

Amy Jacques Garvey “On A Trip from Coast to Coast”: Roots, Routes, and Emancipation

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RESÜMEE

Ortswechsel schwarzer Menschen waren konstituierend für die Herausbildung transatlantischer Netzwerke, die Paul Gilroy als *Black Atlantic* begreift. Dabei durchquerten jene den atlantischen Raum nicht nur als Versklavte und Vertriebene, sondern auch als selbstbestimmte und selbstbewusste Reisende. Der vorliegende Artikel beschäftigt sich mit der in Jamaika geborenen Reisenden Amy Jacques Garvey, die 1923 gemeinsam mit ihrem Ehemann Marcus Garvey im Dienste der *Universal Negro Improvement Association* (UNIA) die USA bereiste. Ihre Erlebnisse und Eindrücke hielt Amy Garvey in sechs Reisereportagen fest, die wöchentlich in der Organisationszeitschrift *Negro World* veröffentlicht wurden. Entlang dieser Reiseberichte untersucht der vorliegende Artikel zum einen, in welcher Weise die Reise der Garveys und insbesondere die Aktivitäten Amy Garveys als Reisereporterin zu einer transatlantischen Vernetzung beitrugen. Zum anderen diskutiert der Artikel die sowohl emanzipatorischen als auch restriktive Dimensionen, die sich für Amy Garvey an die Reise und die Berichterstattung knüpften: In welcher Weise bestimmten zeitgenössische Vorstellungen von *race*, *class* und *gender* die Reise Amy Garveys und ihre Möglichkeiten der Berichterstattung? Die Berichte zeichnen die Verfasserin als aktiv Handelnde aus, die in ihren Reportagen selbstbewusst Formen von Rassismus kritisiert und sich diesen im Zuge ihres Schreibens widersetzt.

1. Introduction

On October 2 1923, the *Negro World* headlined in large letters on page three: “On a Trip from Coast to Coast: Impressions of Mrs. Amy Jacques Garvey, Wife of Presi-

dent-General on Vacation".¹ This headline opened a series of six travel reports written by Jamaican born Amy Jacques Garvey on her journey through the United States of America. Together with her husband Marcus Garvey, the president of the *Universal Negro Improvement Association* (UNIA), she had toured the country for six weeks. They started in New York City where both of them lived, passed various Midwestern industrial cities onto California's West Coast, and from there they returned through the U.S. South and the capital Washington, D.C. back to New York City. During the trip, Amy Garvey reported her observations and experiences to the *Negro World*, the official press organ of the UNIA. In her travel reports, she depicted the landscape, reflected on the socio-economic conditions of black people throughout the various regions of the country, and described the personal encounters she and her husband experienced. At the same time, her travel can be seen as a practice through which she rooted her own identity within the Atlantic world and established connections among black people in the United States, the Caribbean, South America, and Africa as I will discuss in my article. Furthermore, I will illuminate how these processes of identification and community building opened up moments of emancipation².

As Paul Gilroy demonstrated in his landmark text *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, traveling has always been a crucial practice in the struggle for emancipation and equality. Gilroy observed that "modern black political culture has always been more interested in the relationship of identity to roots and rootedness than in seeing identity as a process of movement and mediation that is more appropriately approached via the homonym routes."³ He argued, however, that identities are not fixed, singular and essentially rooted entities but fluid formations constantly in the process of making and subject to multiple influences and historical determinants. Identities are not merely biologically given but result from mediations between people and their social surroundings.

Besides pointing to the fluidity of identity, Gilroy's statement also underlines the importance of travel in the formation of black politics. The movement of people within the Atlantic region – the routes they pursued – affected their conceptions of belonging and the ways in which they proclaimed their own roots and that of others: experiencing routes has been significant in rooting black identities within certain time periods and spaces. In this context, travel writing is not only a reflection of what had happened during the journey. Rather, it can be seen as a practice of identification, as a means through which belonging and roots have been constituted. As such, travel writing might also become a practice of self-empowerment: in the description of the social surroundings they

1 On a Trip from Coast to Coast: Impressions of Mrs. Amy Jacques Garvey, Wife of President-General on Vacation, in: *Negro World*, 23 October 1923.

2 In this article the term emancipation is perceived in a broader sense. It describes not only the process of gaining full citizenship rights but is rather used to mark moments in which historical actors became able to modify norms that otherwise limited their access to social resources and thus their possibilities to act in the society they belonged to.

3 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1993, p. 19.

pass, travelers constitute images of themselves and the people they interact with. These portrayals of their own personas and that of others are always entangled in race, gender, and class norms. They are shaped by contemporary visions on race, class, and gender but also shape these visions themselves.⁴

Despite its important contributions to the critical study of the Black Atlantic, Gilroy's work disregarded not only black women's active involvement in transatlantic transfers of ideas and the creation of diasporic connections but also the gendered hierarchies structuring these processes.⁵ However, my study of Amy Garvey's travel writings demonstrates the importance of female travelers. Through a close reading of Amy Garvey's travel writing, I will explore the ways in which visions of gender, race and class structured and determined the participation of females within processes of transatlantic exchange. At the same time, I will discuss in which ways traveling, and especially travel writing, could become a means to stretch these structures. In doing so, I will highlight the important contributions of black women to and within formations of the Black Atlantic and present them as people actively shaping transnational spaces as well as political movements. To that end, I will address the following questions about Amy Garvey and her "Trip from Coast to Coast": In which ways did Garvey's travels shape her identity? How did her journey through the United States connect to proclamations of her own roots and that of others? Which origins were claimed and by whom? How did these roots both open up and limit the social spaces in which Garvey could operate? Ultimately, how did the debate about roots prompted by Garvey's travels contribute to the formation of a black transatlantic community?

