

## **Summary of our Concerns in 1995**

From Bob James & Chuck Egerton letter to the Universal House of Justice, (10 December 1995)

### **NINE POINTS**

- Our current Bahá'í community is mostly white, and we fear that if the teaching work succeeds in bringing in large numbers of people of color we will not be prepared for the impact of this diversity.
- Because so many of us have a simplistic and superficial understanding of the most vital and challenging issue we fear many of the new believers may leave the Faith, as occurred in the 1970's in the south.
- We fear that a major opportunity to relieve humanity's suffering due to racism is being blocked because of a lack of understanding of this issue and because of a fear of being audacious and making mistakes.
- We fear that white Bahá'ís are not standing up to champion this issue, that they remain unaware and uneducated, seeing no need to change, and are unconsciously blocking progress toward greater racial unity.
- We fear that white Bahá'ís, having been unknowingly conditioned by American society with subconscious feelings of superiority, are unwilling to challenge and to change their concepts and attitudes toward non-whites.
- We fear that black Bahá'ís, unknowingly conditioned by American society to feel inferior, have sometimes accepted a lesser role in the Bahá'í community. They need to be empowered to develop the necessary confidence and assertiveness, to arise to serve Bahá'u'lláh, and to demonstrate and share the beauty of their culture and heritage.
- We fear that black Bahá'ís will continue to feel suspicious toward white Bahá'ís and withdraw from active community life until whites demonstrate their willingness to be transformed by Bahá'u'lláh and strive to overcome their prejudice.
- We fear that current political ideologies are contaminating the Bahá'í community on issues such as affirmative action, welfare, "color-blind" justice and denial that racism is America's major problem. These ideologies, at their root, have a tendency to blame the victim for society's ills.
- We fear that, due to current events mentioned above, blood will again run in the streets of America and we will not deflect the grave danger 'Abdu'l-Bahá so emphatically warned us about.

**Universal House of Justice Reply to 10 December 1995 letter from Bob James & Chuck Egerton:**

The Universal House of Justice has received and read with interest your letter dated 10 December 1995 seeking its guidance in regard to the work of achieving race unity in the United States. We have been instructed to send the following reply. Since the Writings contain so much material on this subject, already brilliantly summarized and expounded by the beloved Guardian, the House of Justice does not feel it would be feasible or useful to rehearse that with which you are already very well familiar. The friends, generally, need to digest this material, to study and internalize it, until they have a profound grasp of the Bahá'í perspective on the matters which you have identified as ones on which there is no true unity of thought. For this—mastery of the Teachings—there is no effective substitute.

In essence, the House of Justice feels that methods should be subordinated to purposes and goals, and are to be selected, adapted or discarded, as they show themselves to be effective or not. In this regard, it has often been observed that attempts which set out, self-consciously, to arrive at unity often lose momentum, unless they lead beyond discussion to some form of action. With respect to principles, it will assist the friends greatly if the issue of addressing race unity can be formulated within the broad context of the social development of the community. The distinctiveness of the Bahá'í approach to many issues needs to be sharpened. In our public outreach, we need to correlate the Teachings with current thought, and be very clear about the bases and assumptions upon which various conceptions rest, and not swallow uncritically whatever ideas happen to be in vogue. Likewise, as a community we need to be future oriented, to have a clear vision and to think through the steps necessary to bring it to fruition. This is where consultation with the Bahá'í institutions will provide a critical impulse to your own efforts.

(letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice dated 25 February 1996)

Included as first letter in:

**Extracts from Letters Written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to Individual Believers in the United States on the Topic of Achieving Race Unity**  
(Updated Compilation 1996–2020)