

# Marcus Garvey's lessons in learning

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by Conrad W. Worrill

It is quite clear that African people in America continue to be miseducated. This problem is discussed in a variety of ways in conversations everyday in our communities throughout America.

From time to time we should consult the wisdom of those who have addressed this problem whom we may have forgotten. One such person who addressed this problem is the Honorable Marcus Mosiah Garvey, when he presented his formula for learning in his courses on African Philosophy in the 1930s. I think it is only appropriate to review Mr. Garvey's formula for learning as we continue to build the Reparations Movement and seek specific guideposts to our development as a people.

These lessons and guideposts in learning can be found in Marcus Garvey, *Message to the People, The Course of African Philosophy*, edited by Dr. Tony Martin.

Lesson 1: One must never stop reading. Read everything that you can read, that is of standard knowledge. Don't waste time reading trashy literature. The idea is that personal experience is not enough for a human to get all the useful knowledge of life, because the individual life is too short, so we must feed on the experience of others.

Lesson 2: Read history incessantly until you master it. This means your own national history, the history of the world, social history, industrial history, and the history of the different sciences; but primarily, the history of man. If you do not know what went on before you came here and what is happening at the time you live, but away from you, you will not know the world and will be ignorant of the world and mankind.

Lesson 3: To be able to read intelligently, you must first be able to master the language of your country. To do this, you must be well acquainted with its grammar and the science of it. People judge you by your writing and your speech. If you write badly and incorrectly they become prejudiced towards your intelligence, and if you speak badly and incorrectly, those who hear you become disgusted and will not pay much attention to you, but in their hearts laugh after you.

Lesson 4: A leader who is to teach men and present any fact of truth to man must first be taught in his subject.

Lesson 5: Never write or speak on a subject you know nothing about, for there is always somebody who knows that particular subject to laugh at you or to ask you embarrassing questions that may make others laugh at you.

Lesson 6: You should read four hours a day. The best time to read is in the evening after you have retired from your work and after you have rested and before sleeping hours, but do so before morning, so that during your sleeping hours what you read may become subconscious, that is to say, planted in your memory.

Lesson 7: Never keep the constant company of anybody who doesn't know as much as you or (is) as educated as you, and from whom you cannot learn something from or reciprocate your learning.

Lesson 8: Continue always in the application of the things you desire educationally, culturally, or otherwise, and never give up until you reach your objective.

Lesson 9: Try never to repeat yourself in any one discourse in saying the same thing over and over again except when you are making new points, because repetition is tiresome and it annoys those who hear the repetition.

Lesson 10: Knowledge is power. When you know a thing and can hold your ground on that thing and win over your opponents on that thing, those who hear you learn to have confidence in you and will trust your ability.

Lesson 11: In reading books written by white authors, of whatever kind, be aware of the fact that they are not written for your particular benefit of your race. They always write from their own point of view and only in the interest of their own race.

Garvey had many other lessons of learning, in his formula that journalistic constraints will not allow me to elaborate at this time. However, I encourage you to read Marcus Garvey, *Message to the People*, *The Course of African Philosophy*, and as we celebrate begin to

internalize and incorporate these “Lessons In Learning.”

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