

A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

The American Bahá'í

Volume 53, Number 6

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November/December 2022



Finding our sphere

As the Nine Year Plan progresses, Bahá'ís and friends find meaning in community relationships, personal teaching, international and neighborhood service ... [pages 4–11](#)

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'Support and empower'

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Eye toward justice

Summer sees Bahá'ís involved in racial equity initiatives across U.S.
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*The source
of courage
and power is
the promotion of
the Word of God,
and steadfastness
in His Love.*

-Bahá'u'lláh



3 weeks in Iran

200 incidents of Bahá'ís being targeted as international community roundly condemns “sweeping crackdown”

news.bahai.org/story/1613/

Government officials and international media outlets have rushed to the defense of the Bahá'ís of Iran, provoked by an escalating crackdown on the community. Bahá'í World News Service image



A cultural ambassador

Kevin Locke, 1954–2022, traveled to 90 countries to proclaim the oneness of humanity and promote the preservation of Indigenous traditions.

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On the cover: A collage of pictures from the Nine Year Plan launch conferences, the Igniting Black Bahá'í Youth seminar, and the Plan's first Pioneer Orientation gathering.



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NATIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Email addresses for offices of the National Spiritual Assembly, as well as contact information for locations other than Evanston/Wilmette and Washington, can be found at www.bahai.us/community/—sign in with your Bahá’í Online Services account, then use the menu to navigate to **Directories > National Offices**.

Bahá’í National Center offices

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1320 19th St. N.W. Suite. 701 | Washington, DC 20036–1631 | 202-833-8990

FIND OUT ABOUT

Huqúqu’lláh, the Right of God

Contacts for inquiries, resources for education and avenues for making payment can be found on [pages 12–13](#)

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Contact the Pilgrimage Office at the Bahá’í World Center: pilgrimage@bwc.org or pilgrimage.bahai.org

Study circles, tutor training, children’s classes, junior youth groups

Regional training institute (RTI) boards oversee the coordination of those activities at the regional and cluster levels; *please see contact information for your region at right*

Homefront pioneering and traveling teaching; Assembly training to support growth of the Faith

Regional Bahá’í Councils (RBCs) oversee the coordination of these activities at the regional and cluster levels; *please see contact information for your region at right*

International pioneering

For information about opportunities to pioneer abroad, email the Office of Pioneering: pioneer@usbnc.org
International service opportunities are also posted from time to time on the U.S. member services website; for a current listing, log in with your Bahá’í Online Services Account to: www.bahai.us/community/resources/international

Summer or seasonal Bahá’í schools

To find out about seasonal school sessions near you, contact your Regional Bahá’í Council (*contact information at right*) or the national Office of Education and Schools (schools@usbnc.org or 847-853-7874). Some listings may appear in the Calendar; *see page 52*

Bahá’í youth volunteering at the permanent Bahá’í schools

Office of Education and Schools: byscschools@usbnc.org

College club registration

youth@usbnc.org

Teaching materials and literature

Bahá’í Distribution Service: bahaibookstore.com or *see pages 25–27*

Assembly support in administration and justice

Office of Assembly Development: oad@usbnc.org
Office of Community Administration: community@usbnc.org



REGIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Secretary of each Regional Bahá’í Council (**RBC**) and Regional Training Institute board (**RTI**)

o Appalachian States

Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia

RBC: 331 Deerpoint Dr., Hendersonville, TN 37075

615-307-1567 | secretary.rbcapp@gmail.com

RTI: secretary@rtiapp.com

o Atlantic States

Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia

RBC: 1620 Mt. Carmel Church Rd., Chapel Hill, NC 27517

919-914-0156 | secretariat@rbcatlantic.org

RTI: 832-314-2936 | rti.secretary@rbcatlantic.org

o State of California

RBC: 852 Maple Pl., East Palo Alto, CA 94303-1353
707-943-3252

secretary@rbcca.usbnc.org

RTI: rti.board@rbcca.org

o Four Corners States

Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah

RBC: 9908 N. Sand Dollar Ct., Tucson, AZ 85743-5217

623-396-6769 | secretary@rbcfourcorners.org

RTI: rti.secretary@rbcfourcorners.org

o Heartland States

Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin

RBC: 1642 E. 56th St., Apt. 504, Chicago, IL 60637-1973

651-492-4745 | secretary@rbchl.usbnc.org

RTI: rtisecretariat@rbcheartland.org

o Midwestern States

Indiana, Michigan, Ohio

RBC: 1028 Clovernoll Ct, Marysville, OH 43040

937-594-3592 | secretariat@rbcmws.org

RTI: 813-928-5583

traininginstitute@rbcmws.org

o Northeastern States

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont

RBC: P.O. Box 932, Bellport, NY 11713

631-258-3571 | secretary@rbcene.usbnc.org

RTI: 503-928-9953 | neinstituteboard@gmail.com

o Northern Plains States

Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming

RBC: P.O. Box 1055, Thayne, WY 83127-1055

307-272-0722 | secretary@rbcnp.usbnc.org

RTI: rti-secretary@nprbc.org

o Northwestern States

Oregon, Washington

RBC: 1507 11th St., Oregon City, OR 97045

458-206-0833 | RBCsecretary@nwbahais.org

RTI: rtisecretary@nwbahais.org

o Prairie States

Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska

RBC: 2744 Russell Blvd., Saint Louis, MO 63104-2136

314-922-6789 | secretary@rbcps.usbnc.org

RTI: 402-541-5247 | rti.prairiestates@gmail.com

o South Central States

Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas

RBC: 5824 Covehaven Dr., Dallas, TX 75252-5228

214-796-6486 | secretary@rbcmc.usbnc.org

RTI: 214-755-4770 | southcentral.rti@gmail.com

o Southeastern States

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina

RBC: 3102 Causey St., Conway, SC 29527-5916

843-267-8367 | rbcsesecretary@usbnc.org

RTI: 305-632-7892 | board@rtise.org

Deadlines for upcoming issues:

- Issue dated January/February 2023:
Deadline November 3

- Issue dated March/April 2023:
Deadline January 6

Send items for possible publication to:

The American Bahá’í
1233 Central St., Evanston, IL 60201
email TABWeb@usbnc.org

[More details on inside back cover](#)



A reminder regarding travel to Iran

Excerpt from a letter from the National Spiritual Assembly to an individual, dated November 9, 2012

Dear Bahá’í Friend,

We appreciate your inquiry, received via telephone on November 6, regarding the advisability of visiting Iran in the near future. While neither Western believers nor believers of Iranian descent are prohibited from travelling to Iran, the situation in that country makes it imperative that all Bahá’ís weigh carefully the wisdom of making such visits. Over the years, the Universal House of Justice has written to both non-Iranians and Iranians regarding proposed visits to the Cradle of the Faith, and we share with you here extracts of these communications for your consideration.

In a letter dated August 15, 2010, the Supreme Body provided the following guidance to all Iranian Bahá’ís residing outside Iran wishing to visit their birthplace:

Iranian believers throughout the world who contemplate visiting Iran are encouraged to arrive at their own decisions in this regard after careful and prayerful consideration of their circumstances and weighing the various factors involved, in consultation with family members and friends whose judgment they trust. Individuals should bear in mind the views of their National Spiritual Assembly and the relations between their country of residence and Iran, as well as the advice issued by their government or other appropriate sources about travel to that country. This guidance also applies to couples where an Iranian believer is married to someone who is not of Iranian background.

It would be a grave disservice to the Cause of God if the believers who visit Iran should, through their actions or communications, undermine, however inadvertently, the resolve of the friends to remain in the Cradle of the Faith—where so many triumphs have been

won—by placing before them the lure of ephemeral advantages of life in other lands, thereby creating further tests for those who have already sustained incalculable trials. However, visits that are intended to focus on meeting with sympathetic members of one’s family and close friends to acquaint them with the Faith, using the insights and skills learned from the institute process, could indeed be helpful.

Bahá’ís visiting Iran are advised to use caution and wisdom when speaking of the Faith. They should not carry Bahá’í credentials when entering Iran, the number of Bahá’í books in their possession should be kept to those required for personal use, and there should be no direct contact from that region, even by email, with the Bahá’í World Center. Also, one’s passport should bear no indication of a visit to Israel. Should a visa application form provide a space for identification of the applicant’s religion, it should not be left blank but rather struck through, as there is a likelihood that if it is left blank, the authorities will simply fill in the space themselves. If specifically required by the officials, the applicant must, of course, state that his or her religion is Bahá’í.

In a letter dated January 12, 2004, the Supreme Body also addressed all Iranian believers living outside Iran as follows:

Under present circumstances, visits to Iran should be made only in cases of genuine necessity and after all reasonable precautions have been taken. Some among you may find yourselves facing urgent family or other reasons to make such return visits. In doing so, you will have to ensure that you have properly

discharged whatever obligations you have assumed, as refugees, to the government of your country of residence. ... Whether such returns are of brief or longer term, however, you should take the utmost care to avoid ostentatious materials displays or inappropriate conversation that would create additional tests for friends who have already sustained far more than their share of trials.

The concern of the House of Justice is to avoid having Iranian Bahá’ís living outside of Iran inadvertently undermine the resolve of the believers in Iran to stay—despite the hardships and persecution—and to play a role in the regeneration of Iran envisaged by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Elaborating further on aspects of this letter, the House of Justice wrote to this National Spiritual Assembly on November 28, 2005, addressing the contrast and apparent contradiction between the facility with which U.S. citizens and permanent residents among Bahá’ís of Iranian descent have traveled back and forth to Iran, on the one hand, and the persecution of Iranian Bahá’ís in Iran, on the other.

Whereas a Bahá’í living in Iran is denied basic human rights and faces the constant threat of imprisonment or worse,

[Continued on page 52](#) —————→

ON THE WEB

Guidance on the Nine Year Plan

Messages from the Universal House of Justice relevant to the Nine Year Plan have been posted by the National Spiritual Assembly in several languages. This includes the **message of December 30, 2021**, to the Counselors’ Conference, defining features of the Plan—as well as several messages supplementing it.

Log in to bahai.us/community



Photos of conferences, clockwise from above:

Above and right: Boston, Massachusetts, photo by Zeaman Aghdasi; Beaverton, Oregon, photo by Keyvan Zahedy; Concord, New Hampshire, photo by Riley Roper; East Valley, Arizona, photo courtesy of Four Corners RBC; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, photo courtesy of Northeast RBC.

Emergence of early learning in the wake of the conferences

Glimpses of a few reflections, follow-up efforts, challenges and capacities bring a picture partly into focus

With the breeze at our backs from the worldwide series of conferences to launch the Nine Year Plan, many Bahá'í individuals, communities and institutions in the United States are moving forward to find our place to contribute—and sometimes thrive—in the process of releasing the society-building power of the Cause.

Regional Bahá'í Councils, examining feedback from planning teams and participants, have been analyzing lessons learned from the spectrum of experiences represented in more than 550 conferences nationwide, attended by about 35,000 people, from April into September.

While the following is only a fragmentary collection of the successes, challenges and learnings in the wake of the conferences, we offer it with special thanks to the Regional Councils that have responded directly to *The American Bahá'í* or reported through regional newsletters.

On the individual level

A sense of belonging proved to be an important element in the process.

"I never felt a belonging like this in my life. It's a belonging where I'm growing all the time. And I want to go out and shout on the rooftops

Photos of conferences, counterclockwise from top of this page:

Grand Rapids, Michigan, photo by David Smith; Frisco, Texas, photo courtesy of Naomi de la Torre; Boston, Massachusetts, photo by Zeaman Aghdasi; Thousand Oaks/Ventura/San Luis Obispo, California, photo from California RBC Facebook page; Skagit-San Juan Counties, Washington, photo from *NW Bahá'í Star* newsletter; Grand Rapids, Michigan, photo by David Smith; Hartford, Connecticut, photo by Pat Ludwig

what they offer here," one participant in the Southeast shared. This participant focused on how this feeling is connected with encouragement to take action: "I wanted inner peace, but inner peace is not enough. Without spiritual activism, you're stopping right before the miracle."

Many conferences were consciously planned to be as universally welcoming as possible. For instance, a family-oriented consultative process in a Northwestern cluster, with junior youths helping in translation between English and Spanish, led to a bilingual conference that engendered warm conversation and ideas for follow-up service.

Another cluster staged a "progressive conference" that met in the homes of a succession of families whose members are involved in devotionals and children's classes.

Visual arts and crafts activities, singing, and other artistic expressions were often shaped to reflect the cultural traditions of the population participating. The arts especially were seen to help young people feel more a part of gatherings.

Some junior youth, the Appalachian States Council notes, "were able to experience for the first time in-depth conversations with their peers about the issues they face in their lives. The icebreaker questions aided in this process."

On the other side of the coin, attentive reflections often followed when some people reported feeling they may have been "othered" at the conferences. "The conferences were held near the time where several national tragedies occurred, and some felt there was not enough attention paid to the effects of those tragedies, especially on Black people," a Council notes. Since then, local institutions have acted to raise awareness of the need to be more mindful of creating welcoming spaces.

Community and institutional learning

Community-building work at the local and neighborhood level continues to stimulate the gradual emergence and intensification of programs of growth in the conferences' wake (*see map, page 6*). This progress can take the form of "slow-moving awareness," as one Council reports, and sometimes it has helped an active nucleus grow.

Indeed, clusters in various regions have seen the conferences directly stimulate:

- Junior youth and children's camps in many places.
- Enrollment of small numbers of new Bahá'ís.



- New youth activity, including one conversation group that has continued over a few months.
- A neighborhood outreach in one cluster that led to a family festival that drew 40 people.
- Home visits as a more regular part of routine community activities, including with those who couldn't attend the conferences,
- Follow-up conferences in some clusters, often focused on specific ethnic populations or age groups, that take advantage of momentum generated by joy and optimism. They also often use the same materials and conversation-starters used for the launch conferences.

The Four Corners States office reports that one small group of youth—part of a cohort of young people given central roles in facilitating a conference—have stayed together over several months to teach

children's classes and lead music at devotional gatherings, with the accompaniment of a Spiritual Assembly. "It seems that children's classes and devotional meetings are 'easy' avenues of service for this group because they are not alone," the report says—again amplifying the important role of a sense of belonging.

Some challenges and capacities

Carrying out these gatherings naturally posed challenges, especially with only a few months to plan. Facing these challenges often built capacity.

In many cases the outreaches by the friends promised to bring in so many participants, planning teams had to exercise creativity on short notice to find suitable places. So gatherings took place in schools, parks, community centers, even homes or backyards.

More than one Council mentions it was sometimes difficult to help the Bahá'ís and

their friends understand the purpose of the conferences.

These and other challenges, however, helped communities and institutions develop a number of capacities, such as:

- Communicating about Bahá'í principles of consultation.
- Engaging families as a whole.
- "Welcoming people with the understanding that none of us is perfect," in the words of the Southeastern newsletter.
- And significantly, the capacity for action and service to others, with the aim of generating the desire in those served to serve in turn. ■

ON THE WEB

Video glimpses of conferences across the U.S.

link.bahai.us/1010

Two close-up encounters with inquiring souls

California: Through difficulties to meaningful connections

San Bernardino County occupies a huge chunk of Southern California. Even when the county is portioned into clusters to help in managing community-building activities, some of the clusters themselves have more land area than entire U.S. states.

Feeling united in these far-flung communities can be a challenge. So when the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of San Bernardino County Southwest arranged for visits to some distant community members who had been out of communication, it would be a serious trip across desert highways even in ideal conditions.

"It takes anywhere from an hour and a half to two hours to get to these friends," says Barbra Badger, who lives in an unincorporated area.

An added mission for the trip was to contact two people in isolated areas who had inquired about the Bahá'í Faith on the web or the phone, and were referred to the Assembly by national inquiry specialists.

One August morning, then, Badger made the short drive, or so she thought, to carpool with Deborah Conow for the trip. Road conditions weren't ideal, and she

found herself off the road stuck in sand.

With help from a tow truck, she eventually reached her friend's home, and they set aside the next day for planning. It almost ended up being more than a day, though, as a large truck got stuck for hours at the top of a steep drive, blocking their way. It finally cleared out of the drive before the day was over.

"I don't know why transportation was made to be such a test," Badger says.

The roads were friendlier after that, and the team renewed contact with several far-flung Bahá'ís, as well as the two inquirers. They even helped several of them plan a hike together to strengthen their bond.

One isolated inquirer, Richard, had already been using his phone to take part in a Bahá'í study circle for more than two years with Jesse and Jimmy Sisk some miles away. Once the team showed up in person, he declared his faith and enrolled as a Bahá'í. Badger says he is getting better connected with Bahá'í community meetings: for instance, participating in a Feast by phone and getting transportation to a fireside gathering. "We were just privileged to be present when he declared," Badger says.

After this productive experience, she adds, the Spiritual Assembly may plan a similar trip to a different part of the cluster.

South Carolina: Witnessing a step in a spiritual journey

Longtime Bahá'í Heather Lally is always eager to share her faith. Recently she was being transported to a hospital for a



Manuela Jensch

planned procedure in Columbia, South Carolina, and started to chat about the Faith with the emergency medical technician, who didn't seem to pay much attention.

But Manuela Jensch, the driver, did. Originally from Germany, she

had at different times been a Christian of varied denominations and a Muslim. She told Heather that she still felt that there was something more. She had begun to read about the Bahá'í Faith and tried earlier to contact Bahá'ís locally.

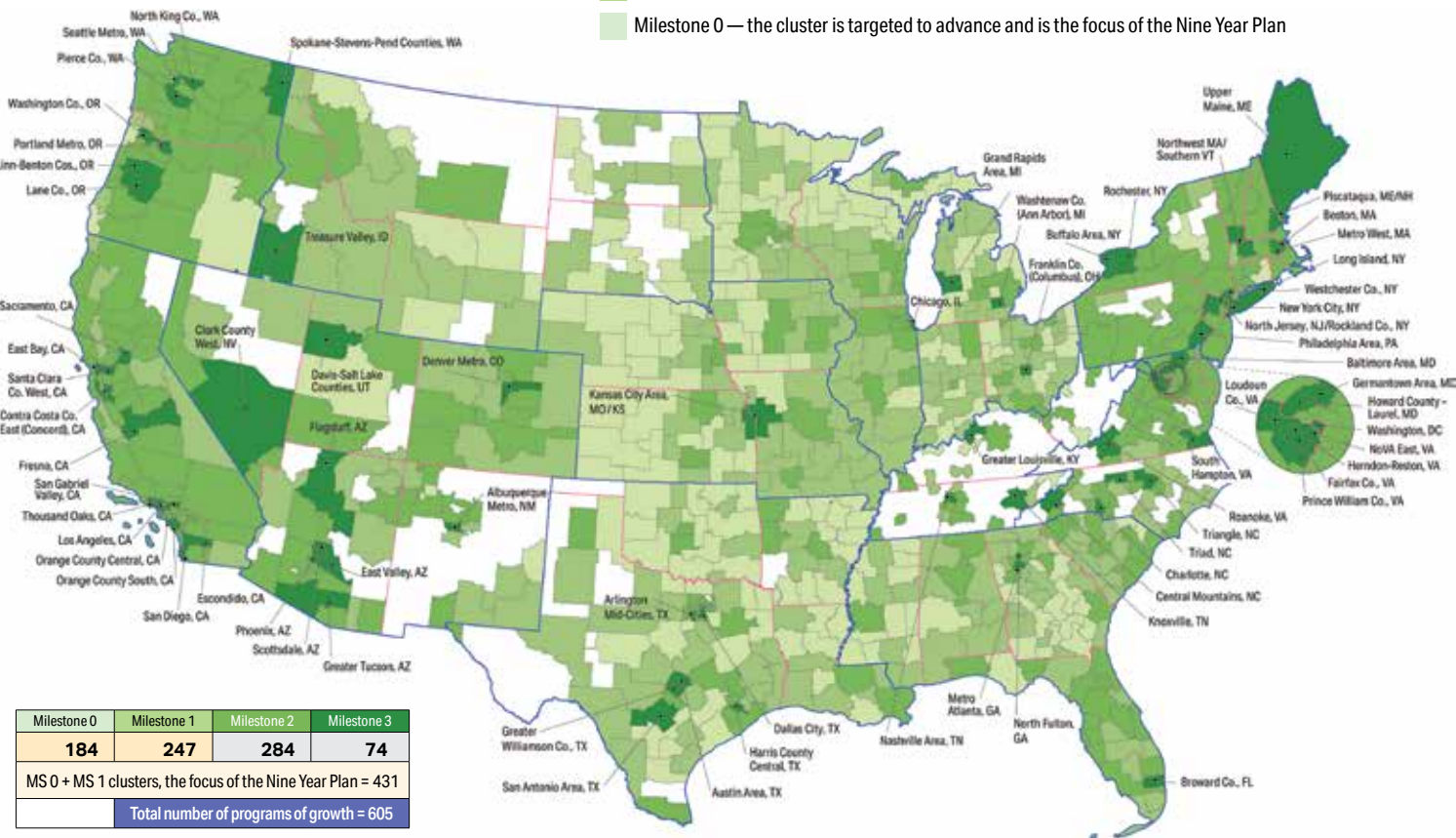
She started coming to firesides with Heather and some of the Bahá'ís, particularly Woody and Parvin Stanwood. Manuela and Parvin hit it off because as an Iranian, Parvin was able to talk with her about Islam.

After a few weeks, Manuela met even more community members as she joined in the conference in Columbia that was one of the global series of Bahá'í conferences held starting this spring.

Not long afterward, Manuela enrolled in the Faith. Soon afterward, she completed the first course in the Ruhi Institute training sequence. Her strong interest in learning about Bahá'u'lláh and the history of the Faith brought her quickly to Book 4, *The Twin Manifestations*. ■

Programs of growth

- Milestone 3 has been passed — the pattern of activity embraces large numbers
- Milestone 2 has been passed — the cluster has an intensive program of growth
- Milestone 1 has been passed — the cluster has a program of growth
- Milestone 0 — the cluster is targeted to advance and is the focus of the Nine Year Plan



Garden service project

Participants in a Bahá'í children's class near Trenton, New Jersey, tend to a garden plot at a farm preserve in Princeton. Children work together to raise and harvest tomatoes, eggplants, peppers and other vegetables for donation to the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen. The class works with the cooperation of the Delaware & Raritan Greenway Land Trust, of which Wendy Kvalheim, a Bahá'í, is a trustee. "Working together on a garden project with an eye toward being of service was a joy for both parents and the kids," Kvalheim says in a news release by the land trust. "Parents were actively teaching the children who learned a lot. There is something each one of us can do, however small, in contributing our talents to help others." Photos courtesy of D&R Greenway Land Trust



Spiritual and practical preparation

Orientation at Temple gathers 23 prospective pioneers

By Joyce Litoff

On May 24, 2022, the Universal House of Justice sent the Bahá'ís of the world a message renewing the call for international pioneers in the Nine Year Plan. Then a letter of June 19 conveyed to our National Spiritual Assembly the assignment for the U.S. Bahá'í community:

to raise at least 52 pioneers from your advanced clusters to be dispatched to Alaska, Algeria, Armenia, Aruba, Belize, Bermuda, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dominica, Egypt, Estonia, Greenland, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, the Leeward Islands, Lithuania, the Mariana Islands, Mexico, Morocco, Poland, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Sudan, and Tunisia as early as possible in the first phase of the Nine Year Plan.

In preparation to fulfill these ambitious goals, the new Plan's first orientation session for pioneers from the United States was held over 9½ days in August at the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois.

Twenty-three prospective pioneers joined representatives from several Bahá'í institutions to immerse themselves in prayer, study and consultation about the realities, roles and responsibilities facing a person who chooses to serve the Faith in this immersive, life-altering way.

They also made daily field visits in the Chicago area and heard stories about others' pioneering experiences. Each day focused on a particular theme:

- **Pioneering**—the immense blessings of service as a pioneer and the spiritual forces it releases
- **Divine Assistance**—the capacity to face difficult situations with maturity

- **Reliance on God**—an appreciation of the interplay of crisis and victory
- **Detachment and Sacrifice**—a spirit of sacrifice and an understanding that service as a pioneer will require sacrifice
- **Selflessness and Humility**—a humble attitude of learning alongside others
- **Service**—adaptability to different contexts
- **Steadfastness and Firmness in the Covenant**—resilience
- **Love and Unity**—an outward-looking orientation
- **Joyfulness**—an ability to maintain a positive outlook

Pioneering, past and present

“They that have forsaken their country for the purpose of teaching Our Cause—these shall the Faithful Spirit strengthen through its power,” Bahá'u'lláh wrote. *“Such a service is, indeed, the prince of all goodly deeds, and the ornament of every goodly act.”*

In the time of the Blessed Beauty, Bahá'ís were already moving to such places as India, Burma and Indonesia to spread the Faith. Some of them He chose for that purpose, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi often similarly assigned teachers to particular pioneering goals.

“In times past people would write to the Guardian of their intention to pioneer and he would respond ... ‘go here,’” says Ravi Starr, a prospective pioneer from Kansas City, Missouri, attending the orientation.

“Now, as we are working to promote the maturity of the human race, it is a bit more complicated, so we pray and consult with the institutions about the best next steps,” says Starr. “We trust that the best next steps will become clear.”

“Our understanding of the pioneer has advanced,” says Amelia Tyson, a participant from Atlanta. “The needs of the community the pioneer moves to is of central consideration.

“We are going to a country or locality, becoming part of that community, working alongside others. So, the institutions match the experience and skills of an individual to the needs of the receiving community. In a sense it is like match-making,” Tyson says.

Another important difference, she adds, is

that we now have the institute process and the Ruhi curriculum, “which has no parallel as an instrument for the systematic exposure of limitless numbers of souls to Bahá'u'lláh's vision for humanity.” And once relocated in a village or neighborhood, today's pioneer often works alongside residents who are already well-acquainted with the institute.

Field visits to neighborhoods

During the orientation's daily field visits the prospective pioneers were dispatched to various neighborhoods in the Chicago area, where they gained experience meeting neighbors and starting conversations.

“My team was mostly in the West Ridge area of Chicago,” says Starr, whose small group included wife Nasim Ahmadiyeh, 9-year-old daughter Nyala and a few others. Starr says the experience was “overwhelmingly positive.”

“Having our daughter with us was really helpful. We went to a playground, where it was natural for us to connect with other parents,” he says. The couple also have a 6-year-old son, Tahir, who stayed with a relative during the orientation.

“My wife is so open and genuine. We talked about the education of our children. We found that others responded, shared vulnerably and talked about their aspirations as well.”

Starr says that meeting an 11-year-old from Afghanistan was a highlight of the outreach. “He had a tray of chicken his aunt cooked for a birthday party and shared his food,” Starr says. “It was delicious.”

“One person on our team spoke Farsi [Persian], which is close to one of the languages in Afghanistan, so she was able to talk with the aunt.”

She described the junior youth spiritual empowerment program for 11 to 14-year-olds to them and asked the boy, “Do you think this is a program your friends would be interested in?” His calm reply: “Yes. Yes, they would.”

“We learned so much from her about being direct and open in our approach,” Starr says.

From here, movement

Since the orientation ended, some prospective pioneers are further along with making plans to move than others.



National Pioneer Orientation participants gather for a group picture Aug. 19 on the steps of the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois. Photo by Kevin Trotter

The first pioneer from the orientation to move overseas, Alex Tara-Browne of Santa Clara, California, arrived in Latvia on Sept. 6.

