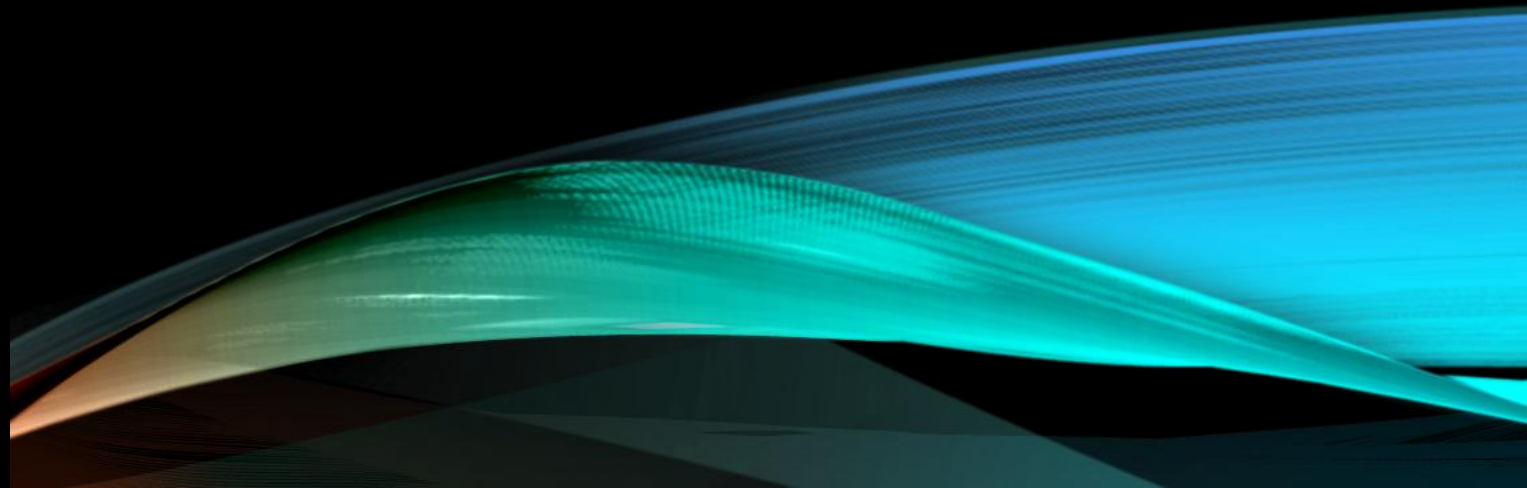




DESTINY OF AMERICA: RACE UNITY

Louhelen, Midwest Summer School 2025



“Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. He Who is the Daystar of Truth beareth Me witness! So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.”

