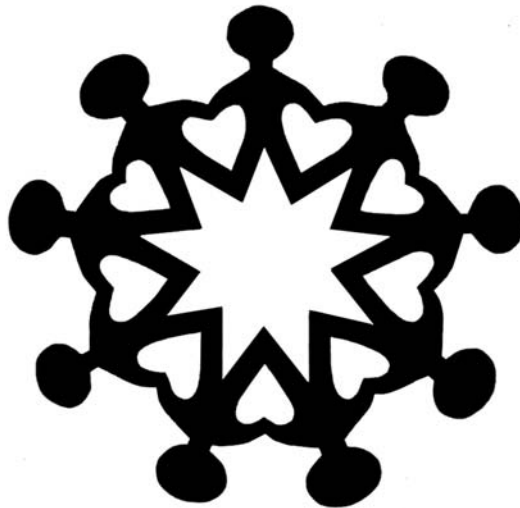


**CORE CURRICULUM
FOR
SPIRITUAL EDUCATION**

**SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR
THE EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN**



Prepared by the
National Bahá'í Education Task Force

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**EQUALITY
FACILITATOR'S MANUAL**



**CORE CURRICULUM
FOR
SPIRITUAL EDUCATION**

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Journal



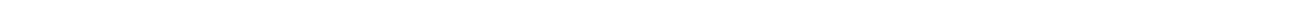
Journal



Journal



Journal



Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education

Spiritual Foundations for the Equality of Women and Men



Introduction to the Course

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☞ key activity

* handout

Welcome, Devotions and Introductions

Purpose:

Create a joyful, loving and spiritually oriented atmosphere.
Build a unified sense of community.
Share logistical information regarding the training.
Introduce the training process and materials using a kinesthetic experience.

Welcome the participants on behalf of yourselves, your sponsoring Local Spiritual Assembly and the National Bahá'í Education Task Force ~

Devotions (music) ~

See suggested prayers and passages that follow.

Logistics ~

Explain the layout of your facility, location of rest rooms and any other housekeeping announcements that are necessary.

Introduction of the facilitators and participants (music, art) ~

Choose an introduction activity from the following pages, or one of your own, that enables participants to get to know each other and share expectations and desired benefits from the course experience.

Devotions Equality and Oneness



God, my God! These are Thy feeble servants; they are Thy loyal bondsmen and Thy handmaidens, who have bowed themselves down before Thine exalted Utterance and humbled themselves at Thy Threshold of light, and borne witness to Thy oneness through which the Sun hath been made to shine in midday splendour. They have listened to the summons Thou didst raise from out Thy hidden Realm, and with hearts quivering with love and rapture, they have responded to Thy call.

Lord, shower upon them all the outpourings of Thy mercy, rain down upon them all the waters of Thy grace. Make them to grow as beauteous plants in the garden of heaven, and from the full and brimming clouds of Thy bestowals and out of the deep pools of Thine abounding grace make Thou this garden to flower and keep it ever green and lustrous, ever fresh and shimmering and fair.

Thou art verily the Mighty, the Exalted, the Powerful, He Who alone, in the heavens and on the earth, abideth unchanged. There is none other God save Thee, the Lord of manifest tokens and signs.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ, PAGES 24-25)

O Thou kind Lord! O Thou Who art generous and merciful! We are the servants of Thy threshold and are gathered beneath the sheltering shadow of Thy divine unity. The sun of Thy mercy is shining upon all, and the clouds of Thy bounty shower upon all. Thy gifts encompass all, Thy loving providence sustains all, Thy protection overshadows all, and the glances of Thy favor are cast upon all. O Lord! Grant Thine infinite bestowals, and let the light of Thy guidance shine. Illumine the eyes, gladden the hearts with abiding joy. Confer a new spirit upon all people and bestow upon them eternal life. Unlock the gates of true understanding and let the light of faith shine resplendent. Gather all people beneath the shadow of Thy bounty and cause them to unite in harmony, so that they may become as the rays of one sun, as the waves of one ocean, and as the fruit of one tree. May they drink from the same fountain. May they be refreshed by the same breeze. May they receive illumination from the same source of light. Thou art the Giver, the Merciful, the Omnipotent.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGE 116

In this Day the Hand of divine grace hath removed all distinctions. The servants of God and His handmaidens are regarded on the same plane. Blessed is the servant who hath attained unto that which God hath decreed, and likewise the leaf moving in accordance with the breezes of His will. This favour is great and this station lofty. His bounties and bestowals are ever present and manifest.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: WOMEN, PAGE 358

Ye are all the leaves of one tree and the drops of one ocean.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, PAGE 129

Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: EPISTLE TO THE SON OF THE WOLF, PAGE 14

Be as one spirit, one soul, leaves of one tree, flowers of one garden, waves of one ocean.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGE 24

My handmaiden, O My leaf! Render thou thanks unto the Best-Beloved of the world for having attained this boundless grace at a time when the world's learned and most distinguished men have remained deprived thereof. We have designated thee 'a leaf' that thou mayest, like unto leaves, be stirred by the gentle wind of the Will of God -exalted be His glory - even as the leaves of the trees are stirred by onrushing winds. Yield thou thanks unto thy Lord by virtue of this brilliant utterance. Wert thou to perceive the sweetness of the title 'O My handmaiden' thou wouldst find thyself detached from all mankind, devoutly engaged day and night in communion with Him Who is the sole Desire of the world.

In words of incomparable beauty We have made fitting mention of such leaves and handmaidens as have quaffed from the living waters of heavenly grace and have kept their eyes directed towards God. Happy and blessed are they indeed. Ere long shall God reveal their station whose loftiness no word can befittingly express nor any description adequately describe.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, PAGES 254-255

If you could see with the eye of truth, great waves of spirituality would be visible to you in this place. The power of the Holy Spirit is here for all. Praise be to God that your hearts are inspired with Divine fervour! Your souls are as waves on the sea of the spirit; although each individual is a distinct wave, the ocean is one, all are united in God.

Every heart should radiate unity, so that the Light of the one Divine Source of all may shine forth bright and luminous. We must not consider the separate waves alone, but the entire sea. We should rise from the individual to the whole. The spirit is as one great ocean and the waves thereof are the souls of men.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: PARIS TALKS, PAGES 83-84

Although these waves may differ in form and shape, they are waves of the same sea. Flowers may be variegated in colors, but they are all flowers of one garden. Trees differ though they grow in the same orchard. All are nourished and quickened into life by the bounty of the same rain, all grow and develop by the heat and light of the one sun, all are refreshed and exhilarated by the same breeze that they may bring forth varied fruits. This is according to the creative wisdom. If all trees bore the same kind of fruit, it would cease to be delicious. In their never-ending variety man finds enjoyment instead of monotony.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGE 51

The plurality of humanity may be likened to the waves, but the reality of humankind is like the sea itself. All the waves are of the same water; all are waves of one ocean.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGE 284

From separation doth every kind of hurt and harm proceed, but the union of created things doth ever yield most laudable results. From the pairing of even the smallest particles in the world of being are the grace and bounty of God made manifest; and the higher the degree, the more momentous is the union. 'Glory be to Him Who hath created all the pairs, of such things as earth produceth, and out of men themselves, and of things beyond their ken.'(1) And above all other unions is that between human beings, especially when it cometh to pass in the love of God. Thus is the primal oneness made to appear; thus is laid the foundation of love in the spirit.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ, PAGE 119

Introductions of the Friends

Getting Acquainted

Purpose:

Assist participants in becoming acquainted with one another.

Cultivate a sense of expectation and personal meaning for attendance at this training.

Take a few moments to reflect individually on the following questions. Then, working with a partner, take turns listening to each other as you share your equality story.

Reflect on your own experiences with equality.

- What have been the high points for you? Select one high point, a time when you felt most alive, most happy; a time when you felt you were making a difference and doing creative, useful, meaningful work.
- What was it about you that felt good, who else was involved, what were you doing, what did you feel you achieved? Describe the “story” around the moment.

Invite each person to introduce their partner to the group, briefly capturing one small element of the story you heard in a single sentence to share with the group as a whole.

Processing the Session:

Turn to the person sitting at your left and talk for a minute or so each on how the ice-breaker (inclusion) activity worked for you. How might you use such an activity with others?

Invite participants to share any insights they may have had with the whole group.

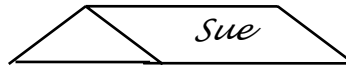
Introductions of the Friends Name Cards

Provide your participants with heavy paper or card stock (approximately 8 1/2" x 11"). From these they will make name cards which can stand up on a table and can be read from across the room.

Instruct them to fold the card in half, crease and open it. Then ask them to fold both ends in to meet at folded line. and crease these folds. If you open the paper, you'll have three creases, like this:



Create a three-dimensional triangular prism using the folds, like this:



Invite participants to write their name, as they wish to be addressed, on one side of their name card. Present the art supplies and invite them to decorate their name card as well. Explain that this can be an on-going art project throughout the course, adding more decoration to their name card as they feel inclined.

Encourage prominent display of the name cards at each person's seat: they are much more visible than label-type name tags, and thus are an aid to consultation.

Purpose:

Briefly acquaint the participants with the guiding quotation in which the framework is grounded. Provide them with a point of reference on which to build stronger understanding of the framework throughout their training process.

≈ KEY

Organizational schema

Discuss the curriculum framework and its source from the sacred text. The learning model of the *Core Curriculum* has been developed from the following statement of Bahá'u'lláh:

Strain every nerve to acquire both inner and outer perfections, for the fruit of the human tree hath ever been and will ever be perfections both within and without. It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for he is then but a barren tree. Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception, and eloquent speech.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Bahá'í Education*, rev. ed. 1999, #9

The organization of the learning model for the *Curriculum*, which will be shared in Module Four, has been guided by this quotation. Learning objectives for the children within each topic area of each strand have been described in accordance with the following definitions:

KNOWLEDGE

A keen awareness of information and facts. The remembering and recall of previously learned material.

WISDOM

True comprehension and insight. The discovery, through experience, of the meaning of information and facts. Wisdom is acquired through experience, consultation, reflection, inspiration and an evolving understanding of spiritual truth.

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION

Penetrating inner vision and the acquisition and utilization of a Bahá'í perspective. The discovery of purpose and meaning. The bringing to bear of Bahá'í spiritual values, principles and laws upon the individual's expanding consciousness of issues and problems. As such it includes the capacity to apply, analyze, and evaluate, using Bahá'í Law, principles and qualities as the standard for discernment.

ELOQUENT 'SPEECH'

The ability to articulate knowledge, understanding and beliefs in a clear and comprehensive way. For the purposes of the Core Curriculum the definition of eloquent 'speech' has been extended beyond articulated language to include the manifestation of all the behaviors that reflect the internalization of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. This involves the integration and synthesis of learning into the active expression of the understanding acquired through knowledge, wisdom and spiritual perception. As such it is the endeavor to live the Bahá'í life, to teach and engage in service to humanity.

≈ Explain that the objectives of this course are also arranged according to this framework.

Purpose:
Give participants a kinesthetic model to
introduce the Core Curriculum Training
process and materials.

Presentation of the Participant Handbooks/Manuals

∞ KEY

Introduction to the Course Process and Presentation of the Participant Handbook/Manual

You can pass out the course manual/binders at this time. Provide some time for participants to look through them.

Emphasize that the manual needs to become personally yours, and may transform as we individually transform through the course process.

Overview of the Equality Course

Course Format and Content Modeling Books and Materials

≈ KEY

Purpose:

Give participants a view of how the training process will unfold and what will be covered.
Familiarize them with their course materials.

Share the following with the participants:

Format

This is designed as a 32 hour equality course to assist participants both to live and to teach others the principle of the equality of women and men.