In an email Tara-Browne wrote that the most impactful part of the orientation for him was hearing “stories that described other pioneers, with complete detachment and steadfastness, leaving their homes and serving the Cause. I think it has been inspiring and helpful to try to be able to start off my pioneering with the same spirit.”

Starr says he and his family are en route, living temporarily in Bethesda, Maryland, to obtain some medical services. “At this moment we are waiting for the next consultation,” he says.

Starr says his heart is moved by the prospect of pioneering as a family whenever he sees a particular story in the video *Glimpses of a Hundred Years of Endeavour*.

That story told of a man who served in the German army in North Africa during World War II who married a woman who had been confined in a prisoner of war camp. “They became Bahá'ís and met the Guardian, who urged them to go back to Africa—this time in love. I cry every time I see it,” Starr says.

Another couple attending the August orientation, with a baby due in December,

have already visited their future home in Boca del Río, Veracruz state, Mexico.

“That we were expecting was a big motivator to want to pioneer,” says Gabriela Reyes. “I really wanted that experience for our son. I want him to grow up with his parents serving really intensely ... where he sees what community life could really be like.”

Reyes and her husband, Andre Rouhani, are living in Tempe, Arizona, and say they will return to Mexico as soon as possible after the birth.

On the last day of the orientation, Counselor Lucho Boddy gave the couple an original copy of the May 24, 2022, letter with the Seal of the Universal House of Justice, in which the Supreme Body calls for pioneers for the Nine Year Plan.

“He gave it to us saying basically, ‘Don't stick around for too long,’” Reyes says with a laugh. “It was like, ‘You guys are needed, so like try to get out of here quickly.’”

Meeting future neighbors

During their visit to Boca del Río, Rouhani says, they took initial steps to meet their future neighbors. “We went to the park last night and met three youths. The people here are so open, talkative, just desiring connection,” he says.

“There's no, like, secret sauce,” Rouhani says. “There's no magic mystery. I think we've just gotta go out there and just do stuff, and it's really cool to have that chance.”

“I will say bringing cookies and having a basketball really did help, though,” adds Reyes. She says the people they encounter drive the conversation, “and that is great because we're really here to listen.”

“That's one thing that really struck me from the orientation—how important just listening is and kind of understanding the community and reading the reality of where we are even the first couple of months of being in a new place,” she says.

“It is just remembering that we are guests in this country. We aren't from here, and it's not our job to be the main protagonists. Our main role is to walk with the population here.”

Rouhani and Reyes say they will miss their families in the United States. She says her parents are “over the moon to be grandparents.” But they also say it's been helpful to remember “that the whole world is one family, and we will have family and community no matter where we go.” ■



A Pioneering Orientation participant and local Bahá'í practice outreach during a field visit to suburban Oak Park. Photo by Alan Hatchett

‘Support and empower’ Seminar in DC brings Black Bahá’í youth together in joy

Reflection by Nadia Mehretab



Black Bahá’í youth ages 18–28 from across the nation gathered in Washington, DC, for a three-day seminar on Labor Day weekend. Planned in the span of about three months this summer, “Igniting Black Bahá’í Youth (IBBY) seeks to foster a space of healing and spiritual deepening ... and overall uplift the spiritual strength, capacity, and steadfastness in Black Bahá’í youth in our communities.”

And uplift it did.

Thursday evening, the 35 participants began arriving at the DC Bahá’í Center from Minneapolis, Chicago, Toronto, Atlanta, various parts of California, New York, and the greater DC area. And love radiated from the start.

“I didn’t think this was going to be as impactful as it was, but right away when we began gathering Thursday for dinner, I felt something I never felt before. I’m still trying to put it into words,” says Kayla Taylor, one of the weekend seminar’s planners.

Inspired by conversations at the 2022 Bahá’í National Convention about the importance of lifting up Black Bahá’ís and supporting affinity spaces, Taylor began working in late April alongside Nadia Mehretab, Jason Henderson, Amani Lawrence, Emilia Mehretab and Asiyih Lawrence to create the program.

Putting on a nationwide gathering would take a lot of time and work and they felt the urgency to make it happen as soon as possible. With the help of Barbara Talley, planner and organizer of the “Arise: Pupil of the Eye” conferences, the team raised funds from generous souls who were excited to support Black youth.

Looking for attendees, the group pooled lists of their friends, then launched a social media campaign and website posting weekly updates for a growing number of interested participants.

The next concern was to identify an appropriate space to host the event. This began a loving and helpful relationship between the planners and the Washington, DC, Spiritual Assembly, whose members expressed support and offered administrative guidance.

“The DC [Assembly] felt honored to host the IBBY conference and have the opportunity to learn together with this wonderful group of youth,” says Assembly member Shayda Vance. “We’ve been trying to learn as an [Assembly] how to support youth and also how to support and empower African American Bahá’ís. And along came a group of youth wanting to do both!”

“The timing could not have been more perfect,” participant Aziza Hutcherson said on the last day as she thanked the planners. Many of the youth felt they were at a breaking point—the pandemic, increasing racial violence, and heightened tensions have created a confusing social reality that cannot be navigated alone. For Taylor and

Continued on page 30 →

Above: Group picture with most of the IBBY gathering.

Right: Planning team members (clockwise from top left) Amani Lawrence, Jason Henderson, Kayla Taylor, Asiyih Lawrence and Nadia Mehretab; Emiia Mehretab was also on the team. Photos by Aziza Hutcherson



Youth shares highlights of Georgia neighborhood activity growth

Editor's Note: Despite the best efforts of a Bahá’í community in Cobb County, Georgia to get youth to participate, Aric Ting was one of the few to serve in activities in a local apartment complex. Later, Ting recruited a few fellow students from his Bahá’í Sunday school. Slowly, more friends attended the activities, and they began doing door-to-door outreach and sharing flyers about their activities. They established relationships with families who then contacted others to help. Ting shared this letter about his experience a few months ago:

Alláh-u-Abhá,

My name is Aric, a Bahá’í youth from Cobb County, Georgia. For the past few years, a few Bahá’ís and I have been doing junior youth activities and children’s classes for Sedgefield Apartments, a local underresourced neighborhood. There, we provided activities for the children to learn and have fun. With them we made music (singing songs like “We are drops”), studied virtues, and discussed important subjects such as race unity and gender equality. Not only that, we also helped the children organize service for the neighborhood.

For instance, they posted signs at the laundromat to remind people to empty their clothes’ pockets because half the machines were broken most of the time by sharp objects, such as nails. We went to Sedgefield every week for a year until the pandemic came around, and our activities had to come to a halt.

In summer of 2021, we came back to Sedgefield on July 19th by hosting Camp Brilliant Star, a free summer camp where children can learn about the noble Brilliant Stars they are through the Bahá’í teachings. They learned virtues, made music, and had fun! Many families at Sedgefield can’t send their kids to camps in the summer, so this was a great opportunity for the kids to spend time developing their noble selves. The week before, we hosted a cookout for the neighborhood to enjoy and learn about the camp. Since then, we’ve been organizing camps for the children at Sedgefield during school breaks instead of each week due to COVID-19.

For our last camp in February, we also fundraised to get the students at Sedgefield free backpacks. At the camp, we distributed

50 backpacks to underresourced students, and we’ll continue distributing backpacks to more students both at Sedgefield and a local shelter.

Update: Efforts to expand this nucleus of activity are continuing. In spring, another fundraising effort provided packs of school supplies for youth and children, and since then the group has been focusing on meeting more consistently. The local community is also looking for others to build their capacities to organize the activities, as Ting is moving to college and will be serving a new community. ■

ON THE WEB

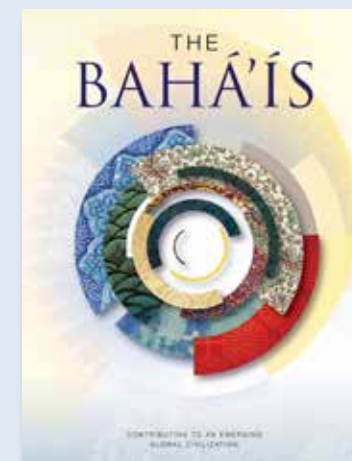
Seed planters at Interfaith Earth Festival express our interconnectedness through art

The term “planting seeds” is often used as a metaphor for the hopeful expectations that accompany new undertakings. In the case of an event sponsored by Faithbridge Interfaith in McHenry County, Illinois, the act of planting seeds was partly literal, partly artistic expression and partly figure of speech.

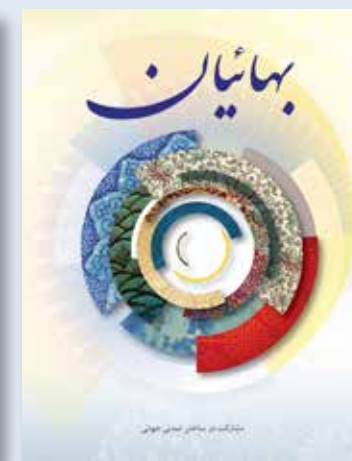
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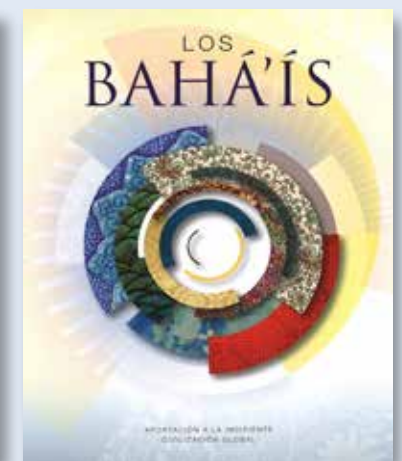
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Ḥuqúqu'lláh

The Right of God

Making payment

Payment to Ḥuqúqu'lláh should be made to
“Bahá'í Ḥuqúqu'lláh Trust.”

Mail to:

Bahá'í Ḥuqúqu'lláh Trust
P.O. Box 697
Wilmette, IL 60091

Please include:

- Your **Bahá'í identification number** written on your check; if a joint payment, please include **both spouses' Bahá'í ID numbers**.
- Your **current address** where a receipt should be mailed.

To make a payment online:

Log in to ushuquq.org with your Bahá'í Online Services Account to access the Ḥuqúqu'lláh Payment System (HPS).

To create a Bahá'í Online Services Account, you may go to ushuquq.org and click on the “Create Account” button.

For assistance with mail-in or online (HPS) payments:

Either:
email support@ushuquq.org
Or:
Call 847-733-3478

Note: Office hours are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Central time

National Ḥuqúqu'lláh Conference sparks joyous conversation on service

For those in service to the institution of Ḥuqúqu'lláh, the act of accompanying and learning alongside others requires striving to be one's best self—in Bahá'u'lláh's words, “*Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me standing within thee.*”

This perspective was shared by William Wieties, a member of the International Ḥuqúqu'lláh Board of Trustees, in a talk at the National Ḥuqúqu'lláh Conference, held Sept. 16–18 in Skokie and Wilmette, Illinois. “If you are being a light of Bahá'u'lláh within your community,” he told the gathering, “you are fulfilling your mission.”

Centered on the conference's theme, “Fostering Loving Relationships,” the weekend saw a continual buzz of heartfelt conversation about how Ḥuqúqu'lláh Representatives in the United States, as educators, can be channels for divine love as they strive to help believers learn more about the spiritual significance of the law of the Right of God and about applying the principles of its practice according to their own circumstances.

One of the primary missions of the institution, said Adam Robarts, also a member of the International Board of Trustees, is to foster “a sense of love and marvel” at the law. Because voluntary Ḥuqúq payments are a



Adam Robarts. Photo by David Smith

major source of material support to the Universal House of Justice, he said, they can be seen as “enabling the Will of God to take place.”

Also speaking in the sacred environs of the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette was Nwandi Lawson, member of the Continental Board of Counselors in the Americas, who emphasized the envisioned role of the Right of God in transforming humanity's economic life. This can happen when wealth that may be historically tainted is purified through participation in the Right of God. Such a transformation can also be influenced by people learning over time to “consider our material and our spiritual realities as being unified” and to use resources more justly.

The seven members of the Board of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh in the United States joined 110 Ḥuqúqu'lláh Representatives from across America in attendance, with about 20 of them participating by videoconference. They studied passages from sacred Writings and authoritative guidance, drew inspiration from the keynote talks, and shared experiences and questions in panel-style presentations and interactions as well as in small-group reflections.

They explored vital topics surrounding the law of the Right of God and how to increase the believers' awareness of it, so that more can learn to participate in this obligation recorded in the Most Holy Book. They were reminded that the Blessed Beauty asks offerings to be made “*with the utmost joy and radiance*”; the Universal House of Justice characterizes this as a “profoundly private act of conscience”; and therefore the believers must “never feel pressured” to comply.

The conference presented these topics for consideration, study and discussion:

- The spiritual significance of the law in the individual and social dimensions
- Deepening on the practical aspects of the law
- Cultivating a deep love for the Divine Law
- Aiding the friends to observe the law with joy
- Nurturing loving relationships

These topics proved to be vital jumping-off points, and



Robust discussion brought together members of the Board of Trustees of Ḥuqúqu'lláh in the U.S. alongside Representatives.

as conversations progressed, a few themes emerged organically:

Love and joy surrounding the law of the Right of God. Often mentioned during the conference was a set of 12 lessons that assists in Ḥuqúqu'lláh group study sessions. Taken in sequence, a Representative observed, these lessons explore many elements of the spiritual joy and transformative nature of the law, well before the course materials begin to address how believers might refine their attitude toward their earthly possessions and purify them.

Many Representatives talked about an attitude of learning together, rather than a teacher-student dynamic, in studying the 12 lessons as well as other participatory study courses that are available.

And a number talked of praying and preparing to share their own love and enthusiasm for the law. “The core vehicle for joy is our own selves,” a Representative said. Exercising empathy and “meeting people where they are” brings the greatest success in attracting hearts to the law.

Ḥuqúqu'lláh as a force for social justice. As individuals build a greater power of distinguishing “wants” from “needs” by participating in the law, it was observed, a new and more just attitude toward building and using wealth will gradually grow among humanity.

A panel discussion and a robust conversation explored one way this power is working. Approaches are being explored among African American believers that are informed by sensitivity to the institutional and social barriers to wealth-building that they and other marginalized populations



Ḥuqúqu'lláh Representatives from several regions take part in a panel discussion. Photos by David Smith

have faced. Participants are seeing fresh currents of empowerment through education in the spiritual principles of Ḥuqúqu'lláh alongside financial literacy training.

These activities are approached not only with mindfulness regarding the study materials, but also with “special attention to devotions ... that are culturally relevant.” All these elements can add up to helping people from every population gain confidence that they have a part in this enterprise, one Representative said.

Dissolving barriers to the believers' understanding about the practice of the law. People can be daunted by the math involved in meeting their Ḥuqúq obligation of 19 percent of excess wealth. Representatives shared various approaches that, when carried out with sensitivity, can assist believers in understanding the principles that apply to their circumstances.

Many Bahá'ís believe they can't participate in the law unless they are already wealthy. More than one Representative talked of friends feeling relief and joy on finding out the actual requirements.

Even if a person's excess wealth is not at a threshold prompting an offering, Bahá'ís are free to observe the law and to realize its spiritual and practical benefits by making a contribution, even if it is a small one, when offered with love and motivated by a desire to establish a direct personal connection with the Universal House of Justice.

Ḥuqúqu'lláh is “an institution that has always had accompaniment at its center,” said the secretary of the Ḥuqúqu'lláh Board of Trustees in the United States, as he outlined the institution's unfoldment—from

Bahá'u'lláh's appointment of the first Trustee in the late 1870s to the current activity of the International Board, which oversees 33 regional Boards of Trustees and a worldwide network of more than 1,000 Representatives. He shared that “we are in awe and wonder at both the law and the institution the Blessed Beauty ordained”—an institution that, the Universal House of Justice has written, “contributes to the spiritualization of humanity through the promotion of a new attitude towards the acquisition and use of material resources necessary for great collective enterprises designed to improve all aspects of life.” ■

For more information

Inquiries may be brought to either a Representative or a Deputy Trustee member of the Ḥuqúqu'lláh Board in the United States.

To locate a Representative in your area, log in to bahai.us/community.

To contact a member of the Board of Trustees:

Dennis Andrews
203-339-1227
dandrews@ushuquq.org

Adib Birkland
651-216-1055
abirkland@ushuquq.org

Mojgan Bowers
847-644-7866
mbowers@ushuquq.org

Danita Brown
678-858-3529
dbrown@ushuquq.org

Shannon Javid
206-708-5100
sjavid@ushuquq.org

Behrad Majidi
636-675-3902
bmajidi@ushuquq.org

Mashiyat Rahmani
310-360-5199
mrachmani@ushuquq.org

Board of Trustees in the United States
secretariat@ushuquq.org

On the web

Log in to bahai.us/community for:

- Compilation: *Ḥuqúqu'lláh—The Right of God*
- Codification of the Law of Ḥuqúqu'lláh

Former mayor focuses on spiritual transformation

By Francisco Rendon

When Jim Nass learned about the Bahá’í Faith’s avoidance of partisanship and divisiveness in politics, he was gearing up to run for re-election as mayor of Pittsboro, North Carolina.

As he was first investigating the Faith, he saw the wisdom in the teachings and swiftly decided that he would not campaign for his re-election nor would he utter a disparaging word against his opponent.

“The campaign for mayor and the board of commissioners ... had been, in my experience, extremely divisive,” Nass says. “When the election was held and someone won, those divisions remained. The supporters of candidate X continued to oppose what candidate Y was trying to do.

“When I read the Bahá’ís’ take on not seeking office and not campaigning, because of the divisive nature of that, it made absolute sense to me. I had seen firsthand how after the election ends the real work begins, but that work is hindered because there is not unity of purpose. So I thought the proper, moral thing to do was to not campaign and then, regardless of how it turned out, the division would not be there as a result.”

Nass did not win the November 2021 election. He had appeared at some public events with his opponent during the election season, and said he hoped the lack of contention between the two mayoral candidates would positively contribute to a more unified government and population.

A poet and longtime student of religion, Nass first heard about the Bahá’í Faith in June 2021 in the parking lot of a local grocery store, from a local Bahá’í, Kelly Clark Boldt—who had earlier met him at a ribbon cutting ceremony for a new park. In that parking lot conversation in 2021, he shared his plans to bring people from different religious backgrounds together during the annual Christmas tree ceremony.

When Clark Boldt shared that Pittsboro had a small Bahá’í community, Nass was taken aback, as he had never before heard of the religion.

“I thought I was pretty well read in a lot of spiritual books, but when she said Bahá’í, I had never heard that word, and that began my study,” Nass says. “[After researching] I said ‘My goodness, the aims and goals of the Bahá’í Faith, that looks like me.’”

Nass read the introductory book *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era*, attended a dinner party at Clark Boldt’s home where he met other Bahá’ís, and soon began regularly participating in her “Sacred Moments” devotional gathering.

“The Bahá’í community of Chatham County—I couldn’t believe the welcoming and acceptance,” Nass says.

Soon Nass was invited to begin planning the local conference that had been called for by the Universal House of Justice. The Pittsboro and Chatham County communities decided their conference should focus on connecting with local religious leaders, and Nass proved to be a valuable resource in engaging many friends he had built relationships with through the years.

“Because he is so well-respected in this community, he reaches out to a lot of people already, to invite them to activities,” Clark Boldt says. “Everything he has worked on after being mayor has been devoted to race unity or something to unify the community.”

Philip Cantor, who later went on to serve as Nass’s tutor for Ruhi Book 1, *Reflections On The Life Of The Spirit*, says working alongside the Bahá’ís as they were taking action really seemed to help Nass draw closer to the Faith.

“He was working shoulder to shoulder with us and in one of those meetings he just said, ‘I am a Bahá’í, I believe Bahá’u’lláh is the Manifestation of God for this day,’” Cantor says.

The experience of declaring his faith at one of the conference planning meetings is one that Nass holds dear. “I remember so distinctly ... just the feeling of being home,” Nass says. “The searching was over, I was home.”

Since completing his study of Book 1, Nass now hosts the “Sacred Moments” devotional gathering. The community began planning another conference in the fall and Nass and Cantor have partnered with a local Presbyterian minister to host an event



Jim Nass in Pittsboro, NC. Photo courtesy of Jim Nass

addressing the religious persecution of the Bahá’ís of Iran and other religious minorities around the world.

Nass’s experience as mayor showed him the pressing need to address major challenges in his community including religious division, racial prejudice and affordable housing. He says the action Bahá’ís are taking is crucial in creating a more unified vision around these issues.

“One of my favorite photos is of [former Presidents] Kennedy and Eisenhower, walking hand in hand to the White House. If only we could get back to that kind of community and oneness,” Nass says. “But my conviction is that we can start at the local level. As it starts there it begins to expand. I feel a great hunger, here in Chatham County, at least, not for this constant rancor, but for a calm reflection on reality.

“In my year of exploration I determined I could do a lot more for my community as a Bahá’í than I ever could as a mayor.” ■

New believers

Enrollments, adult/youth (age 15+)

- 570 Past year: October 2021–September 2022
- 53 August 2022
- 41 September 2022

Registrations, child/junior youth

- 435 Past year: October 2021–September 2022
- 41 August 2022
- 29 September 2022

Releasing the ‘society-building power’ of the Faith

Dear Bahá’í Friends,

In 1936 on the eve of a world war, amid a global economic depression and the turbulence of a “world crisis,” Shoghi Effendi appealed to the American Bahá’ís.

He said that the world was entering some of the “darkest days and severest ordeals that humanity has ever experienced.”

And he urged the American believers to use the “key” of the promulgation of the Divine Plan to unlock the door to their destiny, the destiny of their nation, and the “betterment of the world.”

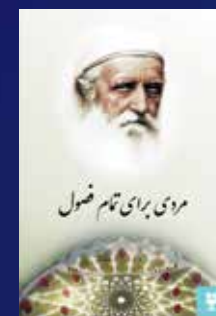
He explained that as our champions multiply, as our efforts increase, and as the Bahá’í Message gains momentum its “potentialities will correspondingly unfold.”

Today, as the global crisis grows, as truth and trust lose their luster, as the concept of unity is only seen in the context of partisanship, the Universal House of Justice calls us to be champions of love who release the “society-building power” of the Faith and quicken the drooping souls of our sisters and brothers to work with us for the “betterment of the world and to live together in concord and harmony.”

Help us do this work—with your time, your devotion, and your contributions that sustain our efforts.

Our love and prayers are with you every day,

Robert C. Henderson
Treasurer



Some frequently asked questions regarding the Pioneering Funds

The letter of May 24, 2022, from the Universal House of Justice, issued an urgent call for pioneers, in the international field and on the home front, to help to ensure “that the light of the Faith shines bright in every territory.” As the friends are arising to champion this call, the Office of the Treasurer in collaboration with the Office of Pioneering is providing some answers to frequently asked questions regarding the Funds that have been set up to assist the friends to embark on this heroic field of service or to deputize others if they are themselves unable to pioneer at this time.

What Funds are set up to assist with pioneering efforts?

Two specific Funds are set up to assist with this path of service.

- **Deputization Fund, International Pioneering.** Contributions made to this Fund are used at the discretion of the National Spiritual Assembly to assist the friends in the American Bahá’í community with their international pioneering efforts.

- **Regional Deputization Funds.** Each region also has a Regional Deputization Fund, managed by the Regional Bahá’í Council for that region. This Fund may be used to assist homefront pioneers and pioneering efforts.

These Funds can be found on the drop-down menu of the Online Contribution System (ocs.bahai.us).

Can I send a contribution earmarked for a specific pioneer?

While it is encouraged that one of the main Funds above are used to support the pioneering efforts and to allow the institutions to apply their overall knowledge and assessment of the current needs in allocating the funds, if any of the friends have an ardent wish to earmark their contributions in a specific way, it is possible to write a check with the earmark notation in the note section of the check and mail it to: **National Bahá’í Fund**
PO Box 541
Wilmette, IL 60091-0541

How does one apply for financial assistance for pioneering?

In addition to initiating consultations with relevant members of the Auxiliary Boards and Regional Bahá’í Councils about your plans, as noted on the June 22, 2022, Feast letter from the National Spiritual Assembly, anyone interested in exploring service as a pioneer, whether on the home front or abroad, is warmly invited to

complete, as a first step, an online form, accessible on the U.S. Bahá’í website (bahai.us/community/). Upon receipt of that information, you will be contacted as soon as is feasible to discuss opportunities that may be open to you. Once these steps are complete, those who find themselves in need of financial assistance to fulfill their pioneering goals can work with the Office of Pioneering to discuss these needs.

Are there any specific goals set for the American Bahá’í community with regard to the call for pioneering?

In its June 19 letter, the Supreme Body shared:

“In this regard, the House of Justice is confident that, in addition to ensuring the flow of pioneers on your home front, your community has the capacity to raise at least 52 pioneers from your advanced clusters to be dispatched to Alaska, Algeria, Armenia, Aruba, Belize, Bermuda, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dominica, Egypt, Estonia, Greenland, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, the Leeward Islands, Lithuania, the Mariana Islands, Mexico, Morocco, Poland, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Sudan, and Tunisia as early as possible in the first phase of the Nine Year Plan. You are asked to consult with the Counsellors forthwith to explore how to approach this vital endeavour.” ■

Persian Bahá’í Media Service (Persian BMS)

Persian Bahá’í Media Service, an agency of the National Spiritual Assembly, provides a steady flow of informative programming through radio, television, podcasts and social media platforms on a \$1.5 million budget per year. The privilege of supporting this path of service is given to all American Bahá’ís by the Universal House of Justice. Persian BMS serves as a source of accurate information on the Bahá’í Faith. The programs provided through Persian BMS offer hope to the people of Iran, especially the youth, opening their hearts and minds to how they can contribute to the betterment of society.

The persecution of the Bahá’í community in Iran has recently increased, with intensified efforts to crack down on Bahá’í businesses, a new wave of arrests that are tearing through many innocent families, the destruction of homes and a village, along with an increase in hateful propaganda. For example, in 2010-2011, there were approximately 22 new anti-Bahá’í postings or videos on the internet per month; by the first four months of 2021, the rate of hate propaganda postings has increased to over 950 per month.

In the face of these recent events, more and more Iranians are becoming curious about the Bahá’í Faith. Some, including prominent members of Iranian society, are speaking up against the gross injustice that the Bahá’ís are facing. Below are a few comments they have shared:

“All of us, and our parents and the parents of our parents, have had a part to play in the current situation of Iranian Bahá’ís. Let’s raise our voice so that we may make up for the shame of our historical collective anti-Bahá’ísm.”

—Maryam Mirza, an Iranian journalist residing in Germany

“As a Muslim and as a member of a religious intellectual family, I sympathize with dear Bahá’í fellow citizens and strongly condemn the destruction of properties of residents of Roshankouh, Mazandaran, which happened because of the beliefs of the owners in the Bahá’í Faith. Whether we are Muslims, Christians, Jews, Bahá’ís or atheists, protecting our civil rights is a prerequisite for coexistence and it cannot be neglected at any cost.”

—Koroush Dabbagh, Iranian philosopher

“Bahá’ís do not have clerics, mullahs or muftis. The Iranian regime is afraid of Bahá’í beliefs. Let’s be the voice of our Bahá’í fellow citizens.”

—Javad Abbasi Tavalali, Iranian journalist and human rights activist

Persian Bahá’í Media Service has become a trusted source on what the Bahá’í Faith has to offer to the people of Iran. However, support for this work requires a steady source of material resources. Contributions made toward Persian Bahá’í Media Service are also part of our National Bahá’í Fund goal of \$45 million.