--Epistle to the Son of the Wolf

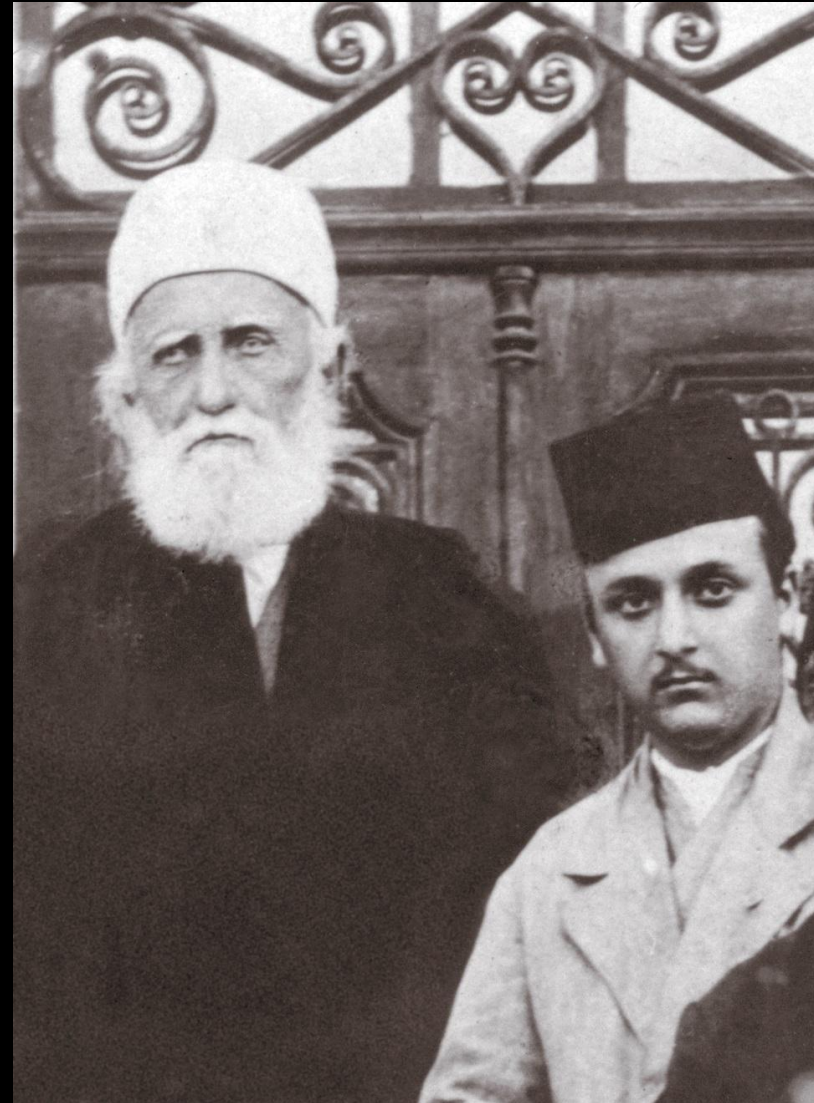
BAHA'U'LLAH

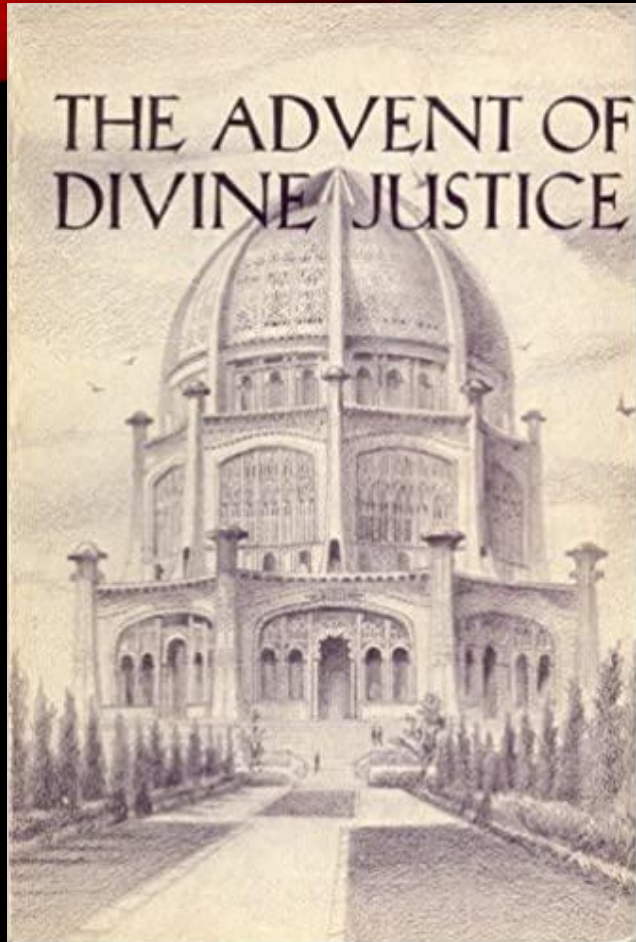
1912: 'ABDU'L-BAHA VISITS



A legacy of commentary
and action on American
race relations

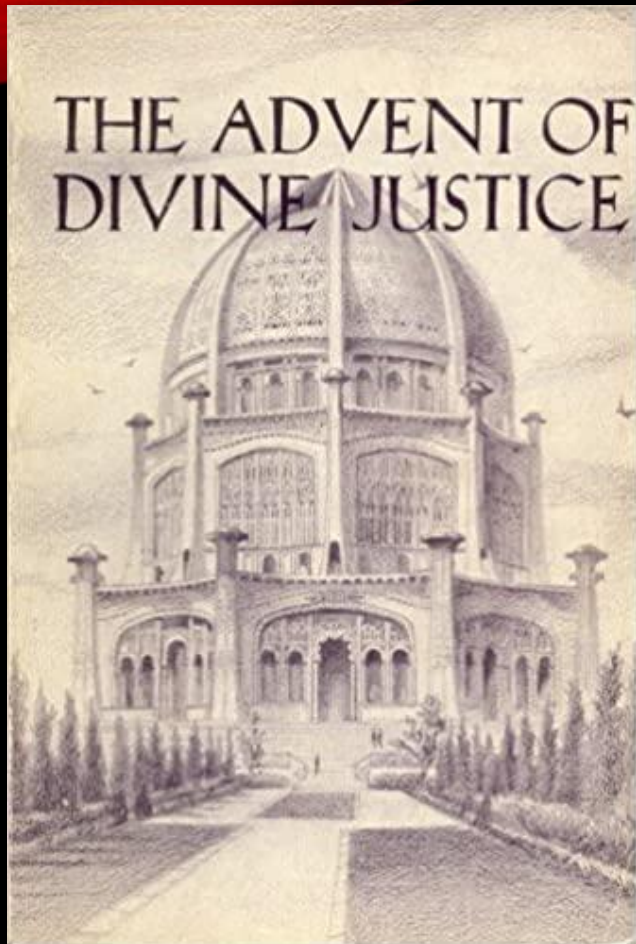
'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi





FROM SHOOGHI EFFENDI

As to **racial prejudice**, the corrosion of which, for well-nigh a century, has bitten into the fiber, and attacked the whole social structure of American society, it should be regarded as constituting the most vital and challenging issue confronting the Bahá'í community at the present stage of its evolution. The ceaseless exertions which this issue of paramount importance calls for, the sacrifices it must impose, the care and vigilance it demands, the moral courage and fortitude it requires, the tact and sympathy it necessitates, invest this problem, . . . with an urgency and importance that cannot be overestimated.



FROM SHOOGHI EFFENDI

... Let them call to mind, fearlessly and determinedly, the example and conduct of 'Abdu'l-Bahá while in their midst. Let them remember His courage, His genuine love, His informal and indiscriminating fellowship, His contempt for and impatience of criticism, tempered by His tact and wisdom. Let them revive and perpetuate the memory of those unforgettable and historic episodes and occasions on which He so strikingly demonstrated His keen sense of justice ...

A SUCCESSION OF AUTHORITY AND INSIGHT



Shoghi Effendi



Universal House of Justice

