

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

November 27, 2019

To the participants in the
“Pupil of the Eye” Conference

Dearly loved Friends,

Barely a month has passed since Bahá’ís across the globe celebrated that momentous day, 200 years ago, when the Báb, the Prophet-Herald of the long-promised Day of God, was born into this world. His appearance set in motion spiritual forces of incalculable potency designed, on one hand, to shatter for all time antiquated concepts and patterns governing human affairs that were characterized by ignorance, strife, and conflict, and, on the other, to establish in their place the foundation on which a wholly new order could be erected, resting on mighty pillars of true knowledge and divine justice. These two processes were described by the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, as agencies both “of integration and of disintegration, of order and chaos . . . [which] are but aspects of a greater Plan, one and indivisible, whose Source is God, whose author is Bahá’u’lláh, the theater of whose operations is the entire planet, and whose ultimate objectives are the unity of the human race and the peace of all mankind.”

In these opening decades of the 21st century, we remain very much in the midst of a struggle to achieve this destiny, so glorious and long sought for. Nowhere is this more apparent than in America. Despite the sacrificial efforts of countless people over many generations to remold our society according to noble ideals and the genuine progress that has been made, we continue to be mired in rampant materialism, sunk in ever-deepening and more deplorable moral decay, and enmeshed in a deep-seated and seemingly intractable form of racism that manifests itself in virtually every dimension of our public and private lives. Even those who have accepted the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh, however earnest their belief, are not immune to the pernicious influence of these forces and the insensitivities and injustices to which they give rise. All are the result of our immature and incomplete understanding and practice of the shining truth of the oneness of humanity.

You, the people of color of this nation who for so long have been subjected to wounds grievous and slow-healing, understand well that what the world needs is more than mere lip-service to the ideal of human brotherhood. You know that the hearts of your fellow citizens must be entirely transformed; that patterns of community life must be created that will over time manifestly and magnetically demonstrate the richness and splendor of Bahá’u’lláh’s unifying teachings; and that Bahá’í institutions must be tested and refined until they reflect the full glory of His vision. You are only too aware that America desperately needs persuasive evidence of “a true pattern, in action, of something better than it already has.” You also know that only the Bahá’í revelation has the power to fulfill these longings.

You have assembled at a time of critical importance to the nation’s future. You will spend the next few days reflecting on the contribution you can make to the task of applying Bahá’u’lláh’s healing medicine to a sick and diseased society. In particular, you

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will prayerfully consider the implications of this situation for people of African descent and the special role they have been assigned by the Blessed Beauty Himself, as stated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

Bahá'u'lláh once compared the colored people to the black pupil of the eye surrounded by the white. In this black pupil is seen the reflection of that which is before it, and through it the light of the spirit shineth forth.

This powerful statement provides indisputable proof of the greatness of your divinely appointed station and mission, to be long cherished in the trying days ahead as we together work shoulder to shoulder to build a new civilization, the like of which the world has never seen.

These tasks must be taken up in community after community, the Universal House of Justice has stated, in a "sustained, spiritual and social transformation" that will "gradually grow in scale and effectiveness—through action and reflection over time." The Supreme Body further elaborates that it is "[t]hrough collective action in the various social spaces in which the friends are wholeheartedly engaged to translate the Teachings into action that they will, through mistakes and difficulties, with love and forbearance, learn to resolve challenges pertaining to race, both within their communities and in the society at large."

Throughout the course of this conference you will doubtless call to mind African American believers of past generations whose outstanding services helped lay the strong foundation on which this community stands. We refer, of course, to such heroes of our Faith as Pocahontas Pope, Robert Turner, Elsie Austin, Hand of the Cause of God Louis G. Gregory, Magdalene Carney, and countless others who stand ready to assist you. Above all, you will surely call to mind the incomparable example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Whose keen and uncompromising sense of justice, infinite love, and ceaseless encouragement set the very pattern of Bahá'í service. Whatever the obstacles ahead, however seemingly insurmountable the challenges, we all have faith in the ultimate victory of this sacred Cause, and in the destiny assigned to America by the Master's unerring pen:

Likewise, the continent of America is, in the eyes of the one true God, the land wherein the splendors of His light shall be revealed, where the mysteries of His Faith shall be unveiled, where the righteous will abide and the free assemble.

We ardently supplicate the Beloved of the World to enfold you, each and every one, in the shelter of His loving embrace, and to bless, guide, and sustain you in all your efforts to spread the Light of this glorious Day.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

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