Please scan the QR code below to see an example of the type of programming that Persian BMS offers, which was shared initially on Sept. 3, 2022, for the Persian Bahá’í Media Service Celebration Webinar. We are delighted to share this presentation with the American Bahá’í community! ■ <https://youtu.be/mRViTig7hOM>





‘To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine’

Offering a gift through Planned Giving

To give and to be generous, according to Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings, are attributes of God. The expression of these attributes is foundational to the new civilization that He is building through the many sacrificial efforts that the friends offer at His Threshold every day. But for each soul, this is a realization that may come with time.

Early in his life, a young man began to feel that the teachings of the religion into which he was born were not unifying. And just like Moses and the Israelites who wandered the desert for 40 years in search of the Promised Land, so was his story of seeking the truth. He stopped searching and denied the existence of God for 25 years. In time he entered into married life, and his late wife who he sacrificed everything for, had a Bahá’í friend. He said to his Bahá’í friend, “Our love was unconditional.” She responded, “No man’s love is unconditional, but only God’s love is unconditional.” She suggested that he attend a fireside, which he did. This created a spark within the young man’s soul and brought him closer to the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh. He was attracted to the Faith because he felt that among the Bahá’ís, all people were welcome. Around the same time, he experienced a severe physical injury—he completely lost the ability to think in words.

Through this \trial, his heart was opened to God, like the words Jesus said to his disciples, “*Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*” —Matthew 18:3

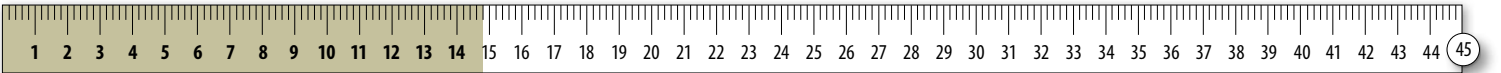
His views of the world started to change as he began deepening in the Faith and fell in love with a line in the Tablet of Aḥmad: “*Verily, this is that Most Great Beauty, foretold in the Books of the Messengers, through Whom truth shall be distinguished from error and the wisdom of every command shall be tested.*”

This believer has been a Bahá’í for many years now, serving and teaching the Faith. He expresses his love of the Faith in many ways, including giving to the Fund. Whenever a surplus of \$10,000 is saved, he opens a gift annuity. He also remembers going homefront pioneering with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren and has been able to support them so that they could serve the Faith. He says, “It is no sacrifice. It is a pleasure and a joy.”

Many friends, based on their life circumstances, make offerings through the Planned Giving options made available by the National Spiritual Assembly. These options range in their possibilities—from those that enable believers to support the work of the Faith in their lifetime to leaving a legacy to the Cause. To learn more about the available Planned Giving options, please visit bahai.us/community You can also send an email (plannedgiving@usbnc.org) or call 847-733-3569. The Office of the Treasurer is happy to assist you. ■

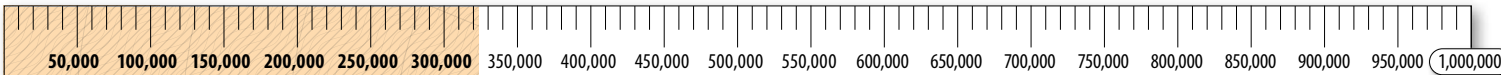
National Fund goal: \$45 million for year ending April 2023

Contributions as of September 30, 2022: **\$14.8 million**

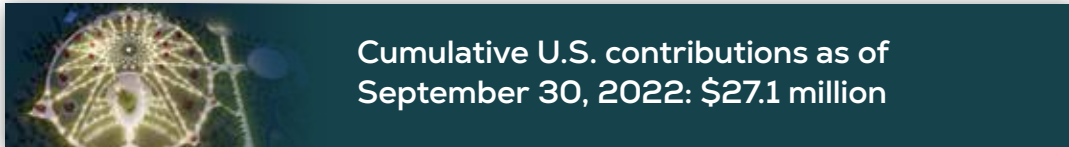


Continental Fund: \$1 million goal for year ending April 2023

Contributions as of September 30, 2022: **\$343,000**

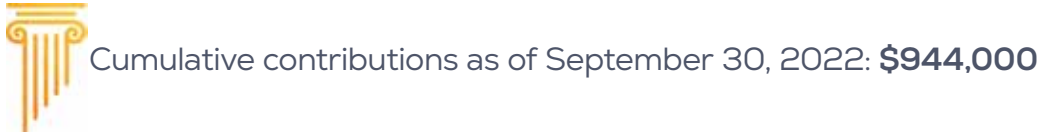


Shrine of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Fund (since inauguration of this Fund)



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'Reading groups' enrich annual ABS conference

Bahá'í World News Service; posted September 18, 2022 on news.bahai.org

Ottawa, Canada: The Association for Bahá'í Studies (ABS) recently held its 46th annual conference, bringing together over 1,000 people from over 30 countries. The conference, which was once again held online this year, enabled participants to reflect on their efforts to contribute insights from the Bahá'í teachings to various areas of thought and discourses essential to the progress of humanity.

Presentations and interactive sessions during this year's three-day gathering were particularly enriched by discussions in a growing number of collaborative initiatives, including "reading groups," that meet throughout the year and are each focused on a topic such as education, economics, climate change, dynamics of social change, the harmony of science and religion, justice and reconciliation, law, media, public health, and urban planning.

Todd Smith, the secretary of the ABS executive committee, says: "These groups—some discipline-specific and some multi-disciplinary—open opportunities for people to explore the deeper questions and concerns in their fields in light of spiritual principles, seeking new insights into the needs of humanity at this time."

The reading groups were born out of a question before the ABS about how the principle of consultation can be applied in various contexts to facilitate the generation of knowledge. Selvi Adaikkalam Zabihi, who helps coordinate collaborative initiatives for ABS, says: "The Association is learning practically about Bahá'u'lláh's statement that *'the maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.'*"

Ms. Adaikkalam Zabihi explains that new reading groups form when people are inspired to undertake a focused exploration of a discourse related to their field.

Eric Farr, who also assists with coordinating collaborative initiatives, says that the "groups typically identify an initial reading list of relevant literature, which can be expanded and refined over time. As participants of a group review these materials together, they try to understand the underlying assumptions, central concepts, and highest aspirations within a discourse that have shaped thought and practice in their fields, correlating them with the Bahá'í teachings."

Ms. Adaikkalam Zabihi adds: "The growing experience in Bahá'í community-building initiatives and social action, as well as the essential Bahá'í teachings and principles, also shed light on these questions."

The Association is learning that the relationship between the conference and these small group settings form a virtuous circle: the more dynamic the discussions at an annual conference, the more reading groups are enriched and the more new groups are formed—the more insights there are to inform presentations and forums at future conferences.

Dr. Smith says: "Many of the presentations in this year's program were the fruit of collective learning initiatives, such as reading groups or thematic seminars, that took place in the months between the 2021 and 2022 conferences. The program was further enhanced by the contributions of presenters engaged in other academic and professional endeavors."

Presentations and supplementary materials from this year's conference program, along with an archive of presentations from previous years are now available at the website of the Association for Bahá'í Studies. ■

ON THE WEB

Selected conference sessions

Streaming video and summaries of a keynote talk by Firaydoun Javaheri, former Universal House of Justice member, as well as various presentations: www.bahaistudies.ca/event/2022

Building an alternative, equitable education system

ABS presentation shares author June Thomas' learning from researching the book *Struggling to Learn: An Intimate History of School Desegregation in South Carolina*: link.bahai.us/1008

A deeper understanding



Online course underscores role of Persian Americans in building race unity

By Leslie Farrell

Bahá'ís know the importance of working to eliminate racism. It's a prerequisite for establishing the oneness of humanity, a mandate of the Faith's teachings.

However, for some immigrant populations, understanding the systemic nature of racism in the United States is difficult terrain to navigate. For this reason the Wilmette Institute, in consultation with the Regional Bahá'í Council of the Northwestern States, created an online course on the Bahá'í teachings about racism and race relations that is designed for Persian Americans, a significant immigrant population among U.S. Bahá'ís.

In 2020, when the Wilmette Institute first offered the online course *Anti-Black Racism in the U.S. and Building a Unified Society*, members of the Northwest Council took the course. They then encouraged Bahá'ís in their region to enroll the next time it was offered.

Few Persian Americans signed up for the class, it turned out. Some acknowledge thinking it didn't apply to them. "I always thought I had no prejudices to any groups. I was raised in a Bahá'í family, with Bahá'í principles," says Naz Parsiani, who immigrated to this country in 1978 at age 16.

Adds Chitra Golestani, one of the new course's creators, "Some Persian friends thought that because they are followers of Bahá'u'lláh, they don't have to worry about racial prejudice."

Understanding this challenge, the Wilmette Institute developed a class in the

Persian language: *Race Unity: The Role of Persian Americans*. Response to the class was eye-opening and inspiring.

"The course opens up an exploration of how racism is in the fabric of our country and what we can do about it," Golestani says. "As stated in the July 22, 2020

message of the Universal House of Justice, we need to dedicate our lives not only to rooting out racism, but supplanting it with true friendships that contribute to 'the establishment of just relationships among individuals, communities, and institutions of society.'"

Parsiani enrolled in the class because she'd been upset about the killings of Black people reported in the news and wanted to understand more about the challenging issue of racism. "As a result of taking this class, it opened my eyes to be more aware of my own faults. It widened my perspectives to know what racism is about."

Before taking the class, "I didn't even know the history of slavery in the United States," Parsiani says. "When I took the class, I became more aware. I learned it's not enough to take the course; I need to continue educating and reflecting, to change not just my thoughts, but my heart and my actions," she says. "I'm so glad I took the class."

This virtual weekly class, underway this fall, is structured so that all the participants begin each class time together, break out into smaller sessions for discussion, then come back for reflection. Sessions are dynamic with videos, podcasts and reading materials.

"I think educating ourselves about the true nature of racism in this country is critical," says Arta Monjazebe, one of the course instructors. "The disease of racism affects every aspect of American life and afflicts our Bahá'í communities as well. If we do not understand the true history and nature of this disease we will be powerless to protect ourselves and our communities from its pernicious influence."

Hoda Hosseini says she has for decades studied and opposed racism, an issue that deeply troubles her. Yet she still gained much

from the Wilmette Institute course, and she has volunteered as a teacher's assistant for this fall's session.

"There's anti-Blackness in Iran and there's anti-Blackness in America, and I have to commit to weed out those inherited tendencies as well as those subconscious feelings and attitudes of superiority on a moment-to-moment basis," she says. "Anti-Black racism is real; it is a global problem, but first I have to work on myself, be brutally honest and constantly check myself. It's a constant battle within, to bring myself to account every day and try to do better."

In these efforts, Hosseini feels the biggest blessings flow from her many long-lasting, intimate friendships with Black Bahá'í friends. Listening to examples of their daily struggles fuels her commitment to address the "double crusade" in Shoghi Effendi's words, "first to regenerate the inward life of their own community, and next to assail the long-standing evils that have entrenched themselves in the life of their nation."

Hosseini says some Bahá'í immigrants from Iran believe that the challenges experienced by Black Americans are exaggerated because they feel they have faced similar problems of religious oppression back home and they "don't complain and get angry." She says, "They don't understand the extreme circumstances and trauma brought on by the legacy of chattel slavery and the continued anti-Blackness and institutionalized racism Black Americans deal with every day from cradle to grave, generation after generation."

Hosseini says there is also the view on occasion that racism "has gone on for 400 years; I had nothing to do with it. But we can't hide behind 'Oh, I'm just an immigrant, I didn't create this problem.' We can't say 'Black [people] exaggerate; things are much better now' or blame them and say it's their problem. It's actually our problem!" she says.

"We are the ones asked to first make a supreme effort to abandon our racial prejudice towards Black [people] and promote racial justice and unity before we have the expectation of the corresponding effort of our Black brothers and sisters."

Finding an example in the Master's actions, she says, "When 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited [North America in 1912], He knew what side He was on. He was on the side of justice. He wasn't apathetic. He was



Bahá'í World News Service image

courageous. He was intentional in his behavior, attitude, language and actions. He really did notice, see, understand and empathize with the plight of Black Americans," she says. "He even encouraged intermarriage ... when it was even against the law in 26 states for Blacks and whites to marry. Now that was impressive and revolutionary over a hundred years ago! He unapologetically and fearlessly carried the bright torch of the oneness of humanity to the heart of all Americans."

Golestani says that in the class, "we explore our prejudices that every human being has and look at how the Revelation can help us become promoters of race unity. Being protagonists of race unity in general is great, but it's not specific enough. How are we protagonists of race unity? Through community building at the grassroots level." This process, she notes, makes protagonists out of all its participants through study, consultation, action and reflection.

Says Hosseini, "These courses are eye opening and once you wake up, you do not want to go back in the cave." Some people tell her not to worry about racism because it will go away eventually. But she feels strongly that we must do something about it—not just rest and wait.

"Black Americans don't want us to feel sorry for them or patronize them; they want us to be accountable, to acknowledge the privilege our skin color affords us and they want to see what whites and others are doing to heal this mutating cancer of racism," she says. "We need to look at ourselves. What do we need to do to encourage more Black people to be attracted to and enter the Faith? We are trying to build a diverse community to allow everyone to bring their gifts to the table without us raising our eyebrows insisting that they assimilate into what we impose as the 'right' Bahá'í culture."

Parsiani says she has learned to be aware, to develop relationships and to speak up when she hears derogatory conversation about others.

Another thing she's learned is that true friendships with people of other races are crucial. "I need to seek relationships with people of all colors," she says, explaining that she is starting with her neighbors. "My goal is now to build on our relationship, to make more intimate relationships with people of color, to feel like they are our brothers and sisters and really act on it."

Many participants and facilitators in the course have arisen to put knowledge into practice as captured in this news article on the Wilmette Institute website: [wilmetteinstitute.org/report-addressing-anti-black-racism](https://www.wilmetteinstitute.org/report-addressing-anti-black-racism)



Naz Parsiani



Hoda Hosseini



Azita Moallem

"I learned to have open and honest conversations with my own family, when we sit at the dinner table, to talk about injustices I see," says Parsiani, a real estate agent. She's been asked by clients who have seen Black residents if a neighborhood is safe. "Now I try not to be silent. I have grandchildren now; it's important to raise children and grandchildren to be mindful. There are so many books about racism and I never before thought about looking for books on the topic to teach my grandchildren. If we start with our children, it makes a big difference."

"In our teaching efforts, we often talk about the oneness of mankind as a pivotal principle of the Bahá'í Faith," says Farhad Sabetan, another course instructor. "However, simply stating this principle does little to demonstrate our deep desire to make it a viable reality. Striving to unite races and eliminate racial prejudice is, without a doubt, a concrete step toward that ideal we all cherish and believe."

Azita Moallem, another course instructor, wants participants to learn the unique history of Black people in America. Reflecting especially on the atrocities suffered in enslavement—separation from children, physical and sexual abuse, even murder—she asks if one puts oneself in that place, "how would you feel?"

Every night for a month, Moallem emailed historical facts about Black women in American history to members of her Bahá'í community in Oregon. A Black community member used that information to create a quiz game for Ayyám-i-Há. Moallem was moved to tears on seeing that participants knew the answers. She knew her emails had made a difference.

Moallem had heard Persian-Americans say their English was too broken to be able to make friends with non-Persian speakers. So she decided to teach English each weekday on Zoom, free for whoever wanted to learn. "Every morning we get together because if you learn

English, you'll want to talk to people. I found libraries that teach English and told people 'don't be shy; try to get out of your comfort zone.'" She also encouraged people to volunteer at Big Brothers Big Sisters, to spend a few hours a week with a child.

A lot of people in the class are considering teaching their grandchildren the class material, Moallem says. "This is important because we don't know if they will learn this in school." Class participants have told her that they have developed action plans they never thought they would create, she says.

The Wilmette Institute offers a number of classes on the topic of racism. Future course offerings may be found at [wilmetteinstitute.org/community-learning-courses/](https://www.wilmetteinstitute.org/community-learning-courses/)—including upcoming sessions of *Anti-Black Racism in the U.S.* and *Building a Unified Society* (tentatively scheduled for February 2023) and *Race Unity: The Role of Persian Americans* (tentatively scheduled for September 2023). ■

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—Bayan B., age 11

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—Marisa K., age 12

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—Jennifer Hampton, children's class teacher and coordinator, Tennessee Bahá'í School



Award-Winning Content for Kids



Brilliant Star Online, our interactive website, won a 2022 Best of Class Award from The Religion Communicators Council (RCC). Our 2021 print issues won a Best of Category Award (Vol. 51, No. 2-5). C. Aaron Kreader's "Transforming Our Spirits" cover art won an Award of Excellence.

Brilliant Star's 2019 issues (Vol. 50, No. 1-4) and *Brilliant Star Online* both won the prestigious Mom's Choice Gold Award, which is globally recognized for establishing the benchmark of excellence in family-friendly materials. The program evaluates thousands of entries from over 55 countries.

Check out the *Brilliant Star Treasure Box* on page 34!

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Summer sees Bahá'ís involved in racial equity initiatives across U.S.

For decades, U.S. Bahá'ís have held summer events inviting the public to celebrate the oneness of humanity, a central teaching of the Bahá'í Faith, through the ideal of amity and equity among races. In 1957, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States established the second Sunday of June as Race Amity Day, sometimes celebrated as Race Unity Day. Since then, Bahá'í communities have chosen that date or others in summer for countless picnics, prayer gatherings, service efforts and similar activities promoting racial harmony and justice. Here are a few examples from this year:

Philomath, Oregon: New historical marker honors Black pioneer family

Some 150 people from across Oregon witnessed the July 23 dedication of a state historical marker in Philomath honoring Reuben and Mary Jane Shipley, Black pioneers to the West in the 1850s.

The project to erect the marker in Newton Creek Park, recognizing the Shipleys for their service to the town, was begun several years earlier by Bahá'ís in near-by Corvallis. The Bahá'ís took inspiration from a principle put forward by the National Center for Race Amity: that a key step toward healing the many wounds of racism is to honor and celebrate the accomplishments of Black heroes.

At the dedication event, the Bahá'ís of Philomath offered hospitality and distributed 100 roses with this text attached: “The betterment of the world can be accomplished through pure and goodly deeds ... —Bahá'í Writings. The Bahá'í community is grateful for Reuben Shipley’s contributions, which have made our community a better place.”

As speakers at the event, Roger Blaine of the Corvallis Bahá'í community joined Philomath’s current and former mayors, Chas Jones and Eric Niemann, as well as Jessica Andrade of its City Council; Alex Johnson II, mayor of Albany and president of the Oregon League of Black Cities; Zachary Stocks, executive director of Oregon Black Pioneers; and Jason Dorsette, president of the Linn-Benton chapter of NAACP.

After Blaine filed the state application for the marker in 2015, the Bahá'ís of Corvallis obtained two significant grants, worked with Philomath’s City Council and officials to determine a site, coordinated with the Oregon Black Pioneers on the historical content, and obtained consent for a marker from the Oregon Travel Information Council.

Oregon history has bleak elements that have come to light in recent years, especially the notorious Black Exclusion Laws enacted as early as the 1840s that at various times restricted Black people from taking up permanent residency, owning property or making contracts. The last Exclusion Law was not repealed until 1926.

Oregon’s population is still under 2 percent Black, even as some localities including Corvallis take steps to recognize the historic contributions of African Americans.

The story of the Shipleys is recounted from 1853, when Reuben Shipley, an enslaved man in Kentucky, agreed to drive the family of Robert Shipley, his then-owner, on the 2,000-mile trek to Oregon Territory. In return Reuben was freed from enslavement, and he went on to marry Mary Jane Holmes. They raised a family and owned and farmed more than 100 acres of land (acquired after the earliest Exclusion Law was rescinded) in what was then the small town of Plymouth.

In 1861, Reuben Shipley deeded two acres of his land to create Mount Union Cemetery in what is now Philomath, on the condition that both Black and white persons could be buried there.

In his remarks at the July 2022 dedication, Blaine of the Bahá'í community said, “From its beginning, the Bahá'í Faith has had three distinguishing characteristics. The first of these is holding fast to the oneness of humankind—that we’re all equal, regardless of skin color, gender and religion. The second is collaboration with others of goodwill to create a better community. And third is personal service to others.

“The Shipley marker that we’re dedicating today, on

the 150th anniversary of Reuben Shipley’s passing, demonstrates all three of these characteristics,” he added.

A report prepared afterward by Corvallis’ Spiritual Assembly notes, “This event clearly illustrated what can happen when Bahá'ís are involved in service to their towns and cities, collaborate with like-minded organizations, advocate for social and racial justice, and work together in a spirit of service in the communities where they live and work.”



Zachary Stocks, executive director of Oregon Black Pioneers, cuts the ribbon on the Shipley Family Marker at Newton Creek Park on July 23 in Philomath, Oregon. Photo by Logan Hannigan-Downs/Mid-Valley Media

[Continued on page 28](#) →



New Arrivals



◀ Bahá'í Wall Calendar 180 B.E.

A 15-month wall calendar for 180 B.E., made in collaboration with Nineteen Months (nineteenmonths.com). Covers January 2023 until March 2024. Each page contains a vivid photograph taken by Bahá'í photographers living in or visiting places all over the world.

[Wall Calendar \\$4.95 \(BWC180\)](#)

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◀ Bahá'í Datebook 180 B.E.

A pocket-size calendar ranging from January 2023 until March 2024.

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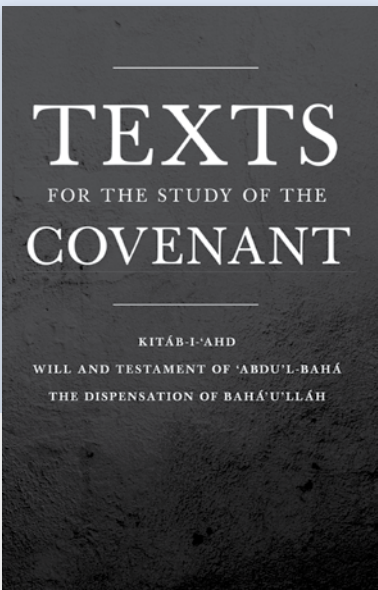
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Texts for the Study of the Covenant

A small volume containing the Kitáb-i-‘Ahd of Bahá’u’lláh, the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and *The Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh* by Shoghi Effendi. A wonderful resource to aid those who wish to deepen their understanding of the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh.

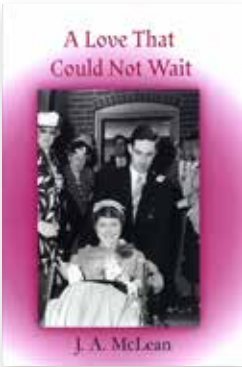
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A Love that Could Not Wait

By J. A. McLean

The remarkable story of Knights of Bahá’u’lláh Catherine Heward Huxtable and Clifford Huxtable. At a college freshman dance, Cliff Huxtable spotted a lovely young lady sitting across the room. Approaching her to ask for a dance, he saw to his dismay that she sat in a wheelchair. Against all odds, she and Cliff would marry and travel the world during the beloved Guardian’s Ten Year Crusade.

[eBook – ePub \\$4.99 \(LCNWEP\)](#)

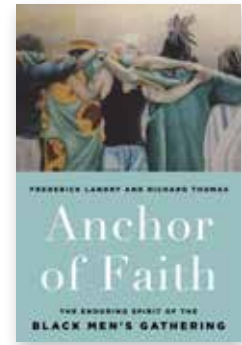


Strive

Prayers and Meditations for Youth

A new book of prayers and meditative passages designed especially for junior youth and youth. The period of adolescence is a potent time of change, and this compilation aims to support youth to make time for prayer, meditation and reflection. Organized thematically around topics such as trust in God, joy, difficulties, justice, service and more.

[eBook – ePub \\$3.99 \(SPMYEP\)](#)



Anchor of Faith

The Enduring Spirit of the Black Men’s Gathering

By Richard W. Thomas, Frederick Landry

Anchor of Faith gives us a glimpse of the vibrant spirit of the Gathering; details its history, evolution and influence; and brings to light the countless avenues of service pursued by its participants both at home and across the globe.

[eBook – ePub \\$5.99 \(AFESep\)](#)



Food, Farmer, and Community

Agriculture and the Reconstruction of the World

By Winnona Merritt

Drawing on foundational spiritual concepts, quotations from the sacred and authoritative texts of the Faith, as well as statements and documents from various Bahá’í institutions and agencies, this comprehensive compilation explores practical ideas for the transformation of food systems. A valuable resource for those

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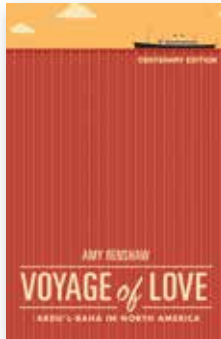
The Nightingale’s Song

By Andrea Torrey Balsara

Throughout one magical night, a child dreams of a world in which diversity is cherished, and the beauty of every child celebrated. This poetic children’s book is filled with lovely illustrations that capture the beauty of children and the natural world, and was awarded Silver in the 2018

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Voyage of Love

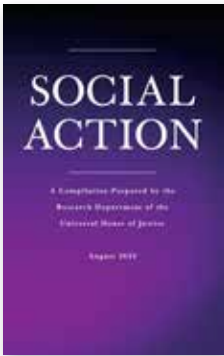
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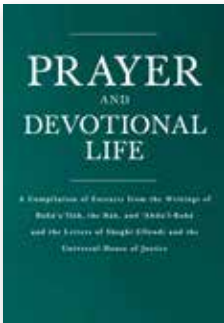
Social Action

By the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice

The compilation contains 253 extracts drawn from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, the Writings and Utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the writings and letters of Shoghi Effendi, and the messages of the Universal House of Justice and letters written on its behalf, several of which appear in English translation for the first time.

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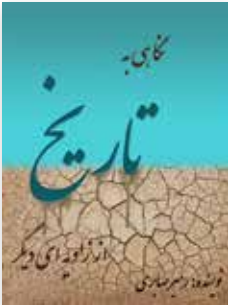
Prayer and Devotional Life

By the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice

The compilation contains extracts from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, the Báb, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the letters of Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice on a number of related topics.

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Negahi Be Tarikh Az Zaviyehe Digar (Coming soon)

To Look at History from a Different Perspective

This book takes the reader through a historical journey of Iran. The book aids the reader to gain full familiarity with the period during which the Báb declared His mission and examines the subsequent political shift in Iran. The book also dis-

cusses the issuing of two very important epistles from the pen of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in relation to politics and civilization.

Hardcover \$45.00 (PNBT)



Haft Dokhtaran (Coming soon)

The Seven Maidens

This is a narrative about the martyrdom of the author’s sister, Simin Saberi, who was martyred alongside six other girls and three other women in Shiraz in 1983. The book recounts the subsequent rise of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the calamities that befell the Bahá’ís of Iran, starting from the early unrest in 1978

until September of 2016. The book also examines the efforts made by the Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre.

Hardcover \$50.00 (PHD)



Khaterateh Mirza Reyhan Reyhani (Coming soon)

Memories of Mírzá Reyhan Reyhani

This book is about a child by the name of Reuben, who was born to a Jewish family in Kashan, Iran. During his youth Reuben became a believer in the Bahá’í Faith and received the title “Mírzá” from Bahá’u’lláh and the name “Reyhan” from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. This book

contains Mírzá Reyhan’s memoirs which describe the persecution and abuse of the Bábí and Bahá’í populations, plus his memories of the early Bahá’ís of his time.

