

**Exploring the Destiny of
America through the Pupil
of the Eye: Early African
American Bahá'is and the
Making of a Spiritual
Nation**





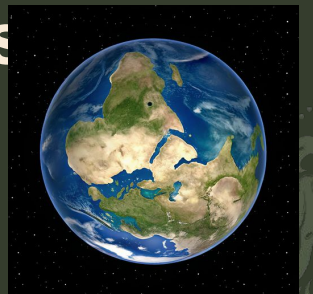
“The American people are indeed worthy of being the first to build the Tabernacle of the Most Great Peace, and proclaim the oneness of mankind.... For America hath developed powers and capacities greater and more wonderful than other nations.... The American nation is equipped and empowered to accomplish that which will adorn the pages of history, to become the envy of the world, and be blest in both the East and the West for the triumph of its people.... The American continent gives signs and evidences of very great advancement. Its future is even more promising, for its influence and illumination are far-reaching. It will lead all nations spiritually.”

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, (quoted in the *Advent of Divine Justice*, 1971, p. 72.)



“What other community has produced pioneers combining to such a degree the essential qualities of audacity, of consecration, of tenacity, of self-renunciation, and unstinted devotion, that have prompted them to abandon their homes, and forsake their all, and scatter over the surface of the globe, and hoist in its uttermost corners the triumphant banner of Bahá’u’lláh?”

-Shoghi Effendi, *Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 7.



African American Bahá'í Pioneers





Valerie Wilson (1952) - Liberia

Vivian Wesson and Mavis Nymon (1954) – Togo
West Africa, Republic of Guinea, Liberia, Sierra
Leone

William Foster (1952) – Liberia

Elsie Austin (1953) – Morocco, Nigeria, Cameroon,
Kenya, Ghana, Togo

Earlita and John Fleming, Alyce Janssen, Luella
McKay and Nick McKay (1953) – Spanish Morocco

Lecile Webster (1950's) – Korea, Japan, Hong
Kong

Joy and David Earl (1950's, 1960's) – Korea,
Japan

Hallie E. Queen (1909-1913) – Puerto Rico

Zylpha Mapp Robinson (1970's) – Uganda,
Barbados, Jamaica, England, Germany, The Gambia,
Botswana....

Harriet Gibbs Marshall (1922) – Haiti

Louis Gregory (1934) – Haiti

Rosa and John Shaw (1939) – Haiti

Ellsworth and Ruth Blackwell (1940's) – Haiti

Gwili Posey (1969) – Haiti

Camillia Hutcheanson (1960's) – Haiti

Betty Jane Walker (1960's) – Haiti

Robert and Farrel Love (1950's) - Haiti

I TOO

Langston Hughes



I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

theinsightt.com

"Everywhere I have traveled I have been received
as a man, save in my own country." – Robert
Abbot

"I was never lonely or lonesome. I missed my
mom and my dad, I really did. But to say that I
missed being here in the United States, I never
did." – Earlita Fleming

Freedom from racial prejudice, in any of its forms,
should, at such a time as this when an increasingly large
section of the human race is falling a victim to its
devastating ferocity, be adopted as the watchword of the
entire body of the American believers, in whichever state
they reside, in whatever circles they move, whatever their
age, traditions, tastes, and habits. It should be
consistently demonstrated in every phase of their activity
and life, whether in the Bahá'í community or outside it, in
public or in private, formally as well as informally,
individually as well as in their official capacity as
organized groups, committees and Assemblies.

- Shoghi Effendi, Advent of Divine Justice, - p. 30.



“I am moved, at this juncture, as I am reminded of the share which, ever since the inception of the Faith in the West, the handmaidens of Bahá’u’lláh, as distinguished from the men, have had in opening up, single-handed, so many, such diversified, and widely scattered countries over the whole surface of the globe, not only to pay a tribute to such apostolic fervor as is truly reminiscent of those heroic men who were responsible for the birth of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh, but also to stress the significance of such a preponderating share which the women of the West have had and are having in the establishment of His Faith throughout the whole world.”

