

ALLIANCE FOR COLLECTIVE EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT



# THE FOUNDING POSITION

*Why ACE Is Here, Not There, and Why That Is the Only Honest Answer*



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June 2026

*For Our People, By Our People*

## I. The Vision Garvey Gave Us

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Marcus Mosiah Garvey is not a cautionary tale. He is the beginning of the argument ACE completes. No person in the twentieth century articulated the case for Black sovereignty with greater clarity, greater courage, or greater organizational force. His Universal Negro Improvement Association reached millions at a time when the formal machinery of the United States government was actively working to destroy every institution of Black political and economic self-determination it encountered. Garvey understood something that most of his contemporaries were not yet willing to say plainly: that a system designed to exclude cannot be reformed into one that includes. That the architecture of Black subordination in America was not an oversight to be corrected but a structure to be escaped. That the path to dignity was not through the front door of institutions built to keep Black people out, but through the construction of new institutions built by Black people for Black people. He was right. ACE stands on that truth.

Where ACE departs from Garvey is not on the destination. It is on the premise. Garvey's argument was rooted in departure: Black Americans should go back to Africa because there was nothing left for them here. That premise, however understandable given what Garvey witnessed in the decades after Reconstruction's destruction and amid the violence of the early twentieth century, conceded something that ACE is not willing to concede. It accepted that Black Americans had no legitimate claim to what they had built, and that the only available path to dignity was to leave it behind.

ACE does not accept that. Not because going to Africa is wrong. For those who choose it, ACE celebrates it. But departure cannot be the only path to justice, because departure does not collect a debt. It forgives one. And this debt has not been paid.

***Garvey gave us the vision of sovereignty. ACE completes it  
by refusing to leave before the debt is settled.***

There is one more thing that must be said about Marcus Garvey before this document moves forward. The colors that fly on every ACE document, every ACE letter, every future ACE building and institution, are his colors.

The red, the black, the green, and the gold of the Pan-African tradition Garvey carried are all present in ACE's palette. Red for the blood of Black people shed across centuries of bondage and resistance. Black for the people themselves. Green for the fertile lands and natural wealth of Africa. Gold for the riches stolen from those lands and those people, extracted without compensation, the material foundation of the very wealth gap this document names. ACE did not go back to Africa. But it carried the flag. Every piece of correspondence ACE sends into the world, including this one, is marked in the colors of a man who told Black people they deserved to govern themselves. ACE agrees. ACE is the architecture that makes it possible.

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## **II. Why They Stayed: The Debt, Not the Choice**

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The question ACE hears, sometimes asked directly and sometimes left unspoken, is this: if conditions in America have been so deliberately and continuously hostile to Black life, why have Black Americans stayed? The question carries within it an assumption that must be corrected before anything else in this document can be understood. The assumption is that staying was a choice.

It was not. The Emancipation Proclamation was signed on January 1, 1863. Enslaved Black people in Texas did not learn of it until June 19, 1865, two and a half years later, because the country assigned so little urgency to delivering the news of their freedom that it waited until Union troops physically arrived to enforce it. That delay is not a footnote. It is a statement of how much the freedom of Black Americans was valued by the government that declared it. When freedom finally arrived, formally, it arrived without land, without capital, without infrastructure. The only specific promise of material restitution, Special Field Order No. 15, issued by General William T. Sherman in January 1865, was revoked by President Andrew Johnson before the year was out. The formerly enslaved were freed into a legal system that had declared, eight years earlier in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, that they possessed no rights the United States was bound to respect. The Fourteenth Amendment changed the formal legal status. It did not change the conditions.

Leaving requires resources. Passage requires money. Resettlement requires capital. The same system that created the debt made departure materially impossible for the overwhelming majority of Black Americans. This was not an accident. It was the design. A people freed without land, without wages owed for generations of uncompensated labor, without access to the banking system, without the right to vote in most of the country, without legal protection from the violence of those determined to maintain their subordination, is not a people with options. It is a people trapped by the deliberate architecture of the country that trapped them.

***The impossibility of leaving was not a consequence of the system. It was a feature of it. A people cannot be held without means and then accused of choosing to stay.***

Garvey understood this. His Back to Africa movement required organization, capital, and ships because the scale of what he was proposing demanded it. His vision was not naive. It was the most serious attempt in the twentieth century to answer the question of how a people systematically stripped of resources build their way to sovereignty. The United States government answered that question by imprisoning him, destroying his organization, and deporting him. That is not the story of a plan that failed because conditions were too hard. It is the story of a government that recognized a serious threat to its architecture of control and eliminated it by force. ACE builds in the knowledge of that history.