In order to understand the context, in which Amy Garvey's travel reports were written, I will first briefly introduce some of the purposes and transatlantic practices of the UNIA. Afterwards, I will outline Amy Garvey's way into the UNIA and discuss her position within the organization as it is reflected in the reports. Finally, I will turn to one scenario described in the reports to discuss entanglements between travel routes, the formation of communal roots and their racialized, classed, as well as gendered structures.

- 4 On the political dimensions of (African American) travel writing, see for example: Virginia Smith Whatley, *African American Travel Literature*, in: Alfred Bendixen / Judith Hamera (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 197-213; Jennifer Steadmen, *Traveling Economies: American Women's Travel Writing*, Columbus (Ind.) 2007; Cheryl J. Fish, *Black and White Women's Travel Narratives: Antebellum Explorations*, Gainesville (Fla.) 2004; John C. Gruesser, *African American Travel Writing about Africa*, Lexington (Ky.) 2000, pp. 1-20; Alasdair Pettinger, *Always Elsewhere: Travels of the Black Atlantic*, London 1998, pp. viii-xx; Carol Boyce Davies, *Black Women, Writing, and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*, London 1994, pp. 1-28; Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London 1992, pp. 1-12.
- 5 For studies that broaden Gilroy's concept and highlight the gendered tensions within transatlantic relationships, see for example: Judith Anne-Marie Byfield et al. (eds.), *Gendering the African Diaspora: Women, Culture, and Historical Change in the Caribbean and Nigerian Hinterland*, Bloomington (Ind.) 2010, p. 2-5; Ruth Mayer, *The Atlantic in Black and White: A Critique of the Black Atlantic*, in: Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson, *Europe and America: Cultures in Translation*, Heidelberg 2006, p. 177-184; Jacqueline Nassy Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool*, Princeton (N.J.) 2005; Sandra Gunning et al., *Gender, Sexuality, and African Diasporas*, in: *Gender and Histories*, 15 (2003) 3, p. 397-408; Robin D.G. Kelley / Tiffany Ruby Patterson, *Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World*, in: *African Studies Review*, 43 (2000) 1, pp. 11-45.

2. The UNIA: Origin and Objectives

The UNIA was founded by Marcus Garvey and Amy Ashwood in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1914. After three years of financial struggles, Marcus Garvey traveled to the United States to increase the group of supporters and members. While touring the country, he decided to relocate the organization's headquarters to New York City from where it evolved into one of the largest organizations in the civil rights movement of the early 20th century.⁶ As its name already indicates, the organization saw itself as a universal actor addressing black people worldwide. Regardless of their current nationality, black people were seen as part of a community, as a race bound together by shared experiences of displacement, determination and supposedly common African roots. In contrast to white supremacy discourses that referred to blackness as a justification for exclusion, the UNIA equated blackness with belonging. It called black people to be proud of their blackness, as members of a diasporic community that stretched all over the Atlantic region. According to Garvey's philosophy, this community originated in Africa where it had been once a powerful, economically and culturally highly developed collective. Yet, slavery and its aftermath tore apart the collective and weakened it. Garvey blamed the ongoing weakness of the community as a whole for the various forms of everyday oppression that the community's individual members suffered from not only in the U.S. but also in the Caribbean, Central and South America, and Africa. Consequently for Garvey, oppression could only be overcome by a reunification of black people of those regions; they needed to fight collectively across national borders against their marginalization. Thus, starting from the idea that black people belonged to a diasporic community, the basic purpose of the UNIA was to re-unite this community and provide an organizational structure for this reunification.⁷ And indeed, the organization not only proclaimed a transatlantic black community but also managed, to a certain extent, to establish one. During the 1920's, at its peak of success, the organization registered more than seven hundred branches located in North and South America as well as in the Caribbean and had supporters in Europe and Africa.⁸

6 The trip to the U. S. was initiated by a correspondence between Marcus Garvey and Booker T. Washington. After exchanging some letters, Garvey aimed to meet Washington in order to secure his assistance. However, when he eventually arrived in the U.S. South, Washington had already recently died.

7 The philosophy of Marcus Garvey is reflected in a collection of his essays and speeches that was edited by Amy Garvey, see: Amy Jacques Garvey (ed.), *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, v. 1, New York 1923, and v. 2, New York 1925. Organizational documents as well as letters, speeches, and articles by Marcus Garvey are collected in: Robert A. Hill (ed.), *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, v. 1-9, Los Angeles 1983–1995. For a comprehensive historical study on the history of the UNIA, its purposes, activities, and historical significance, see for example: James C. Boyd, *Garvey, Garveyism, and the Antinomies in Black Redemption*, Trenton (N.J.) 2009; Mary G. Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the rural South, 1920–1927*, Chapel Hill (N.C.) 2007; Patrick Bryan/Rupert Lewis (eds.), *Garvey: His Work and Impact*, Trenton (N.J.) 1991; Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey*, Baton Rouge (La.) 1986; Tony Martin, *Race First: The ideological and organizational struggles of Marcus Garvey and the UNIA*, Westport 1976; Edmund Cronon, *Black Moses: The story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*, Madison (Wis.) 1955.