A moment of historic portent has arrived for your nation as the conscience of its citizenry has stirred, creating possibilities for marked social change. It holds significance not only for the destiny of America anticipated in the Sacred Writings, but also for the mission entrusted to your community by the hand of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who cherished you dearly and called you to a path of sacrifice and high endeavor. . . . We ardently pray that the American people will grasp the possibilities of this moment to **create a consequential reform of the social order that will free it from the pernicious effects of racial prejudice** and will hasten the attainment of a just, diverse, and united society that can increasingly manifest the oneness of the human family.

--Universal House of Justice, July 22, 2020



. Sadly, however, your nation's history reveals that any significant progress toward racial equality has invariably been met by countervailing processes, overt or covert, that served to undermine the advances achieved and to reconstitute the forces of oppression by other means. Thus, whatever the immediate outcome of contemporary events, you need not be deterred, for you are cognizant of the "long and thorny road, beset with pitfalls" described by the Guardian that still lies ahead. Your commitment to tread this road with determination and insight, drawing upon what you have learned in recent years about translating Bahá'u'lláh's teachings into reality, will have to be sustained until the time, anticipated by Shoghi Effendi, when you will have contributed your decisive share to the eradication of racial prejudice from the fabric of your nation.

--Universal House of Justice, July 22, 2020



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THOUGHTS: WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE
MEAN?



