

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

June 15, 2023

To the participants in the fifth annual
ARISE/Pupil of the Eye Conference

Dearly loved Friends,

It is with tremendous warmth, affection, and admiration that the National Spiritual Assembly greets you as you embark on five days of meaningful discourse—in a space designed to foster healing and discovery—for the fifth annual gathering of the beloved friends of African descent, referred to so lovingly in the Bahá'í writings as the “*pupil of the eye*” through which “*the light of the spirit shineth forth.*”

As you come together over this Juneteenth weekend—a holiday of historic significance that still has implications for the state of racial justice in this country today—we call to mind the supplications of the Universal House of Justice in its July 22, 2020 message to the Bahá'ís of the United States, in which it writes: “We ardently pray that the American people will grasp the possibilities of this moment to create a consequential reform of the social order that will free it from the pernicious effects of racial prejudice and will hasten the attainment of a just, diverse, and unified society that can increasingly manifest the oneness of the human family.”

In the coming days, as you visit places replete with meaning, such as the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and hear from many distinguished speakers—whose work in the area of racial and social justice is illumined by the light of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh—you will all, it is hoped, be inspired to continue the urgent work of building vibrant communities when you return home. Whether through activities that promote expansion and consolidation, social action, or participation in the discourses of society, may every friend in attendance wholeheartedly engage in the exigencies of the Nine Year Plan in his or her respective clusters—for your spiritual insights are critical in assisting all of us to achieve the goal of releasing the society-building power of the Faith for the transformation of our communities.

The steps you are taking are bold. The conversations you are having are meaningful. The relationships you are building are essential. The friends gathered at this conference embody the qualities of “high-mindedness and high resolve.” Yet, when you face those challenges and setbacks intrinsic to the “deeply unsettled age” in which we live, may you draw strength from these words of the Supreme Body: “Your commitment to tread this road with determination and insight, drawing upon what you have learned in recent years about translating Bahá'u'lláh's teachings into reality, will have to be sustained until the time, anticipated by Shoghi Effendi, when you will have contributed your decisive share to the eradication of racial prejudice from the fabric of your nation.”

The National Spiritual Assembly assures you of its abiding love and of its heartfelt prayers that your every endeavor as part of this great “global spiritual enterprise” may attract bountiful blessings and confirmations.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,



Kenneth E. Bowers
Secretary