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Chicago, Garveyism, and the history of the diasporic Midwest

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This article analyses the dynamic history of Garveyism in Chicago, Illinois (USA). The Jamaican black nationalist Marcus Garvey's message of racial pride, African redemption, and black self-determination electrified black Chicagoans. Thousands of blacks in this Midwestern industrial city joined Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). At its peak in the early 1920s, the UNIA claimed six million members worldwide. Chicago was highly regarded in the transnational UNIA. Black women played a critical role in building this Pan-African movement in the Windy City. The Chicago UNIA spawned black nationalist political and religious movements in this city from the 1920s onward. Tracing the largely unknown story provides insight into the broader history of what I call the 'diasporic Midwest'. I use the term as a theoretical and analytical framework to extend the geographical scope of the African Diaspora, to internationalize African-American history, to consider the gendered contours and paradoxes of Pan-Africanism and black nationalism, and to chart a genealogy of Black Power.

Keywords: Chicago; diasporic Midwest; Marcus Garvey; Garveyism; UNIA; masculinism

Marcus Garvey was animated. The Jamaican president general of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA) delivered a powerful address before 250 people at the Eight Illinois Regiment armory in Chicago, Illinois (USA) on 28 September 1919. Holding the address at this building located on the South Side, Chicago's black belt, was significant. Black Chicagoans revered the Eight Illinois Regiment for its valiant military service in the Spanish-American War and World War I (Dolinar 2013, 82–94). According to a Bureau of Investigation report, Garvey declared: 'I want to tell you about the Universal Negro Improvement Association, what it stands for, the purpose of which organization is to draw the four hundred million negroes of the world together and unite into this great organization'. He emphasized that the UNIA was 'organizing all over', including in Africa, to uplift black people everywhere (Hill 1983, 43, 44). Garvey discussed the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation (BSL), a commercial shipping company incorporated by Garvey in June 1919. He envisioned the BSL as the keystone for black economic independence globally (Bandeled 2008). Garvey's call for armed self-defense of Africa from European subjugation elicited the most enthusiastic response from the audience. Claiming that he represented 'a new negro', who was unafraid of white people, Garvey declared that the continued European domination

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of Africa would occur only ‘over the dead bodies of four hundred million negroes’. The crowd erupted with loud applause (Hill 1983, 44).

Additionally, Garvey alluded to the negative press the UNIA had recently received in the *Chicago Defender*, the nationally prominent African-American weekly published and edited by Robert Sengstacke Abbott. Prior to his arrival to the Windy City, the *Chicago Defender* denounced the BSL as a ‘notorious plot’ organized by Garvey to rob unsuspecting African-Americans who desired to purchase stock in the company and to resettle in Africa.¹ The *Chicago Defender* also reported alleged financial mismanagement of the BSL.² Garvey took exception to Abbott and brought suit for \$200,000 against the *Chicago Defender* for libel. Garvey came to Chicago in late September to defend his name and the BSL from criticism. After this trip, Garvey claimed that Abbott had played a role in prompting Chicago authorities to arrest him on 30 September 1919, for violating the Illinois Security Law, a statute designed to protect the public in the handling of financial securities. Authorities claimed that Garvey had unlawfully sold BSL stock to an undercover agent. In June 1920, Abbott testified in court against Garvey in Chicago. The court ruled in Garvey’s favor. However, the judge awarded the BSL only six cents for damages. Garvey’s troubles with Abbott and the *Chicago Defender* were hardly over. Garvey and Abbott remained sworn public enemies. In the coming years, Abbott’s *Defender* rarely reported local or international news about the UNIA. Moreover, he played a crucial role in Garvey’s eventual incarceration in 1925 and deportation in 1927 from the USA. In 1923, Abbott joined William Pickens of the NAACP, Chandler Owens of the left-wing *The Messenger* newspaper, and others to push the US Attorney General to prosecute Garvey for mail fraud. Ultimately, federal authorities in New York convicted Garvey and incarcerated him in February 1925 for mail fraud (Hill 1983, 370; Dolinar 2013, 199).³

Despite his contention with Abbott and legal troubles in Chicago, Garvey returned to the Windy City before his incarceration in 1925. He viewed this Midwestern metropolis as a center of support for the UNIA. He made this point at a mass meeting at the UNIA’s headquarters in Harlem shortly after he returned from Chicago in February 1921. When he described the Windy City as an ‘another stronghold of his Universal Negro Improvement Association’, the crowd erupted with loud applause (Hill 1984, 164). Garvey was not being hyperbolic. Thousands of blacks in Chicagoland joined the UNIA. Garvey’s call for race pride and African redemption captured the imaginations of black people across the African Diaspora, not least in Chicago. The UNIA was the largest black protest movement in world history, and in its heyday in the early 1920s claimed six million members in the USA, Canada, the Caribbean, Central America, Africa, and Europe. The organization understood itself as a provisional government in exile committed to building self-reliant black institutions, an independent Africa, and a global black empire capable of protecting the rights and dignity of African-descended people everywhere (Ewing 2014; Issa 2005; Martin 1976, 14–16).

Dreaming of a new world in which black people globally could live free of racism, poverty, and European colonialism, Garveyites in Chicago, like elsewhere, built dynamic social protest movements through the UNIA. The Chicagoland region counted some of the largest UNIA divisions (locals) in the world. Black women played a vital role in the Garvey movement in the Windy City, as they did around the world. However, the Chicago UNIA’s membership declined by the 1930s. Still, the UNIA and Garveyism remained a potent political and organizational force in this Midwest metropolis from the Depression and onwards. Garveyism thrived in trade unions, left-wing groups, established black churches, unorthodox religious organizations, and black nationalist protest groups. Garvey, Garveyism,

and the UNIA deserve credit for preparing the ground for Black Power in Chicago during the 1960s. This story remains largely unknown.