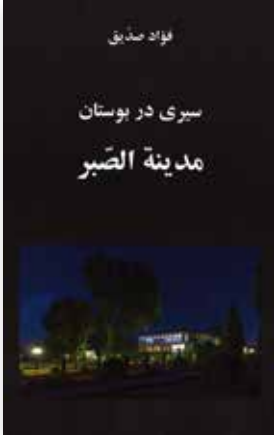
Hardcover \$40.00 (PMMRR)



Payk-i-Rastan

The book contains the texts of more than 300 Tablets by the Central Figures of the Faith addressed to the Hands of the Cause Ismu’lláh Asdaq and Ibn-i-Asdaq (and members of their households), as well as photos, biographies, and other materials. Now back in print.

Hardcover \$5.00 (PPIR)



Seyri Dar Bustan-i Madinatus-Sabr

By Foad Seddigh

Explanation of a letter that Bahá’u’lláh revealed on the first day of Ridván.

[Hardcover \\$39.00 \(PSDB\)](#)

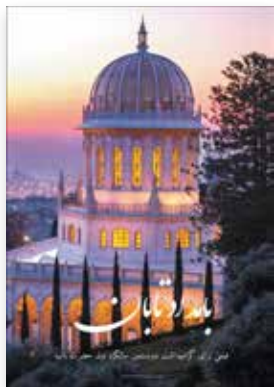


Ayyam-i-Mutabarrikiy-i-Bahá’í

Days of Remembrance

Selections from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh for Bahá’í Holy Days.

[Hardcover \\$20.00 \(PAMB\)](#)



Bamdad e Taban

Dawn of the Light (DVD)

A feature film commissioned by the Universal House of Justice for the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Báb. It follows the personal search for truth and meaning undertaken by eight people from different parts of the world.

[DVD \\$5.00 \(PDLDVD\)](#)



Sar Mashgh'i Aalamiyan

Exemplar (DVD)

Commissioned by the Universal House of Justice to mark the centenary commemoration of the passing of the Master, *Exemplar* is a remarkable film that follows the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the profound effect He had on people both past and present.

[DVD \\$5.00 \(PEDVD\)](#)

Race amity and equity —————> [Continued from page 24](#)

**Loudoun County, Virginia:
A call to allyship**

A call to action issued at a program of the Loudoun County NAACP chapter galvanized Bahá’ís to organize the Race Amity Day program held June 12 in the Northern Virginia Bahá’í Center.

Key talks were offered by Anthony Vance, director of the U.S. Bahá’í Office of Public Affairs, and Jan Wilson, facilitator of the course “The Power of Allyship,” offered through the NAACP. The program also included officials and diversity/inclusion advisers for the local government and the Chamber of Commerce.

Vance’s remarks noted the century-long history of Bahá’í community outreaches to promote interracial friendship and social cooperation, and offered a note of hope toward those aims.

As troubled and divided as current society appears to be, “it is important to keep in mind that much racial progress has actually been made even though it has been at times partially reversed,” he was quoted as saying in the *Loudoun Now* newspaper. Much of that progress, Vance added, has resulted from collaborations that combine the work of white advocates for justice with efforts by people of color.

That kind of support is central to “The Power of Allyship,” and program emcee Mitchell Jacobson said the Bahá’í community was inspired months earlier to plan this event through Wilson’s call to action while she was facilitating that course.

Wilson said she sees much work ahead in establishing racial justice, but also a lot of opportunity. “And a minority can’t get there [alone] so we need allies to change hearts and minds and law and norms and language. We need everyone working together to do that,” she said. “And diversity makes that work stronger.”

Another highlight was the reading of a resolution of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors designating June 12 as a Day of Racial Amity and Reconciliation. Among other things it mentions the mission of the National Center for Race Amity and praises the Northern Virginia Bahá’í Center for “activities and outreach consistent with the central Bahá’í theme that humanity is one.”



Koran Saines (at lectern), member of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, reads a proclamation naming the second Sunday of June as a Day of Racial Amity and Reconciliation, during a June 12 program at the Northern Virginia Bahá’í Center. Photo by Saman Refaee

**Montclair, New Jersey:
Young people add dramatic flair**

Montclair High School students offered dramatic readings from a wide array of thinkers and doers in the area of racial reconciliation and justice during a warmly received Race Amity Day program on June 12 at the Montclair History Center.

An online article on the *Montclair Local* website called it “a celebration of cooperation and friendship between



Montclair High School students offer readings on racial justice by thought leaders and from Bahá’í writings. Photo by Debra David, MHC Board of Trustees

people of different races and cultures. ... Montclair’s government has recognized the second Sunday of June as Race Amity Day since 2019.” The event also featured murals inspired by the theme of race amity and an opportunity for participants to donate canned goods for a local food pantry.

The high schoolers’ dramatic readings drew on works by poets including Amanda Gorman; public figures as diverse as Eleanor Roosevelt, Irish President Michael Higgins and activists Bayard Rustin and Malala Yousafzai; and religious leaders including the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rabbi Abraham Heschel and the Dalai Lama; as well as selections from Bahá’í sacred writings.

The 2021 Race Amity Day event had inspired the formation of the

Montclair Race Amity Initiative, a coalition of religious and civic groups that meets monthly to forge friendships and to undertake collaborative and service projects. Partly as a result, the planning team for the 2022 gathering included representatives of the Montclair History Center; members of varied faith communities; and Montclair High School students.

**Douglasville, Georgia:
Focused conversation on unconscious bias**

The Douglas County Chamber of Commerce is conducting strategic initiatives to develop business leadership with a focus on equity, diversity and inclusivity. And when an official helping guide those initiatives attended a bookstore reading of the book *Longing: Stories of Racial Healing*, she invited the authors, Phyllis and Gene Unterschuetz, to speak at a June 23 dinner and discussion gathering held by the Chamber. The Unterschuetzes, both Bahá’ís, have much experience facilitating related workshops.

Titled “Understanding the Impact of Unconscious Bias,” the gathering was limited to 25 to facilitate conversation. “The majority of attendees were

African American,” recounts Phyllis Unterschuetz. “The discussion was intimate and honest, with many people sharing stories of their own experiences with racism.”

Participants included a university president and people in leadership positions at a hospital and other companies and organizations, she adds. Conversations have already continued with people they met there.

The Unterschuetzes, who are both white, co-wrote the book as an account of their “ten-year journey that forced them to reconsider their comfortable notions about race as they forged new relationships with people of African descent,” according to a promotion by Bahá’í Publishing. As part of racial healing, Bahá’í teachings especially encourage white people to root out their inherent and subconscious sense of superiority.

At the end of the evening, the Chamber of Commerce purchased 20 copies of the book and distributed them as gifts. “We are both grateful for this wonderful opportunity to share our personal experiences, as well as the Bahá’í teachings about race, with this group of community leaders,” Phyllis Unterschuetz says. ■

Advocacy by the National Center for Race Amity

In recent years the National Center for Race Amity (NCRA), an organization inspired by the Bahá’í teachings and supported in part by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, has added impetus to the celebration of Race Amity Day. Through its efforts, the day has been officially proclaimed in the U.S. Senate and the Massachusetts Legislature, and associated efforts have taken place in other states.

On its website the NCRA posts a list of ideas for Race Amity Day observances as well as an overview of its other initiatives contributing to discourse on the “other tradition” of close collaboration, amity and love among diverse people (see raceamity.org for details):

- Race Amity Conferences each year, facilitating conversations, panels and workshops on a spectrum of topics. **The next conference, to be held online, is scheduled for Nov. 17–19.**
- Race Amity Leadership Academy for high school students.
- The public television documentary series *American Stories: Race Amity and the Other Tradition*, which has continued to be broadcast in various localities through this summer.

ON THE WEB

The Bud Billiken Parade in Chicago, sponsored by the Defender Charities, is one the largest parades in the United States. The roots of this annual back-to-school event are closely tied to the Bahá’í Faith. The parade was founded in 1929 by Bahá’ís: *Chicago Defender* newspaper founder and publisher Robert Sengstacke Abbott and Editor David Kellum. They started the parade to promote unity and to celebrate education for the newsboys who sold the paper.

During festivities leading to the Aug. 13, 2022, parade, the “royal court,” students who were honored based on their submitted essays, toured the Bahá’í House of Worship (photos below) to learn about the parade’s origins. Photos by Eddie Quinones



Photo below: Chicago-area Bahá’ís marched in the parade and hosted an “electronic float.” Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot (center) visited with them en route. Photo courtesy of the Bahá’ís of Chicago

More details on these events: link.bahai.us/1009



her friends, it became clear through frequent conversations that Black Bahá'í youth sincerely needed a space to learn and heal.

Amani Lawrence explains his motivation for planning the seminar: "I thought that IBBY could be a source of excitement for Black youth, myself included, and this excitement would be used for arising to serve the Cause, in whatever capacity that may be."

Notes Taylor, "The main reason we created this seminar was to have a place for us to form friendships.

"A lot of us have participated in Bahá'í youth activities throughout our lives but we are so often the only Black youth in those spaces," she says. "That is just as isolating and disconnecting as being the only Bahá'í your age in your community.

"This weekend was life-changing," Taylor says. "The people I've met here are undoubtedly my friends for life."

Because this conference was planned by youth for youth, social opportunities

doesn't work for youth, says Mehretab. "We didn't want to be tired throughout the day but we knew our socializing at night was important. It also allowed us to be creative. Youth are familiar with the conversations youth are having and it allowed us to design [relevant] workshops."

They talked about the pressures of being a Black youth both within and outside the Faith and the important obligations to the Cause of God for this day and age. Many conversations were characterized by a unique understanding of the special message of love and peace that Bahá'u'lláh offers to a spiritually afflicted society.

Some of the most impactful workshops included "Foundations for a Fortress of Well-being" and "Self Love is Not Selfish Love." The latter was a youth-led discussion about the importance of rest and self-care in a troubled society with unique social stressors for those of African descent.

The weekend began with all 35 youths gathering Friday at the National Museum of African American History and Culture, to explore and learn precious parts of their history in a profound and interactive manner. "As a precursor to the rest of the weekend it was important to see what Black people have contributed to this country's progress," says Emilia Mehretab. "And as an artist myself I hadn't been exposed to many Black artists in that kind of space of grandeur. It was such a rare and inspiring thing."

That evening featured a welcome dinner with prayers and introductions of all the youths, facilitators, volunteers and Local Spiritual Assembly members. The night closed with the reading of a love letter written by the Assembly to the youths in attendance.

Saturday workshops that day included topics such as "Demonstration of Heart" led by Ed Rice, a personal and touching tribute to the inspiring life of

the Báb; "Keeping it Real as a Black Bahá'í" led by Kelsey Taylor, an inside look at the necessary qualities of heart and mind as professionals; and "The Growth of the Faith amongst the Dark-Skinned People of the World" by Tod Ewing, a dynamic presentation on the brilliant souls at the forefront of sharing Bahá'í community-building strategies throughout Asia, Africa and the Pacific during various Plans throughout the years.

Hiyab Haile of Virginia found great value in that day's "Self Love" conversation. "As Bahá'ís, we're taught to be of service to the world," she says. "It's pretty important to focus on ourselves too because resting helps with our goals. It shouldn't be seen as a bad thing."

Saturday night included a Persian dinner, a salsa dancing lesson and karaoke.

Early Sunday, the "Foundations for a Fortress of Well-being" workshop sparked discussions on relationships and marriage. Infused with the Faith's principle of harmony of science and religion, married couple Angela and Karim Ewing-Boyd conducted an intellectually empowering workshop that shared insights from Angela's background in therapy and Karim's work as a school administrator. Participants left with an appreciation for marriage as a spiritual institution as well as a personal journey that anyone can prepare for through study of both the Bahá'í Writings and psychology.



A candid moment during evening festivities. Photo courtesy of Kayla Taylor

Following a post-lunch group photo, Ruha Benjamin, an African American studies professor at Princeton University, led a final workshop: "Viral Justice: How to Grow the World We Want." Participants used theater arts and the study of various passages from the Bahá'í Writings and influential Black authors to explore ideas around power and the true nature of justice. The day ended with a cookout where participants grilled burgers and hot dogs for one another.

"If there's one thing I think I've learned this weekend is that there is no formula of how I'm supposed to give service," says Haile. "Someone can take a different path to give service. I don't have to take that exact path."

Haile, an urban planning master's student at George Washington University plans to use her studies to "right the wrongs of the past" and make "a significant difference in the lives of disadvantaged communities." Haile was one of the many young people at IBBY who hope to exemplify 'Abdu'l-Bahá's guidance: "Work done in the spirit of service is the highest form of worship."

On the final evening the youth huddled together in warm conversation as love radiated throughout the room. Atlanta youth Ifeanyi Chuke Williams said he was walking away from the IBBY seminar "with a sense of peace and resolve" in his heart. It appeared that the aims of the seminar to help, heal and empower had been accomplished.

The seminar was also a healing space for adult presenters as well who were able to form bonds of loving mentorship to the youth present. "I realized this conference/meeting of hearts answered an internal healing prayer that I didn't even know I had asked of God," says Rice.

Fellow presenter and Spiritual Assembly representative Ewing could be heard throughout the seminar sharing encouraging messages and demonstrating a welcoming spirit for every downtrodden soul who comes across Bahá'u'lláh's life-giving teachings.

"During the first evening of the conference you could feel the excitement in the air," Ewing says, noting that any such gathering will find each participant somewhere on a continuum ranging between "pain and possibilities."

"Some of the individuals in that room would no doubt be struggling with some aspects of their life and though present could be in some level of pain," he says. "This could be pain related to race or just the pain that life provides during these very challenging times."

Ewing adds that others may be more in a place of joy in their lives and vibrating with a spirit of possibilities. "It was important that the gathering provide an atmosphere that could embrace both ends of the continuum."

As everyone prepared to leave the following Monday, the final devotions abounded with joyful and uplifting music along with a palpable spirit of touching reverence and just a little bit of melancholy. The hearts were clearly bonded together in love, devotion and a dedication to transform the world from a place of pain to joyful possibility for all people. ■

Papua New Guinea: Rising temple inspires public participation in weaving project

Bahá'í World News Service; posted Sept. 28, 2022, on news.bahai.org

Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea: Sitting on a hilltop in Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea (PNG), is the emerging Bahá'í House of Worship—a sacred structure that represents the union of devotion and service to society. This central theme, which underlies the purpose of all Bahá'í Houses of Worship, is inspiring residents in the area to assist with the development of the temple in that country, most recently with a weaving project.

Last week, people from nearby neighborhoods, drawing on their knowledge and skills, gathered at the temple site to weave aluminum strips into a traditional pattern that will adorn the interior walls of the central edifice. Weaving is an art form in PNG with which people interact daily, through items such as baskets created for special occasions, matts woven for family and friends, and other objects used in daily life.

The design of the temple dome and the interior weaving pattern are symbolic of unity and the coming together of people from diverse backgrounds. Yori Moigamu, a volunteer from the suburb of Hohola, says: "This House of Worship belongs to all of us. This is what motivates everyone here to work together."

Confucius Ikoirere, Secretary of the Bahá'í National Spiritual Assembly of PNG, explains that these sentiments are expressed by all people who visit the temple site to pray and offer service. "Once completed, the House of Worship will be open to anyone seeking solace and serenity. It will be a place for all people to reflect deeply on their lives, to think about how they can overcome challenges, and how they can serve their society." ■



The image on the left shows nearby residents assisting with the weaving of aluminum strips that will adorn the interior of the dome. The image on the right is a design rendering of the interior of the temple, featuring a pattern that represents the coming together of the many diverse people of PNG. Bahá'í World News Service photos

ON THE WEB

For a gallery of images illustrating the construction work on the PNG Temple, go to news.bahai.org/story/1617/

More news of activity involving Bahá'ís and Bahá'í-inspired projects around the world is posted regularly on the Bahá'í World News Service: news.bahai.org

Abiding in God's law

Bahá'í guidance relevant to participating in social media

Q: What do the Bahá'í Writings tell us regarding freedom of expression and its limitations?

A: From a Bahá'í point of view, the exercise of freedom of speech must necessarily be disciplined by a profound appreciation of both the positive and negative dimensions of freedom, on the one hand, and of speech, on the other.

Bahá'u'lláh warns us that *“the tongue is a smoldering fire, and excess of speech a deadly poison.”* *“Material fire consumeth the body,”* He says in elaborating the point, *“whereas the fire of the tongue devoureth both heart and soul. The force of the former lasteth but for a time, whilst the effects of the latter endureth a century.”* In tracing the framework of free speech, He again advises *“moderation.”* *“Human utterance is an essence which aspireth to exert its influence and needeth moderation,”* He states, adding, *“As to its influence, this is conditional upon refinement which in turn is dependent upon hearts which are detached and pure. As to its moderation, this hath to be combined with tact and wisdom as prescribed in the Holy Scriptures and Tablets.”*

Also relevant to what is said, and how, is when it is said. For speech, as for so many other things, there is a season. Bahá'u'lláh reinforces this understanding by drawing attention to the maxim that *“Not everything that a man knoweth can be disclosed, nor can everything that he can disclose be regarded as timely, nor can every timely utterance be considered as suited to the capacity of those who hear it.”*

Speech is a powerful phenomenon. Its freedom is both to be extolled and feared. It calls for an acute exercise of judgment, since both the limitation of speech and the excess of it can lead to dire consequences. Thus there exist in the system of Bahá'u'lláh checks and balances necessary to the beneficial uses of this freedom in the

onward development of society. A careful examination of the principles of Bahá'í consultation and the formal and informal arrangements for employing them offer new insights into the dynamics of freedom of expression.

—Universal House of Justice, message of December 29, 1988, to the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in the United States of America

Q: What spiritual principles are we to bear in mind when participating in social media?

A: *Every word is endowed with a spirit, therefore the speaker or expounder should carefully deliver his words at the appropriate time and place, for the impression which each word maketh is clearly evident and perceptible. The Great Being saith: One word may be likened unto fire, another unto light, and the influence which both exert is manifest in the world. Therefore an enlightened man of wisdom should primarily speak with words as mild as milk, that the children of men may be nurtured and edified thereby and may attain the ultimate goal of human existence which is the station of true understanding and nobility. And likewise He saith: One word is like unto springtime causing the tender saplings of the rose-garden of knowledge to become verdant and flourishing, while another word is even as a deadly poison. It behooveth a prudent man of wisdom to speak with utmost leniency and forbearance so that the sweetness of his words may induce everyone to attain that which becometh man's station.*

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, Lawḥ-i-Maqṣúd

O ye the sincere loved ones of the Abhá Beauty! In these days the Cause of God, the world over, is fast growing in power and, day by day, is spreading further and further to the utmost bounds of the earth. ... It is incumbent upon the loved ones of God to exercise the greatest care and prudence in all

things, whether great or small, to take counsel together and unitedly resist the onslaught of the stirrers up of strife and the movers of mischief. They must endeavour to consort in a friendly spirit with everyone, must follow moderation in their conduct, must have respect and consideration one for another and show loving-kindness and tender regard to all the peoples of the world.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, no. 194

It will be apparent that the precepts the friends observe in the course of their general interactions with those around them must also characterize, sometimes even more scrupulously, their communication carried out via social media. These precepts include the prohibition on backbiting, the counsel to see the world with their own eyes and not through the eyes of others, the need to uphold the oneness of humanity and avoid a mind-set of “us” and “them”, and the principles of consultation and the necessary decorum associated with it.

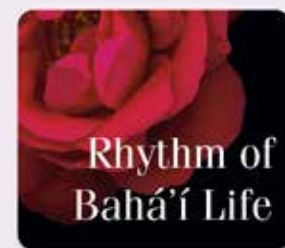
—letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, dated December 1, 2019

Q: What characteristics of the public discourse occurring on social media would we want to bear in mind when participating in online forums?

A: One conspicuous symptom of society's deepening malaise is the steady descent of public discourse into greater rancour and enmity, reflecting entrenched partisan points of view. A prevalent feature of such contemporary discourse is how political disagreements rapidly degenerate into invective and ridicule. However, what particularly differentiates the present age from those that preceded it is how so much of this discourse occurs in full view of the world. Social media and related communication tools tend to give the greatest exposure to all that is controversial, and the very same tools allow individuals, in an instant, to disseminate more widely whatever catches their attention and to register their support or opposition to various sentiments, whether explicitly or tacitly. The unparalleled ease with which a person can join in such public debate and the nature of the technology make

momentary lapses of judgement and incautious actions more likely and their residue more enduring.

This holds particular implications for Bahá'ís, who know well that the principles of their Faith require them to refrain from involvement in political controversies and conflicts of all kinds. *“Speak thou no word of politics”* was the counsel of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to one believer, adding, *“Except to speak well of them, make thou no mention of the earth's kings, and the worldly governments thereof.”* Shoghi Effendi warned against allowing our vision of the Cause to be clouded “by the stain and dust of worldly happenings, which, no matter how glittering and far-reaching in their immediate effects, are but the fleeting shadows of an imperfect world”. While the importance of keeping at a distance from all politically divisive issues is well known to the friends, their engagement with pressing social issues, motivated by a commendable and sincere wish to be of service to those around them, can present them with difficult situations.



179 B.E.

Holy Day and Feast observance dates change from year to year. In each case, the Bahá'í day begins at sunset on the earlier-listed conventional date.

Holy Day: Day of the Covenant

4 Qawl (sunset November 25 through sunset November 26, 2022). Bahá'ís are not required to suspend work on this day.

“‘Abdu’l-Bahá told the Bahá'ís that [the Anniversary of the Declaration of the Báb] was not, under any circumstances, to be celebrated as His day of birth. ... But as the Bahá'ís begged for a day to be celebrated as His, He gave them [a day in November], to be observed as the day of the appointment of the Centre of the Covenant...”

An unexpected development can turn an uncontroversial issue into one that divides people along partisan lines, and some of the same unhealthy modes of expression that are common to the political sphere can transfer into other areas of discourse. Especially in the uninhibited realm of social media, wrongs—both real and imagined—are quickly magnified, and a variety of feelings are easily stirred: righteous indignation perhaps, or a desire to promote one's point of view, or an eagerness to be seen as the source of new information. Much that is taken to be harmless, or even well-intentioned, is, on closer examination, serving to deepen social divides, fuel differences between opposing groups, and perpetuate disagreements, driving away possibilities for consensus and the search for solutions. If one person's contribution seems provocative or objectionable, reacting to it may have the effect of unwittingly strengthening and increasing the exposure of the original sentiment, and exacerbating matters. The followers of the Blessed Beauty must be

conscious and conscientious users of any technology they decide to utilize and must apply insight and spiritual discipline.

—Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, dated Dec. 1, 2019

Q: How might comments made on social media impact the friends in other countries?

A: One example among many areas in which the considerations set out above are relevant is the discussion on social media of matters pertaining to Iran. As will be readily appreciated, this is an area of particular sensitivity, and therefore the friends need to be especially on their guard. Rash statements made online could endanger the believers in that land or unwittingly provide the enemies of the Cause with the means to misrepresent the Bahá'ís. Observing strict caution in this respect is essential for the protection of the sorely tried community in Iran.

—Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, dated December 1, 2019 ■

Holy Day: Anniversary of the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

6 Qawl (sunset November 27 through sunset November 28, 2022); devotional gatherings are to be held at 1:00 a.m. November 28. Bahá'ís are not required to suspend work on this day.

“O God, my God! I call Thee, Thy Prophets and Thy Messengers, Thy Saints and Thy Holy Ones, to witness that I have declared conclusively Thy Proofs unto Thy loved ones and set forth clearly all things unto them, that they may watch over Thy Faith, guard Thy Straight Path and protect Thy Resplendent Law.”

—from the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Upcoming

Ayyám-i-Há (Intercalary Days), sunset Feb. 25–sunset March 1, 2023

Nineteen-Day Bahá'í Fast, March 2–20, 2023

Naw-Rúz (Bahá'í New Year B.E. 180), sunset March 20–sunset March 21, 2023

First days of Bahá'í months

Qudrat (Power), Nov. 3/4

Qawl (Speech), Nov. 22/23

Masá'il (Questions), Dec. 11/12

Sharaf (Honor), Dec. 30/31

Sultán (Sovereignty), Jan. 18/19

Mulk (Dominion), Feb. 6/7

Resources on the web

Through the Bahá'í community's increasing awareness of the Badi' calendar, as the Universal House of Justice has stated, “sacred moments are distinguished, humanity's place in time and space reimaged, and the rhythm of life recast.”

In the process of aligning one's life with the rhythm established by this calendar, a number of tools on the national community website can be useful:

- Letters from the National Spiritual Assembly to be shared with **employers or school officials**, explaining a request for excused absence for a Bahá'í Holy Day
- 50-year Badi' calendar charts, tracking the Gregorian calendar dates of **Holy Days and the first days of Bahá'í months** through 221 B.E. (the year that starts at Naw-Rúz in 2064).

Links to download these documents are at the top of the page after you log in to bahai.us/community/ with your Bahá'í Online Services Account (BOSA). ■

Brilliant Star

TREASURE BOX

CORE ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY

WINTER WARMTH

“Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship.” —Bahá’u’lláh

As winter approaches, there are plenty of reasons to spend time with loved ones. On November 26, Bahá’ís honor ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on the Day of the Covenant. On November 28, we commemorate the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Many also join family and friends for other celebrations, such as Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and the Chinese and Gregorian New Years. Whatever holy days and holidays you enjoy this season, here are some ideas to add fun to your next gathering.

COMMUNITY COLLAGE

On large posterboard, write a quote about friendship, unity, or joy. Gather paper with different textures and patterns, in colors that complement each other.

Everyone cuts out nature shapes, such as flowers and leaves. Work together to layer and arrange shapes into a collage around the quote.



HEART ART



Give everyone four wooden craft sticks. Glue together at the corners to form a square frame. From cardstock, everyone cuts out a heart that fits inside their frame. On the heart, they write a virtue that uplifts individuals and communities.

Decorate heart and frame with markers, stickers, buttons, etc. Glue a string loop on the back of the heart and frame for hanging.

ANIMAL MYSTERIES



For each player, write a different animal name on a sticky note. Place one sticky note on each person’s back, where they can’t see it.

Players mingle, view others’ animals, and ask each other yes or no questions, such as “Is it a mammal?” or “Does it live in the water?” Play until everyone has correctly guessed their animal.

HONEY OAT BARS

Mix 1 cup rolled oats, 1 cup flour, ½ tsp baking soda, ½ tsp salt, and ½ cup brown sugar together. Melt together ½ cup butter, 3 Tbsp honey, and 1 Tbsp water. Pour into oat mixture and stir. Add ¾ cup mix-ins, such as shredded coconut, chocolate chips, nuts, or dried cranberries.

Press mixture into a greased 11" x 7" pan. Bake at 325° for 20–25 minutes. Cool, cut, and share with friends.



La orientación ayuda a los futuros pioneros en la preparación espiritual y práctica

Por Joyce Litoff

El 24 de mayo de 2022, la Casa Universal de Justicia envió a los bahá’ís del mundo un mensaje renovando el llamado a los pioneros internacionales en el Plan de Nueve Años.

