

When the Prophet was angry with the Emperor: On Marcus Garvey's critique of Haile Selassie I, and the aligned legacy of both their logic.

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Greetings, African family. It is an honour to be speaking today in tribute of our Prophet, Marcus Mosiah Garvey. As Rastafari we see Marcus Garvey as our prophet, His Majesty is our God and King, so it is a Blessing to be speaking here today at this occasion of the Prophet's 132nd Earthstrong. I speak here today on a difficult moment in the history as Marcus Garvey and the relationship with Emperor Haile Selassie I, and it is a moment in history which I do not hear talked about much or reasoned about in public, so I thought I would take this opportunity in a safe African family to discuss this in context of Fairfield House.

I am a Trustee of Fairfield House, for those of you who do not know, Fairfield House is the property eleven miles from here in the city of Bath where His Majesty came to live in 1936, a year after Mussolini invaded Ethiopia. His Majesty fought on the frontline of Ethiopia and did not want to leave, but it had got to the point where he had to leave gather the global support from different world leaders for the liberation of his country. He saw his countrymen and his fellow neighbours dying, and he wrote how difficult it was for him to leave Ethiopia at that time. I will not go into the full history, but he lived in the city of Bath for four years, and members of his family continued to live there until 1943. Fairfield House had three functions – it was a family home, he was there with his wife Empress Menen and his children and his grandchildren. He was also there with his government advisors, and essentially the Ethiopian government was in exile in the city of Bath. It was also a spiritual place - the

Ethiopian Orthodox Church priests lived there, with a chapel built on the grounds – the first Ethiopian Orthodox Church building in the UK. In 1936 His Majesty comes to this part of the world to seek, not only sanctuary but also solidarity and support for the Ethiopian Campaign, so you can imagine how difficult that was for His Majesty and his people.

We heard earlier Sister Abeje talking earlier about the passion that Marcus Garvey had, and that is what I really love in him as a prophet, because he spoke truth to power in all areas, and he was incredibly forceful with his words. That is why we take inspiration from him. In March 1937, Marcus spoke about the situation that was happening with His Majesty and Ethiopia, and it is tough reading. Marcus Garvey was angry with His Majesty for leaving Ethiopia and he spoke in forthright terms and does not hold back in his criticism of the Emperor. What Marcus Garvey was saying, was that he was disappointed in the way His Majesty left Ethiopia, and the missed opportunity that His Majesty had to galvanise and mobilize the global African diaspora for the Ethiopian Campaign.

Marcus Garvey was a leader that did not have a land to lead, in a sense, he had a potential global nation of Africans in the diaspora – the was his life mission and project. His Majesty was a leader that had a land and empire, and he Marcus criticised Him for letting His people down by leaving for allied support - so you can see how the conflict came about. We have this moment where our Prophet and our God and King have a difference in strategy and opinion and it is an incredibly difficult moment for an InI Rastafari history, but I think it is important that we talk about it rather than pretend it did not happen.

There is now some wider context needed to bring the strands of this history together. In the same year that the reasoning from Marcus Garvey came forward, in 1937 there was a meeting at Fairfield House with His Majesty and one of his closest advisors, Doctor Melaku Beyan. From the age of six months old, young Melaku, who was also the Emperor's relative, came to live at His Majesty's palace in Ethiopia, and was later sent to Europe to get further education, and subsequently became His Majesty's physician and one of His

closest advisors. At the time of Mussolini's invasion, Doctor Melaku was sent to America to work with the leaders in the African-American community to rally for support. In 1937, Doctor Melaku spoke to His Majesty and reported back what he saw happening in the streets of Harlem, which was that certain people were taking advantage of the campaign for Ethiopian liberation and keeping donated money for themselves rather than sending it to on to Ethiopia to help the people. On hearing this, His Majesty requested that Doctor Melaku come to Fairfield House to discuss the matter further. He brought a delegation of African-American community leaders with him, and together they strategized how to organise the African heritage community in the United States and the wider African diaspora, to raise awareness and provide support for Ethiopia's plight. What was founded at that moment, in Fairfield House in Bath, was the Ethiopian World Federation – the EWF, which still exists today.