The primary focus of this article is an investigation of the complex history of Garveyism and the UNIA in Chicago from the years immediately after World War I to the Black Power era of the 1960s and 70s, with some attention to other Midwestern cities such as Cleveland, Ohio; Detroit, Michigan; and Gary, Indiana. These cities were also UNIA hotbeds. Tracing this history extends the geographic, temporal, and analytical scope of the study of African Diaspora and the American heartland by revealing the history of what I call the 'diasporic Midwest'. I use this term 'diasporic Midwest' as an empirical and theoretical framework to extend the study of the African Diaspora and to internationalize African-American history. The 'diasporic Midwest' lens provides insight for tracing the significance of the American heartland as a center of black transnational political activism; appreciating the gendered contours of Pan-African movements; and charting a genealogy of Black Power. The diasporic Midwest encompasses the American industrial heartland, a region that includes states north of the Ohio River between the Appalachians and the Rocky Mountains, as a single yet complex geographic, political, and discursive formation linked to Africa, the black diaspora, and the world (McDuffie 2011).

The unique interplay in the American heartland between heavy industry, gender, migration, world war, global depression, white supremacy, and empire created fertile ground for Garveyism to take root in Chicago and in other Midwestern industrial cities such as Detroit and Cleveland. Beginning in the early twentieth century, these cities emerged as sites of the most advanced industrial manufacturing on the planet (Bates 2012; Phillips 1999; Cohen 2008). By 1920, Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland ranked as the second, fourth, and fifth biggest cities in the USA in 1920, respectively.⁴ Blacks in Chicago and other Midwestern industrial cities earned incomes higher in the region's heavy industries than their counterparts and enjoyed political rights they could find nowhere else (Reed 2011; Stein 1986, 229). The industrial character of these cities profoundly shaped Garveyism in Chicago and in other Midwestern cities. The bulk of the UNIA's male rank-and-file in these cities worked in heavy industries, while the vast majority of Garveyite women toiled back-breaking hours as domestics in the homes of white women. The industrial character of black Chicago helps explain the militancy and endurance of Garveyism in the Windy City and other Midwestern industrial cities (Hine and McClusky 2012, xiv).

Curiously, scholars of the African Diaspora have paid little attention to the Midwestern United States in general and Chicago in particular. Much work remains to be done to highlight the region's visibility in the larger black world. This is most evident in the currency of the 'Black Atlantic' framework for examining African-American linkages to the African Diaspora. Popularized by black British cultural theorist Paul Gilroy, the Black Atlantic paradigm describes the Atlantic basin as a unit of analysis for looking at the making of modernity and blackness (Gilroy 1993). By focusing primarily on the Anglophone North Atlantic rim, the Black Atlantic paradigm erases the black urban Midwest from scholarly inquiry. Given this, studying Garveyism in Chicago reveals not only the diverse geographic locales where and multiple routes through which black people forged transnational political connections but also the importance of industrial cities in the American heartland as sites for diasporic protest.

In terms of Garvey Studies, research on the UNIA and Garveyism in the USA has typically examined coastal cities such as New York and New Orleans, as well as the rural South (Dalrymple 2014; Harold 2007; Rolinson 2007).⁵ Some scholars have dismissed

the importance of Chicago to the transnational UNIA. St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton in their classic sociological study of the South Side, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* of 1945 assert that ‘Garveyism was never very popular in Chicago (Drake and Cayton 1993, 752)’. This was not the case. Additionally, the history of Garveyism in the Windy City challenges the declension narrative of the Garvey movement, which suggests that the UNIA and Garveyism ceased to be of any significant importance in the African world after Garvey’s death in 1940. The Garvey movement in Chicago reveals the continued influence of Garveyism and the UNIA in shaping black life in the city after Garvey’s death and in laying the groundwork for Black Power.

Similarly, studying the diasporic Midwest through the history of Garveyism in Chicago contains important implications for internationalizing African-American history in the American heartland. Most studies of twentieth century black communities in cities such as Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland typically employ community study and nation-state frameworks to describe black life in these Midwestern locales (Bates 2012; Phillips 1999; Drake and Cayton 1993; Reed 2011; Green 2007). While focusing on individual cities makes sense, the community study approach shrouds the American heartland’s transnational linkages to a larger black world. The diasporic Midwest shifts the history of this region by illustrating how the transnational Garvey movement linked Chicago to the black world, thereby countering the common perception of the Midwest as provincial.

Meanwhile, the prominent role of women in the Garvey movement in Chicago calls attention to the gendered contours of the diaspora. As literary scholar Michelle Ann Stephens points out, Garveyism constructed a masculinist and patriarchal discourse of leadership and nation building, which required ‘the subordination of black women both within the Garvey leadership and within the broader visual culture of the movement (Stephens 2005, 91)’. These gender politics operated within the Chicago Garvey movement. But if masculinism was apparent in the Chicago UNIA, so were women in leading the movement and challenging the agendas of male leaders (Reddock 2014; Leeds 2013; Duncan 2009; Taylor 2002).⁶

Lastly, a study of Garveyism in Chicago provides insight into the ideological complexities and contradictions of Garveyite black internationalism. Too often scholars of black internationalism frame it as uniformly progressive or radical and oppositional to racism, capitalism, imperialism, and sexism. Garveyism in Chicago shows that this was hardly the case. Garveyites in the Windy City held a variety of global political outlooks that were often simultaneously progressive and reactionary. Garveyite black internationalism opposed white supremacy, European colonialism, and black exploitation on the one hand and on the other upheld empire-building, capitalism, and patriarchy.