Luego, una carta del 19 de junio transmitió a nuestra Asamblea Espiritual Nacional la asignación para la comunidad bahá’í de los Estados Unidos: reunir al menos 52 pioneros de sus grupos avanzados para ser enviados a Alaska, Argelia, Armenia, Aruba, Belice, Bermudas, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dominica, Egipto, Estonia, Groenlandia, Japón, Letonia, Líbano, las Islas de Sotavento, Lituania, las Islas Marianas, México, Marruecos, Polonia, Arabia Saudita, Corea del Sur, Sudán y Túnez lo antes posible en la primera fase del Plan de Nueve Años.

En preparación para cumplir con estos ambiciosos objetivos, la primera sesión de orientación del nuevo Plan para pioneros de los Estados Unidos se llevó a cabo durante 9 días y medio en agosto en la Casa de Adoración Bahá’í en Wilmette, Illinois.

Veintitrés posibles pioneros se unieron a representantes de varias instituciones bahá’ís para sumergirse en la oración, el estudio y la consulta sobre las realidades, roles y responsabilidades que enfrenta una persona que elige servir a la Fe de esta manera inmersiva y que altera la vida.

También hicieron visitas diarias de campo en el área de Chicago y escucharon historias sobre las experiencias pioneras de otros. Cada día se centró en un tema en particular:

- **Pionerismo:** las inmensas bendiciones del servicio como pionero y las fuerzas espirituales que libera



Participantes del orientación para pioneros reúnen para un foto el 19 del agosto en las escaleras de la Casa de Adoración Bahá’í en Wilmette, Illinois. Foto por Kevin Trotter

- **Asistencia Divina:** la capacidad de enfrentar situaciones difíciles con madurez
- **Confianza en Dios:** una apreciación de la interacción de la crisis y la victoria
- **Desprendimiento y sacrificio:** un espíritu de sacrificio y un entendimiento de que el servicio como pionero requerirá sacrificio
- **Abnegación y humildad:** una actitud humilde de aprendizaje junto a los demás
- **Servicio:** adaptabilidad a diferentes contextos
- **Constancia y firmeza en la Alianza:** resiliencia
- **Amor y unidad:** una orientación hacia afuera
- **Alegría:** la capacidad de mantener una perspectiva positiva

El pionerismo, pasado y presente

“Aquellos que han abandonado su país por el propósito de enseñar nuestra Causa, a éstos los fortalecerá el Fiel Espíritu mediante su poder”, escribió Bahá’u’lláh. “Tal servicio es, en verdad, el príncipe de toda buena acción y el ornamento de toda obra meritoria”.

En el tiempo de la Bendita Belleza, los bahá’ís ya se estaban mudando a lugares como la India, Birmania e Indonesia para difundir la Fe. Algunos de ellos los eligió para ese propósito, y ‘Abdu’l-Bahá y Shoghi Effendi a menudo asignaban maestros de manera

similar a objetivos pioneros particulares.

“En tiempos pasados, la gente escribía al Guardián sobre su intención de ser pionero y él respondía ... ‘ve aquí’”, dice Ravi Starr, un posible pionero de Kansas City, Missouri, que asiste a la orientación.

“Ahora, mientras trabajamos para promover la madurez de la raza humana, es un poco más complicado, por lo que oramos y consultamos con las instituciones sobre los mejores próximos pasos”, dice Starr. “Confiamos en que los mejores próximos pasos se aclaren”.

“Nuestra comprensión del pionero ha avanzado”, dice Amelia Tyson, una participante de Atlanta. “Las necesidades de la comunidad a la que se muda el pionero son de consideración central.

“Vamos a un país o localidad, a formar parte de esa comunidad, a trabajar junto a otros. Por lo tanto, las instituciones combinan la experiencia y las habilidades de un individuo con las necesidades de la comunidad receptora. En cierto sentido, es como hacer partidos”, dice Tyson.

Otra diferencia importante, agrega, es que ahora tenemos el proceso del instituto y el plan de estudios ruhi, “que no tiene paralelo como instrumento para la exposición sistemática de un número ilimitado de almas a la visión de Bahá’u’lláh para la humanidad”. Y una vez reubicado en un pueblo



Writing by Katie Bishop • Art by Foad Ghorbani

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o vecindario, el pionero de hoy a menudo trabaja junto a residentes que ya están bien familiarizados con el instituto.

Visitas a vecindarios

Durante las visitas de campo diarias de la orientación, los posibles pioneros fueron enviados a varios vecindarios en el área de Chicago, donde adquirieron experiencia conociendo a los vecinos y comenzando conversaciones.

“Mi equipo estaba principalmente en el área de West Ridge de Chicago”, dice Starr, cuyo pequeño grupo incluía a su esposa Nasim Ahmadiyeh, su hija Nyala, de 9 años, y algunos otros. Starr dice que la experiencia fue “abrumadoramente positiva”.

“Tener a nuestra hija con nosotros fue realmente útil. Fuimos a un patio de recreo, donde era natural para nosotros conectarnos con otros padres”, dice. La pareja también tiene un hijo de 6 años, Tahir, que se quedó con un pariente durante la orientación.

“Mi esposa es tan abierta y genuina. Hablamos de la educación de nuestros hijos. Descubrimos que otros respondieron, compartieron de manera sensible y también hablaron sobre sus aspiraciones”.

Starr dice que conocer a un niño de 11 años de Afganistán fue lo más destacado del alcance. “Tenía una bandeja de pollo que su tía cocinaba para una fiesta de cumpleaños y compartía su comida”, dice Starr. “Estaba delicioso.”

“Una persona de nuestro equipo hablaba farsi [persa], que está cerca de uno de los idiomas en Afganistán, por lo que pudo hablar con la tía”.

Ella les describió el programa de empoderamiento espiritual de jóvenes jóvenes [para jóvenes de 11 a 14 años] y le preguntó al niño: “¿Crees que este es un programa en el que tus amigos estarían interesados?” Su respuesta tranquila: “Sí. Sí, lo harían”.

“Aprendimos mucho de ella sobre ser directos y abiertos en nuestro enfoque”, dice Starr.

Desde aquí, el movimiento

Desde que terminó la orientación, algunos posibles pioneros están más avanzados en hacer planes para mudarse que otros.

El primer pionero de la orientación para mudarse al extranjero, Alex Tara-Browne de Santa Clara, California, llegó en Letonia el 6 de septiembre.

En un correo electrónico, Tara-Browne escribió que la parte más impactante de la orientación para él fue escuchar “historias que describían a otros pioneros, con completo desapego y firmeza, dejando sus hogares y sirviendo a la Causa. Creo que ha sido inspirador y útil tratar de poder comenzar mi pionero con el mismo espíritu”.

Starr dice que él y su familia están en camino, viviendo temporalmente en Bethesda, Maryland, para obtener algunos servicios médicos.



Una participante en la orientación para pioneros y una bahá'í local practican el alcance en Oak Park, Illinois. Foto por Alan Hatchett

Su corazón se conmueve ante la perspectiva de ser pionero como familia, dice, cada vez que ve una historia en particular en el video *Destellos de cien años de esfuerzo*. Esa historia hablaba de un hombre que sirvió en el ejército alemán en el norte de África durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial que se casó con una mujer que había sido confinada en un campo de prisioneros de guerra. “Se convirtieron en bahá'ís y conocieron al Guardián, quien los instó a regresar a África, esta vez enamorados. Lloro cada vez que lo veo”, dice Starr.

Otra pareja que asiste a la orientación de agosto, con un bebé previsto para diciembre, ya ha visitado su futuro hogar en Boca del Río, estado de Veracruz, México.

“Lo que esperábamos fue un gran motivador para querer ser pioneros”, dice Gabriela Reyes. “Realmente quería esa experiencia para nuestro hijo. Quiero que crezca con

sus padres sirviendo muy intensamente ... donde ve cómo podría ser realmente la vida comunitaria”.

Reyes y su esposo, Andre Rouhani, viven en Tempe, Arizona, y dicen que regresarán a México lo antes posible después del nacimiento.

El último día de la orientación, el consejero Lucho Boddy entregó a Reyes y a su esposo una copia original de la carta del 24 de mayo de 2022 con el Sello de la Casa Universal de Justicia, en la que el Cuerpo Supremo llama a pioneros para el Plan de Nueve Años.

“Nos lo dio diciendo básicamente: ‘No te quedes demasiado tiempo’”, dice Reyes con una risa. “Fue como, ‘Ustedes son necesarios, así que traten de salir de aquí rápidamente’”.

Encontrando los futuros vecinos

Durante su visita a Boca del Río, dice Rouhani, tomaron las primeras medidas para conocer a sus futuros vecinos. “Fuimos al parque anoche y conocimos a tres jóvenes. La gente aquí es tan abierta, habladora, que solo desea conexión”, dice.

“No hay salsa secreta”, dice Rouhani. “No hay misterio mágico. Creo que tenemos que salir y hacer cosas, y es realmente genial tener esa oportunidad”.

“Sin embargo, diré que traer galletas y tener una pelota de baloncesto realmente ayudó”, agrega Reyes. Ella dice que las personas con las que se encuentran impulsan la conversación, “y eso es genial porque realmente estamos aquí para escuchar”.

“Esa es una cosa que realmente me llamó la atención de la orientación: lo importante que es escuchar y comprender a la comunidad y leer la realidad de dónde estamos incluso los primeros meses de estar en un lugar nuevo”, dice.

“Es solo recordar que somos huéspedes en este país. No somos de aquí, y no es nuestro trabajo ser los principales protagonistas. Nuestro papel principal es caminar con la población aquí”.

Rouhani y Reyes dicen que extrañarán a sus familias en Estados Unidos. Ella dice que sus padres están “en la luna para ser abuelos”. Pero también dicen que ha sido útil recordar “que el mundo entero es una familia, y tendremos familia y comunidad sin importar a dónde vayamos”. ■

Dos encuentros cercanos con almas inquisitivas

California: A través de dificultades para conexiones significativas

El condado de San Bernardino ocupa una gran parte del sur de California. Incluso cuando el condado se divide en grupos para ayudar a administrar las actividades de construcción de comunidad, algunos de los grupos en sí tienen un área más grande que estados enteros de los Estados Unidos.

Sentirse unido en estas comunidades remotas puede ser un desafío. Por lo tanto, cuando la Asamblea Espiritual de los Bahá'ís del suroeste del condado de San Bernardino organizara visitas a algunos miembros distantes de la comunidad que habían estado fuera de comunicación, sería un viaje serio a través de carreteras del desierto, incluso en condiciones ideales.

“Se tarda entre una hora y media y dos horas en llegar a estos amigos”, dice Barbra Badger, que vive en un área no incorporada.

Una misión adicional para el viaje fue contactar a dos personas en áreas aisladas que habían preguntado sobre la Fe Bahá'í en la web o por teléfono, y fueron remitidas a la Asamblea por especialistas nacionales en atender solicitudes de información acerca de la Fe Bahá'í.

Una mañana de agosto, entonces, Badger hizo el corto viaje, o eso pensaba, para compartir el automóvil con Deborah Conow para el viaje. Las condiciones de la carretera no eran las ideales, y se encontró fuera de la carretera atrapada en la arena.

Con la ayuda de una grúa, finalmente llegó a la casa de su amiga, y se reservaron el día siguiente para planificar. Sin embargo, casi terminó siendo más de un día, ya que un camión grande se atascó durante horas en la parte superior de un tramo empinado, bloqueando su camino. Finalmente se despejó de la vía antes de que terminara el día.

“No sé por qué el transporte fuera una prueba así”, dice Badger. Los caminos fueron más favorables después de eso, y el

EN INTERNET

Las guías sobre el Plan de Nueve Años

Mensajes mayores de la Casa Universal de Justicia de relevancia del Plan de Nueve Años han sido publicados en varios idiomas por la Asamblea Espiritual Nacional. Incluyen **el mensaje del 30 de diciembre de 2021** a la Conferencia de los Cuerpos Continentales de Consejeros, definiendo las características del Plan de Nueve Años.

Favor de ingresar a bahai.us/community y, con el menú arriba a la izquierda, navegue a **Recent Guidance > Nine Year Plan**

equipo renovó el contacto con varios bahá'ís lejanos, así como con los dos buscadores. Incluso ayudaron a varios de ellos a planificar una caminata juntos para fortalecer su vínculo.

Un buscador aislado, Richard, ya había estado usando su teléfono para participar en un círculo de estudio bahá'í durante más de dos años con Jesse y Jimmy Sisk a algunas millas de distancia. Una vez que el equipo se presentó en persona, declaró su fe y se inscribió como bahá'í. Badger dice que se está conectando mejor con las reuniones de la comunidad bahá'í: por ejemplo, participar en una fiesta por teléfono y obtener transporte a una reunión junto a la chimenea. “Tuvimos el privilegio de estar presentes cuando se declaró”, dice Badger.

Después de esta experiencia productiva, agrega, la Asamblea Espiritual puede planear un viaje similar a una parte diferente de la agrupación.

Carolina del sur: Presenciando un paso en un viaje espiritual



Manuela Jensch

Heather Lally, bahá'í desde hace mucho tiempo, estaba siendo transportada a un hospital en Columbia, Carolina del sur y, como de costumbre, estaba ansiosa por compartir su fe. El técnico de emergencias médicas no prestó mucha atención.

Pero Manuela Jensch, la conductora, sí lo hizo. Originaria de Alemania, había sido cristiana de diversas denominaciones y musulmana. Le dijo a Heather que todavía sentía que había algo más. Ella había comenzado a leer sobre la Fe bahá'í y trató antes de ponerse en contacto con los bahá'ís a nivel local.

Comenzó a venir a las hogareñas con Heather y algunos de los bahá'ís, particularmente Woody y Parvin Stanwood. Manuela y Parvin se la llevaron bien porque, como iraní, Parvin pudo hablar sobre el Islam con ella.

Después de unas semanas de ese contacto, Manuela conoció a aún más miembros de la comunidad cuando se unió a la conferencia en Columbia que fue una de las series globales de conferencias bahá'ís celebradas a partir de esta primavera.

Poco después, Manuela declaró formalmente su fe en Bahá'u'lláh y se inscribió. Poco después de convertirse en bahá'í, completó el primer curso en la secuencia de entrenamiento del Instituto Ruhi. Su fuerte interés en aprender sobre Bahá'u'lláh y la historia de la Fe la llevó de allí al Libro 4, *Las Manifestaciones Gemelas*. ■

La Conferencia Nacional Ҳуқуқ’иллоҳ provoca una alegre conversación sobre el servicio

Para aquellos que sirven a la institución de Ҳуқуқ’иллоҳ, el acto de acompañar y aprender junto a los demás requiere esforzarse por ser el mejor yo—en palabras de Bahá’u’lláh: “*Vuelve tu vista hacia ti mismo para que me encuentres dentro de ti, fuerte, poderoso e independiente de todo*”.

Esta perspectiva fue compartida por William Wieties, miembro de la Junta Internacional de Fiduciarios del Ҳуқуқ’иллоҳ, en una charla en la Conferencia nacional sobre Ҳуқуқ’иллоҳ, celebrada del 16 al 18 de septiembre en Skokie y Wilmette, Illinois. “Si están siendo una luz de Bahá’u’lláh dentro de su comunidad”, dijo a la reunión, “están cumpliendo su misión”.

Centrado en el tema de la conferencia, “Fomentar las relaciones amorosas”, el fin de semana vio un zumbido continuo de conversaciones sinceras sobre cómo los Representantes de Ҳуқуқ’иллоҳ en los Estados Unidos, como educadores, pueden ser canales para el amor divino mientras se esfuerzan por ayudar a los creyentes a aprender más sobre el significado espiritual de la ley del Derecho de Dios y sobre la aplicación de los principios de su práctica de acuerdo con sus propias circunstancias.

Una de las principales misiones de la institución, dijo Adam Robarts, también miembro de la Junta Internacional de Fiduciarios del Ҳуқуқ’иллоҳ, es fomentar “un sentido de amor y asombro” ante la ley. Debido a que los pagos voluntarios de Ҳуқуқ son una fuente importante de apoyo material a la Casa Universal de Justicia, dijo, pueden verse como “permitiendo que la Voluntad de Dios tenga lugar”.

También habló en los alrededores sagrados de la Casa de Adoración Bahá’í en Wilmette Nwandi Lawson, miembro del Cuerpo Continental de Consejeros en las Américas, quien enfatizó el papel previsto del Derecho de Dios en la transformación de la vida económica de la humanidad. Esto puede suceder cuando la riqueza que puede estar históricamente contaminada se purifica a través del pago del Derecho de Dios. Tal transformación también puede ser influenciada por personas que aprenden con el tiempo a “considerar nuestras realidades materiales y espirituales como unificadas” y a usar los recursos de manera más justa.

Los siete miembros de la Junta de Fiduciarios del Ҳуқуқ’иллоҳ en los Estados Unidos se unieron a 110 Representantes de Ҳуқуқ’иллоҳ de toda América, con la asistencia de unos 20 de ellos por videoconferencia. Estudiaron pasajes de los Escritos sagrados y guía autorizada, se inspiraron en las charlas magistrales y compartieron experiencias y preguntas en presentaciones e interacciones en formato de panel, así como en reflexiones en grupos pequeños.

Exploraron temas vitales que rodean la ley del Derecho de Dios y



Adam Robarts. Fotos por David Smith

cómo aumentar la conciencia de los creyentes sobre ella, para que más personas puedan aprender a participar en esta obligación registrada en el Libro Mas Sagrado. Se les recordó que la Bendita Belleza pide que las ofrendas se realicen “con la alegría más radiante y aquiescencia sincera” y que la Casa Universal de Justicia caracteriza esto como un “acto de conciencia profundamente privado”, y por lo tanto bajo ninguna circunstancia puede presionarse a los creyentes a que cumplan.

A menudo se mencionaba un conjunto de 12 lecciones que ayudan en las sesiones de estudio grupal del Ҳуқуқ’иллоҳ. Tomadas en secuencia, observó un Representante, estas lecciones exploran muchos elementos del gozo espiritual y la naturaleza transformadora de la ley, mucho antes de que los materiales del curso comiencen a abordar cómo los creyentes podrían refinar su actitud hacia sus posesiones terrenales y purificarlas.



Robusta discusión incluyó miembros de la Junta de Fiduciarios del Ҳуқуқ’иллоҳ en los Estados Unidos con Representantes.

Se reconoció que las personas pueden sentirse intimidadas por las matemáticas involucradas en el cumplimiento de su obligación con el Ҳуқуқ del 19 por ciento del exceso de riqueza. Los Representantes compartieron varios enfoques que, cuando se llevan a cabo con sensibilidad, pueden ayudar a los creyentes a comprender los principios que se aplican a sus circunstancias.

Incluso si el exceso de riqueza de una persona no está en un umbral que provoque una ofrenda, los bahá’ís son libres de observar la ley y realizar sus beneficios espirituales y prácticos haciendo una contribución, incluso si es pequeña, cuando se ofrece con amor y está motivada por el deseo de establecer una conexión personal directa con la Casa Universal de Justicia. ■

Para enviar un abono a Ҳуқуқ’иллоҳ, el Derecho de Dios

Favor de hacer el cheque al nombre de “Bahá’í Ҳуқуқ’иллоҳ Trust” y envíelo a: Bahá’í Ҳуқуқ’иллоҳ Trust
P.O. Box 697
Wilmette, IL 60091

Favor de proporcionar:
Su número bahá’í de identificación, escrito en el cheque (o los números bahá’ís de ambos esposos si el abono es conjunto).
Su dirección, a que el recibo puede ser enviado.

Para enviar el abono el línea:
Ingrese a ushuquq.org con su cuenta Bahá’í Online Services (para crear una cuenta, puede visitar bahai.us y hacer clic en “Log in”).

Acatando la ley de Dios

Guía bahá’í relevante para participar en las redes sociales

Pregunta:
¿Qué nos

dicen los Escritos Bahá’ís con respecto a la libertad de expresión y sus limitaciones?

Respuesta: Desde un punto de vista bahá’í, el ejercicio de la libertad de expresión debe necesariamente estar disciplinada por una apreciación profunda de las dimensiones positivas y negativas de la libertad, por una parte, y de la expresión, por otra.

Bahá’u’lláh nos advierte que “*la lengua es un fuego infernal, y el exceso de palabras un veneno mortal*”. “*El fuego material consume el cuerpo*”, dice profundizando en el concepto, “*mientras que el fuego de la lengua devora tanto corazón como alma. La fuerza de aquél dura sólo un tiempo, mientras que los efectos de éste duran un siglo*”. Al trazar la estructura de la libre expresión, El recomienda de nuevo la “*moderación*”. “*La expresión humana es una esencia que aspira a ejercer su influencia y necesita moderación*”, afirma, añadiendo, “*En cuanto a su influencia, ésta está condicionada al refinamiento que a su vez depende de corazones que estén desprendidos y puros. En cuanto a su moderación, ésta tiene que combinarse con tacto y prudencia, como prescriben las Tablas y Escrituras Sagradas*”.

Relacionado también con lo que se dice y cómo se dice, es cuándo se dice. La expresión, como tantas otras cosas, tiene su momento. Bahá’u’lláh refuerza esta comprensión orientando la atención a la máxima que dice “*No todo lo que un hombre sabe se puede decir, ni todo lo que puede decir se puede considerar como oportuno, ni toda expresión oportuna se puede considerar como adecuada a la capacidad de los que la escuchan*”.

La expresión es un fenómeno poderoso. Hay que alabar y también temer su libertad. Requiere el ejercicio agudo del juicio, pues tanto la limitación de la expresión como su exceso pueden conducir a consecuencias terribles. Por ello existen en el sistema de Bahá’u’lláh límites y equilibrios necesarios para los usos beneficiosos de esta libertad en el desarrollo de la sociedad hacia adelante. Un examen detenido de los principios de la consulta bahá’í y de las disposiciones

formales e informales para emplearlos ofrece nuevas visiones de las dinámicas de la libertad de expresión.

—La Casa Universal de Justicia, mensaje del 29 de diciembre de 1988, a los creyentes de Bahá’u’lláh en los Estados Unidos de América

P: ¿Qué principios espirituales debemos tener en cuenta al participar en las redes sociales?

R: *Todas las palabras están dotadas de espíritu; por lo tanto, el orador o expositor debe pronunciar las palabras cuidadosamente en el momento y lugar oportunos, puesto que la impresión que produce cada palabra se manifiesta con nitidez y es claramente perceptible. El Gran Ser dice: Una palabra puede compararse con el fuego, otra con la luz, y la influencia que ambos ejercen es patente en el mundo.*

Por lo tanto, un sabio iluminado debería hablar principalmente con palabras tan suaves como la leche, para que, gracias a ellas, se nutran y se instruyan los hijos de los hombres y puedan lograr el objetivo último de la existencia humana, que es la posición del verdadero entendimiento y la nobleza auténtica. Y además dice Él: Una palabra es como la primavera, que hace que los tiernos retoños del rosál del conocimiento se vuelvan verdes y florecientes, mientras que otra palabra es como un veneno mortal. Le corresponde al hombre de sabiduría prudente hablar con la máxima indulgencia y paciencia, para que la dulzura de sus palabras induzca a todos a lograr aquello que es digno de la posición del hombre.

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablas de Bahá’u’lláh*, Lawh-i-Maqsúd

¡Oh sinceros amados de la Belleza de Abhá! En estos días la Causa de Dios, por todo el mundo, crece rápidamente en poder y, día a día, se extiende cada vez más a los confines más apartados de la tierra. Por consiguiente, sus enemigos, que provienen de todos los linajes y pueblos de la tierra, se ponen cada vez más agresivos, malévolos, envidiosos y enconadamente hostiles. Incumbe a los amados de Dios emplear el

mayor cuidado y prudencia en todas las cosas, ya sean grandes o pequeñas, consultarse entre sí y resistir unidos el ataque de los promotores de discordia y los instigadores de maldad. Deben poner empeño en asociarse con todos en un espíritu amistoso, deben guardar moderación en su conducta, deben tener respeto y consideración los unos por los otros y mostrar bondad y tierno afecto a todos los pueblos del mundo.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selecciones de los Escritos de ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, no. 194

Será evidente que los preceptos que los amigos observan en el curso de sus interacciones generales con los que los rodean también deben caracterizar, a veces más escrupulosamente todavía, las comunicaciones que llevan a cabo a través de las redes sociales. Estos preceptos incluyen la prohibición de la murmuración, el consejo de ver el mundo con sus propios ojos y no a través de los ojos de otros, la necesidad de respetar la unidad de la humanidad y evitar una mentalidad de «nosotros» y «ellos», y los principios de la consulta y el decoro necesario asociado con ella.

—Carta escrita en nombre de la Casa Universal de Justicia a todas las Asambleas Espirituales Nacionales, con fecha 1 de diciembre de 2019

P: ¿Qué características del discurso público que se produce en las redes sociales querriamos tener en cuenta al participar en foros en línea?

R: Un síntoma visible de la enfermedad cada vez más aguda de la sociedad es el continuo descenso del discurso público hacia un mayor rencor y antagonismo, lo que refleja puntos de vista partidistas enraizados. Una característica predominante de este discurso contemporáneo es la manera en que los desacuerdos políticos degeneran rápidamente y se convierten en vituperio y ridiculización. Sin embargo, lo que distingue particularmente a la época actual de las que la precedieron es lo mucho que este discurso ocurre a plena vista del mundo. Las redes sociales y las herramientas de comunicación relacionadas tienden a darle la mayor cobertura a todo lo que es controvertido, y las mismas herramientas permiten a las personas, en un instante, difundir más ampliamente lo que capta su atención

y registrar su apoyo u oposición a diversos sentimientos, ya sea de forma explícita o tácita. La facilidad sin precedentes con la que una persona puede participar en semejante debate público y las características de la tecnología hacen más probables los errores de juicio momentáneos y las acciones incautas, y sus secuelas, más duraderas.

Esto tiene implicaciones especiales para los bahá’ís, quienes saben bien que los principios de su Fe les exigen que se abstengan de involucrarse en controversias políticas y conflictos de todo tipo. “*No hables ninguna palabra de política*”, fue el consejo de ‘Abdu’l-Bahá a una creyente, y añadió: “*A menos que sea para hablar bien de ellos, no menciones a los reyes de la tierra ni sus gobiernos terrenales*”. Shoghi Effendi nos advirtió que no permitiéramos que nuestra visión de la Causa se viera nublada “por la mancha y el polvo de los acontecimientos mundanos, que, no importa cuán centelleantes y trascendentales en sus efectos inmediatos, no son más que las sombras fugaces de un mundo imperfecto”. Si bien los amigos conocen bien la importancia de mantenerse alejados de todos los temas políticamente divisorios, su compromiso con cuestiones sociales apremiantes, motivado por un deseo encomiable y sincero de servir a quienes los rodean, puede presentarles situaciones difíciles. Un acontecimiento inesperado puede convertir un tema no polémico en uno que divida a la gente en líneas partidistas, y algunos de los modos de expresión malsanos que son comunes a la esfera política pueden transferirse a otras áreas del discurso. Particularmente en el ámbito desinhibido de las redes sociales, los daños —tanto reales como imaginarios— se amplifican rápidamente, y se suscitan con facilidad una variedad de sentimientos: indignación justificada tal vez, o un deseo de promover el punto de vista propio, o un deseo de ser visto como fuente de nueva información. Cuando se analiza con mayor detenimiento, mucho de lo que se considera inofensivo, o incluso bien intencionado, contribuye a profundizar las divisiones sociales, alimentar las diferencias entre grupos opuestos y perpetuar los desacuerdos, y aleja así las posibilidades de consenso y la búsqueda de soluciones. Si la contribución de una persona parece provocadora u objetable, reaccionar a ella puede tener el

efecto de fortalecer y agrandar inadvertidamente la manifestación del sentimiento original, y exacerbar las cosas. Los seguidores de la Bendita Belleza deben ser usuarios conscientes y escrupulosos de cualquier tecnología que decidan utilizar, y deben ejercer perspicacia y disciplina espiritual.