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--Universal House of Justice, July 22, 2020



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The principles and exhortations that guide your steps are well known to you from the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi. The concepts and approaches for social transformation developed in the current series of Plans that can be utilized to promote race unity in the context of community building, social action, and involvement in the discourses of society have been set out in our messages. Every believer, as the promulgator of Bahá'u'lláh's central principle of the oneness of humanity, should deeply meditate upon it and weigh its demanding implications for the profound alteration of thought and action required at this time. July 22, 2020



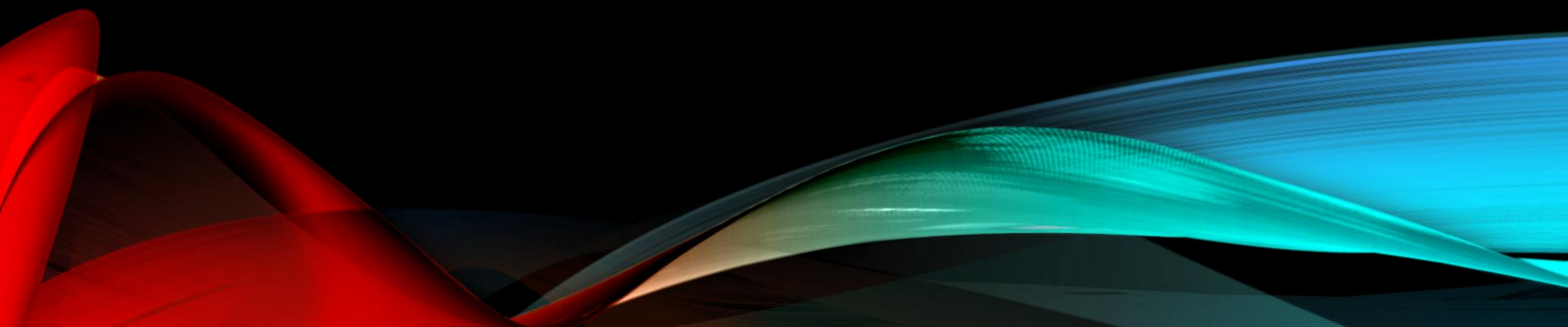
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SUMMARY, PART OF JULY 22, 2020 MESSAGE

- “A mission entrusted to your community by the hand of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá”
- We need “a consequential reform of the social order that will free it from the pernicious effects of racial prejudice,”
- “countervailing processes” in this country inevitably hinder progress,
- Baha’is will need to sustain our efforts until the time . . .
- The concepts given to us by Shoghi Effendi, and the tools given to us by the House of Justice, are “concepts and approaches for social transformation developed in the current series of Plans that can be utilized to promote race unity in the context of community building, social action, and involvement in the discourses of society.”
- The example of ‘Abdu’l-Baha is key.

CHALLENGES FOR OUR NATIONAL COMMUNITY

Today



A VISIT, SUMMER 2024: UNDERSTANDING OUR DESTINY



SUBSEQUENT STEPS

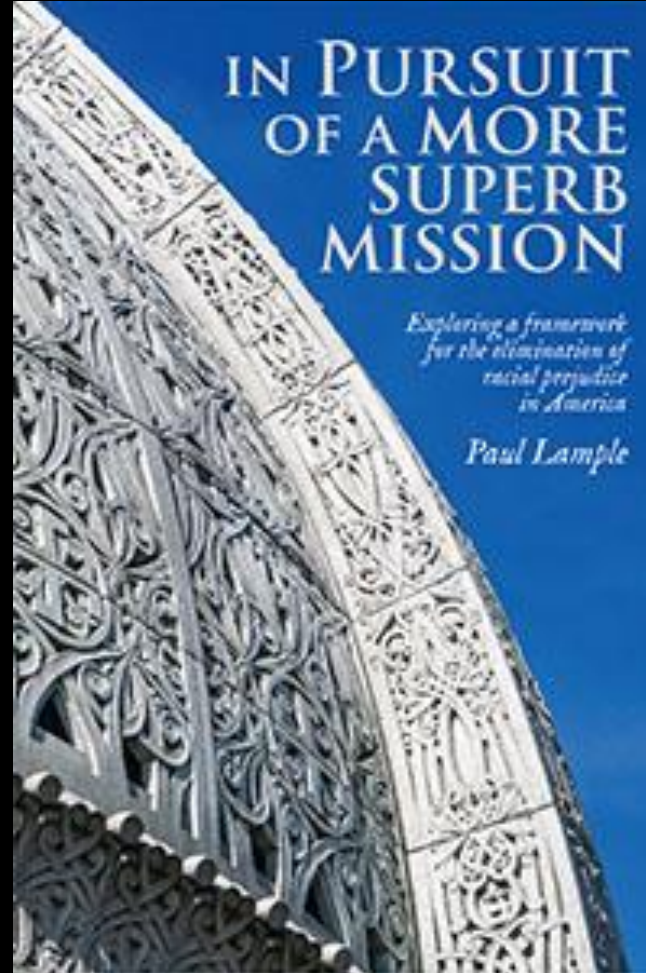
- September 30, 2024 letter
- A Common Endeavor