Examining the history of the diasporic Midwest through a study of Garveyism in Chicago, not only tells a fascinating but largely unknown story. More broadly, this history extends the geographic scope of the African Diaspora, the Garvey movement, and the American heartland; globalizes African-American history; reveals the gendered contours of Pan-Africanism; highlights the ideological paradoxes of black internationalism, and charts a genealogy of Black Power (McDuffie 2011).

The roots of Garveyism in Chicago

Chicago provided fertile ground for Garveyism and the UNIA. From the city’s very beginning, Chicago was rooted in the African Diaspora. Chicago’s first permanent resident was Jean Baptiste Pointe du Sable, a fur trader from Haiti, who settled along the

Chicago River by 1790 (Drake and Cayton 1993, 31). By the late nineteenth century, the Windy City emerged as a center of internationally focused black protest. The black Chicago press regularly featured articles about African-American emigration to the West African nation of Liberia.⁷ The Chicago-based journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett, with prominent African-American leader Frederick Douglass, led efforts that successfully challenged the exclusion of African-descended people from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in the Windy City (Reed 2000).

World War I era marked a key turning point in the history of blacks in Chicago and an important moment in stoking diasporic politics. Chicago counted the largest black population in the American heartland and emerged as a stronghold of New Negro radicalism. The term described a new black militancy fostered by the Great Migration, racial oppression, and the global upheavals of the war years. Between 1915 and 1920, 50,000 African-Americans migrated from the South to the Windy City in search of a new life free from Jim Crow and lynching. The city's black population exploded from 44,103 in 1910 to 109,458 in 1920, 233,903 by 1930, and 277,731 in 1940 (Drake and Cayton 1993, 8). Newly arrived migrants dreamed of securing good-paying jobs in the city's stockyards, railroad yards, and factories. Most black men worked as unskilled laborers or in the dirtiest and most menial factory jobs, while most black women toiled as domestics. Black Chicagoans lived in the densely populated, highly segregated, underserved South Side. Racial violence was a daily occurrence for black Chicagoans. The deadly Chicago 'Riot' of July 1919, in which white mobs invaded the South Side, claimed 16 black and 15 white lives (Tuttle 1970, 10).

Despite racial terror and poverty, black Chicago did not complacently accept their second-class citizenship. They fought back. The South Side was home to a dynamic black cultural and commercial scene. The *Chicago Defender* played a key role in stoking black militancy and the Great Migration. Featuring sensationalist stories about racial terror in the South, the *Chicago Defender* encouraged blacks to migrate to the North in search of a better life. The newspaper reported global news affecting black people (Baldwin 2007; Reed 2011, 101–113). It was these local and global developments that prepared the ground for Garveyism when it took root in Chicago in 1919.

Garvey, Garveyism, and the Chicago UNIA, 1917–1930

The 1920s marked the heyday of the UNIA in Chicago. The Garvey movement in the Windy City constituted the largest black protest organization during these years and was a major hub in the worldwide Garvey movement. Garvey first visited Chicago by 1917, and he returned to the city several times before his incarceration in 1925.⁸ Organizationally, the UNIA by 1930 established nine divisions in Chicagoland, including three locals in the Windy City.⁹ Division 23 was the first and largest local in Chicago. Founded in 1920, Division 23 eventually established its Liberty Hall, the name of UNIA meeting halls, at 4859 South State St. in the heart of the South Side. Division 23 claimed more than 20,000 members, making it the second largest UNIA division in the world. Only the Harlem UNIA counted more members (Hill 1989, 260–261).¹⁰ William A. Wallace, the owner of profitable bakery and later a state senator, held the first presidency of Division 23, served as a delegate to the UNIA's First International Convention of Negro Peoples of the World held in Harlem in 1920, and became secretary-general of the UNIA in 1926. Ida B. Wells-Barnett briefly supported Garvey and the UNIA (Giddings 2008, 585–589).¹¹ Although middle-class blacks often held positions of power within the Chicago UNIA, factory

workers and domestic laborers comprised the majority of the UNIA's membership. Like elsewhere, Division 23 staged large parades, sponsored mass meetings, operated restaurants and laundry mats, and provided mutual aid to needy black Chicagoans, connecting the Windy City to the African Diaspora (Drake and Cayton 1993, 751–753).

Meanwhile, the *Negro World*, the official newspaper of the UNIA, which reported news about the Garvey movement and black people globally, also connected Chicago to the African Diaspora. The *Negro World* regularly featured news about the Chicago UNIA, as well as about Cleveland and Detroit (Hill 1984, 164; McDuffie 2011, 166–69, 171–72).¹² The Detroit and Cleveland both claimed 5,000 members, while the Gary UNIA counted 2,000 members. Like in the Windy City, the bulk of UNIA membership in Cleveland, Detroit, and Gary hailed from the South. In Cleveland and Gary, many UNIA men worked in the steel mills, while a significant number of men in the Detroit UNIA toiled in the city's automobile plants, including local leaders J. Charles Zampty of Trinidad and Joseph Craigen of British Guiana. In July 1925, thousands of Garveyites from Detroit and Gary traveled to Chicago, where they participated in a massive street parade through the South Side (Smith-Irvin 1989, 65; Stein 1986, 229; McDuffie 2011, 169; Mayor's Interracial Committee 1926).¹³

If the UNIA tied Chicago to the African Diaspora then the organization's global vision also understood African redemption in highly gendered terms, underscoring a limitation within Garveyite black internationalism. Masculinism was apparent in Garvey's February 1921 speech in the Windy City. He proclaimed: 'I do not fear death. How can a man die more gloriously than fighting for the cause and for the liberty of the race (Hill 1984, 150)'. The crowd cheered after these remarks. For Garvey, African redemption constituted a Manichean global struggle between black and white men for manhood and freedom. This position overlooked the distinct oppressions black women faced and framed their roles in the struggle for African redemption primarily as mothers and wives.