ACE does not ask Black Americans to leave. ACE does not accept that the absence of a viable exit constitutes consent to the conditions they were left in. The debt is not forgiven by the fact that departure was made impossible. If anything, the impossibility of leaving is part of the debt.

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### III. The Maryland Doctrine of Exclusion

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To understand why the conditions Black Americans live in today persist, it is necessary to understand that those conditions were not produced by neglect, by accident, or by the residue of a slavery that ended long ago. They were produced by policy. Named policy. Written policy. Policy that has never been formally reversed.

In 1638, the Maryland Colony issued a public edict. It did not use the language of preference or custom. It used the language of policy. Its exact words:

***“Neither the existing Black population, their descendants, nor any other Blacks shall be permitted to enjoy the fruits of White society.”***

It became known as the Doctrine of Exclusion. Other colonies adopted it. By 1705, the Slave Codes extended it into law across the colonies, requiring every institution, churches, schools, businesses, governments, to enforce the economic and political subordination of Black people as official, mandatory public policy.

That edict was issued 388 years before ACE was founded. No legislature has formally repealed it. No court has issued a judgment that names it and declares it void. No reparation has been paid. No land has been returned. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 addressed specific mechanisms of discrimination. It did not address the accumulated consequence of 326 years of deliberate exclusion that preceded it. The Fourteenth Amendment granted citizenship. It did not grant restitution. The gap between what was taken and what has been returned remains, in 2026, essentially total.

***The conditions that persist today are not a failure to progress. They are the intended, named, and continuously enforced output of a system designed to produce exactly this result.***

The wealth gap between Black and white Americans is wider today than it was in 1968. Black maternal mortality remains three times the rate of white women. The question people ask, why are Black Americans seemingly no better off today than when they were brought here, has a documented answer. Not a theory. Not an argument. A document. Written in 1638. Extended in 1705. Never reversed.

ACE is the first organized, legal, civilization-scale answer to that document. Not a protest against it. Not a petition asking for it to be reversed. A decision to build outside its reach entirely, on sovereign ground, under ACE's own constitution, funded by ACE's own people.

The founding documents of the United States did not accidentally exclude Black and Native people. They excluded us by design, with specificity, and in writing. We do not dispute that. What ACE disputes is the conclusion that the remedy lives inside the same architecture that produced the exclusion. The Constitution is not failing its purpose. It is fulfilling it. We are not surprised. And we are not waiting for it to change. Nor are we asking to change it. Every activist, every movement, every piece of legislation that came before ACE was built on the belief that the system could be made to serve the people it was designed to exclude, operating under the ideal that if enough laws changed, hearts would follow. And many of those efforts produced real and hard-won gains. But no act of Congress, no Supreme Court ruling, no constitutional amendment has ever been able to legislate what lives in the hearts of the people responsible for enforcing it. The law can change. The man holding the law does not have to. Four hundred years of evidence has made that clear. It is not out of spite, and it is not out of hatred, that ACE builds outside the jurisdiction of a document that was never written with as much as a suggestion of serving our communities. It is out of the only honest conclusion the evidence permits: that the freedom, sovereignty, and dignity Black and Native people deserve cannot be granted by a system designed to deny it. Any system built to truly serve our communities must be built by those communities, on their own ground, under their own authority.

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## **IV. Why the Debt Lives Here**

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The question asked most often by those who encounter ACE from the African continent is a generous one. It comes from a place of genuine welcome: why not do this in Africa? The land is there. The sovereign frameworks are there. African governments are actively

seeking exactly the kind of capital, entrepreneurship, and population that the African diaspora represents. Why build on American soil, under American political pressure, in the shadow of the government that created the conditions ACE is correcting?

The answer is not that Africa is wrong. Africa is not wrong. The African continent is the homeland of every Black person alive, and ACE honors that without reservation. The answer is that Africa is not the debt.

The labor that built the American economy happened here. The uncompensated generations of work that produced the wealth of the wealthiest nation in human history happened here. The promises of restitution, forty acres and a mule, were made here and broken here within the year they were made. The documented policy of exclusion was written here, extended here, and enforced here for nearly four centuries. The obligation to restore belongs to the country that holds the debt, on the soil where that debt was incurred.