—Carta escrita en nombre de la Casa Universal de Justicia a todas las Asambleas Espirituales Nacionales, con fecha 1 de diciembre de 2019

P: ¿Cómo podrían los comentarios hechos en las redes sociales afectar a los amigos en otros países?

R: Un ejemplo de las muchas áreas en las que son relevantes las consideraciones arriba expuestas es la discusión en las redes sociales sobre asuntos relacionados con Irán. Como se apreciará fácilmente, esta es un área de especial delicadeza, y por lo tanto los amigos deben estar particularmente alertas. Declaraciones precipitadas hechas en línea podrían poner en peligro a los creyentes en esa tierra o, involuntariamente, proporcionar a los enemigos de la Causa medios para representar a los bahá’ís de manera distorsionada. Es fundamental observar estricta cautela a este respecto para la protección de la comunidad iraní, tan dolorosamente puesta a prueba.

—Carta escrita en nombre de la Casa Universal de Justicia a todas las Asambleas Espirituales Nacionales, con fecha 1 de diciembre de 2019 ■

EL RITMO DE LA VIDA BAHÁ’Í

Año 179 Era Bahá’í

En cada caso, el día en el calendario bahá’í comienza al atardecer de la víspera de la fecha en el calendario gregoriano.

Días sagrados:

Día de la Alianza, 4 Qawl (26 de noviembre)

Ascensión de ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, 6 Qawl (28 de noviembre)

Primer día de los meses bahá’ís en 2022:

Qudrat (Poder), 3/4 de noviembre

Qawl (Expresión), 22/23 de noviembre

Masá’il (Preguntas), 11/12 de diciembre

Sharaf (Honor), 30/31 de diciembre

Sultán (Soberanía), 18/19 de enero

Liberar el “poder de construcción de la sociedad” de la Fe

Queridos amigos bahá’ís,

En 1936, en vísperas de una guerra mundial, en medio de una depresión económica global y la turbulencia de una “crisis mundial”, Shoghi Effendi apeló a los bahá’ís estadounidenses.

Dijo que: “Paulatinamente, los hechos futuros habrán de demostrar la verdad de que tan sólo el fuego de una severa aflicción, de intensidad inigualada.”

E instó a los creyentes estadounidenses a usar la “llave” de la promulgación del Plan Divino para abrir la puerta a su destino, el destino de su nación y el “mejoramiento del mundo”.

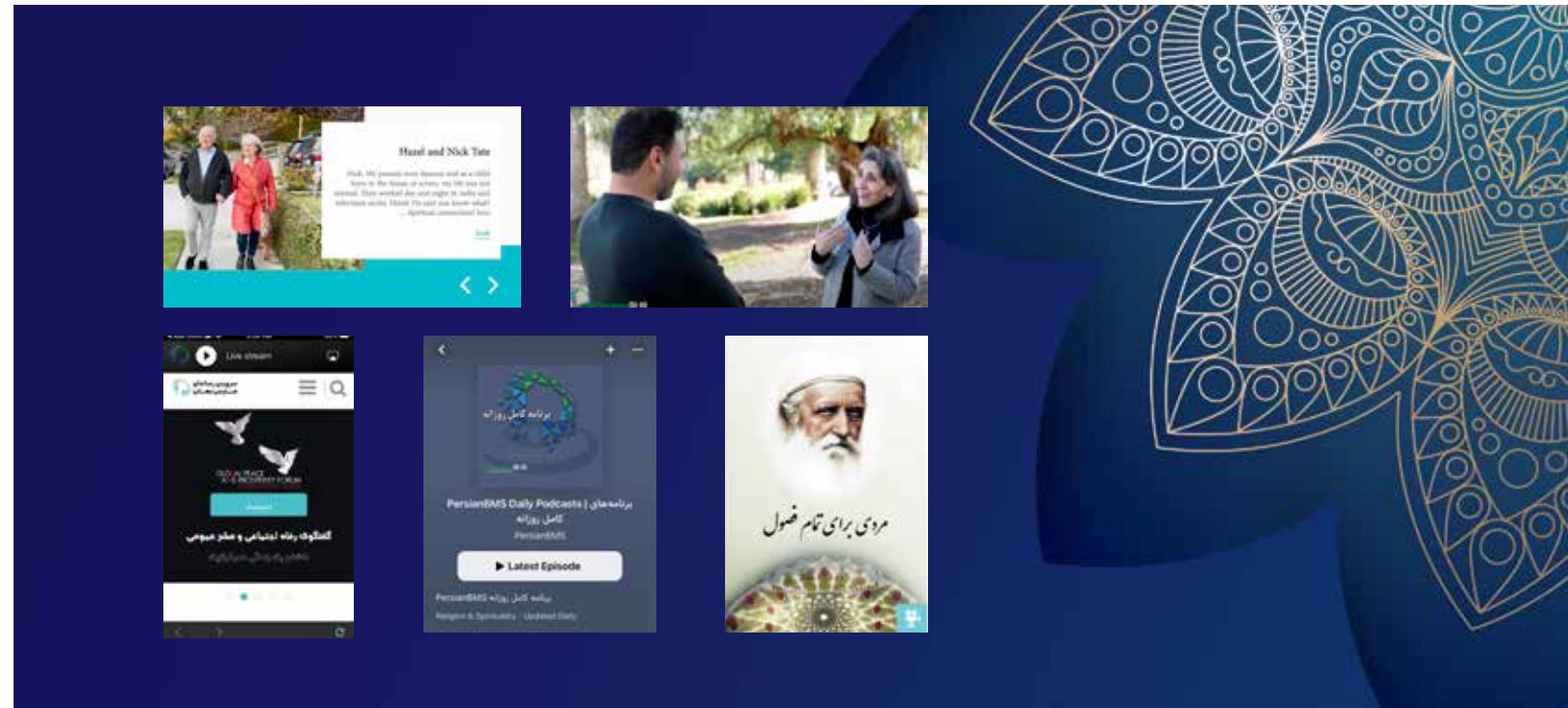
Explicó que a medida que nuestros campeones se multipliquen, a medida que aumenten nuestros esfuerzos y a medida que el Mensaje Bahá’í gane impulso, sus “potencialidades se desarrollarán correspondientemente”.

Hoy, a medida que la crisis global crece, a medida que la verdad y la confianza pierden su brillo, ya que el concepto de unidad solo se ve en el contexto del partidismo, la Casa Universal de Justicia nos llama a ser campeones del amor que liberan el “poder de construcción de la sociedad” de la Fe y vivifican las almas lánguidas de nuestras hermanas y hermanos para trabajar con nosotros por la “mejora del mundo y convivan en concordia y armonía”.

Ayúdanos a hacer este trabajo, con tu tiempo, tu devoción y tus contribuciones que sostienen nuestros esfuerzos.

Nuestro amor y oraciones están con ustedes todos los días,

Robert C. Henderson
Tesorero



سرویس رسانه‌ای فارسی بهائی

PERSIAN BAHÁ’Í MEDIA SERVICE (PERSIAN BMS)

«سرویس رسانه‌ای فارسی بهائی» یا «خدمات رسانه‌ای بهائی به زبان فارسی» یکی از دواثر محفل روحانی ملی است که مسئولیت تهیه برنامه‌های رادیویی و تلویزیونی و همچنین دیگر برنامه‌های شنیداری (podcast) و سکوهای (platform) رسانه‌های اجتماعی را بر عهده دارد. بودجه سالانه این دایره یک و نیم میلیون دلار است. افتخار حمایت مالی از این خدمات را بیت‌العدل اعظم بر دوش جامعه بهائی این سامان گذاشته‌اند. این سرویس منبع اطلاعات صحیح درباره امر الهی است، و برنامه‌هایی که تهیه می‌کند مردم ایران، به‌ویژه جوانان را نوید امید می‌بخشد، و آنان را یادآور می‌شود که چگونه می‌توان با همکاری و اتحاد به بهبود آن کشور کمک کنند.

اخیراً آزار و تضيقات جامعه بهائی ایران و تبلیغات حکومتی برضد امر مبارک شدت یافته است. به عنوان مثال، در سال ۲۰۱۰ و ۲۰۱۱ ماهانه حدود ۲۲ برنامه صوتی یا ویدیویی برضد امر الهی در اینترنت قرار می‌گرفت. در چهار ماه اول سال ۲۰۲۱ این تعداد بالغ بر ۹۵۰ برنامه ضد بهائی در هر ماه شده بود.

رویدادهای اخیر ایران سبب شده است که ایرانیان کنجکاو بیشتری درباره آیین بهائی نشان دهند. بعضی از افراد برجسته ایرانی نسبت به ستمی که بر بهائیان ایران می‌رود اعتراض کرده‌اند. چند نمونه از موارد حمایت از حقوق انسانی بهائیان در زیر درج می‌شود:

خانم مریم میرزا، خبرنگار ایرانی چنین نوشت: «اگر درباره هیچ ستم دیگری در ایران این جمله صدق نکند، درباره وضعیت بهائیان صدق می‌کند: در این وضعیت، همه ما و پدران و مادران مان و پدران و مادران‌شان دخیل هستیم. صدایمان را بلند کنیم بلکه از شرم تاریخی بهائی‌ستیزی جمعی‌مان کم کنیم.»

<https://youtu.be/mRVITig7hOM>



بیان، پدیده‌ای است قدرتمند که به آزادیش باید هم با ستایش و هم با بیم نگریست. این آزادی مستلزم اعمال قضاوت دقیق می‌باشد زیرا محدودیت‌های بیان و زیاده‌روی در آن هر دو می‌تواند عواقب وخیمی به بار آورد. بنا بر این در نظم حضرت بهاءالله ضوابط تعادل لازم برای استفادهٔ سودمند از این آزادی در جهت پیشبرد اجتماع وجود دارد. بررسی دقیق اصول مشورت بهائی و ترتیبات رسمی و غیر رسمی برای به‌کار بردن آنها بینش‌های جدیدی در بارهٔ ویژگی‌های آزادی بیان ارائه می‌دهد.»

پرسش: برای مشارکت در رسانه‌های اجتماعی، چه اصولی را باید از لحاظ روحانی و اخلاقی در نظر گرفت و به خاطر داشت؟

پاسخ: حضرت بهاءالله در لوح مقصود می‌فرماید:

«از برای هر کلمه‌ئی روحی است لذا باید متکلم و مبین ملاحظه نمایند و بوقت و مقام کلمه القا فرمایند چه که از برای هر کلمه اثری موجود و مشهود حضرت موجود می‌فرماید یک کلمه بمثابة نار است و اخری بمثابة نور و اثر هر دو در عالم ظاهر لذا باید حکیم دانا در اوّل بکلمه‌ئی که خاصیت شیر در او باشد تکلم نماید تا اطفال روزگار تربیت شوند و بغایت قصوای وجود انسانی که مقام ادراک و بزرگی است فائز گردند و هم‌چنین می‌فرماید یک کلمه بمثابة ربیع است و نهالهای بستان دانش از او سرسبز و خرم و کلمه دیگر مانند سموم انتهی حکیم دانا باید بکمال مدارا تکلم فرماید تا از حلاوت بیان کل به ما ینبغی للانسان فائز شوند.»

حضرت عبداله‌ها در یکی از الواح مبارکه، مندرج در جلد اول «منتخباتی از مکاتیب حضرت عبداله‌ها» فقرهٔ ۱۹۴ می‌فرماید:

«ای دوستان حقیقی جمال ابهی امر الله در این ایام در جمیع اقطار قوت گرفته و روز بروز رو بعلو است ... باید یاران کل در جزئی و کلی امور مواظبت نمایند و مشورت کنند و بالاتفاق مقاومت فساد و فتن نمایند و در حسن معاشرت و اعتدال حرکت و حرمت و رعایت یکدیگر و مرحمت و عنایت با سائر طوائف کوشند....»

در نامه‌ای که به تاریخ اول دسامبر سال ۲۰۱۹ از جانب بیت‌العدل اعظم خطاب به محافل روحانی ملی نگارش یافته، چنین آمده است:

«بدیهی است اصولی که احبا در ضمن تعامل عمومی خود با اطرافیان‌شان رعایت می‌کنند باید در هنگام استفاده از رسانه‌های اجتماعی نیز با دقتی بیشتر معمول گردد. این اصول شامل نهی از غیبت، دیدن عالم با چشم خود نه از دید دیگران، لزوم تعهد به وحدت عالم انسانی و اجتناب از ذهنیت "ما" و "آنها" و مشورت و حفظ احترامی که لازمهٔ آن است می‌باشد.»

پرسش: هنگام شرکت در جلسات مجازی که برای تبادل نظر تشکیل می‌شود، چه مواردی از گفتمان عمومی را باید در نظر گرفت؟

پاسخ: در نامه‌ای که در فقرهٔ بالا بدان اشاره شد، بیت‌العدل اعظم می‌فرماید:

«یکی از نشانه‌های آشکار بیماری روز به روز وخیم‌تر اجتماع تنزل مداوم گفتمان‌های عمومی به بغض و عناد روزافزون است که نمایانگر جبهه‌گیری‌های تفرقه‌ساز در نقطه‌نظرها است. از جمله خصوصیات رایج چنین گفتمان‌های امروزی انحطاط سریع اختلافات سیاسی به توهین و استهزاء است. اما وجه تمایز عصر حاضر از دوران گذشته اینست که قسمت اعظمی از این گفتمان‌ها در برابر دیدگاه جهانیان صورت می‌گیرد. رسانه‌های اجتماعی و وسایل ارتباطی مربوطه بیشترین اشاعه را برای مسائل مشاجره‌انگیز میسر می‌سازد، و همین وسایل به افراد اجازه می‌دهد

تا هر چه را که توجه آنان را جلب کرده در سطح وسیعی فوراً منتشر سازند و حمایت و یا مخالفت خود را نسبت به گرایش‌های گوناگون بطور صریح یا ضمنی نشان دهند. سهولت بی‌نظیری که شرکت در چنین مناظرهٔ عمومی را ممکن می‌سازد و نیز ماهیت این تکنولوژی، احتمال اشتباه و لغزش آنی در قضاوت و رفتارهای غیر محتاطانه را بیشتر و پیامدهای آن را پایدارتر می‌سازد.

این مسئله مفاهیم و مقتضیات خاصی برای بهائیان دارد که به خوبی آگاهند که اصول دیانت‌شان آنان را ملزم به اجتناب از مداخله در هرگونه مباحثه و مجادلهٔ سیاسی می‌نماید. حضرت عبداله‌ها به یکی از احبا نصیحت می‌فرمایند که "لا تتلفظی بکلمه من السیاسیات... و لا تذکری ملوک الأرض و حکوماتها المادیة و الزمنیة الا بخیر." حضرت شوقی افندی به ما هشدار می‌دهند که مبدا بینش ما از امر الهی "به آلایش و غبار حوادث این عالم مگدّر گردد، حوادثی که هر چند جلوهٔ ظاهری آن بدو چشمگیر و گسترده باشد، ولی فقط سایه‌ای ناپایدار از عالمی بی‌اعتبار است." با وجود اینکه اهمیت احتراز از کلیهٔ مسائل نفاق‌افکن سیاسی برای احبا کاملاً روشن است، اما اشتغال‌شان به مسائل مُبرّم اجتماعی ناشی از انگیزهٔ ممدوح و صادقانهٔ خدمت به اطرافیان‌شان می‌تواند آنان را در موقعیت‌های دشواری قرار دهد. رویدادی غیر منتظره می‌تواند یک موضوع ساده را به مسئله‌ای مشاجره‌انگیز تبدیل نماید و مردم را بر اساس گرایش‌های جانب‌دار از یکدیگر جدا سازد و بعضی از شیوه‌های غیر سالم گفتار را که در عرصهٔ سیاسی رایج است به سایر عرصه‌های گفتمان منتقل نماید. به خصوص در قلمرو بی‌قید رسانه‌های اجتماعی، اشتباهات و تقصیرها — چه واقعی چه تصوّری — به سرعت بزرگ‌نمایی شده به آسانی موجب برانگیختن انواع احساسات می‌گردد، احساساتی مانند خشم موخه، اصرار به ترویج نقطه‌نظر شخصی، و یا اشتیاق به شناخته شدن به عنوان منبع اطلاعات تازه. بسیاری از اموری که ظاهراً بی‌ضرر یا حتی مبتنی بر نیت خیر به نظر می‌آید، وقتی با دقت بیشتری بررسی شود، ملاحظه می‌گردد که موجب افزایش نفاق اجتماعی، شعله‌ور ساختن اختلافات بین گروه‌های مخالف، و تداوم عدم توافق گشته، و در نتیجه اتفاق نظر و یافتن راه حل را امکان‌ناپذیر می‌سازد. اگر ابراز نظر یک شخص تحریک‌آمیز یا ناخوشایند به نظر رسد، هر عکس‌العملی نسبت به آن ممکن است بطور ناخواسته موجب تقویت و اشاعهٔ آن نقطه‌نظر گردد و موضوع را وخیم‌تر سازد. پیروان جمال مبارک باید هرگونه تکنولوژی را با هوشیاری و دقت مورد استفاده قرار داده بینش و انضباط روحانی به‌کار برند.»

پرسش: مطالبی که در رسانه‌های عمومی مطرح می‌شود، به چه نحوی ممکن است بر بهائیان سایر کشورها اثر گذارد؟

پاسخ: در نامه‌ای که در بالا بدان اشاره شد، معهد اعلی می‌فرماید:

«یک مورد از موارد زیادی که به ملاحظات فوق‌الذکر مربوط می‌گردد، بحث در رسانه‌های اجتماعی دربارهٔ مسائل مربوط به ایران است. چنانچه به خوبی می‌توان درک نمود این موضوع از حساسیت خاصی برخوردار است و بنابراین احبا باید احتیاطی خاص در این مورد مجرا دارند. اظهارات نسنجیده در اینترنت می‌تواند احبا را در آن سرزمین در معرض خطر قرار دهد یا ندانسته دستاویزی برای دروغ‌پردازی‌های دشمنان امر فراهم سازد. رعایت احتیاط کامل در این مورد برای حفظ جامعهٔ مُمتحنِ ایران امری بسیار مهم است.»

دورهٔ مؤسسهٔ ویلمت به زبان فارسی دربارهٔ تعصبات نژادی

ONLINE COURSE UNDERSCORES ROLE OF PERSIAN AMERICANS IN BUILDING RACE UNITY

اهل بهاء از اهمیت ترک تعصبات نژادی به خوبی آگاهند. در آنچه تعالیم دوازده‌گانه نام‌گرفته، معمولاً حضرت عبداله‌ها پس از ذکر هدف غائی امر بهائی که وحدت عالم انسانی است، از ترک تعصبات از هر گونه‌ای که باشد، سخن رانده‌اند. این آموزهٔ مبارک شرط لازم و ضروری استقرار وحدت در جهان بشری است.

اما از این نکته نباید غافل بود که برای بعضی از گروه‌های مهاجر ممکن است درک ماهیت تعصبات نژادی در ایالات متحده دشوار باشد، و در نتیجه نتوانند به عمق این مشکل که حضرت ولی امرالله آن را «چالش‌انگیزترین مشکل» جامعهٔ امریکا خوانده‌اند پی برند و خود در روابطی که با افراد غیرسفیدپوست برقرار می‌کنند، قادر به فهم رفتار خود و واکنشی که با آن رو به رو می‌شوند نباشند. از این رو، مؤسسهٔ ویلمت (Wilmette Institute) با مشورت شورای منطقه‌ای بهائی ایالات شمال غربی برای بهائیان ایرانی‌تبار دوره‌ای مجازی و برخط (online) به زبان فارسی دربارهٔ تعالیم بهائی راجع به تعصبات و روابط نژادی ایجاد کرده است.



ناز پارسیانی



هدی حسینی



آزیتا معلّم

در سال ۲۰۲۰ وقتی مؤسسهٔ ویلمت اولین دورهٔ «تعصبات ضدسیاه‌پوستان در ایالات متحده و ساختن جامعه‌ای متحد» را به صورت برخط (online) ایجاد کرد، اعضای شورای منطقه‌ای شمال شرقی در آن شرکت کردند و احبای منطقه را نیز تشویق کردند که آن دوره را بگذرانند. تعداد کمی از احبای ایرانی‌تبار در آن دوره نام‌نویسی و شرکت کردند. بعضی از آنان گفتند که این دوره کاربردی برایشان ندارد. به گفتهٔ خانم ناز پارسیانی که در سال ۱۹۷۸، در شانزده سالگی به امریکا آمده «همیشه گمان می‌کردم که از لحاظ نژادی هیچ تعصبی ندارم. در خانواده‌ای بهائی و با اصول امر مبارک بزرگ شده بودم.»

به گفتهٔ خانم چیترا گلستانی که یکی از تهیه‌کنندگان دورهٔ ویژهٔ مؤسسهٔ ویلمت است «بعضی از احبای ایرانی می‌پندارند که چون بهائی‌اند، لازم نیست که نگران تعصب نژادی باشند.»

به همین جهت، مؤسسهٔ ویلمت دوره‌ای برای احبای ایرانی‌تبار با عنوان «وحدت نژادی: سهم امریکاییان ایرانی‌تبار» تهیه دید. احبا به دلایل

گوناگون در این دوره شرکت جستند و تجارب گوناگونی اندوختند. یکی از دوستان می‌گفت که «شرکت در دورهٔ مؤسسهٔ ویلمت باعث شد که چشم دلم بازتر شد و توانستم قصور و عیب‌های خودم را بینم و درک بهتری از تعصب نژادی داشته باشم.» وی همچنین اظهار داشت که «قبلاً هیچ اطلاعی از تاریخ بردگی در ایالات متحده نداشتم. وقتی در این دوره شرکت کردم فهمیدم که گذراندن این دوره به تنهایی کافی نیست، بلکه باید مستمراً آموزش بینم و دربارهٔ تعصبات نژادی تأمل کنم و سعی کنم نه تنها خود و افکار خود را عوض کنم بلکه قلب و رفتارم را هم تغییر بدهم.» یکی از معلمان می‌گفت: «باید خود را دربارهٔ ماهیت واقعی تعصبات نژادی آموزش بدهیم زیرا این آموزش ضروری است. تعصب نژادی مرضی است که بر همهٔ جوانب زندگی در ایالات متحده اثر می‌گذارد و جامعهٔ بهائی را هم مبتلا می‌کند. اگر تاریخ و منشاء این بیماری را ندانیم نخواهیم توانست خود و جوامع خود را در مقابلش حفظ کنیم.»

یکی دیگر از احبا می‌گفت که سال‌ها به مطالعه و بررسی و مخالفت با تعصبات نژادی پرداخته است؛ با این حال از شرکت در دورهٔ مؤسسهٔ ویلمت بسیار بیشتر آموخته است. به گفتهٔ او «هم در ایران و هم در امریکا احساسات ضد سیاه‌پوستی وجود دارد و ما باید بکوشیم که این حالاتی را که ناشی از حس ناخودآگاه برتری در خود داریم و میراث نامطلوب فرهنگ ماست ریشه‌کن کنیم.»

دورهٔ «وحدت نژادی: سهم امریکاییان ایرانی‌تبار» در سپتامبر سال آینده دوباره عرضه خواهد شد. علاقه‌مندان به شرکت در این دوره می‌توانند برای کسب اطلاعات بیشتر و نام‌نویسی با مؤسسهٔ ویلمت تماس حاصل فرمایند: <https://wilmetteinstitute.org/community-learning-courses/>

از دفتر امین صندوق

RELEASING THE 'SOCIETY-BUILDING POWER' OF THE FAITH

امین صندوق محفل روحانی ملی یادداشتی خطاب به احبای ایالات متحده نوشته که خلاصهٔ آن در زیر درج می‌شود:

دوستان عزیز، در سال ۱۹۳۶ در آستانهٔ جنگ جهانی، در بحبوحهٔ کساد جهانگیر اقتصادی، و در اوج آشفتگی بحرانی عمومی، حضرت ولی امرالله بهائیان امریکا را فراخواندند که در یکی از تاریک‌ترین دوران‌هایی که جهان بشری به چشم دیده، با توسل به نقشهٔ الهی، راه اصلاح عالم انسانی را هموار سازند.

حضرت ولی امرالله خاطر نشان ساختند که با افزایش حامیان دلیر امر مبارک و با ازدیاد کوشش‌های احبا و و شتاب گسترش امرالله، قابلیت‌های پیام الهی نیز به همان درجه شکوفا خواهد شد و شدت خواهد گرفت. کدر زمان حال که بحران جهان رو به فزونی گرفته و راستی و اعتماد رنگ باخته و مفهوم وحدت تنها در جامعهٔ سیاست حزبی جلوه‌گر شده، بیت‌العدل اعظم اهل بهاء را فراخوانده که «قوة جامعه‌ساز» آیین ربانی را به حرکت آوریم و روان فرسودهٔ خواهران و برادران خود را تازگی و نشاط بخشیم تا برای بهبود و اصلاح عالم و هم‌زیستی و اتحاد راستین مردمان با ما همکاری کنند.

یاران را فرا می‌خوانیم که به جهت ادامهٔ فعالیت‌ها و خدمات، لازم است تبرعات به صندوق امری را از یاد نبرند.

حقوق‌الله

HUQÚQU'LLÁH

آنچه در همایش ملی حقوق‌الله‌گذشت

NATIONAL HUQÚQU'LLÁH CONFERENCE SPARKS JOYOUS CONVERSATION ON SERVICE

از ۱۶ تا ۱۸ سپتامبر سال جاری «همایش ملی حقوق‌الله» در شهرک اسکوکِی (Skokie) و شهرک ویلمت برگزار گردید.

موضوع همایش «پرورش و ترویج روابطِ مهرآمیز» (Fostering Loving Relationships) بود و سه روز آخر هفته بر محور همین موضوع تمرکز داشت. گفتگو در این باره بود که نمایندگان حقوق‌الله در ایالات متّحده

چگونه می‌توانند در سِمَتِ مربّی، مانند مجاری لازم برای محبّت الهی عمل کنند، و در عین حال احبا را مدد برسانند که از اهمیتِ روحانی حکم حقوق‌الله آگاه شوند و اصولِ مربوط به اجرای آن حکم الهی را در موردِ وضع خاصِ خود به مرحلهٔ اجرا درآورند.

در این همایش، هفت عضو هیئت امنای حقوق‌الله در ایالات متّحده به ۱۱۰ نمایندهٔ حقوق از سراسر امریکا پیوستند که حدود ۲۰ نفر از آنان از طریق «میزگرد تصویری» (videoconference) در آن شرکت می‌جستند. در طی

جلسات، به مطالعهٔ نصوص مبارکه و رهنمودهای معهد اعلی پرداختند و از سخنرانی‌های اصلی بهره‌مند شدند و آموخته‌ها و اندوخته‌ها و پرسش‌های خود را در گروه‌های کوچک تأمل با هم در میان نهادند.

شرکت‌کنندگان دربارهٔ موضوع‌های مهمی دربارهٔ حقوقِ الهی به بررسی پرداختند و دربارهٔ چگونگی افزایش آگاهی احبا دربارهٔ این فرمان ایزدی، و در نتیجه، اجرای آن، مذاکره کردند. همچنین خاطرنشان ساختند که تقدیم حقوق باید «به کمالِ روح و ریحان» صورت بگیرد. بیت‌العدل اعظمِ ادای حقوق را «عملی وجدانی و بسیار شخصی» تعبیر فرموده‌اند که هرگز نباید فردی تحتِ فشار قرار بگیرد که آن را ادا کند.