This politics was evident in the Chicago UNIA. A report about local Black Cross Nurses by Division 23 to the *Negro World* called attention to these women's bodies and clothing. The women wore 'spotless tunics of white, and around their arms was the modest cross of black that stood out boldly against its background of white. They are interested in the uplift of their people, and are growing in strength and numbers'.¹⁴ This article cast black women primarily as virtuous, respectable nurturers. This was a powerful move. The UNIA turned denigrating white supremacist cultural representations of black women as immoral and unattractive on their head. Still, the discourse circumscribed women's role in racial uplift within a patriarchal ethos.

Despite the masculinism within the Garvey movement, women pursued creative means to champion African redemption in ways that both affirmed and challenged prevailing gender conventions. Harlem-based internationally renown Garveyite female leaders such as Amy Jacques Garvey, Henrietta Vinton Davis, and Maymie Turpeau DeMena frequently visited and spoke in Chicago (Hill 1985, 454).¹⁵ In 1925, Amy Jacques Garvey, Marcus Garvey's second wife and a brilliant Pan-African thinkers in her own right, came to Chicago and delivered a powerful address at a Division 23 meeting. She called for the release of her husband from jail. Jacques Garvey was keenly aware that her political influence within the male-dominated Garvey movement rested on her ability to mediate her leadership claims through her status as Garvey's wife. Yet at the same time, Jacques Garvey transgressed gender conventions. Although she was married, Jacques Garvey at the time had no children. She believed that women were men's intellectual equals and thereby best suited to lead the 'race (Taylor 2002, 41–90)'.

In addition to speaking about African redemption and Garvey's imprisonment, these ranking UNIA female leaders, as well as local Chicago female officials, devoted special attention to uplifting black women and children in the Windy City. Mrs. Lula Blanton, the lady president of Division 313 on Chicago's West Side, delivered the opening address at a massive meeting of this UNIA branch in March 1923 in which she extolled the principles of Garveyism.¹⁶ Black Cross Nurses actively performed community service in underserved black Chicago communities.¹⁷ Clearly, Chicago UNIA women understood the connections between the protection of black women and children, the incarceration of Garvey, and the struggle for African redemption. They also skillfully navigated the complex gendered terrain of the UNIA.

The UNIA's dynamic movement culture played a crucial role in building the Garvey movement in Chicago. Key to this process was Garvey's philosophy of 'African fundamentalism', a civic religion he conceived and incorporated into the UNIA's organizational life. Drawing from a variety of black religious credos, African fundamentalism claimed God was black, rejected white supremacy, and demanded the full freedom of black people (Burkett 1978, 7).

Chicago UNIA meetings, like elsewhere, resembled southern black church services. Meetings began with the singing of 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains', the popular nineteenth-century abolitionist hymn adopted by the UNIA as its official opening anthem for all events (Hill 1985, 902). The song's opening stanza vividly reveals the essence of African fundamentalism as both a political and religious credo for black liberation.

From Greenland's icy mountains, from India's coral strand
Where Afric's sunny fountains roll down their golden sand
From many an ancient river, from many a palmy plain
They call us to deliver their land from error's chain (Grant 2009, 173).

Prayer followed the song. Then came fiery, sermon-like addresses about African redemption, current events, and black history. Spontaneous shouts of 'amen'. thunderous applause and foot stamping from the audience often punctuated these addresses. Meetings closed with prayer and the singing of 'Ethiopia, Thou Land of Our Fathers', the UNIA's official anthem. As scholar Shana Redmond observes:

'Ethiopia, Thou Land of Our Fathers' ... broke the national anthem mold. 'Ethiopia' became a transnational text that attempted to unite 'the Negro race', millions of black people on (at least) four continents. This song's place of prominence ensured that diaspora would be a key organizing concept for the leaders and members of the UNIA. (Redmond 2011, 25; McDuffie 2011, 171-72)

For newly arrived southern migrants, UNIA meetings surely provided a welcoming sense of community in new urban surroundings and a link to black people everywhere.

Massive street parades counting thousands of participants and bystanders also played a key role in building the UNIA in disseminating Garveyism into Chicago. Garveyites marched through the streets of Chicago carrying red, black, and green tricolor, the African liberation flag Garvey conceived (Hill 1984, 765). They were joined by columns of the Black Cross Nurses and Universal African Legions, the UNIA's paramilitary unit. The spectacle of Garveyism could be felt on the streets of the South Side.¹⁸

The Chicago UNIA's membership declined during the years immediately before and after Garvey's deportation from the USA in 1927. Frustration with Garvey's alleged

dictatorial style and poor business acumen prompted some UNIA members to leave the organization (Dolinar 2013, 200). Still, thousands of black Chicagoans remained loyal to Garvey and the UNIA. Although the movement had sustained a blow, the UNIA had left an indelible mark on black Chicago by the end of the 1920s. This surge of diasporic militancy was never confined within the UNIA.