The course is organized in modules.

Module One: Your Role as an Equality Worker

Module Two: Equality in the World at Large

Module Three: Equality in the Family

Module Four: Teaching Equality "Can Attract Much Notice"

Modeling

Explain how throughout the course sessions the facilitators will endeavor to model behaviors and techniques that are important to be used in the teaching work. Among these are direct use of the Writings, encouragement of memorization of the Writings, use of music, experiential learning activities, cooperative learning experiences, consultation and creative expression.

Books and Materials

Briefly introduce the following publications:

The *Summary of the Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education* provides an overview of the main goals and features of the *Core Curriculum*.

The *Foundations for a Spiritual Education: Research of the Bahá'í Writings* is the compilation of Bahá'í Writings that have guided the development and growth of this project. These Writings are organized around key concepts of the curriculum framework and are provided for your in depth study or as background in gaining familiarity with Bahá'í education, instructional methods and learning tools.

The *Curriculum Booklets* (typically offered through the teacher training program) are the collection of developed goals, topics, objectives, tools and activities from which you will develop detailed educational activities to implement the *Curriculum*. Note that a curriculum booklet on equality is currently in development.

The efforts of the friends in pioneering this project and providing feedback is a vital and valuable service which is greatly appreciated.

Please remind the friends that they should not duplicate and distribute any materials as they are copyrighted, and that some items are intended to be distributed only in connection with the course process. However, they are strongly encouraged to share their materials with the friends in the community, and to provide as much information as they are able regarding the Core Curriculum and the course programs of the National Bahá'í Education Task Force.

Purpose:

Cultivate a sense of personal meaning for attendance at this training.

You may introduce the journals at this time.

Share with the participants the value of journal work; that it can provide:

- time to reflect and process the events, new concepts and activities
- a place to record ideas, insights, questions and concerns
- a place to recognize understanding, consider past events and engage in self evaluation
- a place to describe aspirations and future action steps

Provide friends with a guiding question or statement for their first journal entry, such as:

WHY I HAVE COME TO THE CORE CURRICULUM EQUALITY COURSE?

You might play soft music during journal writing.

SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN
CORE CURRICULUM
FOR SPIRITUAL EDUCATION



MODULE ONE

Your Role as an Equality Worker

Learning Objectives ≈ KEY

KNOWLEDGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To know some of the events in the life of the Greatest Holy Leaf.To recognize some of the factors that distinguish this century from others.To know the logical arguments that 'Abdu'l-Bahá used to teach the principle of equality.To know that human virtues belong equally to all.To identify effective strategies for promoting equality.Become familiar with the national teaching initiative focusing on equality.To know that the Greatest Holy Leaf is an example for all mankind.
WISDOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To recognize the station of the Greatest Holy Leaf in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.To understand the significance of the principle of the equality of women and men fulfilling prophesy and initiating a new era of human fulfillment.To understand that equality is a critical factor in establishing peace and prosperity.To understand that the distinct qualities of women and men may be related to child rearing.To understand that both love and justice promote equality and preserve unity.To understand the core curriculum learning model.
SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To perceive ways to emulate the example of the Greatest Holy Leaf.To recognize some of the assumptions we have about women and men.To perceive that both sexes can express all the qualities of God.To perceive the relationship between the principles of equality and unity.To perceive ways to use the core curriculum learning model for self transformation
ELOQUENT 'SPEECH'	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To express how our own human relationships reflect the principles of oneness and equality.To use logic and reason to teach the principle of equality.To plan to use a presentation on equality in our local communities.To demonstrate understanding of the complementary relationship of men and women.To demonstrate some strategies for promoting equality.Demonstrate capacity to host spiritual gatherings to introduce the principle of equality to all humankind

Purpose:

Introduce Module One.
Give participants an overview of the themes and objectives that will be explored.

Welcome

Devotions (with music)

If your presentation of Module One is immediately preceded by the Introduction to the course, you will not need welcome and devotions.

Introduce Module One

- Handout, project on the screen or display a poster of the Module One themes and objectives.
- Read through these aloud.
- Point out to the participants that the learning model - Knowledge, Wisdom, Spiritual Perception and Eloquent 'Speech' - is not a linear model. This module will begin with with acquiring knowledge of qualities exhibited by the Greatest Holy Leaf and move to spiritual perception of how to exhibit these qualities in our own lives.

Bahíyyih Khánum, The Greatest Holy Leaf

Purpose:

- To know some of the events in the life of the Greatest Holy Leaf.
- To recognize her station in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.
- To perceive ways to emulate her example.

≈ KEY



Set a sweet mood by playing Persian music (such as *Music from the Bahá'í World Congress*) as background music. Consider using leaves as decoration near a framed portrait of the Greatest Holy Leaf or a photograph of her shrine. Invite the friends to clear their minds of all things else to focus on the words of the beloved Guardian as the facilitators alternate reading the excerpts from Shoghi Effendi's tribute to the Greatest Holy Leaf with fervor and eloquence.

Introduce the readings by noting that these passages are from the beloved Guardian's tribute to his great-aunt, the Greatest Holy Leaf, the daughter of Bahá'u'lláh, sister of Ábdu'l-Bahá, outstanding heroine of our Faith, designated by Bahá'u'lláh with "a station such as none other woman hath surpassed."

Allow the music to continue playing after the dramatic reading is completed. Invite the friends to turn to their journals. Invite them to record their reflections on the Greatest Holy Leaf perhaps by responding to the following questions:

- What qualities did the Greatest Holy Leaf exemplify and under what circumstances of time and place?
- How can I incorporate those qualities in my life, in my own circumstances?

Process the Session:

What will be the impact on my own self, my family and friends, my community, and the world at large as I increasingly manifest the qualities so beautifully demonstrated by the Greatest Holy Leaf?

Bahíyyih Khánum, The Greatest Holy Leaf

Focus Questions:

What qualities did the Greatest Holy Leaf exemplify and under what circumstances of time and place?

How can I incorporate those qualities in my life, in my own circumstances?

What will be the impact on my own self, my family and friends, my community, and the world at large as I increasingly manifest the qualities so beautifully demonstrated by the Greatest Holy Leaf?



As far back as the concluding stages of the heroic age of the Cause, which witnessed the imprisonment of Bahá'u'lláh in the Síyáh-Chál of Tihrán, the Greatest Holy Leaf, then still in her infancy, was privileged to taste of the cup of woe which the first believers of that Apostolic Age had quaffed.

How well I remember her recall, at a time when her faculties were still unimpaired, the gnawing suspense that ate into the hearts of those who watched by her side, at the threshold of her pillaged house, expectant to hear at any moment the news of Bahá'u'lláh's imminent execution! In those sinister hours, she often recounted, her parents had so suddenly lost their earthly possessions that within the space of a single day from being the privileged member of one of the wealthiest families of Tihrán she had sunk to the state of a sufferer from unconcealed poverty. Deprived of the means of subsistence her illustrious mother, the famed Navváb, was constrained to place in the palm of her daughter's hand a handful of flour and to induce her to accept it as a substitute for her daily bread.

And when at a later time this revered and precious member of the Holy Family, then in her teens, came to be entrusted by the guiding hand of her Father with missions that no girl of her age could, or would be willing to, perform, with what spontaneous joy she seized her opportunity and acquitted herself of the task with which she had been entrusted! The delicacy and extreme gravity of such functions as she, from time to time, was called upon to fulfil, when the city of Baghád was swept by the hurricane which the heedlessness and perversity of Mírzá Yahyá had unchained, as well as the tender solicitude which, at so early an age, she evinced during the period of Bahá'u'lláh's enforced retirement to the mountains of Sulaymáníyyih, marked her as one who was both capable of sharing the burden, and willing to make the sacrifice, which her high birth demanded.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, PAGES 32-33

That her sensitive heart instantaneously reacted to the slightest injury that befell the least significant of creatures, whether friend or foe, no one who knew her well could doubt. And yet such was the restraining power of her will - a will which her spirit of self-renunciation so often prompted her to suppress - that a superficial observer might well be led to question the intensity of her emotions or to belittle the range of her sympathies. In the school of adversity she, already endowed by Providence with the virtues of meekness and fortitude, learned through the example and exhortations of the Great Sufferer, Who was her Father, the lesson she was destined to teach the great mass of His followers for so long after Him.

Armed with the powers with which an intimate and long-standing companionship with Bahá'u'lláh had already equipped her, and benefiting by the magnificent example which the steadily widening range of Ábdu'l-Bahá's activities afforded her, she was prepared to face the storm which the treacherous conduct of the Covenant-breakers had aroused and to withstand its most damaging onslaughts.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, PAGES 35-36

With the passing of Bahá'u'lláh and the fierce onslaught of the forces of disruption that followed in its wake, the Greatest Holy Leaf, now in the hey-day of her life, rose to the height of her great opportunity and acquitted herself worthily of her task. It would take me beyond the compass of the tribute I am moved to pay to her memory were I to dwell upon the incessant machinations to which Muhammad-Alí, the arch-breaker of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, and his despicable supporters basely resorted, upon the agitation which their cleverly-directed campaign of misrepresentation and calumny produced in quarters directly connected with Sultan Abdu'l-Hamíd and his advisers, upon the trials and investigations to which it gave rise, upon the rigidity of the incarceration it reimposed, and upon the perils it revived. Suffice it to say that but for her sleepless vigilance, her tact, her courtesy, her extreme patience and heroic fortitude, grave complications might have ensued and the load of Ábdu'l-Bahá's anxious care would have been considerably increased.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, PAGES 37-38

The outbreak of the Great War gave her yet another opportunity to reveal the true worth of her character and to release the latent energies of her heart. The residence of Ábdu'l-Bahá in Haifa was besieged, all throughout that dreary conflict, by a concourse of famished men, women and children whom the maladministration, the cruelty and neglect of the officials of the Ottoman Government had driven to seek an alleviation to their woes. From the hand of the Greatest Holy Leaf, and out of the abundance of her heart, these hapless victims of a contemptible tyranny, received day after day unforgettable evidences of a love they had learned to envy and admire. Her words of cheer and comfort, the food, the money, the clothing she freely dispensed, the remedies which, by a process of her own, she herself prepared and diligently applied - all these had their share in comforting the disconsolate, in restoring sight to the blind, in sheltering the orphan, in healing the sick, and in succouring the homeless and the wanderer.

She had reached, amidst the darkness of the war days the high water-mark of her spiritual attainments. Few, if any, among the unnumbered benefactors of society whose privilege has been to allay, in various measures, the hardships and sufferings entailed by that Fierce Conflict, gave as freely and as disinterestedly as she did; few exercised that undefinable influence upon the beneficiaries of their gifts.