8 Robin D.G. Kelley, *To Make Our World Anew: The History of African Americans*, Oxford 2000, p. 406.

According to an autobiographical article by Marcus Garvey, migration and travel had been essential in founding the organization. He recalled that he began to perceive himself as a political activist and leader during his travels across Europe “My doom – if I may so call it – of being a race leader came upon me in London after I traveled through almost half of Europe.”⁹ He eventually decided to establish his own political organization on his way back from Europe:

*It was while speaking to a West Indian Negro who was returning home from Basutoland that I further learned of the horrors of native life in Africa. ... I pondered over that subject matter ... and at midnight the vision and thought came to me that I should name the organization Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities (Imperial) League.*¹⁰

With these autobiographic remarks, Marcus Garvey claimed that his experiences of traveling, and crossing Europe in particular, shaped his self-perception and political visions, and also induced his plan to establish a universally oriented political organization. Although the UNIA started its activities in Jamaica, Garvey did not locate its beginnings there. Rather, he placed the origins of the organization in the middle of the Atlantic and identified his transatlantic crossings as the founding moment. As such, Garvey’s autobiographic constructions of the organizational beginnings exemplify the significance of transatlantic routes regarding the formation of ideas, activities and politics of black people.

The importance of transatlantic movements for the establishment of the organization was also emphasized by Amy Garvey in her memories. In her book *Garvey and Garveyism*, in which she reconsidered the activities and philosophy of Marcus Garvey and the UNIA, she recalled:

*Persons who had relatives and friends in the West Indies and Central and South America wrote telling them of the Garvey organization, and because of his previous activities in these areas hundreds of branches were quickly formed through correspondence.*¹¹

The people Amy Garvey referred to were primarily migrants who had moved in great numbers from the Caribbean islands to the United States since the turn of the century. Between 1899 and 1937 approximately 150,000 people left the English-speaking Caribbean for the United States in search for education, professional opportunities, higher pay and better living conditions.¹² Many of these Caribbean migrants became – or remained

9 Marcus Garvey, *The Negroes Greatest Enemy*, in: Amy Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, v. 2, London 1967 [1925], p. 127. Before Marcus Garvey had moved to London in 1912, he had already traveled extensively throughout the Caribbean and Latin America.

10 Ibid.

11 Amy Garvey, *Garvey and Garveyism*, New York 1970 [1963], p. 34.

12 Adapted Report by the Commission of Immigration and the Secretary of Labor, in: Ira de Reid, *The Negro Immigrant*, New York 1939, p. 235.

– politically active in the U.S. and contributed significantly to the various organizations that fought against racism on cultural as well as organizational levels at that time. Migrants from the Caribbean also composed the bulk of members of the UNIA – especially in New York City where the largest Caribbean population lived in the 1920's.¹³ With their ongoing contacts to family and friends in the Caribbean, they helped to establish the organization and to broaden its scope beyond national borders. So in addition to Marcus Garvey's own movements within the Atlantic region, the transatlantic transfers by the many Caribbean immigrants living in the U.S. turned the UNIA into a transatlantic venture: their personal relationships provided the basis for a transatlantic network of communication in which news and political ideas were delivered back and forth between the Americas and the Caribbean.

Besides private and organizational correspondence, the organization's newspaper *Negro World* was another important means for exchanging information and building a transatlantic community. In 1923, when Amy Garvey's travel reports appeared in the paper, it had reached a circulation of more than 50,000 issues and was distributed in the U.S. and Canada as well as in the Caribbean, in South America and even in Europe and Africa.¹⁴ The weekly publication contained articles on world politics focusing especially on colonialism and the fight against it. Additionally, it depicted the activities, objectives, and plans of the UNIA. It focused on the New York headquarters and published information sent by branches situated in the U.S. countryside, the Caribbean, and Central America. Thus, the flow of information channeled by the *Negro World* was not unidirectional, with information delivered only from New York to the world. Rather, the paper served as a platform bringing together information from various world regions. Although the paper was the official press organ of the UNIA and contained a lot of information on the organization's activities, it did not only address members of the UNIA. Like the UNIA itself, the *Negro World* was praised as a voice from and for all black people in the world as the full title indicates: *Negro World: A Newspaper Devoted Solely to the Interests of the Negro Race*. The "Negro Race" the UNIA attempted to address and represent was envisioned as a multilingual community that included people from various parts of the Atlantic world as the Spanish and French section in the paper underlines.

Next to written communication and publications such as the *Negro World*, traveling was a vital organizational practice to establish contacts and coherence among black people across the Atlantic. In the 1920's, the organization, for example, arranged the "International Convention of Negroes of the World" almost every year. This Congress brought

13 On the social and political activism of Caribbean migrants in the U.S. in the early 20th century, see for example: Frank Andre Guriy, *Forging Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in an Age of Empire* and Jim Crow, Chapel Hill (N.C.) 2010; Joyce Moore Turner, *Caribbean Crusaders and the Harlem Renaissance*, Urbana (Ill.) 2005; Violet S. Johnson, *The other Black Bostonian: West Indians in Boston, 1900-1950*, Bloomington (Ind.) 2006; Susan Greenbaum, *More than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa, Gainesville (Fla.)* 2002; James Winston, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in early 20th Century America*, London 1998.

14 With its transatlantic circulation, the *Negro World* was one of the most widely read newspapers in the 1920s, see: Frederick German Detweiler, *The Negro Press in the United States*, Chicago 1922, pp. 176–188; Roland Edgar Wolseley, *The Black Press U.S.A.*, Ames (Iowa) 1971, pp. 46–49.

together in New York City delegates from branches located in the various regions of the United States, the Caribbean, and Central America as well as other interested parties, who were not necessarily formally attached to the organization. In addition to meetings of members and followers in New York City, the organizational leadership also traveled to various countries to spread the philosophy of the UNIA, to attract new members and influential supporters, and to collect money for the manifold enterprises the organization had founded.

The trip of the Garveys in 1922 took place in the service of the organization as well. It served as a means to enhance Garvey's public presence and to bring him into contact with American people, as Amy Garvey later expressed in *Garvey and Garveyism*: "Much to the delight of the people out west he planned an itinerary that took him through the following states: New York, Pennsylvanian, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, Washington, Oregon and California."¹⁵ Thus, the trip was mainly initiated to attract new members and strengthen the cohesion within the organization.