در این همایش، موضوع‌هایی که در زیر درج می‌شود موردِ ملاحظه و مطالعه و مذاکره قرار گرفت:

- اهمیتِ روحانیِ حکمِ حقوقِ الله برای افراد، و ابعاد اجتماعی آن
- افزایشِ معلومات و اطلاعات دربارهٔ مواردِ عملیِ حکمِ حقوقِ الهی
- پرورش و تقویتِ عُلقهٔ عاطفی به حکمِ حقوقِ الهی
- کمک به احبا برای ادای حقوقِ الله با روح و ریحان
- ایجاد و پرورشِ پیوندهای محبت‌آمیز

این موضوع‌ها آن قدر مهم و ضروری بود که با ادامهٔ گفتگو و مذاکره به موضوع‌های دیگری نیز انجامید، به شرح زیر:

مهر و مسرّت دربارهٔ حکمِ حقوقِ الله

آنچه معمولاً در طی همایش مطرح می‌شد مجموعهٔ ۱۲ درس دربارهٔ حقوق‌الله بود که برایِ جلساتِ مطالعه تهیه شده بود. یکی از نمایندگان اظهار می‌داشت که وقتی این درس‌ها به ترتیب موردِ مطالعه قرار بگیرد، بسیاری از عواملِ شادی و مسرّت و تقلب را موردِ بررسی قرار می‌دهد، و همهٔ این مواردِ پیش از این صورت می‌گیرد که بینیم که چگونه می‌توان به بهبودِ طرزِ تلقی و برداشتِ احبا در قبال اموالشان پرداخت.

بسیاری از نمایندگان بیشتر دربارهٔ شیوهٔ نگرشِ یادگیریِ جمعی صحبت کردند تا دربارهٔ چند و چون مطالعهٔ این ۱۲ درس و سایر مواد مطالعه، آن هم در سِمَتِ آموزگار و کارآموز.

برخی هم دربارهٔ دعا و مناجات و آماده ساختن خود برای نشان دادن مهر و شوری که برای حکمِ حقوق‌الله دارند صحبت کردند. به گفتهٔ یکی از نمایندگان، وسیلهٔ اصلی گسترش شادی و مسرّت خود ماییم. باید با دوستان در همان وضعی که هستند همدلی برقرار کنیم.



شرکت نمایندگان حقوق‌الله از مناطق مختلف در يك میزگرد. عکس از دیوید اسمیت

حقوق‌الله به‌مثابهٔ نیرویی برای ایجاد عدالت اجتماعی

وقتی افراد با ادای حقوق‌الله بهتر بتوانند بین «خواست‌ها» و «نیازها» تفاوت بگذارند، درک و برداشتِ منصفانه‌تری در مورد تولید و مصرف و کاربردِ ثروت در جهانِ بشری حاصل خواهد شد.

در حالِ حاضر، شیوه‌ها و رویکردهایی در دستِ تحول است که به رفع نیازهای امریکاییانِ افریقایی تبار و سایرِ جمعیت‌های محروم می‌پردازد که نسل اندر نسل از کسبِ ثروت محروم بوده‌اند.

این فعالیت‌ها تنها به مطالعهٔ موادِ مربوط به حقوق‌الله مربوط نبود، و در آن «توجه به عبادات هم که از لحاظِ فرهنگی با آن ارتباط دارد»، منظور شده بود.



بحثی پر قدرت اعضای هیئت امنای حقوق‌الله در ایالات متّحده را در کنار نمایندگان گرد هم آورد. عکس از دیوید اسمیت

از میان برداشتن آنچه مانع می‌شود احبا درک درستی از حکمِ حقوق‌الله داشته باشند

گاهی محاسبهٔ ۱۹ درصد از مازادِ مخارجِ ضروری سببِ تشویش احبا می‌شود. نمایندگان حقوق‌الله دربارهٔ رویکردهای گوناگونِ محاسبهٔ حقوق صحبت کردند که وقتی با دقّتِ اعمال شود، احبا را برای وضعِ خاصی که از لحاظ مالی دارند، کمک خواهد کرد.

بسیاری از احبا می‌پندارند که چون ثروتمند نیستند، مشمولِ حکمِ حقوق‌الله نمی‌شوند. چند تن از نمایندگان گفتند وقتی احبا به چند و چونِ این حکمِ الهی پی می‌برند، مثل این است که باری از دوشِ‌شان برداشته می‌شود.

حتی وقتی داراییِ فردِ بهائی به حدِ نصاب هم نرسیده باشد، مُجاز است و می‌تواند با تقدیم وجه اندکی به موجب این حکم عمل کند مشروط بر این که این تقدیمی با محبت و بر اساسِ ارادهٔ شخص برای ایجادِ ارتباطی شخصی با بیت‌العدل اعظم صورت گرفته باشد.

منشی هیئت امنای حقوق‌الله در ایالات متّحده خاطر نشان ساخت که حقوق‌الله به‌عنوانِ یک مؤسسهٔ بهائی، همواره راهنما و همراهی داشته است، چه در سال ۱۸۷۸ هنگامی که نخستین امینِ حقوق را حضرت بهاء‌الله منصوب فرمودند، و چه اکنون، در زمانِ فعالیتِ هیئتِ بین‌المللی که مسئولیت ۳۳ هیئتِ امنای منطقه‌ای و بیش از ۱۰۰۰ نمایندهٔ حقوقِ الله را بر عهده دارد. به همین جهت، اگر دوستانِ پرسشی داشته باشند، نماینده‌ای که در ناحیهٔ آنان است، از هیچ کمکی دریغ نخواهند کرد.

نحوهٔ ارسال وجوه حقوق‌الله

دوستانِ گرامی باید تقدیمی‌های حقوق‌الله را در وجهِ «Bahá'í Huqúqu'lláh Trust» و به نشانیِ زیر ارسال دارند و نکاتِ زیر را دربارهٔ آن در نظر داشته باشند:

Bahá'í Huqúqu'lláh Trust
P.O. Box 697
Wilmette, IL 60091

- شمارهٔ کارتِ بهائی فرد باید بر روی چک نوشته شود. در صورتی‌که تقدیمی از طرفِ زوجِ بهائی باشد، باید شمارهٔ کارتِ بهائیِ هر دو نفر روی چکِ ارسالی نوشته شده باشد.
- برای این‌که احباء رسیدِ تقدیمی را وصول نمایند، باید به نحوی نشانیِ دقیقِ خود را قید نمایند.

(online، نی‌الن‌آ) «ط‌خ‌رب» قی‌رط زا هَل‌لاق‌وق‌ح لاس‌را ی‌ارب هُرام‌ش چ‌رد اب و ،دنی‌ام‌ن ه‌ع‌ج‌ارم (**ushuquq.org**) ه‌ب دی‌اب د‌ن‌ن‌ک زاب دوخ هَل‌لاق‌وق‌ح ی‌ارب ی‌باس‌ح ،دوخ ی‌ئ‌اه‌ب ت‌راک دورن نات‌دای ی‌ناشن!

اجرای احکام الهی

ABIDING IN GOD’S LAW

روشِ اهل بهاء در مشارکت در رسانه‌های اجتماعی

BAHÁ'Í GUIDANCE RELEVANT TO PARTICIPATING IN SOCIAL MEDIA

خوانندگانِ گرامی توجه داشته‌اند که محفلِ روحانیِ ملی بر آن بوده است که تقریباً در هر یک از شماره‌های این نشریه، یکی از احکام و تعالیم امرِ بهائی و نکاتِ مربوط به آن بررسی شود. در شمارهٔ فعلی، مطالبی دربارهٔ «روشی که اهل بهاء در مورد مشارکت در رسانه‌های اجتماعی» اتخاذ می‌کنند، از نظر خوانندگان می‌گذرد.

پرسش: نصوصِ بهائی دربارهٔ آزادی بیان و حدِ آن شامل چه مطالبی است؟

پاسخ: بیت‌العدل اعظم در نامه‌ای به تاریخ ۲۹ دسامبر سال ۱۹۸۸ خطاب به پیروان حضرت بهاء‌الله در ایالات متّحده می‌فرمایند: «از نقطه نظر دیانتِ بهائی لازمهٔ اعمالِ آزادی بیانِ انضباطی است که از طریقِ فهمی عمیق از ابعاد مثبت و منفی آزادی از یک طرف، و بیان و گفتار از طرف دیگر، میسر می‌گردد.

حضرت بهاء‌الله به ما هشدار می‌دهند که "زبان ناراست افسرده و کثرت بیان سمّی است هلاک‌کننده" و در تشریح این نکته می‌فرمایند که "نار ظاهری اجساد را محترق نماید" و "نار لسان ارواح و افنده را بگدازد. اثر آن نار به ساعتی فانی شود و اثر این نار به قرن‌ی باقی ماند." در تعیین چارچوب آزادیِ گفتار "اعتدال" را توصیه نموده می‌فرمایند "اِنَّ البیان جوهر یطلب النَّفوذ و الاعتدال اما النَّفوذ معلقٌ بِاللِّطَافَةِ و اللَّطَافَةُ منوطٌ بِالْقُلُوبِ الْفَارِغَةِ الصَّافِیَةِ و اما الاعتدال امتزاجه بِالْحِکْمَةِ الَّتِی ذَکَرْنَاهَا فِی الْأَوَاحِ."

علاوه بر آنچه ذکر می‌شود و علاوه بر نحوهٔ بیان، وقت ابراز یک مطلب نیز اهمّیت دارد زیرا برای گفتار، مانند بسیاری از امور دیگر، زمان مناسبی وجود دارد. حضرت بهاء‌الله این مفهوم را با ذکر این نکته تأکید می‌فرمایند که "لا کُلّ ما یعلم یقال و لا کُلّ ما یقال حان وقته و لا کُلّ ما حان وقته حضر اهله."

این امر محسوس نباشد، ولی آنان که اوضاع و احوال سالیان قدیم و جو حاکم بر اجتماع را در زمان‌های پیشین به یاد دارند و بی‌اطلاعی عمومی و جدایی‌های گذشته را به خاطر می‌آورند بدون شک به بیداری فزایندهٔ مردم شریف آن سرزمین که در فرهنگ خویش همیشه کرامت انسانی و تساوی شهروندان را ارج می‌نهاده‌اند با حیرت و شگفتی می‌نگرند که چگونه در مدتی چنین کوتاه تغییری چنین عمیق مقدّر و میسر شده و در بین بسیاری از ایرانیان حقیقت مقاصد و اهداف بهائیان و تعلق‌شان به آن سرزمین مقدّس معلوم گشته، اصول عقایدشان بیش از پیش شناخته شده، و ماهیت تلاش و مساعی آنان برای خدمت به اجتماع و ترویج وحدت عالم انسانی که پایهٔ اصلی و شالودهٔ همهٔ تعالیم حضرت بهاءالله است آشکار و مبرهن گردیده است.

ای ستاینندگان طلعت جانان، به اتفاقات اخیر بیندیشید. ملاحظه نمایید که در پاسخ به چنین مظالم عیانی که می‌تواند در درون هر نفسی خشم و طغیان ایجاد نماید، در سینه‌های پاک آن عزیزان که همواره در بحر چنین بلایا غوطه‌ور بوده‌اند نه تنها اثری از انتقام‌جویی موجود نیست بلکه دادخواهی آنان توسّل به قانون است و تظلم به مسئولین. بهائیان خواهان عدالتند و طالب داد و انصاف ولی نه در پی تلافی و انتقام. قلوب‌شان از درد مشحون است ولی از نفرت و دشمنی آزاد و مبرا، نگرانند ولی محبت و رأفت‌شان به دیگران بی‌انتهای، تنگ‌دستند ولی طبع‌شان بلند و مقاصدشان والا، بی سر و سامانند ولی خود برای سایرین ملجأ و پناه، گرفتار در دام کینه‌وراند ولی روح‌شان طایر و پُران، مظلومند ولی در حقّ ظالم خیرخواه. اطفال‌شان را نه به ترویج خشونت و ستیز بلکه به مهربانی و بخشش تربیت می‌نمایند که خاطر موری نیاززند تا چه رسد به انسان. آن ستم‌دیدگان دل‌های سوزان خویش را با ایمان و اندرزهای جمال ابهی که نیاکان روحانی‌شان را او خود در آن اقلیم به ید قدرت‌ش تعلیم و پرورش داد آرامش می‌بخشند. آن حضرت نزاع و جدال را منع نمود، و به آنان اینگونه آموخت: "دین الله و مذهب الله از برای حفظ و اتحاد و اتفاق و محبت و الفت عالم است او را سبب و علت نفاق و اختلاف و ضغینه و بغضا منمائید".

از عزیزان ایران، آن دست‌پروردگان حضرت یزدان، البته انتظاری جز این نیست اما به راستی بدانید که در این جهان متلاطم و پرابتلا که مردمانش از خشونت به ستوه آمده‌اند و به ویژه از خشونت‌ی که به اسم دین مجرا می‌گردد منزجر و گریزانند، اگر نفسی به دیدهٔ انصاف و به چشم پاک و عاری از تعصبات بنگرد، روش و منش جامعهٔ بهائیان ایران بر اعجاز حضرت بهاءالله و قوای پرتوان صلح‌آفرین و وحدت‌بخش امر مبارکش دلیلی است کافی و برهانی است باقی. آن عزیزان با تمسک به تعالیم آن حضرت و با رفتار و کردارشان، تجلی خصایل روحانی و فضایل معنوی در عالم انسانی را گواه صادقدند و امکان تحقق بنای اجتماعی متنوّع و متحد و پیشرو و پویا را شاهد ناطق. مرحبا و هزار مرحبا. این است مفهوم راستین دین الهی. این است امتیاز ابدی و افتخار سرمدی. موهبتی این‌چنین را کم نشمرید و در رفعت مقام مروّجان واقعی صلح و آشتی و در سموّ درجات عاشقان حقیقی عالم انسانی هرگز شک و تردیدی به خود راه ندهید.

در عین حال سزاوار این تحوّل تاریخی که در اذهان بسیاری از ایرانیان

ایجاد شده همان است که شما سالکان راه پروردگار سعی و هم خود را معطوف این مهم می‌نمایید که هر چه بیشتر مصداق نصایح الهی در این عصر پرانوار گردید. در تقویت روابط روحانی در جوامع خویش و ازدیاد اتحاد و اتفاق و هم‌بستگی کماکان کوشایید، هم‌دیگر را در هر خدمتی تشویق و هم‌دلی و قدردانی می‌نمایید و اجازه نمی‌دهید که در وحدت عمیق جامعه و ارتباط قلبی همهٔ اجزای آن با یکدیگر ادنی تزلزلی حتّی موقتاً رخ دهد. ای محبوبان، در حین این اتفاقات قلوب هم‌میهنان خود را امیدوار کنید، سبب دل‌گرمی هر سرخورده گردید و موجد اطمینان هر دل‌خسته، دل‌سوز واقعی همگان شوید و غم‌خوار هر درمانده، درمان درد دیگران گردید و درد خود را بدین ترتیب التیام بخشید، نزد حضرت پروردگار برای آنان که ظلم روا می‌دارند طلب غفران کنید، و برای زدوده شدن قلوب‌شان از زنگ تعصّب و جهل دعا و استغاثه نمایید.

در پهنهٔ گیتی خواهران و برادران روحانی شما که از پیوستگی معنوی خود به آن عزیزان قهرمان مفتخرند، در این ایام در ادعیهٔ روزانه و مخصوص خود مرتباً به یاد شما هستند و از بارگاه حضرت متعال خالصانه رفع تعصبات و تضییقات و تبعیضات بی‌شماری که با آن مواجه‌اید را می‌طلبند و جوامع بهائی در سراسر عالم برای اطلاع‌رسانی به دولت‌های جهان و بیدار نمودن مردمان به آنچه بر شما گذشته و می‌گذرد کوشا و سعی‌اند. این مشتاقان نیز در هر دم و آن به یادتان مشغولیم و در هر فرصت به نیابت از شما عزیزان در نهایت تضرّع به درگاه حضرتش متوسّلیم و ملتمس.

[امضا: بیت العدل اعظم]

ترجمهٔ نامهٔ محفل روحانی ملی بهائیان ایالات متّحده خطاب به یکی از احباء دربارهٔ سفر به ایران

THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY MESSAGE TO AN INDIVIDUAL ABOUT TRAVELING TO IRAN

۹ نوامبر ۲۰۱۲

یار عزیز روحانی،

از پرسشی که روز ۶ نوامبر از طریق تلفن مطرح کرده بودید سپاسگزاریم. پرسیده بودید که آیا در آیندهٔ نزدیک سفر به ایران صلاح است یا خیر. هر چند یاران غربی یا احبای ایرانی‌تبار ممنوع از سفر به ایران نیستند، اوضاع آن کشور اقتضا می‌کند که همهٔ احبای الهی به دقت دربارهٔ حکمت و مصلحت این گونه اسفار بیندیشند. بیت‌العدل اعظم در طی چند سال خطاب به احبای ایرانی و غیرایرانی در مورد سفر به مهد امرالله مطالبی نوشته‌اند که در اینجا گزیده‌ای از آن را برای ملاحظهٔ شما نقل می‌کنیم.

معهد اعلی در پیام مورّخ ۱۵ اوت سال ۲۰۱۰ راهنمایی و دستورالعمل زیر را به همهٔ احبای ایرانی مقیم کشورهای خارجه در مورد سفر به ایران صادر فرمودند:

به احبای ایرانی در سراسر عالم که در نظر دارند به ایران سفر کنند توصیه می‌شود بعد از ملاحظهٔ شرایطشان و سنجیدن عوامل گوناگون دخیل در

موضوع، همراه با دعا و مناجات و دقت و توجّه تام، و مشاوره با اعضای خانواده و دوستانی که به قضاوتشان اعتماد تام دارند، به اتخاذ تصمیم مبادرت نمایند. افراد باید دیدگاه‌های محفل روحانی ملی و روابط بین کشور محل اقامت و ایران، و نیز توصیه‌های صادره از سوی دولت یا سایر منابع مرتبط دربارهٔ سفر به کشور مزبور را مدّ نظر قرار دهند. این هدایت همچنین در مورد زوج‌هایی نیز که یکی از طرفین ایرانی و دیگری از تباری غیرایرانی است، مصداق است.

اگر افرادی از احباء که به ایران سفر می‌کنند، در اثر اقدامات یا مکاتبات خود — با قرار دادن جذبهٔ مزایای گذرا و ناپایدار زندگی در سرزمین‌های خود در مقابل یاران کشور مزبور — هر چند سهوا، عزم جزم یاران به اقامت در مهد امرالله را — که انتصارات بسیاری در آنجا حاصل شده — تضعیف نمایند و به این ترتیب امتحانات بیشتری را برای کسانی که از قبل با افتتانات لاثند و لاثحصای مستمر مواجه بوده‌اند پدید آورند، لطمه و زیان عظیم و وخیمی به امرالله وارد می‌آورند. اما سفرهایی که بر ملاقات با اعضاء هم‌دل و هم‌فکر خانوادهٔ خویش و دوستان نزدیک خود، و با استفاده از بینش‌ها و مهارت‌های حاصله از جریان مؤسسه، آشنا کردن آنها با امر مبارک متمرکز باشد، فی‌الحقیقه می‌تواند مفید و مؤثر باشد.

به بهائسانی که به ایران سفر می‌کنند توصیه می‌شود در هنگام صحبت دربارهٔ امر مبارک، خزم و حکمت را مرعی دارند. آنها نباید موقع ورود به ایران، معرفی‌نامهٔ امری با خود داشته باشند، تعداد کتب امری که در اختیار دارند باید کتابهایی باشد که برای استفادهٔ شخصی نیاز دارند، و نباید از ناحیهٔ مزبور، حتّی با پست الکترونیک (ایمیل) با مرکز جهانی تماس بگیرند. همچنین گذرنامهٔ فرد نباید مهر ورود به اسرائیل را داشته باشد. چنانچه برگهٔ درخواست روادید دارای بخش مربوط به دین متقاضی باشد، نباید سفید گذاشته شود، بلکه باید خط کشیده شود، زیرا این احتمال وجود دارد که اگر خالی گذاشته شود، مسئولین مربوط خودشان آن را پُر کنند. اگر مسئولین مربوطه صریحاً متقاضی را به ذکر دین ملزم سازند، البته متقاضی باید دیانت خود را «بهائی» ذکر نماید.

در مرقومهٔ مورّخ ۱۲ ژانویهٔ سال ۲۰۰۴، معهد اعلی خطاب به احبای ایرانی مقیم کشورهای خارجه فرمودند:

در شرایط فعلی دیدار آن عزیزان از ایران نیز باید فقط در موارد واقعاً ضروری و بعد از رعایت احتیاطات معقول صورت گیرد. برخی از شما که به خاطر مسائلی فوری از قبیل امور خانوادگی به ایران سفر می‌کنید باید مطمئن شوید که در تدارک این اسفار کلیهٔ تعهدات خویش را به‌عنوان پناهندهٔ بهائی به دولت میزبان خود به نحو احسن و اکمل انجام خواهید داد. بعضی از شما قادر خواهید بود که در ایران رحل اقامت افکنده تجربیات و امکاناتی را که در خارج کسب نموده‌اید در خدمت جامعه‌ای که زادگاه امر الهی است به کار برید. صرف نظر از طول سفر، چه کوتاه و چه طولانی، در حین دیدار باید به دل و جان بکوشید که از جلوه‌نمایی مُفرط تجملات مادی خود و یا از مکالمات نامناسبی که ممکن است موجب امتحان بیشتر احبای عزیز آن سامان گردد، اجبایی که تا بحال بیش از سهم خود تحمّل بلایا و صدمات نموده‌اند، احتراز نمایید.

آنچه حائز اهمّیت و مورد نظر بیت‌العدل اعظم است این که مبادا بهائیان

ایرانی ساکن کشورهای خارج، ناخواسته، عزم و تصمیم احبای ایران را برای ماندن در ایران، به رغم مشقّات و تضییقات وارده، تضعیف نمایند، و در نتیجه، سهمی را که حضرت عبدالبهاء، برای تجدید و احیاء حیات روحانی ایران، بدان عزیزان محوّل فرموده است ایفا ننمایند. بیت‌العدل اعظم در تشریح دقیق‌تر این نامه، در نامهٔ دیگری به تاریخ ۲۸ نوامبر سال ۲۰۰۵ خطاب به این محفل ملی، به تضاد و تناقض آشکاری اشاره فرموده‌اند که آن، از یک سو، عبارت از تسهیلات و سهولت سفر ایرانیان بهائی شهرند امریکا یا مهاجران قانونی مقیم ایالات متّحده به ایران است، و از سوی دیگر، تضییقاتی است که بهائیان ساکن ایران بدان دچار گشته‌اند: در حالی که بهائیان ساکن ایران از حقوق اولیهٔ انسانی خود محرومند، و با خطر مداوم زندانی شدن یا بدتر از آن مواجه‌اند، تا امروز این موارد برای احبایی که صرفاً برای دیدار به ایران سفر می‌کنند، وجود نداشته است. در واقع سهولت نسبی ترک ایران برای بهائیان و بازگشت آنان به جهت دیدار از کشور، در تضاد آشکار با تضییقات خطرناک و خصمانه‌ای است که احبای ساکن ایران بدان دچارند. احتمالاً این تضاد و ناهماهنگی نمودار ترفند و کوشش بی‌وقفهٔ حکومت است تا همهٔ بهائیان ایران آن کشور را ترک کنند، و علاوه بر این، سران حکومت بتوانند اتهام سوء رفتار با بهائیان را دفع کنند. جدا از این که حکومت ایران چه انگیزه‌ای داشته باشد، احبای ایرانی مقیم خارج در مورد سفر به ایران و دیدار از آن کشور با مشکلات اندکی مواجه می‌شوند.

هک دوشی‌م هی‌صوت ی‌ناری‌غِ نای‌ی‌اک‌یرمِ هب آل‌وم‌عم ی‌درف هک ی‌ت‌روص رد ،لاح ن‌ی‌ا اب .دن‌ن‌کن ر‌فس ناری‌ا هب دن‌اوت‌ی‌م دراد ناری‌ا هب ر‌فس هب ی‌م‌ر‌ب‌م زای‌ن هک دن‌ک س‌رح و فی‌ل‌ک‌ت ب‌س‌ک م‌ظ‌ع‌ا لد‌ع‌ل‌ات‌ی‌ب ز‌ا لی‌م‌ی‌ا قی‌ر‌ط ز‌ا رد نی‌ن‌چ‌م‌ه ی‌ل‌ع‌ا ده‌عم .secretariat@bwc.org:دن‌ک ه‌زاجِ نای‌ئ‌ا‌ه‌ب ر‌فس هک دن‌اه‌دوم‌ر‌ف ح‌ی‌ر‌ص‌ت دوخ ی‌ل‌ب‌ق‌ت‌ال‌س‌ارم ر‌ض‌م ،ناری‌ا رد یرم‌ا هس‌د‌ق‌م ن‌ک‌ام‌ا ت‌ر‌ای‌ز ی‌ارب ناری‌ا هب ب‌ر‌غ .ت‌س‌اک‌ر‌اب‌م ر‌م‌ا ح‌ل‌ا‌ص‌رم هب

توصیه می‌شود که پیش از اخذ تصمیم دربارهٔ سفر به ایران، همهٔ عواملی را که در بالا توصیف شده، با در نظر گرفتن سابقهٔ خاص خود مورد سنجش قرار دهید. همان گونه که در بالا بدان اشاره شد، مختارید که برای کسب هدایت با بیت‌العدل اعظم نیز تماس حاصل نمایید.

شما را به ادعیهٔ خیر محفل ملی اطمینان می‌دهیم.

با تحیات ابدع ابهی

محفل روحانی ملی بهائیان ایالات متّحده

منشی: کیت ای باورز

حضرت بهاء‌الله می‌فرمایند:

یا جواد امروز روزیست که از ذکرش نفس ساعت مضطرب مشاهده شد و جمیع کتب الهی از قبل و بعد بر عظمتش گواهی داده‌اند امروز کتاب با‌علی‌البیان شهادت داده و می‌دهد و میزان با‌علی‌الدّاء ندا مینماید امروز روزیست که صراط بکلمه انا السبیل المستقیم ناطقست و طور ببیان قد اتی مالک الظهور گویاست. چون اهل ارض از سکر هواهای نفسانیّه مدهوشند از آیت کبری و غایت قصوی و فیوضات لایتناهیّه الهیّه محروم و ممنوع مشاهده میشوند. باید اهل الله مدارا نمایند و بقدر و مقام هر نفسی کلمه القا کنند که شاید بشعور آیند و بافق مقدّس از آفاق متوجّه شوند.

حضرت بهاء‌الله، کتابخانه آثار بهائی

پیام بیت العدل اعظم مورّخ ۱ شهریور ۱۴۰۱ خطاب به احبّای ایران

THE MESSAGE OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE DATED AUGUST 23, 2022

۴ شهرالاسماء ۱۷۹

تعصّب و غرض و کینه و عناد می‌تواند فهم و خرد را این چنین ساقط کند و سبب انتشار کلمات و اظهاراتی بدین درجه سست و بی‌عنصر گردد که طفل سیق‌خوان را فریب نمی‌دهد تا چه رسد مردم بادرایت و پردکاوت ایران را. ناراستی و بهتان در چنین ابعادی وسیع گناهی است کبیر و نشر این مفتریات نامعقول اهانتی است عظیم به هوش و عقل ایرانیان و به سخره گرفتن جمیع جهانیان.