A Common Endeavor: Building America's Future - Full broadcast





INSIGHTS: RACE UNITY





**Household reaction
To this book**

INSIGHTS: THE CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE ON RACE

- Lack of agreement about nature of racism
- **“At this time, the people of the United States do not have unity of thought and vision about how the problem of racial prejudice can be resolved; they are, instead, divided socially and politically on this issue. As you witness, even among Black intellectuals, as well as within the African American community more generally, there are disparate views.”** Universal House of Justice to an individual, December 15 2020
 - Disparate organizations/ theories
 - Lack of agreement on what is racism
 - Essentialism v.s. color blindness

INSIGHTS: THE CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE ON RACE

- Instead, for Baha'is
- At this time, the people of the United States do not have unity of thought and vision about how the problem of racial prejudice can be resolved; they are, instead, divided socially and politically on this issue. As you witness, even among Black intellectuals, as well as within the African American community more generally, there are disparate views. **Therefore, rather than becoming enmeshed in patterns of behavior pervasive in the wider society that seek to assign blame or deal with issues at the level of broad generalities, Bahá'ís have the opportunity to address the challenge of racial prejudice through the instrumentality of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and His Administrative Order. They do so by concentrating on practical challenges in specific settings through consultation in an atmosphere of love and common purpose.**
 - Universal House of Justice to an individual, December 15 2020

INSIGHT: CONSIDER AN EVOLVING FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING

The junior youth **spiritual empowerment** program

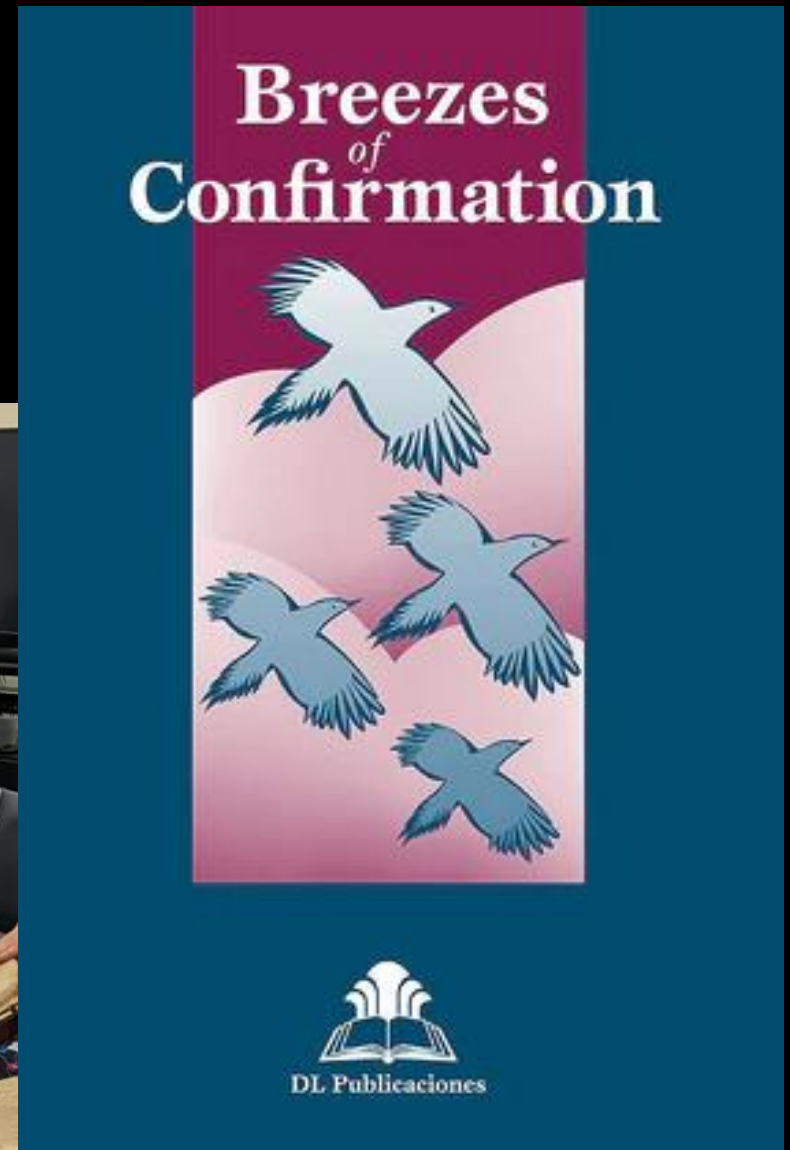
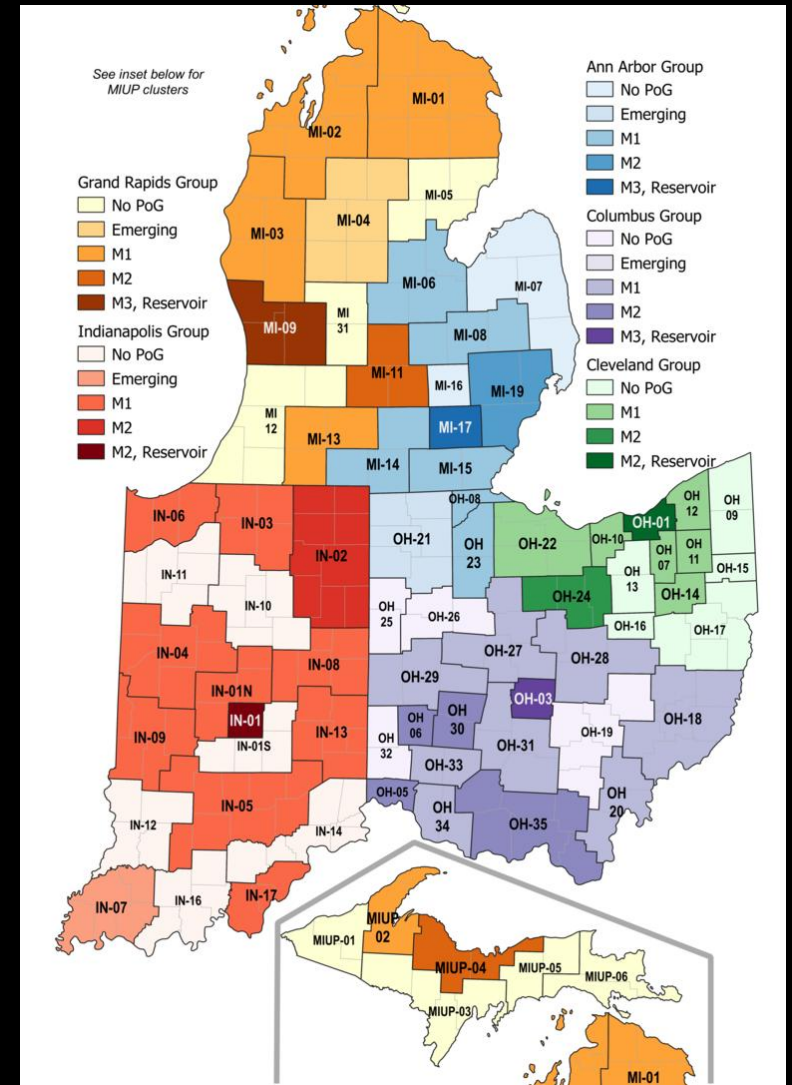