-Shoghi Effendi, *Advent of Divine Justice*, p.

“Consider how many important women have come into this world! How many queens have lived upon this earth! How many distinguished ladies have become the presidents of Societies! But neither have their names nor any great account of their deeds been left behind!”

-‘Abdu’l-Bahá, (quoted in *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Egypt*, by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, p. 253)



**Creadell Johnetta Haley
(1916-2000)**

“Exert yourselves; your mission is unspeakably glorious. Should success crown your enterprise, America will assuredly evolve into a center from which waves of spiritual power will emanate, and the throne of the Kingdom of God will, in the plentitude of its majesty and glory, be firmly established.”

-‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Portrait of WAC (Women’s Army Corps) member Marjorie Randolph Suggs Edwards, circa 1944. Source: Marjorie Randolph Suggs Edwards Papers, Jackson Library, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.



(1917-2005)



Creadell-Haley
(1916 - 2000)



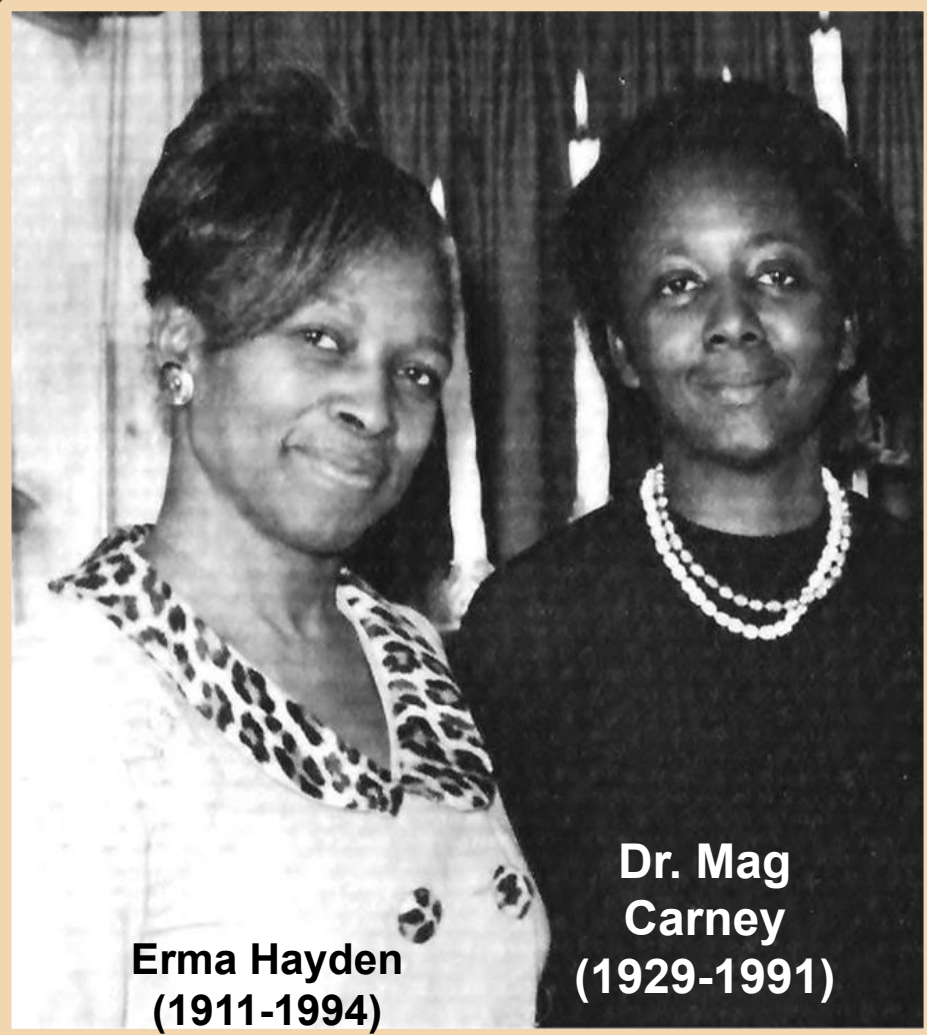
The wrong in the world continues to exist just because people talk only of their ideals, and do not strive to put them into practice. If actions took the place of words, the world's misery would very soon be changed into comfort. My hope for you is that you will ever avoid tyranny and oppression; that you will work without ceasing till justice reigns in every land.... – Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, p. 16.

