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Grange welcomes Garvey pardon, continues push for exoneration

Kingston, 19 January 2025 – The Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Olivia Grange, has said that the US President, Joe Biden, did “the right and honourable thing” when he used his clemency power to pardon, posthumously, the Right Excellent Marcus Garvey.

Minister Grange says President Biden’s “historic pardon is a most significant step in a process which must continue until the National Hero is exonerated—his name must be cleared completely.”

The Minister said the pardon which was announced this morning (Sunday) was the outcome of “many years of advocacy by successive Jamaican governments, the Garvey family led by his son Julius, the UNIA, members of the Jamaican Diaspora and many people in America and across the world who have been fighting against this wrongful conviction.”

Garvey was convicted of mail fraud in the United States in 1923, but Minister Grange says “that trial and conviction were meant to tarnish Garvey’s image and diminish his global movement.”

Minister Grange says:

“Marcus Garvey was a formidable advocate for the rights of black people, and leader of the largest black movement in history. It was no surprise when Garvey caught the attention of federal agencies in the racially-charged United States of America. It was no surprise when Garvey was charged with mail fraud, imprisoned, tried and deported.

I welcome President Biden’s decision which represents a major victory in the struggle to clear Garvey’s name. We must welcome the pardon wholeheartedly. However, we maintain that Garvey’s actions were not criminal actions, but were acts of liberation, with moral justification.

Therefore, what we need is an expungement of Garvey’s record in America, similar to what was done by the Jamaican parliament.

We have been on this journey for a very long time and we must continue the advocacy for the removal of this criminal record against our hero.”

A resolution was brought to the US House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, as far back as 1987 to clear Garvey, but did not succeed.

In 2018, the Jamaican Houses of Parliament passed The National Heroes and Other Freedom Fighters (Absolution from Criminal Liability in Respect of Specified Acts) Act, which cleared the records of National Heroes, including Garvey.

The law removed the conviction for sedition against Garvey.

Minister Grange says the decision of President Biden “removes a stain against one of the greatest Jamaicans, a Jamaican National Hero, and a hero for humanity.”

The Minister says the “Government of Jamaica will continue to work with the Garvey family, and all the stakeholders to push for the exoneration of Marcus Garvey. Today we celebrate.”

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