Age seemed to have accentuated the tenderness of her loving heart, and to have widened still further the range of her sympathies. The sight of appalling suffering around her steeled her energies and revealed such potentialities that her most intimate associates had failed to suspect.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, PAGES 40-41

It would take me too long to make even a brief allusion to those incidents of her life, each of which eloquently proclaims her as a daughter, worthy to inherit that priceless heritage bequeathed to her by Bahá'u'lláh. A purity of life that reflected itself in even the minutest details of her daily occupations and activities; a tenderness of heart that obliterated every distinction of creed, class and colour; a resignation and serenity that evoked to the mind the calm and heroic fortitude of the Báb; a natural fondness of flowers and children that was so characteristic of Bahá'u'lláh; an unaffected simplicity of manners; an extreme sociability which made her accessible to all; a generosity, a love, at once disinterested and indiscriminating, that reflected so clearly the attributes of Ábdu'l-Bahá's character; a sweetness of temper; a cheerfulness that no amount of sorrow could becloud; a quiet and unassuming disposition that served to enhance a thousandfold the prestige of her exalted rank; a forgiving nature that instantly disarmed the most unyielding enemy - these rank among the outstanding attributes of a saintly life which history will acknowledge as having been endowed with a celestial potency that few of the heroes of the past possessed.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, PAGES 42-43

Dearly-beloved Greatest Holy Leaf! Through the mist of tears that fill my eyes I can clearly see, as I pen these lines, thy noble figure before me, and can recognize the serenity of thy kindly face. I can still gaze, though the shadows of the grave separate us, into thy blue, love-deep eyes, and can feel in its calm intensity, the immense love thou didst bear for the Cause of Thine Almighty Father, the attachment that bound thee to the most lowly and insignificant among its followers, the warm affection thou didst cherish for me in Thine heart. The memory of the ineffable beauty of thy smile shall ever continue to cheer and hearten me in the thorny path I am destined to pursue. The remembrance of the touch of thine hand shall spur me on to follow steadfastly in thy way. The sweet magic of thy voice shall remind me, when the hour of adversity is at its darkest, to hold fast to the rope thou didst seize so firmly all the days of thy life.

Bear thou this my message to Ábdu'l-Bahá, thine exalted and divinely-appointed Brother: If the Cause for which Bahá'u'lláh toiled and laboured, for which Thou didst suffer years of agonizing sorrow, for the sake of which streams of sacred blood have flowed, should, in the days to come, encounter storms more severe than those it has already weathered, do Thou continue to overshadow, with Thine all-encompassing care and wisdom, Thy frail, Thy unworthy appointed child.

Intercede, O noble and well-favoured scion of a heavenly Father, for me no less than for the toiling masses of thy ardent lovers, who have sworn undying allegiance to thy memory, whose souls have been nourished by the energies of thy love, whose conduct has been moulded by the inspiring example of thy life, and whose imaginations are fired by the imperishable evidences of thy lively faith, thy unshakable constancy, thy invincible heroism, thy great renunciation.

Whatever betide us, however distressing the vicissitudes which the nascent Faith of God may yet experience, we pledge ourselves, before the mercy-seat of thy glorious Father, to hand on, unimpaired and undivided, to generations yet unborn, the glory of that tradition of which thou hast been its most brilliant exemplar.

In the innermost recesses of our hearts, O thou exalted Leaf of the Abhá Paradise, we have reared for thee a shining mansion that the hand of time can never undermine, a shrine which shall frame eternally the matchless beauty of thy countenance, an altar whereon the fire of thy consuming love shall burn for ever.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, PAGES 43-45

Purpose:

- To recognize some of the factors that distinguish this century from others.
- To understand the significance of the principle of the equality of women and men fulfilling prophesy and initiating a new era of human fulfillment.



In teams of two, read the passages “This Radiant Century” aloud.

Reflect on the passages just read and discuss the following questions:

- *What are some of the scientific evidences and spiritual indicators that this is truly a radiant century?*
- *How does the promulgation of the principle of equality indicate that this is a new and wonderful age?*

Share one high point of your discussion with the entire group.

Process the session:

How can we respond to those who only see the suffering of this age of transition?

This Radiant Century

Focus Questions:

What are some of the scientific evidences and spiritual indicators that this is truly a radiant century?
How does the promulgation of the principle of equality indicate that this is a new and wonderful age?



The realities of things have been revealed in this radiant century, and that which is true must come to the surface. Among these realities is the principle of the equality of man and woman - equal rights and prerogatives in all things appertaining to humanity.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 283

In the estimation of historians this radiant century is equivalent to one hundred centuries of the past. If comparison be made with the sum total of all former human achievements, it will be found that the discoveries, scientific advancement and material civilization of this present century have equaled, yea far exceeded the progress and outcome of one hundred former centuries. The production of books and compilations of literature alone bears witness that the output of the human mind in this century has been greater and more enlightening than all the past centuries together. It is evident, therefore, that this century is of paramount importance. Reflect upon the miracles of accomplishment which have already characterized it: the discoveries in every realm of human research. Inventions, scientific knowledge, ethical reforms and regulations established for the welfare of humanity, mysteries of nature explored, invisible forces brought into visibility and subjection - a veritable wonder-world of new phenomena and conditions heretofore unknown to man now open to his uses and further investigation. The East and West can communicate instantly. A human being can soar in the skies or speed in submarine depths. The power of steam has linked the continents. Trains cross the deserts and pierce the barriers of mountains; ships find unerring pathways upon the trackless oceans. Day by day discoveries are increasing. What a wonderful century this is! It is an age of universal reformation.... Just as the thoughts and hypotheses of past ages are fruitless today, likewise dogmas and codes of human invention are obsolete and barren of product in religion. Nay, it is true that they are the cause of enmity and conducive to strife in the world of humanity; war and bloodshed proceed from them, and the oneness of mankind finds no recognition in their observance. Therefore, it is our duty in this radiant century to investigate the essentials of divine religion, seek the realities underlying the oneness of the world of humanity and discover the source of fellowship and agreement which will unite mankind in the heavenly bond of love...

If love and agreement are manifest in a single family, that family will advance, become illumined and spiritual; but if enmity and hatred exist within it, destruction and dispersion are inevitable. This is, likewise, true of a city. If those who dwell within it manifest a spirit of accord and fellowship, it will progress steadily and human conditions become brighter, whereas through enmity and strife it will be degraded and its inhabitants scattered. In the same way, the people of a nation develop and advance toward civilization and enlightenment through love and accord and are disintegrated by war and strife. Finally, this is true of humanity itself in the aggregate. When love is realized and the ideal spiritual bonds unite the hearts of men, the whole human race will be uplifted, the world will continually grow more spiritual and radiant and the happiness and tranquillity of mankind be immeasurably increased. Warfare and strife will be uprooted, disagreement and dissension pass away and universal peace unite the nations and peoples of the world. All mankind will dwell together as one family, blend as the waves of one sea, shine as stars of one firmament and appear as fruits of the same tree. This is the happiness and felicity of humankind. This is the illumination of man, the eternal glory and everlasting life; this is the divine bestowal.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGES 143-146

Purpose:

To understand that equality is a critical factor in establishing peace and prosperity.
To express how our own human relationships reflect the principles of oneness and equality.

≈ KEY



Using the same teams of two, read aloud the quotations “Equality: A Key to Peace” and discuss the following questions:

- In what ways will establishing the full equality of women and men promote peace?
- In what ways will full equality facilitate human progress?
- What are the benefits of equality to men?

Then create a visual representation or mandala* of a family tree for your families, for the connections between your families, include the connections binding your community, the nation, and all humanity together as a single human family. This tree can be as literal or as figurative as you like, and should in some way acknowledge this radiant century, this long-promised time of peace and equality, and the fact that we are all leaves on the tree of life.

*Any of various ritualistic geometric designs symbolic of the universe, used in Hinduism and Buddhism as an aid to meditation.

Process the session:

How do we understand the similarities and the differences between the terms "equality" and "oneness"?
How does the use of visual images assist us to understand the meaning of the principles of equality and oneness?

Equality: A Key to Peace

Focus Questions:

- In what ways will establishing the full equality of women and men promote peace?
- In what ways will full equality facilitate human progress?
- What are the benefits of equality to men?



...In the estimation of God there is no distinction of sex. The one whose heart is most pure, whose deeds and service in the Cause of God are greater and nobler, is most acceptable before the divine threshold - whether male or female. In the vegetable and animal kingdoms sex exists in perfect equality and without distinction or invidious estimate. The animal, although inferior to man in intelligence and reason, recognizes sex equality. Why should man, who is endowed with the sense of justice and sensibilities of conscience, be willing that one of the members of the human family should be rated and considered as subordinate? Such differentiation is neither intelligent nor conscientious; therefore, the principle of religion has been revealed by Bahá'u'lláh that woman must be given the privilege of equal education with man and full right to his prerogatives. That is to say, there must be no difference in the education of male and female in order that womankind may develop equal capacity and importance with man in the social and economic equation. Then the world will attain unity and harmony. In past ages humanity has been defective and inefficient because it has been incomplete. War and its ravages have blighted the world; the education of woman will be a mighty step toward its abolition and ending, for she will use her whole influence against war. Woman rears the child and educates the youth to maturity. She will refuse to give her sons for sacrifice upon the field of battle. In truth, she will be the greatest factor in establishing universal peace and international arbitration. Assuredly, woman will abolish warfare among mankind. Inasmuch as human society consists of two parts, the male and female, each the complement of the other, the happiness and stability of humanity cannot be assured unless both are perfected. Therefore, the standard and status of man and woman must become equalized.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 108

The world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength, the bird will not fly. Until womankind reaches the same degree as man, until she enjoys the same arena of activity, extraordinary attainment for humanity will not be realized; humanity cannot wing its way to heights of real attainment. When the two wings or parts become equivalent in strength, enjoying the same prerogatives, the flight of man will be exceedingly lofty and extraordinary. Therefore, woman must receive the same education as man and all inequality be adjusted. Thus, imbued with the same virtues as man, rising through all the degrees of human attainment, women will become the peers of men, and until this equality is established, true progress and attainment for the human race will not be facilitated.

The evident reasons underlying this are as follows: Woman by nature is opposed to war; she is an advocate of peace. Children are reared and brought up by the mothers who give them the first principles of education and labor assiduously in their behalf. Consider, for instance, a mother who has tenderly reared a son for twenty years to the age of maturity. Surely she will not consent to having that son torn asunder and killed in the field of battle. Therefore, as woman advances toward the degree of man in power and privilege, with the right of vote and control in human government, most assuredly war will cease; for woman is naturally the most devoted and staunch advocate of international peace.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 375

Purpose:

To know the logical arguments that 'Abdu'l-Bahá used to teach the principle of equality.
To use logic and reason to teach the principle of equality.
To plan to use this presentation in our local communities.

≈ KEY



'Abdu'l-Bahá often mentioned the principle of the equality of women and men in his talks in Europe and North America. The following talks given in North America provide a model for explaining this principle to others.

In groups of four, read aloud one of the following talks and work together to analyze it.

1. What strategies did the Master use to promulgate the principle of equality in contemporary society?
Some possibilities include:
 - identifying equality as one of the requirements of this time in history
 - defining equality as an aspect of the pivotal principle of the oneness of humanity
 - identifying the benefits to men of equality
 - relating equality to peace
 - asking rhetorical questions that expose the lack of logic in traditional views
 - using analogy to establish the principle of equality
 - directly challenging discriminatory attitudes
 - using examples from history
 - using contemporary examples
2. Create an outline of the main points.
3. Memorize a short passage to quote in your presentation.
4. Create a visual aid for your presentation, or use one or more of the family trees created in the previous activity as a visual aid.
5. Prepare a 5 minute group presentation of the main points of the talk.
6. Involve each participant in the presentation.

Process the session:

What are the advantages of preparing talks based on the logical presentation of evidence?
Where, when, and how can I use the talk I prepared in my local community?

2 May 1912 - Talk to Federation of Women's Clubs, Hotel La Salle, Chicago, Illinois
Notes by Joseph H. Hannen

Focus Question:

What strategies did the Master use to promulgate the principle of equality in contemporary society?



One of the functions of the sun is to quicken and reveal the hidden realities of the kingdoms of existence. Through the light and heat of the great central luminary, all that is potential in the earth is awakened and comes forth into the realm of the visible. The fruit hidden in the tree appears upon its branches in response to the power of the sun; man and all other organisms live, move and have their being under its developing rays; nature is resplendent with countless evolutionary forms through its pervading impulse - so that we can say a function of the sun is the revelation of the mysteries and creative purposes hidden within the phenomenal world.