3. Amy Garvey's Journey within the UNIA

When Amy Garvey went on her six-week long trip through the United States, she already had some travel experience. Her first longer trip had taken place in 1917 when she left Kingston, Jamaica. She was born there as Amy Euphemia Jacques to a middle class family in 1895. The social status of the family allowed her to attend not only a primary school but also a prestigious girls' school where she learned languages such as Spanish and French as well as bookkeeping and shorthand.¹⁶ However, according to the scant autobiographic information she gave in *Garvey and Garveyism*, the professional position she could obtain as a colored woman in Jamaica was not satisfying to her. Therefore, she decided to leave the island. Initially, she had planned to move to London as many of her male contemporaries did in order to get a higher education. Yet, this opportunity was denied to her because she was a woman: during World War I, the ship from Jamaica to Great Britain did not accept female passengers because of submarine warfare. In order to overcome this gendered obstacle, she turned her attention to another place and moved to New York City.¹⁷ For the following two years after her arrival, Amy Garvey disappears from the historical records: it is unclear where she lived, how she earned her living and in what social activities and circles she might have engaged. In 1919, she became officially

15 A. Garvey, *Garvey and Garveyism* (footnote 10), p. 129. At the same time, the trip was initiated to improve Marcus Garvey's health. Due to a successful accusation of mail fraud in 1922, Marcus Garvey had spent the summer of 1923 in prison. The imprisonment had had harsh effects on his asthma. For this reason his doctor had recommended a sojourn in a warmer climate.

16 For an encompassing biography of Amy Garvey, see: Ula Yvette Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jacques Garvey*, Chapel Hill (N.C.) 2002.

17 A. Garvey, *Garvey and Garveyism* (footnote 10), p. 113.

engaged in the UNIA as Marcus Garvey's personal secretary. Three years later they were married.

Prior to their marriage, Amy had joined Marcus on several trips. According to an FBI agent who observed the activities of the UNIA, some members of the organization viewed their premarital journeys critically. In his report on Marcus Garvey's journey through the Caribbean in 1921, the agent noted for example: "The girl, Amy Jakes ... is commonly known as the woman whom Garvey lives with. ... He takes her on all his trips and his followers always entertain fears that some day he may be arrested for white slavery."¹⁸ Although the misspelling of Amy Jacques' name suggests that neither the agent nor his informant were really familiar with her, the report nevertheless sheds some light on her perception by others within and beyond the organization. Here, she is dismissively referred to as a "girl" living with Garvey in an inappropriate and even dangerous relationship that might one day be used to accuse him for violating the *White Slave Traffic Act*.¹⁹

In contrast to the agent's report, the travel accounts that recorded the trip of the couple through the United States in 1923 explicitly introduced Amy Garvey as "Wife of President-General". The headline of the travel reports – "Impressions of Mrs. Amy Jacques Garvey, Wife of President-General on Vacation" – already highlighted Amy Garvey's position as a legitimate companion of Marcus Garvey. In the travel reports her social status was no longer that of the improper "girl". She was now identified respectfully as "Mrs." and as the "wife" of the organization's leader. This kind of identification allocated authority and importance to her persona and thus awarded authority to her written voice, her thoughts and experiences expressed in her travel reports.

Ultimately, it can be assumed that it was above all her position as "wife of President-General" enabled her to become active in the public transnational space the *Negro World* provided. Taking up such a prominent, public space was rather unusual for women within the UNIA. Indeed, women were very active on the grassroots level of the movement and often constituted the majority of a branch, but there were only a few women visibly acting in the representative ranks of the organization. This resulted mainly from the organization's philosophy that was laden with culturally constructed concepts of gender. It was assumed that nature had provided men and women with different features, which in turn qualified them for different social tasks. Living along the lines of these supposedly naturally given arenas was seen as fundamental to creating and maintaining an independent and influential community. In this context, men and women were technically cooperat-

18 Report by Special Agent P-138, New York City, 3/1/1921, in: Robert A. Hill (ed.), *The Marcus Garvey and UNIA papers*, v. 3, Berkeley et al. 1984, pp. 237-238.

19 Enacted in 1910, the act basically prohibited the interstate transportation of women for "unmoral causes" and had been initially launched to protect especially female European immigrants for being constrained into prostitution. Black women were not protected by the law which makes the fears of Garvey's followers seem somehow striking. Perhaps their fears referred to Amy Jacques' comparatively light complexion, due to which, she could have easily been classified as white by U.S. officials for the sake of accusing Garvey. Alternatively, the fears might have been due to her Caribbean background. Since as a Jamaican citizen, she was a British subject and thus could be formally declared a European immigrant by the U.S. officials in order to accuse Marcus Garvey.

ing partners with an equal share of power asserting their authority over separate spheres of influence. Men were assigned to public fields such as politics, economy, and military. Their main task was seen in protecting and providing for the community. Women on the contrary were perceived as biologically predestined for care-taking. Consequently, they were supposed to act primarily in the private sphere of the family and thereby to ensure the community's purity, beauty, health and moral strength. In practice this meant that the roles of men and women in the organization were not separate but equal but separate and hierarchical. Even though women were appointed to leading positions, these positions were usually subordinated to men. On the local level for example, the constitution of the UNIA asked the members to elect a "President" as well as a "Lady President" as representatives and heads of their division. However, while the male president was responsible for all activities of the division, the female president was supposed to coordinate only the activities of children and women and beyond that had to report all her decisions and plans to her male counterpart. However, with such a gendered construction of organization, the UNIA opposed a contemporary racism that was equally gendered. In fact, the model of separate spheres for black men and women can be seen as a reaction against racist stereotypes that attributed black men supposedly "femine" qualities such as passiveness and subordination and black women supposedly "masculine" features such as authority and an inflated physical strength. The organization's gendered structure also reversed the racist double standard that assigned white women to home and family while perceiving black women mainly as a work force and sexual objects.²⁰