اما در این راستا اتّفاقات اخیر در مازندران، که حقیقتاً ادامه ستمی است که احبّای آن سامان طیّ سالیان متمادی متحمّل بوده‌اند، این بار به حدّی شنیع و قبیح بود که به درستی می‌توان گفت نه تنها دل مردمان ایران را خراشید بلکه خاطر اهل عالم را نیز جریحه‌دار نمود و بر افکار عمومی در سطح بین‌المللی تأثیری عمیق بر جای گذاشت. تصاویر آن مصیبت‌زدگان بی‌خانمان، ضمیر هزاران هزار نفوس را بیدار نمود و آه و فغان آن ستم‌دیدگان به ناله و شکوه هم‌وطنان‌شان انجامید، قلوب شکسته آن مظلومان قلب هر فرد باوجدان را بفشرد و آکنده از درد و الم نمود و اشکی که برگونه‌های آن اطفال معصوم بارید از چشمان بسیاری از ناظرین در اقصی نقاط دنیا نیز جاری گشت. این بی‌عدالتی عظیم ظرف مدّتی بسیار کوتاه عکس‌العملی خارق‌العاده را در رسانه‌های جهانی سبب شد و به حمایت هم‌میهنان شریف‌تان در ابعادی بی‌سابقه که در فضای مجازی کاملاً مشهود بود منجر گشت. وقایع اخیر در مازندران تبدیل به نمادی از کلیّه مظالمی گردید که در سراسر آن کشور بر جامعه اسم اعظم وارد شده و می‌شود. چنین پشتیبانی وسیعی از حقوق حقّه و پایمال شده آن جامعه ستم‌دیده از جانب سایر ایرانیان حائز اهمّیت بسیار زیادی است. شاید برای نسل جوان که در طول حیات خود شاهد آگاهی روزافزون هم‌وطنان بوده‌اند

۱ شهریور ۱۴۰۱
پیروان مظلوم و باوفای محبوب عالمیان در مهد امر الله ملاحظه نمایند: خواهران و برادران عزیز روحانی، حاملان امانت حضرت کبریا و حافظان امر نازنین جمال ابهی،

گزارشات دریافت شده از سرزمین مقدّس ایران نمایان‌گر تشدید بی‌عدالتی و ظلم بی‌امانی است که پیروان حضرت بهاء‌الله در آن خطّه مبارکه از زمان تجلی اوّلین فروغ آفتاب حقیقت که از افق آن کشور بردمید تا به امروز با آن مواجه بوده‌اند. این اخبار حاکی از انواع مختلف تبعیض و تعرّض به ابتدایی‌ترین حقوق شهروندی بهائیان اعمّ از دستگیری بی‌گناهان و فشارهای شدید بر آنان، هتک حرمت و حمله به خانه‌های شخصی، غصب املاک و اموال و تخریب منازل، و محروم نمودن جوانان بهائی از تحصیلات عالی است و حتّی چندین مورد جلوگیری از امرار معاش افراد را نیز در بر می‌گیرد. افسوس و هزار افسوس که تعصّبات جاهلانه و کینه‌های دیرینه، قلوب بعضی از مسئولین را چنان تسخیر نموده که واقعیت و حقیقت را به کلی رها نموده‌اند و با توسّل به زور و قدرت و با اتکا به مقام و منصب، بساط جبر و ظلم و حرص و طمع پهن نموده، نه تنها حقوق حقّه بهائیان آن مرز و بوم را سلب کرده‌اند بلکه با اشاعه اکاذیب و مفتریاتی علیه جامعه شما که دیگر هیچ نفس منصف و مطلق به آن اعتنا نمی‌نماید و با عنوان نمودن اتّهاماتی پوچ و بی‌اساس که دیگر هیچ عقل سلیمی حتّی یک عبارت ضدّ و نقیض و بی‌معنای آن را جدّی نمی‌گیرد باعث خسران و زیان به حیثیت و اعتبار خود در انظار عموم گشته‌اند. چه عاملی جز

Bahá'í World Center staffing needs

As the vital work of the Cause unfolds in every part of the world, the effective functioning of the Bahá'í World Center takes on added significance. The World Center of the Faith—described by Shoghi Effendi as the “pivot of the agencies of the New World Order”—is supported by a flow of believers from a diversity of countries and occupations who arise selflessly to offer a period of service, of varying length, in the Holy Land.

The staffing needs at the World Center are continually changing in light of the evolving demands and available resources. At any given time, there are roles to be filled which require particular competencies or specialized training, and others that simply require a readiness to learn about one's specific assignment.

Due to the nature of service at the World Center, the **essential requirements include an ability to offer 12 months or more and a basic proficiency in English.**

Anyone interested in learning more about the possibility of offering a period of service at the World Center is encouraged to contact the Office of Personnel (serve@bwc.org). Offers of service can also be submitted directly on the web (<https://bahai.bwc.org/service/>).



PAID SERVICE POSITIONS OPEN at the Bahá'í National Offices

Dear Friends,

Now more than ever, dedicated Bahá'ís with relevant skills and experience are needed to serve the Faith through service at the national level. Perhaps this is the right time for you to consider serving the National Spiritual Assembly in one of the following remunerated positions:

Chief of Public Safety, Department of Public Safety (*Wilmette, IL*): directs and supervises the Department of Public Safety (DPS) operations serving the National Spiritual Assembly and its various properties including the Bahá'í National Center and the Bahá'í House of Worship; and is responsible for the conduct, training compliance, and performance of all Public Safety team members.

Systems Administrator, Office of Information Technology (*Evanston, IL*): facilitates project completion and provides advanced systems support within the Bahá'í National Organization's server and storage infrastructure.

Deputy Director, Office of Human Resources (*Evanston, IL*): encourages collaborative and harmonious relationships; and has oversight of the operations of the Human Resources department (payroll, benefits, training, and recruiting processes).

Digital Creation Associate, Media Services Office (*Remote*): collaborates with media creators at the local and regional levels.

Evanston/Wilmette, Illinois

- Executive Aide, Office of the Secretariat**
- Custodian, National Properties Office**
- Office Administrator, Office of Human Resources**
- Maintenance Technician, National Properties Office**

Remote

- Auditor, Office of Treasurer, Finance**
- Cluster Support Manager, Office of Communications**

Other office locations

- General Manager, Radio Bahá'í WLGJ (South Carolina)**

For more information, please visit the Service Opportunities page on the member services website: [log in to bahai.us/community/](https://bahai.us/community/)

If you are excited about one of our roles but your experience does not align perfectly with every qualification in the position description, we encourage you to apply anyway. You may be just the right candidate for this or other roles. Women and minorities are encouraged to apply. Please send your cover letter and resume to jobs@usbnc.org

International

For information about opportunities to pioneer abroad, email the Office of Pioneering: pioneer@usbnc.org

International service opportunities are also posted from time to time on the U.S. member services website; for a current listing, log in with your Bahá'í Online Services Account to: www.bahai.us/community/resources/international

Virgin Islands: The National Spiritual Assembly of the Virgin Islands has an immediate opening for a couple or an individual to serve as **Property Manager(s) of the National Ḥaẓíratu'l-Quds**. Two-year commitment preferred; the position requires general building and grounds maintenance experience. Please send a resume to nsa@bahai.org with a description of Bahá'í and work experience, Bahá'í ID number, contact information for Bahá'í references, and any other helpful personal information.

Perennial service opportunities at Bahá'í Houses of Worship in:

Chile: secretaria@bahai.cl

Australia: secretariat@bnc.bahai.org.au

India: bhowindia volunteersdesk@ibnc.in

Samoa: secretariat@bahaisamoa.ws

Archives

The National Bahá'í Archives is seeking, at the request of the Universal House of Justice, **original letters written on behalf of the Guardian** to the following: Hugo Quintin Woodyear, George D. Woolley, Lee Worley, Margot Worley, Charles A. Wragg and Martha Wright. Anyone knowing family members or relatives who might have these Guardian's letters is asked to contact the National Bahá'í Archives, 1233 Central St., Evanston, IL 60201–1611 (archives@usbnc.org or 847-869-9039).

The National Bahá'í Archives is seeking **photographs of Native American Bahá'ís, Bahá'í communities on Indian reservations and Native American teaching activities** and gatherings. Please identify photos if possible with name(s) of individual(s), locality and date. Anyone having photographs they could donate is asked to send them to the National Bahá'í Archives, 1233 Central St., Evanston, IL 60201-1611.

A cultural ambassador

Kevin Locke, 68, proclaimed oneness, helped preserve Indigenous culture

Kevin Locke—named *Thokéya Inázhin* (First to Arise) in Lakota—traveled to more than 90 countries to proclaim the oneness of humanity and to promote the preservation of Indigenous traditions. From Lakota and Anishinabe heritage, he shared his inspiration through hoop dancing, music and storytelling for all ages, often with special attention to children. He performed for festivals, powwows, conferences and United Nations events; at schools, universities, performing arts centers, parks, monuments and more.

A cultural ambassador for the U.S. Information Service since 1980, he was awarded a National Heritage Fellowship, the nation’s highest honor in folk and traditional arts, and a United States Artists Fellowship. His flute and song recordings have won numerous Native American Music Awards.

A Bahá’í more than four decades, he was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States 1989–1991; for 15 years afterward he served the northern Plains area as an Auxiliary Board member. He supported countless Bahá’í-organized activities and participated in Trail of Light teaching initiatives through North America.

Kevin passed away suddenly on September 30, 2022, at age 68, while in South Dakota to perform at the Crazy Horse Monument. He lived many years in Wakpala, South Dakota, within the Standing Rock Indian Reservation.

Among countless tributes to his life and work was a message from the Universal House of Justice, which said in part: “May the memory of his commitment to the diffusion of the divine teachings and his tireless efforts to promote and share Indigenous American culture around the



world, particularly through dance, music, and storytelling, be an enduring source of inspiration to all those who knew him.”

A letter from the National Assembly notes: “He will be lovingly remembered the world over for touching people’s hearts—with his characteristic radiant smile, tremendous warmth, and delightful humor—as he shared the beauty of North American Indigenous culture through dance, music, and storytelling, boldly and tirelessly conveying a message of the essential oneness of humanity to all his audiences.”

Kevin’s accomplished forebears—both Indigenous and of European ancestry—include his mother, Patricia Ann Locke, who worked for decades to develop American Indian educational institutions and to preserve languages and culture. She was a National Spiritual Assembly member for nine years.

His autobiographical book *Arising* traces the journey from his birth in California and upbringing on the Standing Rock Reservation, through his education in New Mexico and the Dakotas, through his return to the reservation as a schoolteacher and principal, to his flourishing as a global

cultural ambassador and teacher of the Bahá’í Faith.

He wrote that his awakening into the spiritual ways of his Hunkpapa Lakota ancestors benefited from guidance through mentorship, dreams, fasting and meditation. Over the years he became fluent in Lakota and Indigenous sign language. He accepted the Bahá’í Faith in young adulthood and often talked about how Indigenous traditions and Bahá’í teachings confirm each other.

“All of the people have the same impulses, spirits and goals,” he said when recently asked about his mission in life. “Through my music and dance, I want to create a positive awareness of the oneness of humanity.”

He served on the board of the Lakota Language Consortium and the advisory board of the World Flute Society. He founded the Patricia Locke Foundation in 2018 to provide educational opportunities for underserved children and youth.

Kevin Locke is survived by his wife, Ceylan Isgor; children Patricia Hupahu Locke, Waniya Locke, Ohiyesa Locke and Kimimila Locke; brother Charles Locke; sisters Connie Zupan, Carla Peterson, Winona Flying Earth and Jana Locke; and 11 grandchildren. ■



James L. Sturdivant, 86, South Orange, New Jersey; September 21, 2022. He pioneered to Papua New Guinea and was elected to its National Spiritual Assembly. He served several Eastern

U.S. states, Bermuda, and the Turks and Caicos Islands as an Auxiliary Board member; was a member from 1997–2014 of Regional Bahá’í Councils serving his longtime home state of Maryland; participated in bodies advising the U.S. National Assembly on race unity, finances and authoritative texts; and was a *Huqúqu’lláh* representative. He mentored many youth and adults, not least as a participant in the Bahá’í Black Men’s Gatherings.



Sadeqh Erfanian, 80, Bakersfield, California; April 5, 2022. A prolific Bahá’í scholar, researcher and teacher, he authored four books on the history and teachings of the Faith and its relation with Islam

and Christianity, and conducted study and deepening courses. He served on Iran’s National Teaching Committee, National Youth Committee and other committees; Tehran’s local Bahá’í Youth Committee; a District Teaching Committee and Spiritual Assemblies in California, principally Laguna Hills. Brought up in a family that pioneered to southeastern Iran, he later pioneered to Bulgaria and traveled for the Faith to Fiji and Indonesia. In a spirit of “walking together in the path of service,” he dedicated much time to sharing Bahá’u’lláh’s message with Persian-speaking seekers, whether in study circles or simply being available to answer questions.

Hamideh Behizad Firoozi, 100, Claremont, California; August 15, 2022. Matriarch of a family with dozens of descendants active in the Faith and in a variety of professions, she pioneered in 1979 from Iran to Venezuela and taught the Faith widely among Indigenous people; later, she settled in California. Bahá’is in the Guajira population held a devotional gathering in her honor after her passing.



Iraj R. Khademi, 88, Bellevue, Washington; August 6, 2022. A lawyer and poet native to Iran, he pioneered in England and Chile, and lived in California and Washington. Especially in the Northwest, he fos-

tered Persian literature, music and media personally and as a Hamzaban Cultural Foundation board member; he served on national boards for *Payam-e-Doost* and Persian media and on regional Persian American Task Forces. He was a National Convention delegate from California.

Justin J. Avalos
Tehachapi, CA
June 8, 2021

Fred Azad
Malibu Canyon, CA
August 12, 2022

Tahereh Bahremand Aghdassi
Los Angeles, CA
June 2, 2018

Philip L. Bradley
Billings, MT
August 31, 2022

Nadia K.W. Carroll
Beavercreek, OH
July 24, 2022

Lili Carson
Brooksville, FL
June 18, 2022

Alexandria S. Chadwick
Bainbridge Island, WA
August 27, 2022

Margaret A. Davenport
Yellow Springs, OH
June 21, 2022

Mohamad Ebrahimnejad
Asheville, NC
July 24, 2022

Ramin Eghrari
Scottsdale, AZ
August 15, 2022

Martha J. Elliott
Brockton, MA
August 28, 2022

Donald W. Erickson
Round Rock, TX
August 9, 2022

Abdolhossein Esmaili
Reston, VA
September 1, 2022

Elrico Evans
SeaTac, WA
July 23, 2022

Gary L. Fair
Bentonville, AR
July 20, 2022

Penny Ferguson
Shoreline, WA
September 1, 2022

Laya Gharababae
Reston, VA
May 14, 2022

Kevin C. Graham
Baltimore, MD
August 2, 2022

Mehri B. Haghani
San Clemente, CA
August 12, 2022

James D. Heintz
Florence, OR
July 24, 2022

Roger Hogan
San Antonio, TX
July 18, 2022

Nancy B. Hood
Deerfield, NH
June 21, 2020

Matthew M. Hyde
Hollywood, FL
July 14, 2022

Daryush Irani-Nezhad
San Clemente, CA
July 23, 2022

Ezzatollah Janamian Najafabadi
Redmond, WA
August 15, 2022

G. Gabrielle Jayson
Fort Worth, TX
June 30, 2022

C. Ann (Graham) Jennings
Point, TX
July 26, 2022

Joanne Jordan
Babylon Town, NY
June 28, 2022

Michael A. Kacmar
North Richland Hills, TX
August 9, 2022

Beverly Ketcham
Austin, TX
July 15, 2022

Jason A. Lacey
SeaTac, WA
July 28, 2022

Jeralyn C. Laughton
Wichita, KS
August 16, 2022

Eshraghie Mahmoudi
Snohomish County, WA
August 28, 2022

Liz Mannillo
Las Vegas, NV
July 7, 2022

Rahmatollah Manouchehri
Portland, ME
September 24, 2021

Mohammad Ali Mazidi
DeSoto, TX
August 30, 2022

Sally Meraner
Clifton Park Town, NY
January 10, 2022

Rezvan Mohragi
Oceanside, CA
July 18, 2022

Bennie F. Moore
New York City, NY
March 1, 2020

Paul M. Murray
Albany, NY
July 1, 2022

Mehri Nedaei Momtazi
Santa Clara, CA
August 8, 2022

Linda G. Neil
San Diego, CA
August 16, 2022

Toch Ngeth
Tacoma, WA
July 26, 2022

Charles J. Nier
Elgin, IL
July 17, 2022

Meenu Noori
Collier County, FL
August 15, 2022

Moujan Nosrat
San Diego, CA
September 2, 2022

David A. Ortega
Douglas, AZ
January 27, 2022

Ruth M. Palmer
Prescott Valley, AZ
July 23, 2022

Sandra M. Pelto-Brodin
Anoka, MN
June 2, 2022

Talat E. Rafizadeh
Columbus, OH
February 16, 2021

Lewis F. Ragland
Thurston County, WA
July 25, 2022

Cheryl Reed
Stafford County, VA
July 24, 2022

John A. Rhoades
Charlotte, NC
August 1, 2022

Charles R. Roderick
Warwick, RI
August 5, 2022

Behjat S. Samimi
Pompton Lakes, NJ
May 11, 2022

Hortense H. Sawyer
Longwood, FL
June 26, 2022

Hovieh Sohrabi
Fremont, CA
July 17, 2022

Larry Stauffer
Clallam County, WA
July 25, 2022

Arthur C. Stucklen
Lady Lake, FL
July 29, 2022

Rajcoomarie (Mimi) Sukrah
Union Twp., NJ
July 18, 2022

Clyde B. Sutherland
Dallas, TX
August 28, 2022

Joyce A. Thon
Victor Town, NY
August 9, 2022

H. Davis Wellman
Alturas, CA
August 19, 2022

Mark E. Whaley
Verde Valley, AZ
August 29, 2022

Nate T. Wilson
Hall County, GA
June 10, 2020

Jason N. Young
Medford, OR
February 24, 2022

Richard W. Zeff
Hempstead Town, NY
June 19, 2022

To ensure that a departed Bahá’í is listed in the In Memoriam box:

A Spiritual Assembly, registered group or family member may inform the Membership Office (Membership@usbnc.org or 847-869-9039), 1233 Central St., Evanston, IL 60201. Please include all of the following information on the deceased, if available: Full name, Bahá’í ID number, date of passing and last known address.

this has not thus far been the case for Bahá'ís who are merely visiting the country. Indeed, the relative ease with which Bahá'ís have been able to leave Iran and to return for visits stands in stark contrast to the virulent persecution of the Bahá'ís who reside there. This inconsistency may reflect yet one more tactic in the government's ongoing effort to rid Iran of all Bahá'ís and, in addition, be a ploy to enable the authorities to deny accusations of their gross mistreatment of the Bahá'ís. Whatever the Iranian government's motives, the fact is that at this time, Iranian Bahá'ís living outside Iran experience relatively few problems visiting that country.

Non-Iranian Americans are generally advised not to travel to Iran. However, if one feels one has a compelling need to visit Iran, one may seek permission to do so from the Universal House of Justice, which can be contacted at secretariat@bwc.org. The House of Justice has also made it clear in past communications that it is not in the best interests of the Faith for Bahá'ís from the West to visit the Bahá'í Holy Places in Iran. You are encouraged to weigh all of the factors described above in light of your own unique background before arriving at a decision as to whether to visit Iran. As indicated above, you may also write to the Universal House of Justice for further guidance.

You are assured of our best wishes. With loving Bahá'í greetings, Kenneth E. Bowers Secretary

ON THE WEB

The National Spiritual Assembly has shared a *Compilation of Guidance Relating to the Bahá'í Approach to Non-Involvement in Partisan Political Activity*. To download, log in to bahai.us/community/ ■

Calendar

BOSCH BAHÁ'Í SCHOOL

500 Comstock Lane • Santa Cruz, CA 95060
phone 831-423-3387 • fax 866-935-4994
bosch@usbnc.org • www.bosch.org

GREEN ACRE BAHÁ'Í SCHOOL

61 Green Acre Dr. • Eliot, ME 03903
phone 207-439-7200 • fax 888-519-4384
greenacre@usbnc.org • www.greenacre.org

LOUHELEN BAHÁ'Í SCHOOL

3208 S. State Rd. • Davison, MI 48423
phone 810-653-5033 • fax 810-653-7181
louhelen@usbnc.org • www.louhelen.org

All permanent centers of learning are planning online programs; please check the website for each location.

SEASONAL SCHOOLS

For more up-to-date information, go to the website listed for the particular school

Many seasonal Bahá'í schools invite participants directly, especially those engaged in neighborhood community-building processes. Others conduct conventional registration.

To find out more about school sessions near you, please inquire with your Regional Bahá'í Council (contact information on page 2) or the Office of Education and Schools (schools@usbnc.org or 847-853-7874).

ELSEWHERE IN THE UNITED STATES

Check with individual event organizers for the most up-to-date details

MAY 18–21: 115th Bahá'í National Convention, Bahá'í House of Worship, Wilmette, Illinois. For delegates and invited guests only. Scheduled in May this year because of the Bahá'í International Convention, which is to take place April 24–May 2.

WILMETTE INSTITUTE

Online learning
1233 Central St. • Evanston, IL 60201
Phone/fax: 877-WILMETTE (toll-free)
wi@usbnc.org • wilmetteinstitute.org

Free webinars: wilmetteinstitute.org/webinars/ Articles and newsletter sign-up: wilmetteinstitute.org/articles/ Community learning: wilmetteinstitute.org/community-learning-courses Check the website for each course's tuition, group or other discounts, and college credit prospects. A few courses are available on demand; others have specific schedules.

NOVEMBER 3–Dec. 14: "Empower Your Marriage & Family to Thrive" with Riaz Mostaghim, Wendi Momen Nov. 3–Dec. 14: "God Summons Europe (Part II)" with Shahrokh Monjazerb Nov. 10–Dec. 21: "Praying Together: The Devotional Gathering" with Dumazi Volontiya, Wendi Momen Nov. 10–Dec. 28: "Chinese Religions for Deepening and Dialogue" with Stephen Boyanton Nov. 17–Jan. 4: "Writing Biographies and Histories" with Robert Stockman, Roger Dahl, Thelma Batchelor, Richard Hollinger, Janet Fleming Rose

DECEMBER 8–Jan. 25: "Exploring Bahá'u'lláh's Last Major Work: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf" with Necati Alkan Dec. 15–Feb. 1: "Philosophy and the Bahá'í Faith" with Mikhail Yu. Sergeev, Harold Rosen

JANUARY 18–March 14: "Gifts of the Spirit: The Spiritual Practice of Creative Writing" with Sandra Hutchison

- On demand:
- "Engaging in Parental Consent for Marriage"
 - "Thinking of Relationships and Marriage?"
 - "Nurturing Your Baby Spiritually During Pregnancy"
 - "Enhancing Love, Friendship, and Service in Your Marriage"

CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM

Do you have an upcoming or recent change of address? You can keep receiving The American Bahá'í with little or no interruption in any of the following ways:

- Update your address online! You have two choices: Use http://updatemyinfo.bahai.us OR: Sign in to www.bahai.us/community/ with your Bahá'í Online Services Account.
 - OR: Inform your Spiritual Assembly secretary about your new address and the date of your move; the local secretary can use eMembership or the mail to inform the national Membership Office of the change.
 - OR: Contact the Membership Office directly (email Membership@usbnc.org).
 - OR: Fill out the form at right and mail this page to Membership Office, Bahá'í National Center, 1233 Central St., Evanston, IL 60201-1611. If you photocopy this form, please also include a copy of the address label printed on the back cover.
- Please contact the Membership Office at the Bahá'í National Center (Membership@usbnc.org) if you wish to receive your own copy of The American Bahá'í in addition to the one your household already receives.

تغییر نشانی پستی

لطفاً برای هرگونه تغییر نشانی پستی، یا برای دریافت کردن مکاتبات به تعداد معین، با دفتر احصائیة (Membership Office) در دفتر محفل روحانی ملی به نشانی زیر تماس بگیرید:

Membership Office, Bahá'í National Center
1233 Central St. Evanston, IL 60201-1611
(email Membership@usbnc.org)

از این پس نیازی به تماس مستقیم با سردبیر مجله

PARA ACTUALIZAR SU DIRECCIÓN Si necesita actualizar su dirección u otra información de contacto para recibir The American Bahá'í y otros envíos del Centro Bahá'í Nacional: • visitar updatemyinfo.bahai.us • o ingresar a www.bahai.us/community/myprofile y hacer click en "Contact information" y "Edit" • o contactar con la Oficina de Membresía: membership@usbnc.org • o completar el formulario en esta página y enviarlo a: Office of Membership Bahá'í National Center 1233 Central St. Evanston, IL 60201

A. Name(s) ID#

B. New residence address

Street address Apt/Unit #

Street address

City

State

C. New mailing address (if different)

First and last name Apt/Unit #

Street address

City

State ZIP Code

D. New community

New Bahá'í community Move date

E. Home telephone number F. Work telephone number

() ()

G. Preferred e-mail address



James Humphrey, Editor jhumphrey@usbnc.org Kayla Taylor, Story Acquisition Editor ktaylor@usbnc.org Richard Doering, Graphics and Photo Coordinator rdoering@usbnc.org Joyce Litoff, Office of Communications jlitoff@usbnc.org

SUBMITTING ARTICLES OR PHOTOGRAPHS

Full information is on www.bahai.us/community/ — sign in with your Bahá'í Online Services Account. Every item will be carefully considered, but we cannot guarantee publication. Articles should be clear, concise and relevant to the aims of the current Plan. We may edit stories for length and style. We cannot print advance articles to publicize locally sponsored events, but may be able to list them in the Calendar pages. Sorry, but we cannot publish poems.

Photographs should be bright, well-composed and in focus. Please identify people when possible. Electronic photo images should be high pixel count (5 megapixels or larger), in TIFF or JPEG format.

See upcoming deadlines on page 2

Change of address?

Find instructions on the inside back cover to make sure you keep receiving
The American Bahá'í

تغییر نشانی پستی

لطفاً برای هر گونه تغییر نشانی پستی، یا برای دریافت کردن مکاتبات به تعداد معین، با **دفتر احصائیه** (Membership Office) در دفتر محفل روحانی ملی به نشانی زیر تماس بگیرید:

Bahá'í National Center • 1233 Central Street • Evanston, IL 60201

(email Membership@usbnc.org)

از این پس نیازی به تماس مستقیم با سردبیر مجله نیست. برای تغییر نشانی، فرم مخصوص که در صفحه ما قبل آخر مجله در اختیار شما گذاشته شده را تکمیل فرمایید و به نشانی بالا ارسال کنید.

BAHÁ'Í BOOKSTORE

NEW

Pause & Reflect: Meditations for Community

The fourth title in the *Pause & Reflect* series, a compilation from the Bahá'í writings on the topic of community. A community with a shared sense of purpose is a powerful thing, and when that shared sense of purpose is rooted in the desire to contribute to the betterment of society, then a community has the potential for transformative change. It is hoped these passages will offer inspiration, for both reflection and action in our lives and communities.

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