Garveyism outside of the UNIA in Chicago during the 1920s

From its very arrival to the urban Midwest, Garveyism stoked Pan-Africanism and black nationalism outside of the UNIA in Chicago and in other cities across the American heartland. This was evident in the short-lived, so-called ‘Abyssinian movement’ in Chicago of 1920. Grover Cleveland Redding, who claimed to be a native of Ethiopia, established and led what he called the ‘Star Order of Ethiopia and Ethiopian Missionary to Abyssinia’. The group’s principal objective was to return African-Americans to Ethiopia. It is uncertain whether or not the Abyssinians and UNIA forged a formal relationship. What is clear is that many black Chicagoans believed the Abyssinians and the UNIA were identical organizations given their calls for black repatriation to Africa.¹⁹ The Abyssinians gained notoriety in the Windy City following a violent confrontation with the Chicago police. On 20 June 1920, Redding, astride a white horse and clad in the robes supposedly of an Ethiopian prince, led a procession of Abyssinians down Thirty-Fifth Street on the South Side. At the corner of Thirty-Fifth Street and Indiana Avenue, Redding burned an American flag. Redding shot and wounded an African-American police officer who tried to stop him. Pandemonium ensued. Abyssinians shot and killed two white bystanders during the disturbance. Local authorities arrested and tried Redding and several of other Abyssinians (Dolinar 2013, 199). It is unclear how Redding came to believe he was ‘Abyssinian’ or destined to lead this movement. The visit of Ethiopian government delegation with President Woodrow Wilson 1919 may have inspired Redding. Ethiopian authorities denied any connections with Redding. Ultimately, Redding and one of his co-defendants were found guilty and hung. Authorities neither charged nor arrested UNIA officials for any involvement with the Abyssinians.²⁰ While we may never know the exact relationship between the UNIA and Abyssinians, it is clear that Garveyism helped to inject diasporic militancy into black Chicago.

Garveyism also found a home in mainline black churches on the South Side. This was most evident in Chicago’s Pilgrim Baptist Church pastored by Reverend Junius Cesear Austin, a devout Garveyite who was heralded as one of the greatest preachers of his day. Born in 1887 in Virginia, Austin gained international prominence in the UNIA. Upon Garvey’s invitation, Austin delivered a powerful address before the 1922 the Third International Convention of Negro Peoples of the World in New York. After coming to Pilgrim Baptist Church in 1926, Austin preached the Garveyite principles of race pride, self-help, and African liberation to his congregation which grew to nearly 15,000 members during his forty years as pastor (Burkett 1997; Hill 1985, 801).

Although Pan-Africanism thrived in some mainstream black churches in the Windy City and elsewhere, Garveyism also cultivated new unorthodox religious movements in Chicago and across the urban Midwest. Often referred to problematically as ‘cults and sects’, Garveyism prospered in these movements, touching the lives of thousands of mostly black working-class urban Midwesterners (Burkett 1997, 310). The Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA) was the most significant of these organizations during the 1920s. Founded in 1913, by Noble Drew Ali, the MSTA drew from an

idiosyncratic set of religious beliefs drawn from Islam and Christianity, as well as from Masonic and Garveyite principles. Born Timothy Drew in North Carolina, Drew Ali eventually made his way to Newark, New Jersey, where he claims to have founded the MSTA. He arrived in Chicago by 1925. Once there, he gained notoriety for wearing a red fez embroidered with the symbol of Islam – the star and crescent moon – and robes reminiscent of those worn by Turks. Calling himself a ‘Prophet’, Drew Ali delivered a powerful religious message primarily to poor and working-class black Chicagoans. His main argument was that African-Americans were not ‘Negroes, Colored Folks, Black People or Ethiopians’ but descendants of Moors and hence ‘Asiatics’. Drew Ali established Temple No. 1, the group’s national headquarters, on the South Side. The MSTA transformed its members. They replaced their ‘slave’ names with ‘real’ names such as ‘El’ or ‘Bey’ to signify their dignified Moorish ancestry. Members gained a reputation amongst blacks for their clean-living, as well as for their sense of racial pride and defiance (Dolinar 2013, 202, 203).

Garveyism loomed large in informing the Moorish Science Temple’s creed. Drew Ali and the *Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America*, the sacred text of the MTSA, acknowledged Garvey as one of the movement’s forbearers. In 1927, Drew Ali visited Garvey while in prison in Atlanta. Garvey reportedly praised Drew Ali for the work he was doing.²¹

The Moorish Science Temple emerged as a significant presence on the South Side, as well as in Detroit and Lansing, Michigan by the late 1920s. The MSTA held a national convention in Chicago in 1928. By 1930, the group counted as many as 30,000 members nation-wide, with more than 10,000 dues-paying members in Chicago (Hill 1995, 92). The size of the MTSA and the enthusiasm of its adherents demonstrate the ways Garveyism was as much a religious movement as it was a political phenomenon.

Drew Ali’s mysterious death in July 1929 shocked his followers. However, Drew Ali’s passing did lead to the demise of the MSTA. Some followers remained loyal to the organization, while others joined new Garveyite-inspired groups such as the Nation of Islam during the Depression. Much of the early history of the Moorish Science Temple of America remains unknown. What is certain is that Garveyism informed this Chicago-based group’s transnational vision and touched the lives of thousands of blacks in the Windy City and in other Midwestern cities.²²

Garveyism in Chicago and the Diasporic Midwest during the depression

Although the UNIA never again counted six million members worldwide, the Garvey movement remained a powerful force amongst blacks in Chicago and across the diasporic Midwest during the Depression. In 1930, the Chicago UNIA counted six active divisions and 7,500 members (Dolinar 2013, 198). Several Chicago-area Garveyites earned Garvey’s trust and remained prominent in the transnational UNIA for decades to come, most notably Charles L. James of Antigua, who headed the Gary UNIA. He was a paid full-time organizer for the UNIA; however, he found success in recruiting new members, many of whom worked in steel mills. The Gary UNIA, along with divisions in Cleveland and Detroit, remained some of the most active locals in the transnational Garvey movement through the 1960s. Earnings of UNIA men in good-paying factory jobs helped to sustain these locals (Smith-Irvin 1989, 64–72).²³

While the UNIA remained an important site of black nationalism and Pan-Africanism in Chicago and other Midwestern cities, Garveyism found new homes outside of the

formal organizational structures of the UNIA. In Chicago, Madame Maymie Turpeau De Mena of Nicaragua, who served as the UNIA International Organizer during the 1920s, relocated to the Windy City by the Depression, left the organization, and became a prominent figure in Father Divine's Peace Mission (Watts 1992, 113–114). In Chicago, Cleveland, and elsewhere across the American heartland, Garveyites joined trade unions, the US Communist Party, and the leftwing National Negro Congress (Gellman 2012, 35, 36; McDuffie 2011, 35, 36).