So on the one hand, the introduction of Amy Garvey as "Mrs. Amy Jacques Garvey, Wife of President-General" in the headline of the articles followed the gendered visions pervading the UNIA: she was first and foremost introduced and perceived as the companion of the organization's male leader. In this regard, the headline might be seen as a sign for the gendered restrictions surrounding Amy Garvey's activities within the organization. Even though she obtained public space through her travel writing, she basically appeared in this space not in her own right but in her position as "wife". On the other hand, having in mind the gendered racist structures of the societies Amy Garvey acted in, the proclamation can also be read as an expression of self-assertion. The presentation as "Mrs." and "wife" provided her the status of a respectable woman that was often denied to black women within racist societies.

Eventually, the travel reports marked the beginning of Amy Garvey's activities as a contributing editor to the *Negro World* and increased her popularity within the organization,

20 On gender relations in the UNIA, see: Kate Dossett, *Bridging Race Divides: Black Nationalism, Feminism, and Integration in the United States, 1896–1935*, Gainesville (Fla.) 2008, pp. 150–199; Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction*, Chapel Hill (N.C.) 2004, pp. 218–241; Anne MacPherson, *Colonial Matriarchs: Garveyism, Maternalism, and Belize's Black Cross Nurses, 1920–1952*, in: *Gender & Society*, 15 (2003), pp. 507–523; Michelle Anne Stephens, *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914–1962*, Durham 2005, pp. 74–101; Barbara Bair, *True Women, Real Men: Gender, Ideology and Social Roles in the Garvey Movement*, in: Dorothea O. Heley (ed.), *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History*, Ithaca (N.Y.) 1992, pp. 154–167.

as the couple's return to New York City indicates: When they appeared at the welcome back meeting in the New Yorker meeting hall, the crowd was not only interested in hearing Marcus Garvey speak but also claimed for a public performance of Amy Garvey by shouting, "We want Mrs. Garvey!" In contrast to former meetings in New York where Amy Garvey had basically remained in the background, she now went into the spotlight and reacted to the call of the members by giving a "very entertaining speech".²¹ However, as the call of the crowd and the headline of the articles demonstrate, the newly gained visibility strongly remained connected to her femininity and to her position as "Mrs. Garvey".

Eventually, the positive reactions on her travel reports opened up to her further opportunities to act within the organization. A couple of months after the articles had been published, Marcus Garvey appointed her editor of the women's page, "Our Women and What They Think", that was launched in the *Negro World* in 1924. According to Amy Garvey's memories, it had been basically her success as a travel writer that had prompted Marcus Garvey's decision to nominate her as the editor of the page. The following three years, this page became a platform for Amy Garvey to express her political visions and to encourage other women to become politically active.²²

Unfortunately, it is not possible to figure out whether Amy Garvey herself initiated the travel reports or whether she was requested to write them. Hence, it is also difficult to determine why they were created. According to the beginning of her first article, their main purpose was to keep her "numerous friends and well-wishers who would like to hear from me" updated on her whereabouts and wellbeing.²³ Thus, the travelogue was basically presented as a means to inform the interested parties about the couple's experiences while traveling through the United States. In contrast to the statement in the article, Amy Garvey in her later publication *Garvey and Garveyism* remembered the reports as a series of articles in which she had pointed out the difficult conditions of black people to show "how necessary it was to have united action to overcome such conditions."²⁴ Consequently, the articles can be read not only as reports on the Garvey's travel experiences but also as a practice through which Amy Garvey pursued political goals. Apparently they had also been created to depict black people's living conditions in the U.S. for an audience not necessarily familiar with them. Having in mind the wide-ranging circulation of the *Negro World*, the audience Amy Garvey probably envisioned were not necessarily members of the UNIA or African Americans but might have included people living in the Caribbean, South America, and Africa as well.

21 Rousing Ovation Given Great Leader on Return From Tour, in: *Negro World*, 17 November 1923.

22 In her editorials, she often addressed the political importance of black women that in her view went beyond family care and welfare. For some editorials on women's political significance, see for example: Louis J. Parascandola (ed.), 'Look for me all around you'. Anglophone Caribbean Immigrants in the Harlem Renaissance, Detroit (Mich.) 2005, p. 107-130.

23 Garvey, On a Trip (footnote 1).

24 Garvey, *Garvey and Garveyism* (footnote 10), p. 34.

With their purpose to make readers within the Atlantic region familiar with black people and their lives in the U.S., the travel reports also became a site for community building. In this context, the form of the articles is notable. Every article began with the salutation "To the Editor of the Negro World" and ended with the farewell "Yours truly Amy Jacques Garvey". In contrast to other letters to the editor, Amy Garvey's writings were highly visible in the paper. They were usually published on page three or four, spanning several columns, and were covered by a large headline. However, by constantly referring to the readers as "my dear friends", she drew a common bond between herself and the widespread audience. She did not present herself as a superior voice or opinion leader within the organization but as a writer among a group of equals, a group of like-minded people inclined towards each other. So by their composition as letters to the editor, the articles supported community building. Garvey's friendly tone and manner of address served to turn the "trip from Coast to Coast" into a collective journey. With her detailed descriptions of the itinerary and the socio-economic landscapes as well as of the people she encountered, Amy Garvey made it possible for the readers to become accompanying travelers. Through her written mediation, they could connect to the various regions in the United States and get in contact with black people living there.