The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes. - Bahá'u'lláh, The Arabic Hidden Words 2

Ms. King Jackson, 74, a former assistant attorney for Atlanta during the Maynard Jackson and Andrew Young administrations, was praised as a hero of the civil rights movement. – *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 2007



**Attorney Marion King Jackson
(1932-2007)**



Erma Hayden
(1911-1994)

Dr. Mag
Carney
(1929-1991)

O radiant leaves, I swear by the
Beauty of the Desired One and the
Mystery of Existence that if ye work
actively in this realm, the
outpourings of the Blessed Beauty
will reflect as the sun in the mirrors
of the hearts.
– ‘Abdu’l-Bahá





Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (center)
being interviewed by actor and
activist Harry Belafonte (right), and
George Goodman, community news
director at WLIB radio, New York

**George Wendell Goodman
(1901-1981)**



"I just need you people to know...this is the work of God. I am a vessel!"
- Ieshia Evans (July 10, 2016)

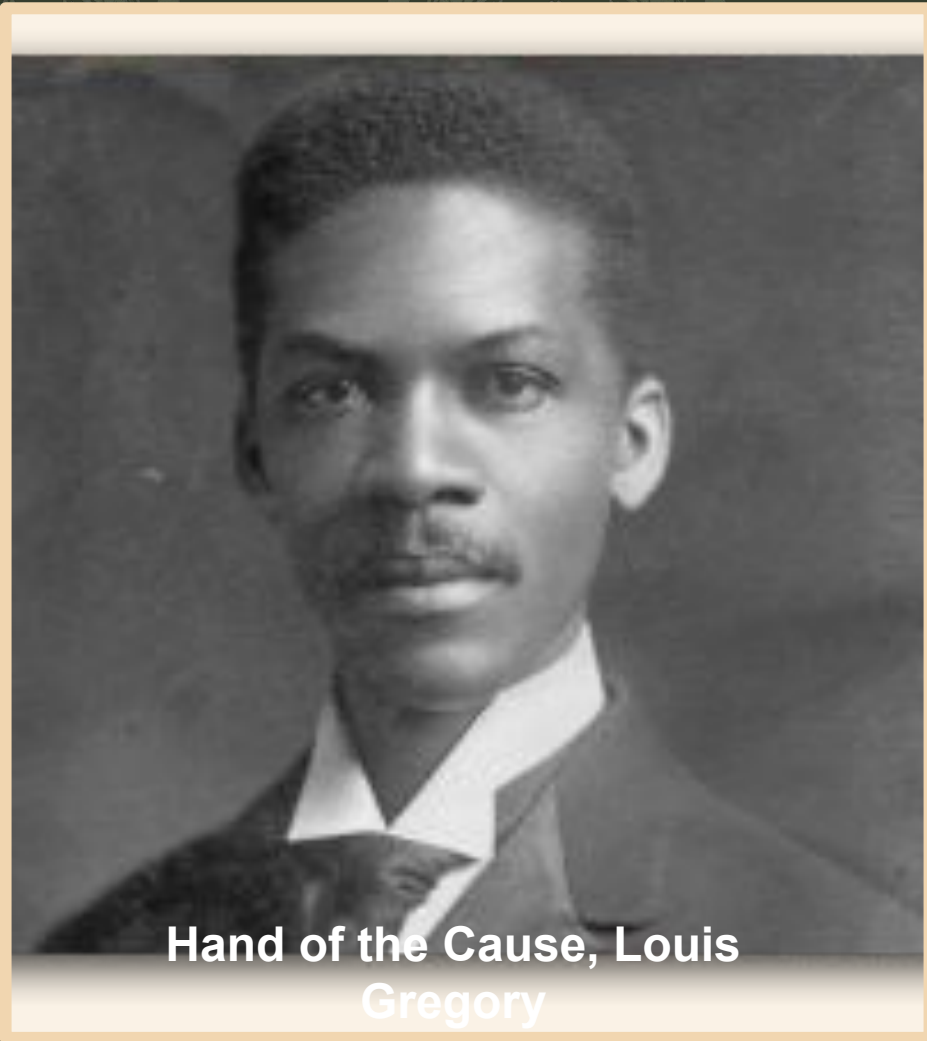


**Let deeds not
words be
your
adorning.**
- Bahá'u'llah



“Baha’u’llah once compared the coloured people to the black pupil of the eye surrounded by the white. In this black pupil you see the reflection of that which is before it, and through it the light of the Spirit shines forth.”

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá (quoted in *Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 31.



**Hand of the Cause, Louis
Gregory**

(1874-1951)

‘Abdu’l-Bahá envisioned a new sociology for the world in general and America in particular. He invites the attention of social workers to the oases rather than the deserts of their environments and helps them to extend the boundaries; He is able to make all places fruitful. His is a wonderful culture of hearts and minds.

Louis Gregory, Race Amity in America: An Historical Review, *The Bahá’i World*, Vol. 7, 1939, pg. 653





**Attorney Helen Elsie Austin
(1908-2004)**

This force of disunity (outlined by a quote of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá) especially as it is generated from racial prejudice is the most dangerous issue in America today. The race issue has become the most subtle and powerful contract of the American people used by the forces most opposed to democracy in any form...Now is the time for every bit of organization, strength and for all types of leadership to unite in an educational campaign to mould new ideas of Americanism and race and to develop a sense of unity in the American people.... Brotherhood is no longer an idea in this age, it is a social necessity without which all men will be in danger of extermination....

