

Marcus Mosiah Garvey

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Marcus Mosiah Garvey was a powerful black revolutionary and race leader who influenced a great many people in his time and continues to do so through reggae music. Many of Marcus Garvey's lessons and ideals have found a voice in the lyrics of conscious reggae musicians past and present. From internationally famous musicians such as Bob Marley and Burning Spear, to the music and words of The Rastafari Elders, reggae musicians have found inspiration in [Marcus](#) Garvey.

For many reggae musicians, their work is about more than music, it is a tool for teaching the masses. Peter Tosh at a concert in California told the audience the reason why he was there. "Don't think I come here for entertainment. I and I come to flash lightning, earthquake, and thunder in these places of destruction and unrighteousness."² Tosh and many musicians like him are taking reggae to a higher level, one where the musicians are prophets of Garvey and Rasta. Much of the teachings of reggae are based on a Rastafarian view, as this is the religion of many of the conscious reggae musicians that preach the Garvey message.

[Rastafarianism](#) owes a lot to Marcus Garvey, as he is credited as the founder. The religion was born on the words "Look to Africa for the crowning of a Black king."³ They waited and

in 1930, the prophecy was fulfilled when, Ras Tafari Mekonnen was crowned emperor of Ethiopia and took the name Haile Selassie. Working from the bible and their own interpretations of it, the Rastafarians found evidence to support their claim and a religion was born. Marcus Garvey is considered part of the Rastafari Trinity, and "is second only to Haile Selassie,"⁴ the Rastafari God. Whether singing directly about Marcus Mosiah Garvey, or about Rastafarianism, reggae musicians are helping to spread the teachings of this black prophet and [revolutionary](#) to millions of music listeners all over the world.

Marcus Garvey was born in 1887 in the St. Ann's Parish in Jamaica. He came from a large, poor family and due to lack of money, when he was fourteen Garvey left school and became a printer's apprentice. By the age of eighteen he had become a master printer. Garvey had always been a quick learner and when he became the foreman of a printing company in Kingston, the capital of Jamaica, "he continued his education by reading extensively, taking advantage of the company library."⁵ However, Marcus Garvey's political feelings soon got in the way when the workers went on strike in 1909.

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