



Legislation Details (With Text)

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Res. No. 459

Resolution calling the United States Congress to pass House Concurrent Resolution 57, sponsored by Congressman Charles Rangel, which calls upon the President of the United States to grant a posthumous pardon to Marcus Garvey.

By Council Members Barron, Gerson, James, Mealy, Palma, Sanders Jr., Seabrook and Vann

Whereas, Marcus Garvey was a pioneering leader whose courageous activism in the early Twentieth Century did much to further African Americans' struggles for freedom, justice and equality; and

Whereas, Marcus Garvey was born in Jamaica in 1887, and developed an interest in social change and racial justice early in his life, as he traveled through Central America and Europe before returning to Jamaica and founding the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), the largest Black organization in history at that time; and

Whereas, In 1916, Marcus Garvey settled in New York City, where he founded a chapter of the UNIA and launched a remarkable career that would have a lasting impact on race relations in the United States; and

Whereas, Through the UNIA, Marcus Garvey began to spread his message of economic independence and pride in the collective culture and ancestry of African Americans that would eventually inspire millions of people to rediscover their shared cultural history; and

Whereas, Marcus Garvey's philosophy and teachings inspired many influential Black leaders throughout the world including W.E.B. DuBois, Kwame Nkrumah, Malcolm X and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr; and

Whereas, Marcus Garvey is remembered as a champion of the "Back to Africa" movement, which was interpreted as encouraging people of African ancestry to return to their ancestral homeland; and

Whereas, Under the leadership of Marcus Garvey, the UNIA established the Negro Factories Inc, which included the Phyllis Wheatley Hotel, a Black baby doll factory, restaurant, millinery shop, printing company, newspaper, and many other enterprises; and

Whereas, In 1919, the UNIA established the "Black Star Line" steamship company in order to encourage trade and travel between America, the Caribbean and Africa and soon drew attention from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which harassed Marcus Garvey and the UNIA; and

Whereas, Pervasive discrimination of African Americans fueled severe racial tension and violence against Blacks in America during the early 1920s; and

Whereas, This climate of violent discrimination and widespread intolerance sparked a determination by certain elements of the United States government to harass and destroy social activists such as Marcus Garvey; and

Whereas, Marcus Garvey became the target of surveillance and harassment by law enforcement agencies such as the FBI; and

Whereas, After a concerted effort by the FBI, which included the infiltration of the UNIA, Marcus Garvey was indicted and convicted of a single count of mail fraud in 1923 and sent to prison; and

Whereas, Marcus Garvey maintained that he was innocent, and submitted his first official application

for executive clemency in 1925 amid widespread popular criticism of his conviction; and

Whereas, In 1926, nine members of the jury that convicted Marcus Garvey signed an affidavit recommending the commutation of his sentence; and

Whereas, In 1927, President Calvin Coolidge responded to mounting public outcry and commuted the sentence, thus establishing the precedence for executive clemency in his case; and

Whereas, Despite this apparent victory and widespread belief that the charges against him were politically motivated, Marcus Garvey was deported back to Jamaica in 1927, never having returned to the United States; and

Whereas, Marcus Garvey left Jamaica in 1935 and moved to London, where he lived and worked until his death in 1940; and

Whereas, In 1964, Marcus Garvey's body was returned to Jamaica, where was declared Jamaica's first national hero; and

Whereas, Since this time, millions of people have signed petitions calling for his exoneration; and

Whereas, Congressman Charles Rangel introduced House Concurrent Resolution 57 in February of 2005, which would call on the President to grant a posthumous pardon to Marcus Garvey; and

Whereas, In light of Marcus Garvey's tireless advocacy on behalf persons of African descent world wide and his significant contributions to the cultural awakening within the African American community during the early Twentieth Century, it is entirely appropriate that his name be cleared from a politically and racially motivated charge; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the United States Congress to pass House Concurrent Resolution 57, sponsored by Congressman Charles Rangel, which calls upon the President of the United States to grant a posthumous pardon to Marcus Garvey.

LS# 1449

8/7/06

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