

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

March 1, 2022

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

Dearly loved Friends,

During the past several years, a number of believers in this country—together with this Assembly and the national community as a whole—have been the fortunate recipients of explicit guidance from the Universal House of Justice on the matter of racial prejudice. In these messages, the Supreme Body has reaffirmed in no uncertain terms the statements made by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi about both the enormity and pressing nature of this “most vital and challenging issue,” reminding us of the inescapable responsibility of Bahá'ís to contribute our special share to the rebuilding of America as a truly unified and just society. It has also clearly pointed to the Master's Divine Plan—and the current series of subsidiary Plans it has devised—as the way forward in achieving a mission of sacred and profound importance, a mission that will require long years of consecrated, unswerving, tireless, and united effort to be completely fulfilled.

In a letter recently written to an individual believer, the House of Justice offered a potent summary of the many dimensions of this matter:

Racial prejudice — and specifically anti-Black prejudice — has existed in some form in the United States for more than four centuries. The problem did not appear overnight, and the process of healing centuries-old wounds will also take time. The friends should have no illusions about the immensity of what they have been called to do in the writings of the Faith. All Bahá'ís in the United States, whatever their background or country of origin, naturally accept Bahá'u'lláh's principle of the oneness of humanity. For a Bahá'í, therefore, there is no basis for any suggestion of the superiority or the inferiority of any race. Indeed, the oneness of humanity is the *sine qua non* of any conception that seeks to overcome racism. But it is one thing to hold a belief in humanity's oneness and another to build a world that manifests this principle in all its dimensions—particularly in a society that has experienced the intractable and continually mutating forms that racism has taken in response to every effort to eliminate it. Such a complete transformation can only be witnessed in the fullness of time in the spiritual civilization envisioned by Bahá'u'lláh.

In pursuit of this objective, then, all Bahá'ís are called to persistently act, little by little, to deliberately cultivate freedom from racial prejudice within their daily lives, their families, their community-building activities, their involvement with society, and all the social spaces in which they participate, so that they increasingly evince the Bahá'í teachings, especially the oneness of humanity. If the friends become fountains of love and create environments wherein the spirit and practice of race unity are prevalent, every trace of race prejudice will ultimately be removed. Yet, to concentrate only on correcting the manifestations of racial prejudice, with an inseparable tendency to focus on the faults of others, rather than on how to work together to create race unity, will invariably lead to a deepening of the differences so widespread in American society.

Let no one suggest that the Bahá'í community stands completely apart and immune from the ills of society. Let no one imagine that it is possible to eliminate every vestige of the impact of racial prejudice on the Bahá'í community before fully engaging in the work of teaching and community building within the wider society. And while there is currently a priceless opportunity for African American believers to reach out to the African American population in the United States, let it not be presumed that in some way this opportunity is closed to Bahá'ís of other racial backgrounds. Rather, the friends should make every effort to reach out to all people, offer the healing remedy of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings to everyone, and invite all to participate in the challenging, but rewarding, process of learning to translate what He has written into reality and action. For it is only through an ever-swelling mass of active workers, and their ever-growing capacity to expand the reach of their activities, that the process of creating the expression of race unity in more and more social spaces and of eliminating all forms of prejudice within them can unfold.

This same letter offers principles to assist the friends guiding the discussion of race in our communities, as well as commentary regarding interpretations of the phrase "*pupil of the eye*," which was used by both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá in reference to people of African descent. The House of Justice's letter to the individual, sans identifiers, and its one attachment—an excerpt of a letter sent on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer in 1942—are attached, and we commend them to your careful study.

Dearest friends, as we enter the sacred season of the Bahá'í Fast—a time of material restraint and spiritual nourishment—let each of us prayerfully consider what service we might render to the realization of Bahá'u'lláh's vision of a society founded on recognition of the oneness of humanity. Let us ardently supplicate His assistance and confirmations as we strive to build a new world that will reflect the beauty of His teachings in all their splendor.

With warmest Bahá'í love,

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



Kenneth E. Bowers
Secretary

Attachments (2)