The outer sun is a sign or symbol of the inner and ideal Sun of Truth, the Word of God. Inasmuch as this is the century of light, it is evident that the Sun of Reality, the Word, has revealed itself to all humankind. One of the potentialities hidden in the realm of humanity was the capability or capacity of womanhood. Through the effulgent rays of divine illumination the capacity of woman has become so awakened and manifest in this age that equality of man and woman is an established fact. In past ages woman was wronged and oppressed. This was especially the case in Asia and Africa. In certain parts of Asia women were not considered as members of humankind. They were looked upon as inferior, unworthy creatures, subordinate and subject to man. A certain people known as the Nusayris held to the belief for a long period that woman was the incarnation of the evil spirit, or Satan, and that man alone was the manifestation of God, the Merciful. At last this century of light dawned, the realities shone forth, and the mysteries long hidden from human vision were revealed. Among these revealed realities was the great principle of the equality of man and woman, which is now finding recognition throughout the whole world - America, Europe and the Orient.

History records the appearance in the world of women who have been signs of guidance, power and accomplishment. Some were notable poets, some philosophers and scientists, others courageous upon the field of battle. Qurratu'l-'Ayn, a Bahá'í, was a poetess. She discomfited the learned men of Persia by her brilliancy and fervor. When she entered a meeting, even the learned were silent. She was so well versed in philosophy and science that those in her presence always considered and consulted her first. Her courage was unparalleled; she faced her enemies fearlessly until she was killed. She withstood a despotic king, the Shah of Persia, who had the power to decree the death of any of his subjects. There was not a day during which he did not command the execution of some. This woman singly and alone withstood such a despot until her last breath, then gave her life for her faith.

Consider the mysteries revealed during the last half century, all due to the effulgence of the Sun of Reality, which has been so gloriously manifested in this age and cycle. In this day man must investigate reality impartially and without prejudice in order to reach the true knowledge and conclusions. What, then, constitutes the inequality between man and woman? Both are human. In powers and function each is the complement of the other. At most it is this: that woman has been denied the opportunities which man has so long enjoyed, especially the privilege of education. But even this is not always a shortcoming. Shall we consider it an imperfection and weakness in her nature that she is not proficient in the school of military tactics, that she cannot go forth to the field of battle and kill, that she is not able to handle a deadly weapon? Nay, rather, is it not a compliment when we say that in hardness of heart and cruelty she is inferior to man? The woman who is asked to arm herself and kill her fellow creatures will say, "I cannot." Is this to be considered a fault and lack of qualification as man's equal? Yet be it known that if woman had been taught and trained in the military science of slaughter, she would have been the equivalent of man even in this accomplishment. But God forbid! May woman never attain this proficiency; may she never wield weapons of war, for the destruction of humanity is not a glorious achievement. The upbuilding of a home, the

bringing of joy and comfort into human hearts are truly glories of mankind. Let not a man glory in this, that he can kill his fellow creatures; nay, rather, let him glory in this, that he can love them.

When we consider the kingdoms of existence below man, we find no distinction or estimate of superiority and inferiority between male and female. Among the myriad organisms of the vegetable and animal kingdoms sex exists, but there is no differentiation whatever as to relative importance and value in the equation of life. If we investigate impartially, we may even find species in which the female is superior or preferable to the male. For instance, there are trees such as the fig, the male of which is fruitless while the female is fruitful. The male of the date palm is valueless while the female bears abundantly. Inasmuch as we find no ground for distinction or superiority according to the creative wisdom in the lower kingdoms, is it logical or becoming of man to make such distinction in regard to himself? The male of the animal kingdom does not glory in its being male and superior to the female. In fact, equality exists and is recognized. Why should man, a higher and more intelligent creature, deny and deprive himself of this equality the animals enjoy? His surest index and guide as to the creative intention concerning himself are the conditions and analogies of the kingdoms below him where equality of the sexes is fundamental.

The truth is that all mankind are the creatures and servants of one God, and in His estimate all are human. Man is a generic term applying to all humanity. The biblical statement "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" does not mean that woman was not created. The image and likeness of God apply to her as well. In Persian and Arabic there are two distinct words translated into English as man: one meaning man and woman collectively, the other distinguishing man as male from woman the female. The first word and its pronoun are generic, collective; the other is restricted to the male. This is the same in Hebrew.

To accept and observe a distinction which God has not intended in creation is ignorance and superstition. The fact which is to be considered, however, is that woman, having formerly been deprived, must now be allowed equal opportunities with man for education and training. There must be no difference in their education. Until the reality of equality between man and woman is fully established and attained, the highest social development of mankind is not possible. Even granted that woman is inferior to man in some degree of capacity or accomplishment, this or any other distinction would continue to be productive of discord and trouble. The only remedy is education, opportunity; for equality means equal qualification. In brief, the assumption of superiority by man will continue to be depressing to the ambition of woman, as if her attainment to equality was creationally impossible; woman's aspiration toward advancement will be checked by it, and she will gradually become hopeless. On the contrary, we must declare that her capacity is equal, even greater than man's. This will inspire her with hope and ambition, and her susceptibilities for advancement will continually increase. She must not be told and taught that she is weaker and inferior in capacity and qualification. If a pupil is told that his intelligence is less than his fellow pupils, it is a very great drawback and handicap to his progress. He must be encouraged to advance by the statement, "You are most capable, and if you endeavor, you will attain the highest degree."

It is my hope that the banner of equality may be raised throughout the five continents where as yet it is not fully recognized and established. In this enlightened world of the West woman has advanced an immeasurable degree beyond the women of the Orient. And let it be known once more that until woman and man recognize and realize equality, social and political progress here or anywhere will not be possible. For the world of humanity consists of two parts or members: one is woman; the other is man. Until these two members are equal in strength, the oneness of humanity cannot be established, and the happiness and felicity of mankind will not be a reality. God willing, this is to be so.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGES 73-77

**20 May 1912 - Talk at Woman's Suffrage Meeting, Metropolitan Temple,
Seventh Avenue and Fourteenth Street, New York, New York**

Notes by Esther Foster

Focus Question:

What strategies did the Master use to promulgate the principle of equality in contemporary society?



Today questions of the utmost importance are facing humanity, questions peculiar to this radiant century. In former centuries there was not even mention of them. Inasmuch as this is the century of illumination, the century of humanity, the century of divine bestowals, these questions are being presented for the expression of public opinion, and in all the countries of the world, discussion is taking place looking to their solution.

One of these questions concerns the rights of woman and her equality with man. In past ages it was held that woman and man were not equal - that is to say, woman was considered inferior to man, even from the standpoint of her anatomy and creation. She was considered especially inferior in intelligence, and the idea prevailed universally that it was not allowable for her to step into the arena of important affairs. In some countries man went so far as to believe and teach that woman belonged to a sphere lower than human. But in this century, which is the century of light and the revelation of mysteries, God is proving to the satisfaction of humanity that all this is ignorance and error; nay, rather, it is well established that mankind and womankind as parts of composite humanity are coequal and that no difference in estimate is allowable, for all are human. The conditions in past centuries were due to woman's lack of opportunity. She was denied the right and privilege of education and left in her undeveloped state. Naturally, she could not and did not advance. In reality, God has created all mankind, and in the estimation of God there is no distinction as to male and female. The one whose heart is pure is acceptable in His sight, be that one man or woman. God does not inquire, "Art thou woman or art thou man?" He judges human actions. If these are acceptable in the threshold of the Glorious One, man and woman will be equally recognized and rewarded.

Furthermore, the education of woman is more necessary and important than that of man, for woman is the trainer of the child from its infancy. If she be defective and imperfect herself, the child will necessarily be deficient; therefore, imperfection of woman implies a condition of imperfection in all mankind, for it is the mother who rears, nurtures and guides the growth of the child. This is not the function of the father. If the educator be incompetent, the educated will be correspondingly lacking. This is evident and incontrovertible. Could the student be brilliant and accomplished if the teacher is illiterate and ignorant? The mothers are the first educators of mankind; if they be imperfect, alas for the condition and future of the race.

Again, it is well established in history that where woman has not participated in human affairs the outcomes have never attained a state of completion and perfection. On the other hand, every influential undertaking of the human world wherein woman has been a participant has attained importance. This is historically true and beyond disproof even in religion. Jesus Christ had twelve disciples and among His followers a woman known as Mary Magdalene. Judas Iscariot had become a traitor and hypocrite, and after the crucifixion the remaining eleven disciples were wavering and undecided. It is certain from the evidence of the Gospels that the one who comforted them and reestablished their faith was Mary Magdalene.

The world of humanity consists of two parts: male and female. Each is the complement of the other. Therefore, if one is defective, the other will necessarily be incomplete, and perfection cannot be attained. There is a right hand and a left hand in the human body, functionally equal in service and administration. If either proves defective, the defect will naturally extend to the other by involving the completeness of the whole; for accomplishment is not normal unless both are perfect. If we say one hand is deficient, we prove the inability and incapacity of the other; for single-handed there is no full accomplishment. Just as physical accomplishment is complete with two hands, so man and woman, the two parts of the social body, must be perfect. It is not natural that either should remain undeveloped; and until both are perfected, the happiness of the human world will not be realized.

The most momentous question of this day is international peace and arbitration, and universal peace is impossible without universal suffrage. Children are educated by the women. The mother bears the troubles and anxieties of rearing the child, undergoes the ordeal of its birth and training. Therefore, it is most difficult for mothers to send to the battlefield those upon whom they have lavished such love and care. Consider a son reared and trained twenty years by a devoted mother. What sleepless nights and restless, anxious days she has spent! Having brought him through dangers and difficulties to the age of maturity, how agonizing then to sacrifice him upon the battlefield! Therefore, the mothers will not sanction war nor be satisfied with it. So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will cease; for woman will be the obstacle and hindrance to it. This is true and without doubt.

It has been objected by some that woman is not equally capable with man and that she is deficient by creation. This is pure imagination. The difference in capability between man and woman is due entirely to opportunity and education. Heretofore woman has been denied the right and privilege of equal development. If equal opportunity be granted her, there is no doubt she would be the peer of man. History will evidence this. In past ages noted women have arisen in the affairs of nations and surpassed men in their accomplishments. Among them was Zenobia, Queen of the East, whose capital was Palmyra. Even today the site of that city bears witness to her greatness, ability and sovereignty; for there the traveler will find ruins of palaces and fortifications of the utmost strength and solidity built by this remarkable woman in the third century after Christ. She was the wife of the governor-general of Athens. After her husband's death she assumed control of the government in his stead and ruled her province most efficiently. Afterward she conquered Syria, subdued Egypt and founded a most wonderful kingdom with political sagacity and thoroughness. The Roman Empire sent a great army against her. When this army replete with martial splendor reached Syria, Zenobia herself appeared upon the field leading her forces. On the day of battle she arrayed herself in regal garments, placed a crown upon her head and rode forth, sword in hand, to meet the invading legions. By her courage and military strategy the Roman army was routed and so completely dispersed that they were not able to reorganize in retreat. The government of Rome held consultation, saying, "No matter what commander we send, we cannot overcome her; therefore, the Emperor Aurelian himself must go to lead the legions of Rome against Zenobia." Aurelian marched into Syria with two hundred thousand soldiers. The army of Zenobia was greatly inferior in size. The Romans besieged her in Palmyra two years without success. Finally, Aurelian was able to cut off the city's supply of provisions so that she and her people were compelled by starvation to surrender. She was not defeated in battle. Aurelian carried her captive to Rome. On the day of his entry into the city he arranged a triumphal procession - first elephants, then lions, tigers, birds, monkeys - and after the monkeys, Zenobia. A crown was upon her head, a chain of gold about her neck. With queenly dignity and unconscious of humiliation, looking to the right and left, she said, "Verily, I glory in being a woman and in having withstood the Roman Empire." (At that time the dominion of Rome covered half the known earth.) "And this chain about my neck is a sign not of humiliation but of glorification. This is a symbol of my power, not of my defeat."