The EWF started in Harlem and quickly spread around America and across into the Caribbean. Regional EWF offices are chronologically numbered and called Locals, and the first office outside of America was in Kingston, Jamaica, at Local 17. This why I want us to start thinking about what Marcus Garvey was asking for – for His Majesty to galvanise Africans in the diaspora. What I argue and what I see, is that was precisely starting to happen - with the founding of the EWF those winds of change for global solidarity for Ethiopia were becoming established.

In leadership roles in Local 17, and other established Jamaican EWF Locals, were Joseph Hibbard, Leonard Howell, Archibald Dunkley – and these people, if you know their names, they are the forefathers of what we now know as the Rastafari movement. They are the individuals that started to preach the divinity of His Majesty back in 1930, at the time of the Coronation. Other Rastafari leaders that came out of the EWF were Vernon Carrington, who we now know as Prophet Gad - founder of the Twelve Tribes of Israel; Charles Edwards, now known as Prince Emmanuel – founder of the Ethiopian African Black International Congress (EABIC), more commonly known as the Bobo-Ites or the Bobo Dreads, known for wearing priestly turbans and robes. These leaders started off and joined the EWF, and then they eventually evolved through that

and founded what we now know as the main mansions of Rastafari. If we think about now, who do we hear talking about Marcus Mosiah Garvey in this time? Who do we hear talking about pan-Africanism and the identity of Black people as Africans in this time? It is the people all over the world who were inspired from the legacy that has grown out of the seeds that were planted with the EWF and the fruits of Rastafari. It is a wonder to realise that the conversation that started that spark happened at Fairfield House, just a few miles down the road from here. It is Rastafari, it is pan-African ideology, it is in reggae music, it is the sympathisers of this movement and the legacy that are keeping these historic names in our public consciousness.

Sadly, Doctor Melaku Bayen died of pneumonia on 4th May 1940, and did not see the fruits of his labour in founding the Ethiopian World Federation. Tragically Marcus Garvey also died in 1940, in London on 10th June of a stroke, and did not live to see the liberation of Ethiopia for himself which happened a year later – 5th May 1941.

Now to pull these threads together.... I ask you today, that actually what was seen back then as a moment of tension between our Prophet and our King, was the prophecy of One Aim, One God, One Destiny being fulfilled. Marcus Garvey was asking for an immediacy in galvanising the African diaspora, and he saw an urgency to build a nation but, as I say, he did not have a land, so it was an idea, a project. His Majesty did not want to gamble Ethiopia on a project idea, because he had an empire that he could have actually lost in that moment. One of the reasons why His Majesty did not want to gamble Ethiopia on the immediacy that Marcus Garvey was demanding, is that he could not trust the British Government, because he knew they wanted to colonise Ethiopia. Even when the British Government escorted and worked with His Majesty before the liberation on 5th May 1941, the British Government asked His Majesty not to go in on that day, they wanted him to hold back. In secret they were negotiating to go in front and colonise Ethiopia, but His Majesty refused. That is what was happening all behind the scenes. He knew that it was going to be five years exactly to the day – 5th May 1936 was when he left, and 5th May 1941 was when he came back. That is the mystical nature of the

relationship between a Prophet and the King. How they work together, even unknowingly to each, is not always apparent in that moment. It is not always apparent five years, ten years, fifty years for us to see, but what we can see now is that actually that global moment of solidarity came together and the process is continuing today.

It is the legacy of InI Rastafari, all the mansions and inspirations that are seeing Marcus Garvey's forthright, speaking truth to power coming to pass, and in fact, there is no tension. Iron sharpens iron, and there is a unity and a seal of a covenant being fulfilled. I give thanks to Prophet Marcus Garvey for speaking truth to power. The Prophet's role is to hold people and power to account, he not there to bow down and kowtow, their role is to be strong and Marcus Garvey demonstrated that strength. I give thanks for the Prophet on this honourable day, and I give thanks to the King for having the vision to see that work fulfilled in that time and in this time Forwards.

Rastafari Blessings and Love.
