

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

April 7, 2021

To the American Bahá'í community  
for the Feast of Jalál

Dearly loved Friends,

Just over four years ago, we addressed a letter to the American Bahá'í community on the issue of racial justice and its relationship to the Five Year Plan. Motivated by an evident resurgence of racial violence singling out African Americans, that letter—published on February 25, 2017—explored the dynamic connection between the vision for racial unity and justice promulgated in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and the pursuit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan, the key to realizing that vision. The letter was informed by guidance given us decades ago by Shoghi Effendi, as timely now as it was then. It also drew on abundant guidance from the Universal House of Justice, which affirmed that it is in the concepts and approaches contained in the current series of Plans that we will find the surest path to eradicating the scourge of racial prejudice from our society.

The Assembly has since issued a series of letters further exploring this theme. The community has been blessed with a continuous stream of guidance from the House of Justice in response to believers' concerns. This loving counsel proved invaluable during the past year's racial unrest, which provoked in the hearts of the community of the Greatest Name renewed desire, a sense of urgency, and restiveness to apply the balm of His message to the slow-healing wounds of racism. In July we received a seminal message from the Supreme Body, addressed exclusively to this community, reaffirming our unique mission and elucidating principles essential to its success.

Throughout this same period, the Assembly has observed with admiration and pride the efforts of the friends to be faithful to the sacred task entrusted to them. Though the road ahead remains long and difficult, we are most pleased by the energy and sincerity with which so many of you have responded. One illustration of this can be found in a report undertaken at our request by a group of friends who have, over the course of some two years, followed efforts in three distinct clusters: Charlotte, North Carolina; Nashville, Tennessee; and Washington, DC. We were especially interested in learning about neighborhoods where the work is being carried out with a conscious intent to build communities characterized by inclusiveness, a frank and loving conversation about race, and an effective empowerment of all people—that is, communities where racial justice and unity will be watchwords in all the activities of the community and in all its institutional decisions.

A summary of that study has been posted on the Race Unity Action Resources website (at <https://sites.google.com/bahai.us/race-unity-action/ideas-for-action/social-action?authuser=0>). We warmly invite you to explore this document, which includes a variety of narratives describing the efforts of the friends and what they are learning. To quote from but one, written by a white male describing his efforts to sustain the junior youth group he endeavored to launch:

[I'm] realizing through this process and study of the guidance that the instruments of the Plan are actual means by which we will disable one by one every instrument used now and in humanity's past to exalt one people over another. Understanding this, I'm realizing this is not just the core activities themselves but all the additional cultures, attitudes, qualities, etc.

which the core activities help us to develop as we participate in them. . . .

[W]hat's interesting is that as the work progresses, it seems to be that the core activities themselves are not the end but the means to building our capacity and that of our community to release society-building powers in the Faith.

These many testimonials show us that the challenges of the work are great and the obstacles are many. Yet just as notable is the soul-transforming impact of contact with the Word of God, leading to consultations that are spiritually based and patterns of friendship and service that are vibrant and new. Also included in the report are a host of recommendations founded on experience, such as the need for believers to:

- Remember the power of humility and a posture of learning as effective means to build bonds of friendship and create environments for frank and loving consultation about race.
- Find practical ways to make freedom from racial prejudice the watchword in every event and occasion connected with the Plan.
- Become more knowledgeable about the history of American race relations, to better understand longstanding realities and how the Faith can address them.
- Develop increasing unity of thought on how we can address the eradication of racial prejudice through the community-building work of the Divine Plan.

Dearest friends, these are but a few of the insights gleaned from this study, which we commend to your consideration in the hope that everyone will be encouraged to make his or her own contributions to our collective learning. As the House of Justice has reminded us:

The movement of your clusters to the farthest frontiers of learning will usher in the time anticipated by Shoghi Effendi at the start of your collective exertions, when the communities you build will directly combat and eventually eradicate the forces of corruption, of moral laxity, and of ingrained prejudice eating away at the vitals of society.

Be ever confident that the unfailing assistance of the Lord of the Kingdom will ensure the ultimate success of your efforts to create the world anew. Be certain of our ardent prayers on your behalf.

With our deepest love,

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



Kenneth E. Bowers  
Secretary