Going to Africa does not collect what is owed in America. It relieves the debtor of the obligation to pay. And Black Americans, who built this country's economy without compensation, who were held here without the means to leave, who have watched every institution of Black self-determination destroyed at its moment of greatest power, are not in the business of relieving debtors.

***ACE is not asking to leave with nothing. ACE is asking to be given, on this soil, a fraction of what was taken on this soil. Ten million acres out of 2.3 billion. The minimum, not the ceiling.***

This is not an argument against Black Americans choosing to build on the African continent. It is an argument that this choice must be exactly that: a choice, made from a position of sovereign self-determination and economic security, not a flight from conditions that were deliberately designed to make every other option impossible. ACE intends to build the conditions under which Black Americans can make that choice freely. When ACE Territory is built, when its economy is functioning and its institutions are

stable, Black Americans who choose Africa will leave from a position of sovereignty rather than desperation. That is the difference.

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## V. The African Parallel

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Every major industrialist on the African continent whose name appears in ACE's outreach understands something that the American political establishment has spent a century refusing to acknowledge. They understand it not from theory but from practice. They built it.

Aliko Dangote did not move to London to build what Britain extracted from Nigeria. He built his empire in Nigeria, on Nigerian soil, in the Nigerian economy, because that is where the obligation to restore lay. The wealth that colonial extraction took from the African continent belongs to the African continent, and the right response to that extraction is not emigration to the country that did the extracting. It is building on the ground where the extraction happened with the people it happened to, under institutions those people control.

Abdulsamad Rabiu built BUA Group into a manufacturing conglomerate that generates over \$2.6 billion in revenue, in Nigeria, in cement and food and agriculture, the same sectors colonial extraction had deliberately stunted. Patrice Motsepe built African Rainbow Minerals in post-apartheid South Africa, in a country whose documented, named, government-enforced system of racial exclusion is the closest analog in the modern world to the Maryland Doctrine of Exclusion. He did not leave. He claimed.

ACE is making the identical argument on American soil. The African industrialists who read this document will recognize it immediately, because they have lived it. The argument is not sentimental. It is structural. You build where the debt is. You build where the resources were taken from. You build with the people the system was designed to exclude. And you build under your own institutions, governed by your own constitution, funded by your own capital, so that what you build cannot be taken again.

***Dangote did not go to London. Motsepe did not leave South Africa. ACE does not leave America. The argument is the same. The ground is different. The principle is identical.***

There is one distinction worth naming directly. The African industrialists built their enterprises within existing nation-states, with their own governments, however imperfect, that in principle represent the interests of their own people. Black Americans have no such government. The United States government is the entity that issued the Maryland Doctrine of Exclusion, revoked Special Field Order No. 15, and has in 388 years produced no comparable remedy. ACE is not building within the existing American system. ACE is building alongside it, on sovereign ground, under ACE's own constitution, in the tradition of what those African industrialists built but with the added dimension of constructing the governing institution itself, not just the economy within it.

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## **VI. Why ACE Is Arrival, Not Departure**

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Every prior generation of Black American leadership has operated from a position of petition. They have asked the American system to recognize rights, to enforce laws, to extend protections, to acknowledge humanity. They have done this with extraordinary courage, at enormous personal cost, and with results that are real and should not be diminished. The Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, and the Fair Housing Act are genuine achievements of that generation's struggle. ACE honors every person who made them possible.

But the model rested on an assumption that four hundred years of evidence has not confirmed: that if you change enough laws, the hearts of people who were taught to enforce superiority will follow. They have not. They do not. The belief in racial hierarchy was not an accident of history. The people who arrived on this continent brought it with them. They built a system that encoded and enforced it. And then the system did something the original hatred alone could not do; it made itself self-sustaining. It

reproduced the belief in generation after generation without requiring the original holders to still be present, delivering it to new people as received truth, as natural order, as the way things simply are. You cannot legislate that out of people. You can constrain how it expresses itself in law. You cannot remove it from the people who hold it, because most of them did not choose it. It was given to them by every institution that shaped them before they had any capacity to question whether it was true.

