, have taken up the charge. With respect to the Garvey movement, Hill has detailed previously Garvey’s inspiration from the Irish independence struggle and Michael G. Malouf has addressed Garvey’s Irish connections from a literary perspective.

Yet, as Volume Eleven’s documents suggest, much work remains, particularly with respect to what rank-and-file Garveyites thought of other international struggles.

Another question that challenges researchers is the nature of the UNIA’s relationship with the United Fruit Company and other major employers of West Indian labor. In his essay on Costa Rica, Harpelle writes that the UNIA has “a history of both radicalism and accommodation” (p. clxxxv). His best example of UNIA accommodation is Garvey’s 1921 visit to Limón, during which he agreed to postpone his speech until a shipment of bananas could be loaded, time which Garvey spent on an all-expense-paid trip to the capital arranged by the company. Volume Eleven’s documents from an earlier period, however, demonstrate that on other occasions the situation was reversed, as powerful employers were forced to accommodate the overwhelmingly popular UNIA. A 1919 exchange between Canal Zone authorities and local UNIA leaders reveals that considerable effort went into finding a place to dock the Black Star Line’s S.S. Frederick Douglass so that a request for “permission for several thousand of these West Indians to inspect the vessel” could be granted (pp. 438-439). Another fascinating set of documents, which Harpelle has quoted before but which are now published in their entirety, includes letters between United Fruit officials in Panama and Costa Rica regarding the arrival to Limón of international UNIA organizer Henrietta Vinton Davis. While the officials were concerned that “she has only to lift a finger... to start trouble,” they also acknowledged, “it is useless for us to oppose them” (pp. 476-479). Instead, the company optimistically chose to regard the UNIA’s stock-raising venture as unthreatening to company interests, as Davis could only sell BSL shares to the gainfully employed. The Cuban state also found that cooperation with the UNIA was more fruitful than suppression during the organization’s early years. In 1920 the Frederick Douglass’ representative, captain, and crew were invited to meet Cuban President Mario García Menocal, who requested a photo with the group. (The photo is included in the volume.) Although one can imagine that the Cuban President was
attempting to render himself friendly to black causes in light of Cuba’s significant black population, his gesture demonstrates that, at least for a time, the UNIA was regarded as a formidable organization, worthy of recognition by powerful state and company authorities.

In his introduction, Hill notes that it would be “difficult to over-emphasize” the centrality of “the movements of West Indians” to the history of the Americas and the world (p. lxxviii). Building on the ground-breaking work of Eric Williams and Sidney Mintz, recent scholarship has indeed centered the Caribbean and its people in world-historical processes, such as the rise of multinational corporations at the turn of the “American Century.” Now, the UNIA Papers’ latest volume expands our view beyond the role of West Indian labor in such processes, allowing researchers to access first-hand accounts of the world’s largest black organization to date, as well as the beliefs and traditions, struggles and victories, migrations and movements of a people who shaped the course of empires.

**Notes**

1 Keiko Araki addresses the Garvey movement’s relationship with Japanese nationalism in her contribution to the forthcoming *Black Intellectuals: The Atlantic World and Beyond*.


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A n alternative title of this book might be ‘A Concise History of Caribbean Plantation Economy.’ Frank Moya Pons, the most widely read historian of the Dominican Republic, set out to write a book that reveals the structural similarities of Caribbean economies of diverse colonial affiliation and the continuities of their experience through historical time. His purpose is to restore balance to an historiography