The UNIA and Garveyism inspired the formation of new black nationalist religious and political organizations in Chicago and across the American heartland. Many of these new groups were based in Chicago and gained international prominence during the Depression. The Nation of Islam (NOI) emerged as one of the most significant neo-Garveyite religious organization in the USA during the 1930s. W. D. Fard Muhammad, an enigmatic figure possibly from New Zealand, founded the NOI in 1930 in Detroit. Prior to the NOI, he joined the Moorish Science Temple of America in Chicago and befriended Noble Drew Ali. Through these associations, Fard Muhammad learned the principles of Garveyism. Like the MSTA, the NOI practiced an unorthodox religious creed drawn from Islam, Christianity, Masonry, and Garveyism. Recently arrived southern migrants who worked in Detroit's automobile plants and factories comprised the bulk of the NOI's membership. By the mid-1930s, the NOI may have counted 5,000 members in Detroit (Gomez 2005, 277–280; Benyon 1938, 894, 897).

The Nation of Islam cast its theology in transnational terms and promoted black racial separatism. Fard Muhammad first introduced himself to blacks in Detroit as a holy man from Arabia.

I am W. D. Fard and I came from the Holy City of Mecca. More about myself I will not tell you yet, for the time has not yet come. I am your brother. You have not yet seen me in my royal robes. (Dolinar 2013, 205)

The NOI developed an elaborate theology in which the organization claimed African-Americans were of the 'lost and found people, who were identified as the original members of the Tribe of Shabazz from the Lost Nation of Asia'.²⁴ Claiming that blacks were the 'original man', the NOI referred to white as 'devils' because they allegedly had been biogenetically engineered from black people by an evil mad scientist millennia ago. Like the Moorish Science Temple of America, the Nation of Islam rejected African-American 'slave names', advocated racial pride, and promoted asceticism and the Protestant work ethic. However, in contrast to the MSTA, the Nation of Islam embraced a 'black' identity.²⁵

Chicago quickly emerged as a center of the NOI. Fard Muhammad established Temple of Islam Number Two in the Windy City by 1934. Soon afterwards, he returned to Detroit where he vanished. His student Elijah Muhammad, born Elijah Poole in Georgia, assumed the leadership of the organization. 'The Honorable Elijah Muhammad' and the 'Messenger of Allah' as he came to be called, was already familiar with Garveyism and the UNIA. Muhammad served as an officer in the Chicago UNIA during the 1920s.²⁶ He moved the Nation of Islam's headquarters to the Windy City. Under his leadership from Chicago, the NOI grew into a major religious and social force on the South Side and in black urban communities across the USA by the late 1950s. The group also claimed Garvey as one of its forbearers (Muhammad 1965, xiii).

The Chicago-based Peace Movement of Ethiopia (PME) constituted the largest neo-Garveyite protest organization to emerge nationally during the Depression. Mittie Maud Lena Gordon, a charismatic leader from Louisiana, founded the organization headquartered in the Windy City in 1932. Repatriating African-Americans to Liberia constituted the PME's core objective. In 1933, the PME sent a memorandum to President Franklin D. Roosevelt asking for federal assistance to fund African-American resettlement to West Africa. The PME gathered 400,000 African-American signatories nation-wide. Garveyism and the UNIA influenced Gordon and the PME. Gordon was an ex-Chicago UNIA member, who credited Garvey for inspiring the formation of the PME. The organization's motto: 'One God, One Country, One People' bore a striking resemblance to the UNIA's motto: 'One God, One Aim, One Destiny' (Blain, *forthcoming*).²⁷

In revealing the influence of Garveyism, then the PME also illustrates the paradoxes of Garveyite black internationalism. This was most apparent in the enthusiastic support from Gordon and the PME for the Greater Liberia Bill of 1939 and Gordon's collaborations with Ernest Sevier Cox, a renowned white supremacist author who championed African-American colonization to Liberia (Hedlin 1974). Drafted by arch segregationist US senator Theodore G. Bilbo of Mississippi, the Greater Liberia Bill called for federally funded resettlement of African-Americans to this West African nation. Bilbo believed racial separation was in the best interests of blacks and whites. Civil rights groups opposed the bill on the grounds that African-Americans had earned their right to full citizenship in the land of their birth and that the legislation was championed by white supremacists (Fitzgerald 1997).