ACE believes that the changing of the guard at the political level, meaning more people of color in more political seats than at any prior point in American history, has produced little to nothing that has actually changed the tangible conditions of the people those seats are supposed to serve. To put it plainly, representation inside an institution built on supremacy, extermination, and the perpetuation of both does not change the institution. It changes who administers it.

It is not because the people in those seats lack ability or commitment. It is because they are fighting two battles simultaneously, one visible and one that is rarely named directly. The visible battle is against the institution itself. The invisible battle is against a belief that was brought to this continent by the people who built the institution, cultivated into law and civic order by the institution they created, and subsequently perpetuated into every generation that followed: the feeling, mindset, and enforcement of hierarchy and superiority, the belief that the superiority of white people and the inferiority of Black people is real, natural, and earned rather than manufactured, imposed, and maintained by deliberate design. As party to and orchestrators of that belief, the government spent nearly four centuries encoding it into law, enforcing it through violence, and teaching it as civic order. Every act of legal subordination told the ordinary white man that what he felt about Black people was not hatred but truth. The institution cultivated that belief, confirmed it at every turn, in every generation, until the confirmation became indistinguishable from fact. And no change of political guard, no matter how historic, reaches what lives in the hearts of people shaped by four centuries of that confirmation. It does not live in policy. It will not be reached by policy.

***For the first time, not petitioning for access to what others built. Claiming sovereign ground to build what was always owed.***

ACE does not attempt to win that battle. ACE makes it irrelevant. ACE builds the conditions under which what white Americans feel about Black Americans has no bearing on whether Black Americans can build schools, own land, govern themselves, heal their sick, feed their communities, and pass wealth to their children. Sovereignty does not require the cooperation of people who have no intention of cooperating. It requires only ground, and the people to build on it.

ACE is asking the United States to honor the specific, documented, quantifiable obligations it created and has not discharged. ACE is simultaneously building, on sovereign ground, what Black Americans would be owed even if that ask were never answered. Both tracks run at the same time. This is arrival: not waiting for recognition to begin and not abandoning the claim because building has started.

The ten million acres ACE is claiming through the contingency framework is less than six percent of the original promise of 1865, applied to the population that existed then, and a fraction of a fraction when measured against the population alive today. It is land the federal government already owns and administers. It requires no condemnation of private property, no seizure from any state, no displacement of any person. It is the minimum achievable remedy for the maximum documented harm. ACE does not ask for everything that was taken. ACE asks for enough to build what has never existed: a place where Black Americans arrive, rather than petition.

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## **VII. The Global Invitation**

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ACE Territory is not a wall. It is a base. The distinction matters because it defines what ACE is building toward, not just what it is building away from.

A wall is defensive. It closes. It is built by people who are afraid of what is outside. ACE is not afraid. ACE is sovereign. Sovereignty is not isolation. It is the condition that makes genuine partnership possible. You cannot partner as an equal when you own nothing. You cannot trade on your own terms when you have no ground of your own. You cannot invite anyone in when you are a guest in someone else's house. Sovereignty is the prerequisite for everything that follows.

From ACE Territory, the African diaspora in North America participates in the global Black economy on its own terms. Trade with the African continent. Cultural exchange with the Caribbean. Investment partnerships with African industrialists building the same self-determining economies on their own soil. The vision Marcus Garvey articulated, of a global Black economy that serves Black people wherever they are, does not require Black Americans to leave America to be realized. It requires Black Americans to have a sovereign base from which to participate in it. That is what ACE is building.

To every person of African descent who reads this document and asks why ACE builds here rather than there: ACE builds here because the debt is here. And when ACE Territory is built, when its economy is functioning and its institutions are stable, the connection to the African continent will not be charity or nostalgia. It will be trade between sovereign peoples. That is what Garvey wanted. That is what every African industrialist who built on their own soil has been building toward from their side. ACE is building toward it from this side.

***Garvey's vision was not departure. It was sovereignty. ACE is sovereignty. Built here, connected everywhere, owing no apology to anyone.***

The colors on this document are his colors. The red of the blood that was shed. The green of the land that was promised and taken. The gold of what is being built. The black of the people it is built for. Marcus Garvey raised that flag in 1920. ACE raises it again in 2026, not as a symbol of what might have been, but as the standard of what is being built right now, on this soil, for these people, by these hands.

**THE FUTURE IS OURS.**  
**LET'S BUILD IT.**



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June 2026

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