Garvey fostered linkages between black people in the Atlantic world not only by the form of the travel reports but also by its content. For example, in her observations of Los Angeles, Amy Garvey first addressed the opportunities as well as the difficulties for black people living there. Following her depiction, she concluded that the United States would never provide equality for its black citizens. In consequence she requested her readers to turn onto Africa:

*Let [us] not kick our heels against the pricks and hurt ourselves, but let us turn our eyes in the other direction and look forward to Mother Africa, where we will be able to rise to the heights of true manhood and womanhood and live in happiness and prosperity with our brothers and sisters over there.*²⁵

From Garvey's point of view, integration was a futile hope. Instead she proclaimed separation as the solution to achieve "happiness and prosperity". In her opinion, black people should focus on establishing a future in Africa in cooperation with the local population. Instead of fighting for equality in the U.S., she perceived a collective return to Africa as the right way to emancipation. With this claim, she constituted Africa as a space that provided affirming communal roots as well as a promising route to liberty. On the one hand, she proclaimed Africa as a place "to look forward to" and on the other metaphorically referred to it as a "Mother". Thus, for Amy Garvey, Africa symbolized at the same time a shared origin and a common future of black people. By placing the past as well as the future of African Americans within Africa, she constituted a common bond between black people in the U.S. and Africa in the reports. She further enhanced these linkages

25 Mrs. Amy Garvey Writes of Her interesting Experiences, in: Negro World, 17 November 1923.

by classifying the people in Africa as "brothers and sisters". In her view, they all formed a family, a diasporic community rooted in Africa.

As her depiction of Africa underlines, her visions of this community were deeply shaped by notions of gender. She decidedly presented the region as a feminine space in referring to it as the "Mother" of black people. Garvey thus associated Africa with the caring features usually attached to mothers – such as providing a comfortable home, shelter, and nurture. She thereby highlighted the possibility that Africa was as a place that could provide a prosperous, safe future for black people. Besides, the metaphor also turned Africa into the bearer of the transatlantic community and as such established unity: Black people worldwide symbolically shared the same "Mother" and consequently could be declared "brothers and sisters". Independent of their current nationalities, they were connected to each other due to their common roots in Africa. Despite their spatial diffusion and different nationalities, they still belonged to one and the same family whose origin and future lay in Africa. So through family metaphors, Amy Garvey created familiarity with Africa and its people. Moreover, she constituted a community that transgressed borders within the Atlantic.²⁶

Notions of gender also shaped the conception of emancipation that, according to Amy Garvey, could be achieved in Africa. Africa in this part of the travel reports is not only presented as the place where "happiness and prosperity" can be achieved but also as a space where black people "will be able to rise to the heights of true manhood and womanhood". Thereby, Amy Garvey opposed contemporary discourses of discrimination. As already mentioned above, normative visions of white manhood and womanhood supported racism and vice versa. They contributed to the constitution of black people as inferior and served as a justification for their humiliation and marginalization. According to white supremacist discourses, black people were simply not able to act as "true men" or "true women", their supposed features – such as hypersexuality – allegedly prevented them from achieving these ideals. In contrast, Amy Garvey argued in her travel reports that black people could achieve these virtues. To her, it was not biology but social surroundings that prevented them from acting as "true men and women". In order to convert the ideal into reality, black people needed to move across the Atlantic and return to Africa.

Visions of Africa and a transatlantic, diasporic community not only informed Amy Garvey's descriptions of the U.S. landscape and cities such as Los Angeles, they also permeated her accounts of the contacts with the many people she and her husband met during their journey. In the last part of my analysis, I would like to focus on one of the encounters she described, which took place at a small train station in Alliance, Indiana.

26 Similar processes and the importance of family metaphors for the construction of national communities have been pointed out by Anne McClintock, 'No longer in a Future Heaven': Gender, Race, and Nationalism, in: Ibid. et al. (eds.), *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, Minneapolis (Minn.) 1997, pp. 89-112.

4. "Traveling Africans"

Alliance, Indiana, was not among the main destinations on the Garvey's trip from "Coast to Coast". They only passed through the small town on their way from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Gary, Indiana, because they had to change trains there. While Marcus Garvey was looking for somebody to help them transport their luggage from one platform to another, Amy Garvey stayed with the trunks and observed the small train station. As she waited, she took notice of two men who seemed to be local citizens of Alliance. Under the subheading "Traveling Africans", she described the encounter in her travel reports as follows:

*My attention was attracted to a colored man who looked as if he had made the station his temporary headquarters. He walked around so leisurely that I was convinced that he belonged to the I.W.W.C. (I Won't Work Club) and must have been highly recommended on examination by 'Dr. Eat More and Work Less'. The gentleman looked me over, then my baggage, and finally said something to the approaching stationmaster who also surveyed me and my outfit. I moved nearer to them and was just in time to hear the station master say, 'Why those are Africans traveling.' I chuckled to myself at the tact of that white man. If we were traveling with bundles and the air of 'sacred and death' folks running from the south, we would have been called 'Niggers' but being well-clad, independent-looking people traveling first class, we were 'Africans' [...]*²⁷

The stop in Alliance was a comparatively short moment of time in the course of the whole trip. Yet in the travel reports, it emerged as a complex experience that exemplifies the interplay between travel writing, community building, and emancipation. Here, the train station becomes a contact zone²⁸, a space where power relationships are negotiated as the historical actors and ideas coincide and constitute identities. In observing each other and exchanging glances and opinions, the three agents rooted themselves and one another within social communities. They constructed differences as well as affiliations and in doing so arranged positions of power, as I will outline in the following.