Among other historical women was Catherine I, wife of Peter the Great. Russia and Turkey were at war. Muhammad Pasha, commander of the Turkish forces, had defeated Peter and was about to take St. Petersburg. The Russians were in a most critical position. Catherine, the wife of Peter, said, "I will arrange this matter." She had an interview with Muhammad Pasha, negotiated a treaty of peace and induced him to turn back. She saved her husband and her nation. This was a great accomplishment. Afterward she was crowned Empress of Russia and ruled with wisdom until her death.

The discovery of America by Columbus was during the reign of Isabella of Spain, to whose intelligence and assistance this wonderful accomplishment was largely due. In brief, many remarkable women have appeared in the history of the world, but further mention of them is not necessary.

Today among the Bahá'ís of Persia there are many women who are the very pride and envy of the men. They are imbued with all the virtues and excellences of humanity. They are eloquent; they are poets and scholars and embody the quintessence of humility. In political ability and acumen they have been able to cope and compete with representative men. They have consecrated their lives and forfeited their possessions in martyrdom for the sake of humanity, and the traces of their glory will last forever. The pages of the history of Persia are illumined by the lives and records of these women.

The purpose, in brief, is this: that if woman be fully educated and granted her rights, she will attain the capacity for wonderful accomplishments and prove herself the equal of man. She is the coadjutor of man, his complement and helpmeet. Both are human; both are endowed with potentialities of intelligence and embody the virtues of humanity. In all human powers and functions they are partners and coequals. At present in spheres of human activity woman does not manifest her natal prerogatives, owing to lack of education and opportunity. Without doubt education will establish her equality with men. Consider the animal kingdom, where no distinction is observed between male and female. They are equal in powers and privileges. Among birds of the air no distinction is evidenced. Their powers are equal; they dwell together in complete unity and mutual recognition of rights. Shall we not enjoy the same equality? Its absence is not befitting to mankind.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGES 133-137

26 August 1912 - Talk at Franklin Square House, Boston, Massachusetts

Notes by Edna McKinney

Focus Question:

What strategies did the Master use to promulgate the principle of equality in contemporary society?



Among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is the principle of equality of man and woman. Bahá'u'lláh has said that both belong to humankind and that in the estimation of God they are equal, for each is the complement of the other in the divine creative plan. The only distinction between them in the sight of God is the purity and righteousness of their deeds and actions, for that one is preferred by God who is most nearly in the spiritual image and likeness of the Creator. Throughout the kingdoms of living organisms there is sex differentiation in function, but no preference or distinction is made in favor of either male or female. In the animal kingdom individual sex exists, but rights are equal and without distinction. Likewise, in the plane or kingdom of the vegetable sex appears, but equality of function and right is evident. Inasmuch as sex distinction and preference are not observed in these kingdoms of inferior intelligence, is it befitting the superior station of man that he should make such differentiation and estimate, when as a matter of fact there is no difference indicated in the law of creation?

In ancient times and medieval ages woman was completely subordinated to man. The cause of this estimate of her inferiority was her lack of education. A woman's life and intellect were limited to the household. Glimpses of this may be found even in the Epistles of Saint Paul. In later centuries the scope and opportunities of a woman's life broadened and increased. Her mind unfolded and developed; her perceptions awakened and deepened. The question concerning her was: Why should a woman be left mentally undeveloped? Science is praiseworthy - whether investigated by the intellect of man or woman. So, little by little, woman advanced, giving increasing evidence of equal capabilities with man -whether in scientific research, political ability or any other sphere of human activity. The conclusion is evident that woman has been outdistanced through lack of education and intellectual facilities. If given the same educational opportunities or course of study, she would develop the same capacity and abilities.

There are some who declare that woman is not naturally endowed or imbued with the same capabilities as man; that she is intellectually inferior to man, weaker in willpower and lacking his courage. This theory is completely contradicted by history and facts of record. Certain women of superlative capacity and determination have appeared in the world, peers of man in intellect and equally courageous. Zenobia was the wife of the governor-general of Athens. Her husband died, and like the Russian Queen, Catherine, she manifested the highest degree of capability in the administration of public affairs. The Roman government appointed her to succeed her husband. Afterward she conquered Syria, conducted a successful campaign in Egypt and established a memorable sovereignty. Rome sent an army against her under direction of distinguished commanders. When the two forces met in battle, Zenobia arrayed herself in gorgeous apparel, placed the crown of her kingdom upon her head and rode forth at the head of her army, defeating the Roman legions so completely that they were not able to reorganize. The Emperor of Rome himself took command of the next army of one hundred thousand soldiers and marched into Syria. At that time Rome was at the zenith of greatness and was the strongest military power in the world. Zenobia withdrew with her forces to Palmyra and fortified it to withstand a siege. After two years the Roman Emperor cut off her supplies, and she was forced to surrender.

The Romans returned in triumphal procession and pageant to their own country. They entered Rome in great pomp and splendor, led by African elephants. After the elephants there were lions, then tigers, bears and monkeys, and after the monkeys, Zenobia - barefooted, walking, a chain of gold about her neck and a crown in her hand, dignified, majestic, queenly and courageous notwithstanding her downfall and defeat.

Among other noted women of history was Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, who held her kingdom against the armies of Rome for a long time. Catherine, wife of Peter the Great, displayed courage and military strategy of the very highest order during the war between Russia and Muhammad Pasha. When the cause of Russia seemed hopeless, she took her jewels and went before the Turkish victor, presented them to him and pled the justice of her country's cause with such convincing skill and diplomacy that peace was declared.

Victoria, Queen of England, was really superior to all the kings of Europe in ability, justness and equitable administration. During her long and brilliant reign the British Empire was immensely extended and enriched, due to her political sagacity, skill and foresight.

The history of religion, likewise, furnishes eloquent examples of woman's capability under conditions of great difficulty and necessity. The conquest of the Holy Land by the Israelites after forty years' wandering in the desert and wilderness of Judea was accomplished through the strategy and cunning of a woman.

After the martyrdom of Christ, to Whom be glory, the disciples were greatly disturbed and disheartened. Even Peter had denied Christ and tried to shun Him. It was a woman, Mary Magdalene, who confirmed the wavering disciples in their faith, saying, "Was it the body of Christ or the reality of Christ that ye have seen crucified? Surely it was His body. His reality is everlasting and eternal; it hath neither beginning nor ending. Therefore, why are ye perplexed and discouraged? Christ always spoke of His being crucified." Mary Magdalene was a mere villager, a peasant woman; yet she became the means of consolation and confirmation to the disciples of Christ.

In the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh there have been women who were superior to men in illumination, intellect, divine virtues and devotion to God. Among them was Qurratu'l-'Ayn. When she spoke, she was listened to reverently by the most learned men. They were most respectful in her presence, and none dared to contradict her. Among the Baha'i women in Persia today there are Rúhu'lláh and others who are gifted with knowledge, invincible steadfastness, courage, virtue and power of will. They are superior to men and well-known throughout Persia.

Briefly, history furnishes evidence that during the past centuries there have been great women as well as great men; but in general, owing to lack of educational advantages, women have been restricted and deprived of opportunity to become fully qualified and representative of humankind. When given the opportunity for acquiring education, they have shown equal capacity with men. Some philosophers and writers have considered woman naturally and by creation inferior to man, claiming as a proof that the brain of man is larger and heavier than that of woman. This is frail and faulty evidence, inasmuch as small brains are often found coupled with superior intellect and large brains possessed by those who are ignorant, even imbecilic. The truth is that God has endowed all humankind with intelligence and perception and has confirmed all as His servants and children; therefore, in the plan and estimate of God there is no distinction between male or female. The soul that manifests pure deeds and spiritual graces is most precious in His sight and nearer to Him in its attainments.

The realities of things have been revealed in this radiant century, and that which is true must come to the surface. Among these realities is the principle of the equality of man and woman - equal rights and prerogatives in all things appertaining to humanity. Bahá'u'lláh declared this reality over fifty years ago. But while this principle of equality is true, it is likewise true that woman must prove her capacity and aptitude, must show forth the evidences of equality. She must become proficient in the arts and sciences and prove by her accomplishments that her abilities and powers have merely been latent. Demonstrations of force, such as are now taking place in England, are neither becoming nor effective in the cause of womanhood and equality. Woman must especially devote her energies and abilities toward the industrial and agricultural sciences, seeking to assist mankind in that which is most needful. By this means she will demonstrate capability and ensure recognition of equality in the social and economic equation. Undoubtedly God will confirm her in her efforts and endeavors, for in this century of radiance Bahá'u'lláh has proclaimed the reality of the oneness of the world of humanity and announced that all nations, peoples and races are one. He has shown that although individuals may differ in development and capacity, they are essentially and intrinsically equal as human beings, just as the waves of the sea are innumerable and different, but the reality of the sea is one. The plurality of humanity may be likened to the waves, but the reality of humankind is like the sea itself. All the waves are of the same water; all are waves of one ocean.

Therefore, strive to show in the human world that women are most capable and efficient, that their hearts are more tender and susceptible than the hearts of men, that they are more philanthropic and responsive toward the needy and suffering, that they are inflexibly opposed to war and are lovers of peace. Strive that the ideal of international peace may become realized through the efforts of womankind, for man is more inclined to war than woman, and a real evidence of woman's superiority will be her service and efficiency in the establishment of universal peace.

ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGES 280-284

Purpose:

- To know that human virtues belong equally to all.
- To understand that the distinct qualities of women and men may be related to child rearing.
- To demonstrate understanding of the complementary relationship of men and women.

Equality, Complementarity and Balance

≈ KEY



In small groups, study the selected quotations from the Bahá'í writings and answer the focus questions. After each small group has had a chance to discuss the questions, invite each individual to take a short walk in the world of nature.* Ask each person to bring back an example from nature of equality, complementarity and balance. Invite the friends to share their examples in the whole group.

- What evidence do we have that ‘human virtues belong equally to all?’
- In what ways might child rearing foster the development of tender-heartedness, receptivity, and intuition?
- How might a deep love and intimate connection with children not only engender the love of peace and abhorrence of war, but also special gifts that would be of particular value in times of danger and crisis?

*If the weather is not conducive to a short nature walk, consider having numerous nature pictures from magazines from which participants can choose an example.

Process the session:

In what way does the Bahá'í concept of the equality of women and men both embrace and transcend contemporary ways of thinking about this issue?

Equality, Complementarity and Balance

Focus Questions:

What evidence do we have that 'human virtues belong equally to all?'

In what ways might child rearing foster the development of tender-heartedness and intuition?

How might an intimate connection with children not only engender the love of peace and abhorrence of war, but also special gifts that would be of particular value in times of danger and crisis?



Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 2, PAGE 379

Exalted, immensely exalted is He Who hath removed differences and established harmony. Glorified, infinitely glorified is He Who hath caused discord to cease, and decreed solidarity and unity. Praised be God, the Pen of the Most High hath lifted distinctions from between His servants and handmaidens, and, through His consummate favours and all-encompassing mercy, hath conferred upon all a station and rank of the same plane. He hath broken the back of vain imaginings with the sword of utterance and hath obliterated the perils of idle fancies through the pervasive power of His might.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 2, PAGE 357

...God hath created all humankind in His own image, and after His own likeness. That is, men and women alike are the revealers of His names and attributes, and from the spiritual viewpoint there is no difference between them. Whosoever draweth nearer to God, that one is the most favoured, whether man or woman.