Photo from web page RBCMWS

INSIGHT: AN EVOLVING FRAMEWORK OF LEARNING

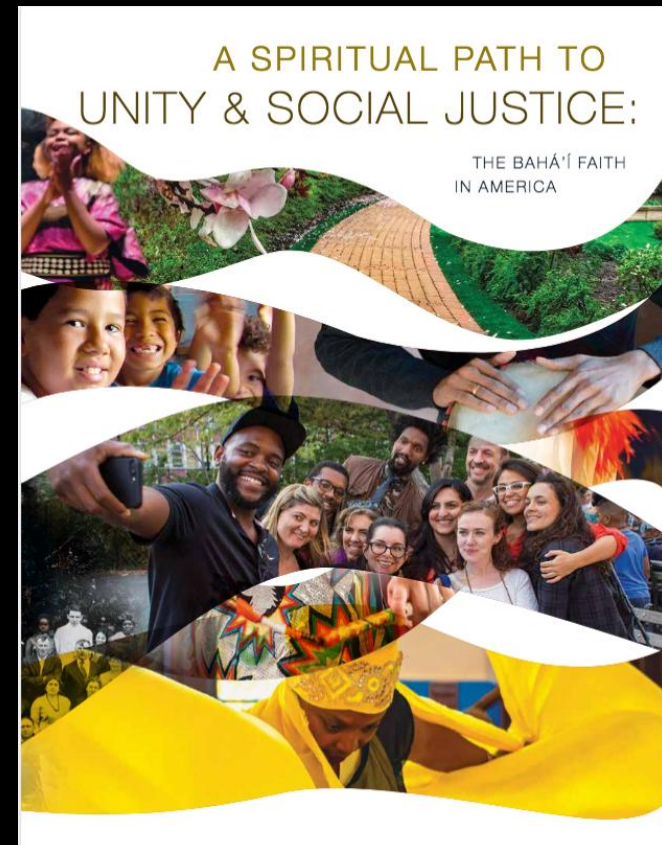
Movement of clusters



SO HOW ARE WE DOING NOW?

Traditional, continuing efforts:

- **Building interracial Baha’l communities**
- Brochures, publications
- Race unity initiatives, direct (conferences, picnics, institutions)
- Courses, gatherings
- Scholarship

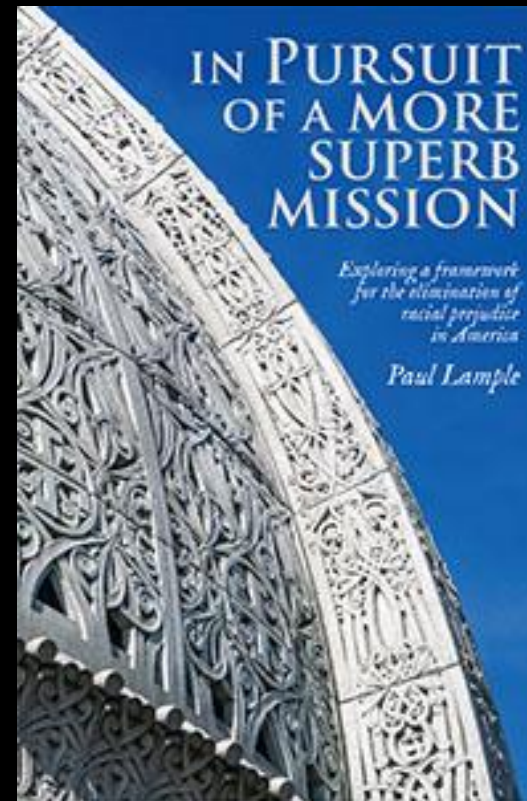


THOUGHTS: HOW MIGHT OUR APPROACH
TO TACKLING RACIAL PREJUDICE
EVOLVE?



UNDERSTAND PRINCIPLES FOR AN EVOLVING FRAMEWORK FOR RACE UNITY

- Belief in the essential oneness of humanity
- But understanding that this is unity in diversity, not homogeneity
- Shared responsibility of all races
- “creating ever-larger social spaces that manifest the oneness of humanity.”



SUCH AS: UNITY IN DIVERSITY

- Belief in the essential oneness of humanity
- **But understanding that this is unity in diversity, not homogeneity**
- Shared responsibility of all races
- “creating ever-larger social spaces that manifest the oneness of humanity.”

