

Jamaican Marcus Garvey gets major OAS recognition

Jamaica's first national hero, Marcus Mosiah Garvey, has received major hemispheric recognition with the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington DC re-naming its Hall of Culture in his honour.

The Marcus Garvey Hall of Culture, located on the first floor of the historic main building of the OAS headquarters in downtown Washington, DC, is a venue for major cultural events.

Along with the unveiling, an exhibition of books, papers and artifacts entitled "Marcus Garvey: National Hero of Jamaica", was mounted by the OAS Columbus Memorial Library to mark the occasion.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony, Secretary General of the OAS, Miguel Insulza, said that it was appropriate that Garvey be recognised by the organization, because he was active throughout the United States, the Caribbean and Latin America.

Son of Jamaica's national hero, Marcus Garvey, Dr Julius Garvey (centre), admiring the plaque officially naming the Marcus Garvey Hall of Culture, after it was unveiled at the Organization of American States' (OAS) in Washington, DC, Wednesday (October 21). Also in the picture are, from left: Assistant Secretary General of the OAS, Ambassador Albert R. Ramdin; Jamaica's Ambassador to the United States and the OAS, His Excellency Anthony Johnson; and Secretary General of the OAS, Jose Miguel Insulza.

"This great Jamaican travelled throughout Central and South America, where he observed the difficult conditions under which his people lived and worked. He was not only perceived to be a trouble-maker, he was a trouble maker demanding an improvement in living conditions and human rights for citizens all over the Americas," Insulza said.

"We are still working on the convention against discrimination, and we hope to complete this process very soon. While this convention speaks against all forms of discrimination, it was conceived as a convention against racial discrimination," he noted.

Mr. Insulza challenged the audience to use Garvey's bust, donated to the OAS by the Jamaican Government in the early 1980s and displayed in the Hall of Heroes (upstairs the Hall of Culture), as well as the renamed Hall of Culture, as symbols of equality and justice in the Americas.

Jamaica's Permanent Representative to the OAS, Anthony Johnson, said that the ceremony in honour of Garvey was significant for Jamaica and the Caribbean.

He said that Garvey's marches through Harlem, Kingston and Havana, as well as his exhibitions of paintings and sculptures, were among his arsenal of tools to build up self-esteem among black people, and to use that self-esteem to promote commercial and industrial success.

Responding to the tributes, Garvey's son, Dr Julius Garvey, recalled his father as a 20th century leader, who dedicated his life to educating and uniting African people across the globe.

"As we advance into the 21st century, we must work together and develop and grow as one united people," he recommended.

The ceremony was attended by ambassadors and other diplomatic representatives of the member states of the OAS, members of the diplomatic corps in Washington, DC and representatives of organizations and agencies within the metropolitan area.