As the subheading of the scenario "Traveling Africans" indicates, the allocation as "Africans" was central for Amy Garvey within this moment of contact. Though it was not the

27 Amy Garvey, Mrs. Garvey visualizes Africa in American Industry, in: Negro World, 27 October 1923.

28 The term refers to the concept of Mary Louis Pratt who describes a contact zone as a "space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations." The concept emphasizes "how subjects get constituted in and by their relations to each other. It treats the relations among ... travelers and 'travelees' not in terms of separatedness, but in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, and often within radically asymmetrical relations of power," see: Pratt, Imperial Eyes (footnote 4), p. 8. Although Pratt uses the concept basically to approach imperial encounters, I think it is also a helpful frame to describe other forms of contact between people of different cultural and social backgrounds. Perceiving the train station in Alliance, Indiana, as contact zone helps to underline that the people who meet get constituted as social subjects by their relation to each other. The relationships developing among them are in turn shaped by power relations that encompass the contact and at the same time become manifested in it.

first time that she had been classified by others as "African". Previously, when she had boarded the ship from Kingston to New York City, the U.S. authorities had registered her as being "African".²⁹ In the context of her arrival in the United States, the classification as "African" had placed her in the group of non-white people and in consequence, had limited her possibilities to act within the racially structured U.S. society. In the context of the Alliance train station, the term "African" referred to processes of marginalization: according to Amy Garvey, it was the "white station master" who classified the Garveys as "traveling Africans". In doing so, he attempted to clarify the confusion of an African American man who was likewise observing the Garveys at the train station. Their behavior and assumptions show the two observers reflected contemporary racial and class perceptions that assigned recreational travel to whites. As Paul Gilroy has pointed out, discourses of the 20th century generally related "uncoerced, recreational travel experiences only to whites while viewing black people's experiences of displacement and relocation exclusively through the very different types of traveling undergone by refugees, migrants, and slaves."³⁰ According to Amy Garvey, the stationmaster engaged in these discourses. He was confused by the couple and uncertain of their roots because he was simply not familiar with black people traveling first class. Seemingly, the Garveys and their mode of traveling did not match any of the stationmaster's notions of African Americans. His identification of the Garveys as "Africans" indicates that in his worldview African Americans who travelled first class could or should not exist. Although their routes directed them through the United States, their unusual prosperity suggested that they could by no means have come from the U.S. and, therefore, they were identified as rooted in Africa.

As such, the scenario hints to the fact that being identified as a person of "African origin" did not always mean the same in the United States: In the context of Amy Garvey's arrival in the United States, the term "African" had marked a difference between her and the white population of the country. In the context of Alliance on the contrary, the term "African" marked a difference between the two locals and the traveling Garveys. While it in the first place had marked a social degradation, it now appointed dignity to her persona and that of Marcus Garvey. In her description, being African became connected to prosperity, pride, and independence. By including the scenario into her travel accounts, Amy Garvey spread this positive connotation of Africa to the public.

At the same time, her description of the situation in Alliance pointed out the racialized and class-bound notions of traveling that circulated in the United States. This issue had been implicitly addressed in the headlines of the articles, as the trip had been explicitly announced as "vacation". Considering that the couple mainly traveled in the service of the organization and therefore had nearly no time for tourist activities, the classification of the journey as vacation seems surprising at first. Of course, this might have simply

29 Department of Labor, List or Manifest of Alien Passengers to the United States. SS Carillo sailing from Kingston, Jamaica, 21/4/1917, <http://search.ancestry.com> (accessed on 18 October 2010).

30 Gilroy, *Black Atlantic* (footnote 2), p. 133.

resulted from the initial expectations and hopes of Amy Garvey regarding the tour. Beyond that, the expression “vacation” also countered the racist discourse in which African Americans only crossed the country as impoverished people. It stressed the fact that black people not only moved due to violence and economic pressure but also as self-determined travelers. Thus, the headline highlighted that there were indeed black people who were able and willing to travel as vacationers.

In the account of the situation in Alliance, Amy Garvey, however, not only represented racialized notions of traveling but also confidently and clearly expressed criticism at this form of racism. By chuckling about “the tact of that white man”, she uplifted herself above him and his bigotry and rejected his judgements. Besides, she not only mocked the stationmaster but also emphasized the prejudice underlying his judgement by referring to the fact that they would have been perceived completely different when wearing other clothes and carrying other luggage. So in her report, she distinguished herself from the naïve locals who falsely perceived her as a “traveling African”; she freed herself from the gaze of her white observer. Moreover, in the report the naivety of the stationmaster contrasted with Garvey’s persona as a sophisticated traveler, as an educated, urbane, active and prosperous woman.

However, the presentation of her persona as self-determined did not only result from Garvey’s confident dealing with the stationmaster and his assumptions. It also relied on the distance she put between herself as a person “traveling first-class” and black migrants from the south. Thus, while her reference to the migrants served as a vivid image to accuse the stationmaster and via him U.S. society for their prejudiced perceptions, it also functioned as a contrasting picture that shaped the image of the Garveys as independent, glamorous, and charismatic people. This image of the Garveys was further enhanced by her description of the black male at the train station. By patronizingly describing him as part of the “I Won’t Work Club” and by describing herself as “well-clad” and “traveling first-class”, she allocated herself to a higher, affluent social status and turned him into a member of the lower class.

Amy Garvey’s judgement of the black male also expressed her political opinions. In assigning the black male to the “I.W.W.C.”, Amy Garvey not only delivered a cynical description of him but also generally condemned lacking willpower and behavior such as lingering around, being ingenuous or trusting the judgements of white people. In her view his lower position was self-inflicted as the term “I Won’t Work Club” underlined. To her, it was not a missing ability or opportunity but a missing willpower that kept him away from work and thus away from achieving prosperity. This disparaging description of the black male at the train station reflected the philosophy of the UNIA. As already mentioned above, the organization espoused independent black businesses and self-initiative as a prerequisite to achieve respect and equality on an individual as well as on a communal level. According to the gendered philosophy of the organization it was especially men who should become economically active. The UNIA idealized the single-income family in which men provided a sufficient income that freed women from the need of working outside the home and thereby from potential exploitation by whites.

