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The New Marcus Garvey Library, No. 4

# AMY ASHWOOD GARVEY

Pan-Africanist, Feminist and Mrs. Marcus Garvey No.1  
(Or, A Tale of Two Amies)



## TONY MARTIN

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Pan-Africanist, Feminist and Mrs. Marcus Garvey No.1 (Or, A Tale of Two Amies)

By **Tony Martin**

Marcus Garvey was arguably the greatest Pan-Africanist of all time. His Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), founded in 1914, had an international membership of many millions. Garvey's Black Nationalism brought him into conflict with integrationists, Communists, and powerful white governments.

What has been largely unknown is that Garvey also built his movement in the face of an almost unbelievable struggle against a scorned first wife who pursued him relentlessly for most of his adult life and who continued to assail his remains and his memory for three decades more, until her own death in 1969. Garvey met Amy Ashwood in Jamaica in 1914. They were married in Harlem in 1919. Their marriage was effectively over in two months.

Garvey divorced Ashwood in Missouri in 1922 and quickly married her namesake Amy Jacques, Ashwood's former roommate and maid of honor. Garvey accused Ashwood of infidelity, theft from the UNIA's Black Star Line and alcoholism. Ashwood never accepted the Missouri divorce and contended to the end of her days that she was still the real Mrs. Garvey.

Yet Amy Ashwood became an important Pan-Africanist in her own right. She was a gifted orator and a charismatic person. She organized women's organizations in West Africa and the Caribbean and became an important figure in the anti-racist movement in England. In 1947 she traced her ancestry back to Ghana in a manner that anticipated Alex Haley's *Roots*.

Running through Amy's story is the fascinating sub-plot of her decades long romance and collaboration with Sam Manning, a Trinidadian calypsonian and one of the world's pioneering Black recording artists.

This biography was in the making for twenty-seven years. It utilizes a wealth of research materials.

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