

Gov't renews efforts to clear Garvey's name in U.S.

There is a renewed thrust by the Government to have the criminal record of National Hero, The Rt. Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey, expunged.

Mr. Garvey, Jamaica's first National Hero, was convicted of mail fraud in the United States of America (USA) in 1923.

In a statement to the House of Representatives at Gordon House on Tuesday (March 1), Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture, Hon. Olivia Grange, said the conviction tarnished his reputation and slowed his global movement, although it did not diminish the impact of his message on black people, worldwide.

"For his contributions to the upliftment of his race, Garvey was named a National Hero but, in the (U.S.) Court records, he is still a criminal," she noted.

Miss Grange said she wholeheartedly agreed with those before her who sought to have his name cleared, and lamented their lack of success.

She pointed out that in 1983 then Prime Minister, Most Hon Edward Seaga, asked President Ronald Reagan to grant a full pardon to Mr. Garvey, to no avail.

"In 1987, U.S. Congressman Charles Rangel introduced House Resolution No. 84 to the House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice in the United States. The resolution called for the exoneration of Garvey on mail fraud charges. To date, Marcus Garvey has not been exonerated," she said.

Since then other efforts have been made, of note was 2004 when the Jamaica National Heritage Trust (JNHT), under the impetus of then board member Professor Verene Shepherd, initiated a project to obtain the transcripts of the trial that led to his conviction.

"The exercise had, as its primary objective, the facilitation of dialogue geared towards expunging the criminal record of the National Hero," the Minister pointed out.

In 2005, the JNHT, with the assistance of then trustee, Nadine Molloy, was able to photocopy the 2000-page transcript and make them available to Jamaicans for the first time.

The transcripts were copied and the first set sent to the Attorney General's Chambers, as part of the review process. Professor Shepherd, who also chaired the Jamaica National Bicentenary Committee (JNBC) commemorating the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic trade in Africans in 2007, recommended the establishment of a

legal sub-committee to spearhead discussions relating to the expunging of the records.

“Unfortunately this was not realised,” Miss Grange told the House of Representatives.

The Minister also presented three sets of the transcripts to the Prime Minister, the Hon. Bruce Golding; the Leader of the Opposition, the Most Hon. Simpson-Miller; and the Speaker of the House, Hon. Delroy Chuck.

“In making these presentations, I hope that we will be able to breathe new life into the discussions and movement to have The Rt. Excellent Marcus Garvey’s name cleared in the annals of history,” Miss Grange said.

Several Opposition MPs, including Mrs. Simpson Miller, as well as Government members supported Government’s continued efforts to clear Mr. Garvey’s name.