Gordon worked with Cox and Bilbo in lobbying for the Greater Liberia Bill and in opposing legislative initiatives backed by civil rights organizations. Gordon was not alone in supporting the Bilbo bill. Garvey and the UNIA also championed the Greater Liberia Bill. The belief in racial separatism of Gordon, Garvey, Bilbo, and Cox explains how these apparent foes found common ground. The bill never made it out of committee. But Gordon continued to correspond and work with Cox in support of African-American repatriation to Liberia and racial separatism for the next thirty years.²⁸

The collaborations between the PME, UNIA, Bilbo, and Cox in support of African-American emigration reveal the ideological and historical contradictions of black nationalism and Pan-Africanism. As historian Tunde Adeleke observes, black American nationalism and European nationalism of the nineteenth century emerged from 'different sets of circumstances'. Yet they both 'paradoxically converged on the same spot – Africa'. Black American and European nationalists, Adeleke argues, understood Africa through an imperialist lens. Both nationalist projects were committed to civilizing alleged backward indigenous African people and to exploiting the continent for the benefit of black Americans and Europeans, respectively (Adeleke 1998, 111). The black nationalist politics of Gordon and Garvey embodied these paradoxes. They assumed African-Americans possessed the right to return to Africa and to determine the continent's future. Moreover, they unquestionably believed capitalism and western-styled empire-building would improve the lives of black people. The history of Africa's violent encounters with imperialism arguably has proven otherwise. Above all, Gordon and Garvey willfully collaborated with avowed racists who held black people in contempt. This Faustian bargain highlights the limitations of Garveyite black internationalism. Yet the PME also reveals the resonance of Garveyism in Chicago and the ways it linked the city to global Africa on the eve of World War II.

Garveyism and Chicago during the 1940s and 1950s

Chicago and other Midwestern cities remained key sites in the global Garvey movement during the 1940s and 1950s. Following Garvey's death in London in 1940, the UNIA elected James R. Stewart of Cleveland as the UNIA's new president general. He moved the UNIA's world headquarters to Cleveland (McDuffie 2011, 176–77). Chicago-area Garveyites such as Charles L. James, Elinor White, Nathaniel H. Grissom, and Ethel Waddell initially supported Stewart. However, these officials eventually split from Stewart and joined the break-away faction that came to be known as the Rehabilitating Committee.²⁹ Formed in 1943 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Rehabilitating Committee accused Stewart of abandoning the principles of Marcus Garvey. In 1951, the Rehabilitating Committee met in Detroit where it formally broke from Stewart and declared itself the legitimate 'UNIA'. The UNIA Rehabilitating Committee established its headquarters in the Motor City.³⁰ Chicago Garveyites Nathaniel H. Grissom and Elinor White served as the third and fourth assistant president generals, respectively.³¹

Garveyism also survived in Chicago through the Peace Movement of Ethiopia and Nation of Islam during the 1940s and 1950s. The World War II years constituted a difficult moment for Mittie Maud Lena Gordon and the PME. She served two years in federal prison in West Virginia for her alleged public praise of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 as a victory for people of color against global white supremacy.³² Gordon remained committed to African-American emigration to Liberia after her release from jail and until her passing in 1961. Underscoring the paradoxes of Garveyite black internationalism, Gordon continued to support the Bilbo Bill, corresponded with Ernest Sevier Cox, and criticized civil rights groups for their alleged support for racial 'amalgamation'. Her stance reveals the ways proponents of narrow black nationalism and white supremacy found common ground.³³

Garveyism in Chicago thrived in the postwar years through the Nation of Islam. By the early 1960s, the NOI had grown into the largest US black nationalist formation. The Windy City-based organization owed its meteoric growth in no small part to Malcolm X, the preeminent black nationalist who became Elijah Muhammad's leading lieutenant. Born in Omaha, Nebraska, Malcolm was reared by staunch Garveyites in Lansing, Michigan. Drawing from the lessons he had learned from his parents and Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm understood the black freedom struggle in global terms. Counting perhaps as many 250,000 members by the early 1960s, Garveyism endured in the NOI and found some of its strongest support in Chicago and Detroit (X 1965, 1–3; Gomez 2005, 356, 331–370).

Garveyism in Chicago during the Civil Rights-Black Power era and onward

Garveyism in Chicago continued to flourish both inside and outside of the UNIA during after the Civil Rights-Black Power era. The Windy City remained a stronghold of the transnational UNIA. Following James R. Stewart's death in 1964, James A. Bennett of Chicago became the new president general of the UNIA. He moved the group's world headquarters to the Windy City.³⁴ In 1978, Charles L. James became the president general of the rival UNIA. He held the post until his passing in 1990. Internationally, Rev. Clarence W. Harding Jr, a Chicago UNIA official, headed the UNIA's Africa Project in Monrovia, Liberia, which established the Marcus Garvey Memorial Institute in 1968. The school touched the lives of thousands of people until its closing in 1978. Garveyites in

Chicago, Gary, Cleveland, and Detroit were critical in providing financial support for Harding's work in West Africa.³⁵

Focusing narrowly on the Chicago UNIA, however, overlooks how Garveyism continued to thrive in the city and foster black Chicagoans' diasporic outlook during the Civil Rights–Black Power era. Chicago was a center of Black Power (Williams 2013). The long history of Garveyism prepared the ground for this new phase of black militancy in the Windy City. Garveyism flourished in new Black Power organizations comprised primarily by young, working-class black nationalists who consciously saw themselves as Garveyites. Local and global developments explain the resurgence of Garveyism during the 1960s. Many black youth felt that civil rights failed to significantly improve their lives. Deindustrialization and public policy in Chicago robbed many young people of good-paying jobs and a brighter future. Inspired by Garvey's call for black self-determination and captivated by burgeoning African nationalism, young Chicago black nationalists participated in groups such as the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), African-American Student Association, the Umoja Student Center, and the Black Panther Party. Committed to the Black Power program of self-determination, black pride, and Pan-African unity, young black militants in Chicago were visibly involved in local struggles for black economic and political power. Local veteran Garveyites, black scholars, the Nation of Islam, and black churches like Reverend Junius C. Austin's Pilgrim Baptist Church helped this new generation of black militants become aware of the rich history of Garveyism (McDuffie 2011, 177).³⁶

Conclusions

Marcus Garvey, Garveyism, and the UNIA electrified black Chicagoans and connected this Midwestern metropolis to the African world. During the 1920s, the UNIA emerged as the largest black protest movement in the city and gained international visibility in the Garvey movement. Garvey's visits galvanized thousands of working-class black people into action in the struggle for African redemption. Black women were central to the group's success. From its very beginning the UNIA spawned black nationalist religious and political formations outside of the UNIA from the 1920s onwards.