- H. Elsie Austin, “Racism is a Deadly Force in America.” in *Rebels in Law: Voices in History of Black Women Lawyers* by John Clay Smith. (2000) p. 144-146.



"We (people) have been torn apart through wars caused by hatred based on artificial barriers and defenses...Many have been brought up to support race, language, class and sex prejudice ... It's time to tear these barriers down." – Dr. Sarah Martin Pereira, 1990



Dr. Sarah Martin Pereira
(1909-1995)



Coralie Franklin Cook
1861-1942

Coralie Franklin Cook was an American professor, public speaker, and activist. She is also the first known descendant among those enslaved at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello estate to graduate from college.

She became a prominent leader in the Black Women's Club movement.

Coralie was active in the woman's suffrage movement and a member of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA).

Coralie Franklin Cook was a Bahá'í and represented the Bahá'í Faith among the black intellectual community in Washington, D.C. since 1910, and formally declared around 1913. Many Bahá'í activities in the Washington, D.C. area were organized and influenced by Coralie and her husband George. She felt the beliefs of this faith would benefit young African Americans by helping them realize their potential and provide them with a more positive outlook on life. As a result, she is credited with bringing this Faith to Howard University students by organizing meetings on campus.





“For no matter how ignorant of the Source from which those directing energies proceed, and however slow and laborious the process, it is becoming increasingly evident that the nation as a whole, whether through the agency of its government or otherwise, is gravitating, under the influence of forces that it can neither comprehend nor control, towards such associations and policies, wherein, as indicated by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, her true destiny must lie. Both the community of the American believers, who are aware of that Source, and the great mass of their countrymen, who have not as yet recognized the Hand that directs their destiny, are contributing, each in its own way, to the realization of the hopes, and the fulfillment of the promises, voiced in the above-quoted words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.”

- Shoghi Effendi, *Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 73.