‘ÁBDU’L-BAHÁ: *SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ÁBDU’L-BAHÁ*, PAGES 79-80

Know thou that the distinction between male and female is an exigency of the physical world and hath no connection with the spirit; for the spirit and the world of the spirit are sanctified above such exigencies, and wholly beyond the reach of such changes as befall the physical body in the contingent world. In former ages, men enjoyed ascendancy over women because bodily might reigned supreme and the spirit was subject to its dominion. In this radiant age, however, since the power of the spirit hath transcended that of the body and assumed its ascendancy, authority and dominion over the human world, this physical distinction hath ceased to be of consequence; and, as the sway and influence of the spirit have become apparent, women have come to be the full equals of men. Today, therefore, there is no respect or circumstance in which a person’s sex provideth grounds for the exercise of either discrimination or favour.

‘ÁBDU’L-BAHÁ, CITED BY JANET KAHN AND PETER KAHN: *THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGE 38

The world in the past has been ruled by force, and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the balance is already shifting; force is losing its dominance, and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy. Hence the new age will be an age less masculine and more permeated with the feminine ideals, or, to speak more exactly, will be an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more evenly balanced.

ÁBDU’L-BAHÁ: *THE COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 2, PAGE 369

In the world of humanity we find a great difference; the female sex is treated as though inferior, and is not allowed equal rights and privileges. This condition is due not to nature, but to education. In the Divine Creation there is no such distinction. Neither sex is superior to the other in the sight of God. Why then should one sex assert the inferiority of the other, withholding just rights and privileges as though God had given His authority for such a course of action? If women received the same educational advantages as those of men, the result would demonstrate the equality of capacity of both for scholarship.

In some respects woman is superior to man. She is more tender-hearted, more receptive, her intuition is more intense.

‘ÁBDU’L-BAHÁ: *PARIS TALKS*, PAGE 161

Divine Justice demands that the rights of both sexes should be equally respected since neither is superior to the other in the eyes of Heaven. Dignity before God depends, not on sex, but on purity and luminosity of heart. Human virtues belong equally to all!

‘ÁBDU’L-BAHÁ: PARIS TALKS, PAGE 162

Among the miracles which distinguish this sacred Dispensation is this, that women have evinced a greater boldness than men when enlisted in the ranks of the Faith.

‘ÁBDU’L-BAHÁ, CITED BY SHOGHI EFFENDI: THE ADVENT OF DIVINE JUSTICE, PAGE 69

Therefore, strive to show in the human world that women are most capable and efficient, that their hearts are more tender and susceptible than the hearts of men, that they are more philanthropic and responsive toward the needy and suffering, that they are inflexibly opposed to war and are lovers of peace. Strive that the ideal of international peace may become realized through the efforts of womankind, for man is more inclined to war than woman, and a real evidence of woman's superiority will be her service and efficiency in the establishment of universal peace.

‘ÁBDU’L-BAHÁ: THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGE 284

...The woman is indeed of the greater importance to the race. She has the greater burden and the greater work. Look at the vegetable and the animal worlds. The palm which carries the fruit is the tree most prized by the date grower. The Arab knows that for a long journey the mare has the longest wind. For her greater strength and fierceness, the lioness is more feared by the hunter than the lion.

The woman has greater moral courage than the man; she has also special gifts which enable her to govern in moments of danger and crisis....

‘ÁBDU’L-BAHÁ IN LONDON, ADDRESSES AND NOTES OF CONVERSATIONS, PAGES 102, 103

Equality between men and women does not, indeed physiologically it cannot, mean identity of functions. In some things women excel men, for others men are better fitted than women, while in very many things the difference of sex is of no effect at all. The differences of function are most apparent in family life. The capacity for motherhood has many far-reaching implications which are recognized in Bahá'í Law. For example, when it is not possible to educate all one's children, daughters receive preference over sons, as mothers are the first educators of the next generation. Again, for physiological reasons, women are granted certain exemptions from fasting that are not applicable to men.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: THE COMPILATIONS, VOLUME 2, PAGE 370

You are quite right in stating that men and women have basic and distinct qualities. The solution provided in the teachings of Baha'u'llah is not, as you correctly observe, for men to become women, and for women to become men. Ábdu'l-Bahá gave us the key to the problem when He taught that the qualities and functions of men and women "complement" each other. He further elucidated this point when He said that the "new age" will be "an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more properly balanced."

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: THE COMPILATIONS, VOLUME 2, PAGES 371-372

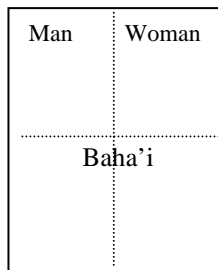
Purpose:

To recognize some of the assumptions we have about women and men.

≈ KEY



Provide each participant with a sheet of paper, fold the paper in half, then in half again. Ask the friends to write the word “Man” at the top of one of the quadrants and quickly record the words that come to mind that describe men. Turn the folded paper over and write the word “Woman” at the top of that quadrant and quickly write all the attributes that describe women. Then open the first fold and write the word “Bahá’í.” Then write the attributes that come to mind to describe a Bahá’í. The attributes listed should be whatever immediately come to mind without thinking too long.



In the whole group, discuss the following questions:

- How similar were each person’s descriptions of man, woman, and Bahá’í?
- Which areas had the most attributes in common? The fewest attributes in common?
- What could be the reasons for the similarities and differences of the descriptions?

Conclude the discussion by reading aloud the following brief passages that illustrate the need to overcome traditional assumptions.

...The root cause of prejudice is blind imitation of the past...

‘ÁBDU’L-BAHÁ: SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF ‘ÁBDU’L-BAHÁ, PAGE 247

We are living in this most radiant century wherein human perceptions have developed and investigations of real foundations characterize mankind. Individually and collectively man is proving and penetrating into the reality of outer and inner conditions. Therefore, it has come to pass that we are renouncing all that savors of blind imitation, and impartially and independently investigating truth.

‘ÁBDU’L-BAHÁ: THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGES 443-444

Processing the session:

How is it helpful to recognize our own assumptions about men and women?

Inherited Assumptions and Investigating Truth

Purpose:

To perceive that both sexes can express all the qualities of God.

≈ KEY

Invite the participants to turn to the handout, "Inherited Assumptions and Investigating Truth," and ask one of the participants to read aloud the following prayer.

God, my God! Aid Thou Thy trusted servants to have loving and tender hearts. Help them to spread, amongst all the nations of the earth, the light of guidance that cometh from the Company on high. Verily Thou art the Strong, the Powerful, the Mighty, the All-Subduing, the Ever-Giving. Verily Thou art the Generous, the Gentle, the Tender, the Most Bountiful.

'ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ, PAGE 22

Give participants 2-3 minutes to write each spiritual quality or attribute in this prayer into one of the following three categories, depending on whether her or his family or cultural background taught that they pertain primarily to men, primarily to women, or were equally common to both:

Primarily masculine

Primarily feminine

Equally common to both

As participants work, write the three categories in columns on chart paper or a chalk board.

Record participants' answers.

Briefly discuss the questions:

- What cultural or other differences do we see in our understanding of traditional beliefs?
- Looking again at the words of the prayer, what qualities do our Sacred Writings assign to men? To women? To both?

Process the session:

How can an awareness of traditional beliefs assist us in our own spiritual development?

How can this awareness assist us to support each other as we strive to implement the principle of equality?

Effective Strategies for Promoting Equality

Purpose:

- To identify effective strategies for promoting equality.
- To understand that both love and justice promote equality and preserve unity.
- To perceive the relationship between the principles of equality and unity.
- To demonstrate some strategies for promoting equality.

∞ KEY



Introduce the session by briefly brainstorming the meaning of the words "love" and "justice."

Ask the friends to form **three** small working groups.

While working in these groups, read the handout "Effective Strategies for Promoting Equality" aloud, and underline specific actions that promote equality.

Share with each other the selected actions and discuss their importance in promoting equality and preserving unity.



Ask one group to focus on the principle of **love**, another group to focus on the principle of **justice**, and the third group to focus on the **interaction of love and justice**.

Ask each group to create a 2-minute skit in which they demonstrate the power of their designated principle to promote equality while preserving unity.

Process the session:

How can the use of drama help us to learn to see new possibilities for our own actions?

Effective Strategies for Promoting Equality

Focus:

Underline specific actions that promote equality.



The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light are these words: 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 Day-Star of Truth beareth Me witness! So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *EPISTLE TO THE SON OF THE WOLF*, PAGE 14

O children of men! Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. Such is My counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE HIDDEN WORDS*, ARABIC # 68

... Woman must prove her capacity and aptitude, must show forth the evidences of equality. She must become proficient in the arts and sciences and prove by her accomplishments that her abilities and powers have merely been latent. Demonstrations of force, such as are now taking place in England, are neither becoming nor effective in the cause of womanhood and equality.

'ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 283

Woman must endeavour then to attain greater perfection, to be man's equal in every respect, to make progress in all in which she has been backward, so that man will be compelled to acknowledge her equality of capacity and attainment.

'ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *PARIS TALKS*, PAGE 162

...The assumption of superiority by man will continue to be depressing to the ambition of woman, as if her attainment to equality was creationally impossible; woman's aspiration toward advancement will be checked by it, and she will gradually become hopeless.

'ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 76

When men own the equality of women there will be no need for them to struggle for their rights!

'ÁBDU'L-BAHÁ: *PARIS TALKS*, PAGE 163

I appeal to you to obliterate this contention between men and women.

‘ÁBDU’L-BAHÁ: *THE COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 2, PAGE 362

We need a change of heart, a reframing of all our conceptions and a new orientation of our activities. The inward life of man as well as his outward environment have to be reshaped if human salvation is to be secured.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *THE COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 1, PAGE 85

We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved. Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it. The one acts upon the other and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *THE COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 1, PAGE 84

If presented properly the position of women in the Bahá’í teachings will surely attract much attention, for it is not only legal but also spiritual and educational. Our ideals are so high and at the same time so practicable that all other views will fall short if compared to them.

WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI: *THE COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 2, PAGE 369

The principle of the equality between women and men, like the other teachings of the Faith, can be effectively and universally established among the friends when it is pursued in conjunction with all the other aspects of Bahá’í life. Change is an evolutionary process requiring patience with one's self and others, loving education and the passage of time as the believers deepen their knowledge of the principles of the Faith, gradually discard long-held traditional attitudes and progressively conform their lives to the unifying teachings of the Cause.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: *THE COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 2, PAGE 405

Those Bahá’ís who devote themselves to promotion of the equality of the sexes, through speeches and articles, should be aware that such a process will be facilitated if it is carried out without disruption to the unity of the believers, in order that spiritual blessings are attracted to the community and its endeavours reinforced. To maintain this unity, Bahá’í men and women must work together co-operatively, in striking contrast to the adversarial and denunciatory attitudes which distinguish so much of the movement for equality of the sexes....

...Bahá’ís should realize that the Bahá’í approach to truth-seeking is consultative and not adversarial, and that contention between men and women is counter-productive in the endeavour to promote equality.

WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, 5 JUNE 1994

Purpose:

Become familiar with the national teaching initiative focusing on equality.

Demonstrate capacity to host spiritual gatherings to introduce the principle of equality to all humankind.

National Teaching Initiative: Hosting Spiritual Gatherings for Equality

∞ KEY



Remind the friends that the national teaching initiative uses the media to proclaim the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Our responsibility as individuals and as communities is to build human connections with those individuals who express interest in these sacred Teachings. Like the Power of Race Unity campaign, the broadcast and individual use of the video, *Speaking of Gender*, proclaims the principle of equality. Individuals can respond to interested seekers by hosting spiritual gatherings designed to reinforce the principles proclaimed in the video.