More significantly, tracing Garveyism in Chicago reveals the broader history of the diasporic Midwest. African-Americanists too often overlook the transnational dimensions of black life in the US heartland, while scholars of the African Diaspora relegate the Midwest to the margins in discussions of the black world. Garveyism in the Windy City illustrates the importance of industrial cities in the Midwest as sites of diasporic protest. Given this, the diasporic Midwest requires scholars to appreciate the multiple geographical locales where the African-descended came to forge transnational political identities and movements. By paying close attention to the gendered contours of this formation, as well as its uncritical understandings of the relation between blacks and capitalism, the diasporic Midwest reveals the paradoxical ideological underpinnings and practices of Pan-Africanism and black nationalism.

Finally, Garveyism in Chicago provides important lessons for African-descended people globally. The contemporary African world is in crisis. Mass incarceration, HIV, climate change, poverty, and on-going civil unrest in Africa and across the diaspora in this so-called 'post-racial moment' threaten black people's very survival. China, the USA, and Western Europe are tightening their neo-colonial grip on Africa. Some African-descended people have willfully abandoned the struggle for black liberation. What is to

be done? The UNIA constituted the largest black movement in world history. We should neither romanticize the Garvey movement nor overlook its limitations. Still, Garveyism enabled African-descended people around the globe to dream that another world was possible. Just imagine how different the world might look if African-descended people were able to make their dreams come true.

Disclosure statement

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Notes

1. Chicago Defender, 20 September 1919 [hereafter CD].
2. CD, 6 September 1919.
3. Guide to the Abbott-Sengstack Family Papers, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, Chicago, IL.
4. <https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab15.txt> (accessed February 10, 2015).
5. The recent years have seen the publication of work focused specifically on Garveyism in the Midwest, see Jolly (2013).
6. For recent work on women.
7. (Chicago) Daily Inter-Ocean, 4 January 1878, 18 October 1906; The Illinois Writers Project: 'Negro in Illinois', box 44, folder, Vivian Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, Chicago, IL [hereafter IWS].
8. Flyer, 'Big Mass Meeting', March 1917, Amy Garvey Memorial Collection of Marcus Garvey, box 10, file 10, Special Collections and Archives, Fisk University, Nashville, TN [hereafter AJG Papers].
9. The divisions were located on the Southside and Morgan Park (Chicago), West Chicago, Chicago Heights, Illinois; Hill Crest, Illinois; Hodges Park, Illinois; East Chicago, Indiana; Gary, Indiana; Indiana Harbor, Indiana. Martin (1976, 363).
10. NW, 28 November 1925, 24 October 1925.
11. Interview with William A. Wallace, IWP, box 44, folder 2.
12. NW, 31 March 1923.
13. NW, 8 August 1925.
14. NW, 6 November 1920.
15. NW, 1 August 1925, 25 July 1925.
16. NW, 31 March 1923.
17. NW, 26 December 1925; 6 November 1920; 7 March 1925.
18. NW, 6 November 1920.
19. 'Abyssinians', (n.d.) Jack Conroy Papers, The Newberry Library, Chicago, IL, box 41b, folder 1863b.
20. CD, 26 June 1920; 2 July 1920; 3 July 1920.
21. <http://hermetic.com/moorish/7koran.html> (accessed, February 6, 2015); CD, 19 November 1927.
22. CD, 3 August 1929.
23. (Cleveland) Call and Post, 26 June 1954; J. Charles Zampty to Thomas W. Harvey, May 1970, UNIA Records MARBL, box 12, folder 8.
24. <http://www.noi.org/noi-history/> (accessed March 2, 2014).
25. 'Untitled Report on Nation of Islam', n.d. IWP, box 45, folder 5; Dolinar, ed., Negro in Illinois, 205–207.
26. AJG, 'The Source and Course of Black Power in America', (October 4, 1966), AJG Papers, box 10, folder 9.
27. Quoted in Constitution of the PME, ESC Papers, Box 30, folder Peace Movement of Ethiopia, 2; Mittie Maud Lena Gordon [hereafter MMLG] to Ernest Sevier Cox, 27 October 1939, ESC Papers, box 5, folder 2.

28. Garvey's support for the Great Liberia Bill was not the first time Garvey had collaborated with white supremacists. During the early 1920s, Garvey met with the Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan (Fitzgerald 1997, 310–327).
29. International Convention (Cleveland, Ohio), August 15–20, 1941, program, UNIA Papers MARBL, box 15, folder 48.
30. UNIA Papers WRHS Finding Aid; 'A Proclamation by the Universal Negro Improvement Association 1929 of the World', UNIA Papers MARBL, box 15, folder 53.
31. 'Minutes of the International Convention of the UNIA & ACL, Aug 26-Sept 3, 1951', UNIA Papers MARBL, box 15, folder 93.
32. United States v. Mittie Maud Lena Gordon ESC Papers, box 34, 4.
33. Quoted in MMLG to ESC, 7 September 1947, ESC Papers, box 6, folder 5; MMLG and Alberta Spain to ESC, 3 March 1961, ESC Papers, box 14, folder 3.
34. Finding Aid, UNIA Papers WRHS.
35. Officers meeting with Commissioner General Mr. Charles L. James, Youngstown, Ohio, March 26, 1972; UNIA Papers MARBL, box 17, folder 12; Smith-Irwin (1989), 55, n. 1.
36. John H. Bracey, Jr., telephone interview by author, 20 December 2013.

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