Because of his behavior, however, the black male in Garvey's travel report embodied exactly the opposite. According to Amy Garvey, he did not show any ambitions to work, refusing responsibility for himself and his personal uplift, as well as for other people of the community. Thus, the disgust she expressed towards the man by turning him into a representative of the "I Won't Work Club" in fact expressed her values regarding male duties within the community.³¹

Next to her gendered visions of communal life, the distance she put between herself and the man at the train station might have been enforced by her Caribbean uprising. In the Caribbean, class strongly infiltrated race relations as the assignment to a racial category depended not only on blood or skin color but also on education and estate. As a comparatively wealthy, educated woman, Amy Garvey had belonged to the Jamaican middle class, which was positioned and positioned itself above the group of the so-called black or "negro" working class.³² When she entered the United States, she held onto this class differentiation, as her short biographic remarks in *Garvey and Garveyism* reveal:

*Garvey convinced me of the worthiness of his program, and stressed the fact that the skin-color class system of Jamaica did not exist in America, as all strata of the race were treated as one – the slogan being, 'Any nigger is a nigger.' Therefore, it was necessary for the educated and better able to join with the masses in a strong uplift-and-onward movement.*³³

As this conversation indicates, Amy Jacques was not at all convinced right from the beginning that black people were all equally part of a diasporic community and should work together in order to achieve civil rights. Instead, she clearly differentiated between "the masses" and "the better able". In the U.S. she at first continued to distance herself from other, less educated black people. According to her memories, it was only the junction with Marcus Garvey and the UNIA that convinced her of the necessity of a transatlantic community in which black people of all classes should cooperate on an equal basis. While her account from 1963 suggested that her attitude fundamentally changed under the influence of Marcus Garvey, her description of the contact in Alliance in the *Negro World* leaves another impression. Here visions of class still permeated her perception of other people as the difference she noted between herself and the supposedly non-working, foolish male at the train station, as well as between herself and the impoverished migrants exemplify. The encounter at the train station in Alliance in fact leaves the impression that the transatlantic black community Amy Garvey envisioned and attempted to establish was not necessarily a community of equals. Rather, her account indicates that

31 Regarding Amy Garvey's visions on male duties, see also: Mrs. Garvey Visualizes Africa in American Industry, in: *Negro World*, 27 October 1923; For You and Your Sons, in: *Negro World*, 13 November 1926; Women as Leaders Nationally and Racially, in: *Negro World*, 24 October 1925.

32 On race relations in the Caribbean and the social position of the Jacques family in Kingston, see: Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey* (footnote 17), pp. 9-15.

33 Garvey, *Garvey and Garveyism* (footnote 13), p. 4.

despite the official philosophy of the UNIA, the community was not only marked by solidarity but also by hierarchies emanating from social structures such as class.

5. Conclusion

Along some lines of Amy Garvey's travel reports, I have attempted to show how her travel writing was not only a presentation of the U.S. American landscape and its people but also a political text. It involved various processes of identification that were connected to negotiations of power and expressions of political visions.

As the travel reports demonstrate, Amy Garvey was as a confident political activist. In the reports she expressed and propagated the philosophy of the UNIA, underlined its strength, and presented its leadership as influential and charismatic. She not only described her experiences while traveling but also turned these experiences into expressions of her political attitudes and visions. On the one hand, her activities and her visibility as a political campaigner were strongly embedded in the gendered hierarchies that structured the UNIA. Yet, at the same time, she also presented herself as a perceptive thinker and social critic and thereby stretched the image of a reserved helpmate that was often allocated to black women in the organization. Besides, she herself referred to notions of gender in order to proclaim common African roots and to constitute community and coherence among black people throughout the Atlantic world.

In connecting her travel experiences to the proclamation of common African roots, Amy Garvey actively participated in the formation of a transatlantic black community. Her travel reports and their publication in the *Negro World* with its transatlantic circulation and audience gave the Garvey's trip through the United States an Atlantic dimension. As such, they significantly contributed to the purpose of the trip – and consequently also to the main aim of the UNIA – to set up relationships with black people who were spread throughout the United States, the Caribbean, South America, Africa, and Europe. Through her depictions of the routes she followed and the people she met on her way she established connections between herself, the black population of the United States and other places such as Africa. While the United States in this context were mainly presented as a country limiting and endangering the lives of black people, Africa was characterized as their genuine home and as such became connected to features as prosperity, safety, liberty, and independence. However, as the content of the articles and the conditions of its emergence underline, the transatlantic, diasporic community Amy Garvey described in her articles was not a community of equals but structured by social patterns such as gender and class.

Linking Africa and the United States in turn became connected to a self-assertion on various levels: By expressing gendered visions of Africa, Amy Garvey created a diasporic community that opened up an alternative to the national bodies in which black people still suffered marginalization and exploitation. The idea of "travelling Africans" that grew out of her encounter with two U.S. Americans at the train station in Indiana granted her

the status of a self-determined, independent, and sophisticated person. And it became a means through which she confidently addressed and criticized U.S. racism as well as the social behavior and supposed ignorance of (male) African Americans.

As such, the travel reports of Amy Garvey demonstrate that looking at the routes black people followed across the Atlantic provides a productive approach to analyze the limiting but also empowering potential that went along with the formations of transatlantic identities and the proclamation of communal roots.