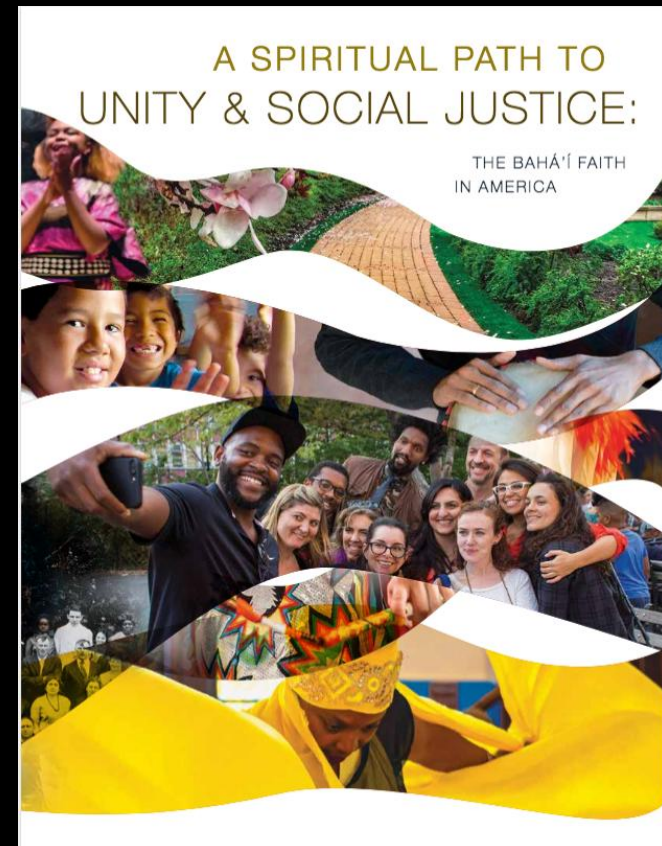
Each culture has many salutary elements that are conducive to promoting unity in diversity, which must be reinforced, as well as negative aspects that contribute to breeding prejudice, which must be gradually abandoned. Meaningful interactions among people hailing from different human groups foster an environment within which advances in culture can occur. To retain and promote customs and traditions that generate animosity is a grave obstacle to the betterment of society.

UJH Nov 1 2022

REPEATING: WHAT WE ARE DOING NOW

Traditional, continuing efforts:

- Building interracial Baha'i communities
- Brochures, publications
- Race unity initiatives, direct (conferences, picnics, institutions)
- Courses, gatherings
- Scholarship



WHAT ELSE ARE WE DOING NOW?

Branching out in exploration:

- Race Unity Desk research
 - Overview of US
 - Case studies—Flint?
- Office of Public Affairs efforts
- Youth initiatives, conferences, camps
- Our own efforts—learning how to evolve

- [deleted picture of Flint youth]



Devotional meeting: Thomas home

A PERSONAL JOURNEY
WRITTEN PUBLIC DISCOURSE



AN EXAMPLE: 'ABDU'L-BAHA

Ahead of you lie times of trial and promise, of hardship and progress, of anguish and joy. Under all conditions, the Master is your solace and support. For those who aspire to lasting change, His example guides the way—tactful and wise in His approach, penetrating in utterance, indiscriminating in fellowship, unflinching in sympathy for the downtrodden, courageous in conduct, persevering in action, imperturbable in the face of tests, unwavering in His keen sense of justice. And to all who arise to emulate Him, He offers this unflinching assurance: “that which is confirmed is the oneness of the world of humanity. Every soul who serveth this oneness will undoubtedly be assisted and confirmed.”

- Universal House of Justice, July 22, 2020

ORANGEBURG MOVEMENT WARRIORS

SCHOOL DESEGREGATION



Cecil Williams, photographer



STRUGGLING TO LEARN

An Intimate History of School
Desegregation in South Carolina

June Manning Thomas



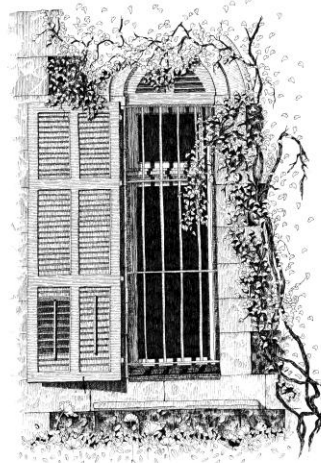
RELIANCE

THE JOURNAL OF BAHÁ'Í STUDIES

La Revue des études bahá'ies/La Revista de estudios bahá'is

Volume 31, number 4

Winter 2021



A Publication of the Association for Bahá'í Studies—North America



'Abdu'l-Baha with friends in Brooklyn, 1912

Media.bahai.org

BREAKOUTS