Show the video, *Speaking of Gender*.



Divide the friends into four groups. Give each group one of the spiritual gatherings (Appendix A) along with the materials necessary to conduct the activities. Ask each group to read through the entire description of the spiritual gathering and prepare to conduct a 5 minute segment of that gathering for the entire group. Ask the groups to involve each group member in the presentation.

Invite the group to affirm each presentation with such comments as:

- I especially appreciated it when you....
- I learned _____ when you....
- I felt encouraged when you....



Invite the friends to turn to their journals and begin to identify a strategy for supporting the teaching plan with these spiritual gatherings.

Process the session:

How can these spiritual gatherings become an effective teaching tool?

The Example of Bahíyyih Khánum

Purpose:

- To know that the Greatest Holy Leaf is an example for all mankind.
- To understand the core curriculum learning model.
- To perceive ways to use the core curriculum learning model for self transformation.

➤ KEY



Shoghi Effendi calls the Greatest Holy Leaf “a shining example, an object of emulation for all mankind,” holds her up as a “true example” for all her kin - male and female - to follow, and resolves to take her as his model.

Ask one or more participants to read aloud the passages on the following pages which describe some of the qualities and attributes of Bahíyyih Khánum. Invite the friends to identify the qualities that most attract their hearts.

In the whole group, remind the friends of the core curriculum learning model, then read aloud the following questions, allow time for the friends to write their answers, and discuss the answers in the whole group.

1. Knowledge - Thinking about these passages and remembering the beloved Guardian’s tribute to the Greatest Holy Leaf, what do we know about Bahíyyih Khánum?
2. Wisdom - Reflecting on both sets of passages that refer to the Greatest Holy Leaf. What deeper understanding have we gained about her role in human history?
3. Spiritual Perception - Pondering the Guardian’s statement that the Greatest Holy Leaf is “a shining example, an object of emulation for all mankind,” how can we begin to emulate her example in our own lives?
4. Eloquent Speech - What words and deeds have we shared together today that in some small way mirror the actions and attributes of the Greatest Holy Leaf? How, specifically, can we build on those words and deeds in a line of effective action for equality?

The Example of Bahíyyih Khánum



Her blessed life was a source of spiritual illumination for the whole world and her noble traits and heavenly attributes served as a shining example, an object of emulation for all mankind.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI: BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, PAGE 84

...Then is my tongue loosed to praise and thank thee, and thy Lord, Him Who did fashion thee and did prefer thee to all other handmaidens,... Who withdrew the veil of concealment from thy true being and made thee to be a true example for all thy kin to follow, and caused thee to be the fragrance of His garment for all of creation.

And at such times I strengthen my resolve to follow in thy footsteps, and to continue onward in the pathway of thy love; to take thee as my model, and to acquire the qualities, and to make manifest that which thou didst desire for the triumph of this exalted and exacting, this most resplendent, sacred, and wondrous Cause.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, PAGES 54-55

She who was a sparkling light of God, she who was so full of grace...was made to appear with all perfections, all goodly attributes, all blessed ways; and never had the world's eye gazed upon such a welling spring of tender love, of pity and compassion, and never will it behold again such a gem of loving-kindness, such a fount of God's munificence.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFENDI: BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, PAGE 82

To every disconsolate one she was an affectionate comforter, to every heart-broken and grief-stricken soul, a token of unfailing sympathy, of kindness, of cheer and comfort....Like the showers of heavenly grace, her generosity knew no bounds, and as the breeze of celestial blessing and favour, she breathed a new life into every soul. Both friends and strangers were drawn by her sense of spirituality, her tenderness and refinement, her unfailing solicitude, and were attracted by the magic of her unbounded affection and goodwill. That heavenly being displayed throughout her life such evidence of glory and dignity, such manifestations of majesty and greatness, such a degree of patience and resignation as bewildered the minds and souls. In the midst of trials her radiant face bore the likeness of a sweet rose and in moments of sore tribulation she was resplendent as a brilliant candle.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI: BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, PAGE 84

She always kept such a wonderful atmosphere of joy and hope around her that was bound to influence those that were present and help them to go out into the world with added zeal and determination to consecrate all in the path of God.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI: BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, PAGE 85

That sacred treasure, that jewel of Heaven, was the very sign and token of spiritual attributes and qualities and perfections, the very model of high honour and nobility and heavenly ways....Fortitude was the rich dress she wore, serenity and tranquil strength were her splendid robe, virtue and detachment, purity and chastity, were all her jewels, and tenderness, care and love for humankind, her beauty's bright adornings."

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI: BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, PAGE 83

Spiritual Development of the Equality Worker

Spiritual Growth Plan

≈ KEY

Purpose:

- Begin to identify one's own strengths and areas for growth as a Bahá'í equality worker.
- Develop a systematic personal plan for continuous spiritual development.
- Use a journal to facilitate one's personal development plan.

Discuss with participants the importance of developing a personal spiritual growth plan. Refer participants to the Writings, "Personal Development" provided. Emphasize the importance of actively directing one's spiritual development process by consciously setting goals and striving to meet them. (Quotations may be placed on a handout or projected as an overhead.)

Set Personal Goals (MUSIC)

From your study of the Creative Word, the example of Bahíyyih Khánum, and your learnings from today's sessions, develop your own set of characteristics of a Bahá'í equality worker.

Set several personal goals that will strengthen your role as a Bahá'í equality worker which:

- Develop qualities for success as an equality worker.
- Promote equality in everyday speech and everyday life.
- Host spiritual gatherings, perhaps using the Master's talk as well as the spiritual gathering plans provided.

Develop a Personal Plan

Select one of these goals and develop a Personal Growth Plan using the core curriculum learning framework.

(Briefly review the learning objectives framework while presenting the sample personal plan as one model. Encouraging participants to use the corresponding blank form to translate the selected goal into this defined framework.)

Process the Session:

How can the core curriculum learning model assist us in our ongoing spiritual development?

Personal Development



Every day, in the morning when arising, you should compare today with yesterday and see in what condition you are. If you see your belief is stronger and your heart more occupied with God and your love increased and your freedom from the world greater then thank God and ask for the increase of these qualities. You must begin to pray and repent for all that you have done which is wrong and you must implore and ask for help and assistance that you may become better than yesterday so that you may continue to make progress.

‘ÁBDU’L-BAHÁ: *THE COMPILATIONS*, VOLUME 1, PAGE 376

If we Bahá’ís cannot attain to cordial unity among ourselves, then we fail to realize the main purpose for which the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh and the Beloved Master lived and suffered.

In order to achieve this cordial unity one of the first essentials insisted on by Bahá’u’lláh and Ábdu’l-Bahá is that we resist the natural tendency to let our attention dwell on the faults and failings of others rather than on our own. Each of us is responsible for one life only, and that is our own. Each of us is immeasurably far from being "perfect as our heavenly father is perfect" and the task of perfecting our own life and character is one that requires all our attention, our will-power and energy. If we allow our attention and energy to be taken up in efforts to keep others right and remedy their faults, we are wasting precious time. We are like ploughmen each of whom has his team to manage and his plough to direct, and in order to keep his furrow straight he must keep his eye on his goal and concentrate on his own task. If he looks to this side and that to see how Tom and Harry are getting on and to criticize their ploughing, then his own furrow will assuredly become crooked.

THE COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 2, PAGES 3-4

...The individual...must make a conscious decision as to what he or she will do to serve the Plan, and as to how, where and when to do it. This determination enables the individual to check the progress of his actions and, if necessary, to modify the steps being taken. Becoming accustomed to such a procedure of systematic striving lends meaning and fulfillment to the life of any Bahá’í.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, RIDVÁN155

Setting Personal Goals within the Curriculum Framework



This is an example of how one facilitator set goals:

Sample Personal Goal: To be more patient.

<p style="text-align: center;">KNOWLEDGE</p> <p>A keen awareness of information and facts. The remembering and recall of previously learned material.</p>	<p><i>To read what the Writings say about patience.</i></p> <p><i>Post quotations around the house to focus my attention.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">WISDOM</p> <p>True comprehension and insight. The discovery, through experience, of the meaning of information and facts Wisdom is acquired through consultation, reflection, inspiration and are evolving understanding of spiritual truth.</p>	<p><i>To read and reflect upon stories of people who display patience, by observing people who are patient and by discussing with others.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION</p> <p>Penetrating inner vision and the acquisition and application of a Bahá'í perspective. The discovery of purpose and meaning. The bringing to bear of Bahá'í spiritual values, principles and laws to the individual's expanding consciousness of issues and problems. As such it includes the capacity to apply, analyze, and evaluate, using Bahá'í Law, principles and qualities as the standard for discernment.</p>	<p><i>To ascertain how I will be able to deal with situations more patiently.</i></p> <p><i>To discern where I have and where I have not been patient by bringing myself to account each day concerning patience.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">ELOQUENT 'SPEECH'</p> <p>The ability to articulate knowledge, understanding and beliefs in a clear and comprehensive way. For the purposes of the Core Curriculum the definition of Eloquent Speech has been extended to include the manifestation of all the behaviors that reflect the internalization of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. This involves the integration and synthesis of learning into the active expression of the understanding acquired through knowledge, wisdom and spiritual perception. As such it is the endeavor to live the Bahá'í Life, to teach and engage in service to humanity.</p>	<p><i>To recite memorized Writings about patience on a daily basis.</i></p> <p><i>To turn to God for assistance.</i></p> <p><i>To be patient and stop getting annoyed so easily with others.</i></p> <p><i>To prepare a short fireside presentation on patience.</i></p>

Setting Personal Goals within the Curriculum Framework



Personal Goal: _____

<p style="text-align: center;">KNOWLEDGE</p> <p>A keen awareness of information and facts. The remembering and recall of previously learned material.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">WISDOM</p> <p>True comprehension and insight. The discovery, through experience, of the meaning of information and facts Wisdom is acquired through consultation, reflection, inspiration and are evolving understanding of spiritual truth.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION</p> <p>Penetrating inner vision and the acquisition and application of a Bahá'í perspective. The discovery of purpose and meaning. The bringing to bear of Bahá'í spiritual values, principles and laws to the individual's expanding consciousness of issues and problems. As such it includes the capacity to apply, analyze, and evaluate, using Bahá'í Law, principles and qualities as the standard for discernment.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">ELOQUENT 'SPEECH'</p> <p>The ability to articulate knowledge, understanding and beliefs in a clear and comprehensive way. For the purposes of the Core Curriculum the definition of Eloquent Speech has been extended to include the manifestation of all the behaviors that reflect the internalization of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. This involves the integration and synthesis of learning into the active expression of the understanding acquired through knowledge, wisdom and spiritual perception. As such it is the endeavor to live the Bahá'í Life, to teach and engage in service to humanity.</p>	

Review the Objectives:

KNOWLEDGE	<p>To know some of the events in the life of the Greatest Holy Leaf. To recognize some of the factors that distinguish this century from others. To know the logical arguments that 'Abdu'l-Bahá used to teach the principle of equality. To know that human virtues belong equally to all. To identify effective strategies for promoting equality. Become familiar with the national teaching initiative focusing on equality. To know that the Greatest Holy Leaf is an example for all mankind.</p>
WISDOM	<p>To recognize the station of the Greatest Holy Leaf in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. To understand the significance of the principle of the equality of women and men fulfilling prophecy and initiating a new era of human fulfillment. To understand that equality is a critical factor in establishing peace and prosperity. To understand that the distinct qualities of women and men may be related to child rearing. To understand that both love and justice promote equality and preserve unity. To understand the core curriculum learning model.</p>
SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION	<p>To perceive ways emulate the example of the Greatest Holy Leaf. To recognize some of the assumptions we have about women and men. To perceive that both sexes can express all the qualities of God. To perceive the relationship between the principles of equality and unity. To perceive ways to use the core curriculum learning model for self transformation</p>
ELOQUENT 'SPEECH'	<p>To express how our own human relationships reflect the principles of oneness and equality. To use logic and reason to teach the principle of equality. To plan to use a presentation on equality in our local communities. To demonstrate understanding of the complementary relationship of men and women. To demonstrate some strategies for promoting equality. Demonstrate capacity to host spiritual gatherings to introduce the principle of equality to all humankind</p>



Close Module One with prayers for assistance in this important work.

SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN
CORE CURRICULUM
FOR A SPIRITUAL EDUCATION



MODULE TWO

Equality In The World At Large

Learning Objectives

≈ KEY

KNOWLEDGE

- To know some examples of 'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraging women to undertake services that have been viewed as the exclusive prerogative of men in past centuries.
- To know that equal education is a necessary prerequisite to equal attainment in the human realm.
- To know that women must enter all professions
- To know the assignments given in our Writings to men, to women, and to both men and women for promoting the principle of equality
- To know that women serve at all levels of the Administrative Order of the Bahá'í Faith, local, national, and international

WISDOM

- To understand the importance of women's contributions to the well-being of humanity as a whole
- To understand the value of specific actions for promoting equality
- To understand the relationship between equality and Bahá'í community life
- To understand that the reason for exclusion of women from the Universal House of Justice will become clear in the future, after the evolution of society.

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION

- To appreciate the power of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's encouragement both for individual women and for the evolution of the entire Bahá'í community.
- To perceive the importance to humanity of educating girl children.
- To appreciate the views of others as we work together to promote equality
- To perceive the importance of encouragement in transforming ourselves and transforming society
- To perceive the contributions of others to the cause of equality.

ELOQUENT 'SPEECH'

- To demonstrate approaches for welcoming all humanity into true patterns of community life
- To respond to the National Spiritual Assembly's call for equality in the Bahá'í community
- To answer questions about the exclusion of women from the Universal House of Justice.
- To plan a community celebration that promotes the principle of equality for all ages and for Bahá'ís as well as others interested in the principle of equality.

Review and Introduction to Module Two

≈ KEY

Devotions

Review Module One

- Go over objectives from Module One and see if they were met by the activities the participants experienced.

Introduce Module Two

- Handout, project on the screen or display a poster of Module Two themes and objectives
- Read through these out loud.
- Review the Knowledge, Wisdom, Spiritual Perception and Eloquent Speech learning model.

Introduction: Example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Purpose:

- To know some examples of 'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraging women to undertake services that have been viewed as the exclusive prerogative of men in past centuries.
- To appreciate the power of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's encouragement both for individual women and for the evolution of the entire Bahá'í community.

∞ KEY



'Abdu'l-Bahá, the authoritative Interpreter and “perfect exemplar” of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, the “embodiment of every Bahá'í ideal,” and “the incarnation of every Bahá'í virtue,” promoted the equality of women in men in many ways including His talks, His writings, His family life, His directions to Bahá'ís, and in his choice of women to undertake many important tasks, of great importance to the development of humanity. The following few examples illustrate His approach to encouraging women to enter all fields of human endeavor.

Before the session begins, invite several of the friends to prepare to read or retell with eloquence and creativity the following examples of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's encouragement to women to enter every field of service.

After sharing these examples in the whole group, invite the friends to turn to their journals, to recall the effects of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words on their own lives. Play quiet music while the friends write, then invite a few friends to share some of their reflections in the whole group, if they like.

Process the session:

What role did 'Abdu'l-Bahá's encouragement play in the extraordinary accomplishments of these women?
How did the accomplishments of these women transform the Bahá'í community and the world at large?

Corinne True

While on pilgrimage in 1907, Corinne True was given her assignment by 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

When their pilgrimage came to an end and Corinne was ready to leave, the Master sent for her. It would be her last interview with Him. 'I asked Him what He wished me to do,' she recalled many years later. 'I wish you to live in Chicago. I wish you to work for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, and if you do that you must live in Chicago.' As she sat beside Him, He took her hand. It was as though, she has said, a great power was pulsing through her – a 'most unusual thing.'

NATHAN RUTSTEIN WITH EDNA M. TRUE, *CORINNE TRUE: FAITHFUL HANDMAID OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ: PAGES 68-69*

While Corinne True and her daughter were on their way home via Paris and London, Thornton Chase, Carl Scheffler and the Agnews were on pilgrimage, experiencing, at one point, something they hadn't expected. It was the Master's response to Mr. Chase's questions regarding the Temple. "When you return consult with Mrs. True – I have given her complete instructions.

Mr. Chases was startled. He simply wasn't prepared for what 'Abdu'l-Bahá had said. The Master had upset his notions about the role of women in the Faith. Had the Master doubted Thornton Chase's firmness in the Faith, He wouldn't have been so direct with him. What was said was obviously meant to broaden and deepen the American pilgrims' understanding of a certain aspect of the Bahá'í teachings.

NATHAN RUTSTEIN WITH EDNA M. TRUE, *CORINNE TRUE: FAITHFUL HANDMAID OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ: PAGE 71*

It was understandable why some of the early Bahá'ís clashed with her, especially some of the more assertive men, who felt she craved power. They were unfamiliar with such a display of drive in a woman, not realizing the Corinne's all-consuming love for the Master was what drove her.

NATHAN RUTSTEIN WITH EDNA M. TRUE, *CORINNE TRUE: FAITHFUL HANDMAID OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ: PAGE 75*

'Abdu'l-Bahá chose her to do what He felt others more experienced in the ways of the world weren't capable of doing. He chose a woman to spearhead the development of the most important single project in the first fifty years of the Faith in North American. But there were other things that she was destined to do for the Master; and she probably did them unaware at the time of what her exploits would eventually lead to. Through her efforts the Administrative Order, on a national scale, was started and developed.

And 'Abdu'l-Bahá used her to break down the psychological barriers against women in the American Bahá'í community. That was a long and painful experience. Above all she stood firm in the Faith, regardless of the severity of the tests within the Bahá'í community. Nothing could unhinge her attachment to the Cause. It was that, more than anything else, that endeared her to the Master and the Guardian. For it is upon that kind of rock that true Faiths are built.

NATHAN RUTSTEIN WITH EDNA M. TRUE, *CORINNE TRUE: FAITHFUL HANDMAID OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ: PAGE 206-207*

Susan Moody

In Iran during the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

...Bahá'í women had no access to competent medical care, especially regarding gynecological concerns, in a society in which the medical profession was male.

When a number of Persian Bahá'í physicians appealed for an American female doctor to reside in Tehran for the purpose of caring for the women of Iran, 'Abdu'l-Bahá chose Dr. Susan Moody, a gynecologist and specialist in women's diseases. She as the first American Bahá'í woman to settle in Iran....

En route to Iran Dr. Moody visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land and received from Him the necessary instructions and encouragement for the work. He gave her the designation *Amatu'l-A'la*, "the handmaid of the Most High," counseled her to have patience, and assured her that He would always be with her. Dr. Moody arrived in Tehran in November 1909, in the fifty-ninth year of her life.

Her medical services were greatly appreciated by the population at large. She served high and low alike, providing primary health care and holding classes for mothers. She also actively promoted the education of girls and worked for the establishment of the Tarbiyat school for girls.... She remained at her post for fifteen years before returning to the United States. In 1928, at Shoghi Effendi's request, she proceeded again to Iran to continue her highly meritorious service. She completely consecrated herself to her work and passed away in that land in 1934. Other health professionals, including Dr. Sarah Clock and Miss Elizabeth Stewart, assisted Dr. Moody and carried on her tradition of providing selfless service to the Bahá'ís and the general public.

JANET A. KAHN AND PETER J. KAHN, *ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGE 161

Martha Root

Martha Root, later described by Shoghi Effendi as “the fairest fruit as yet yielded by the Formative Age of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh,” “the foremost Hand” of the Cause of God, and “that archetype of Bahá'í itinerant teachers,” proclaimed the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh to royalty, statesmen, academics and ordinary people everywhere. She circled the globe from “the very first year the Tablets of the Divine Plan were unveiled in the United States of America” until her death from cancer in 1939 in Hawaii, at the age of sixty-seven. The indomitable Martha Root began her travels in response to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's summons to her:

As ears are awaiting the summons for Universal Peace, it is therefore advisable for thee to travel...to the different parts of the globe, and roar like unto a lion of the Kingdom of God. Wide-reaching consequences thou shalt witness and extraordinary confirmations shall be exhibited unto thee.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ CITED IN M.R. GARIS, *MARTHA ROOT: LIONESSE AT THE THRESHOLD*, PAGES 87-88

Purpose:

To know that equal education is a necessary prerequisite to equal attainment in the human realm.
To perceive the importance to humanity of educating girl children.

∞ KEY



Invite the friends to work in small groups to carefully study the selected quotations and answer the focus questions:

- In what ways does equal education increase opportunities for women and promote the principle of equality of women and men?
- What can individuals, families and the Bahá'í community do to support equal education?

Then ask them to illustrate their answers in a two-minute skit that demonstrates the importance of education in achieving equality.



After each group has shown their skit demonstrating the importance of education for achieving equality, discuss the following questions in the whole group:

1. In our community, what is the status of education (both level of education and excellence of achievement) for boys and girls, men and women?
2. What practical strategies can we use to foster equal education in our communities?

Process the session:

What is the importance of ensuring that girls and boys receive the same courses of study at all levels of education?

Education for Equality

Focus Topics:

In what ways does equal education increase opportunities for women and promote the principle of equality of women and men?

What can individuals, families and the Bahá'í community do to support equal education?



...There must be an equality of rights between men and women. Women shall receive an equal privilege of education. This will enable them to qualify and progress in all degrees of occupation and accomplishment. For the world of humanity possesses two wings: man and woman. If one wing remains incapable and defective, it will restrict the power of the other, and full flight will be impossible. Therefore, the completeness and perfection of the human world are dependent upon the equal development of these two wings.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGE 318

...If woman be fully educated and granted her rights, she will attain the capacity for wonderful accomplishments and prove herself the equal of man. She is the coadjutor of man, his complement and helpmeet. Both are human; both are endowed with potentialities of intelligence and embody the virtues of humanity. In all human powers and functions they are partners and coequals. At present in spheres of human activity woman does not manifest her natal prerogatives, owing to lack of education and opportunity. Without doubt education will establish her equality with men.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGES 136-137

Until the reality of equality between man and woman is fully established and attained, the highest social development of mankind is not possible. Even granted that woman is inferior to man in some degree of capacity or accomplishment, this or any other distinction would continue to be productive of discord and trouble. The only remedy is education, opportunity; for equality means equal qualification.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGE 76

...Woman must be given the privilege of equal education with man and full right to his prerogatives. That is to say, there must be no difference in the education of male and female in order that womankind may develop equal capacity and importance with man in the social and economic equation. Then the world will attain unity and harmony. In past ages humanity has been defective and inefficient because it has been incomplete. War and its ravages have blighted the world; the education of woman will be a mighty step toward its abolition and ending, for she will use her whole influence against war. Woman rears the child and educates the youth to maturity. She will refuse to give her sons for sacrifice upon the field of battle. In truth, she will be the greatest factor in establishing universal peace and international arbitration. Assuredly, woman will abolish warfare among mankind.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGE 108

...Thou hast written about the girls' school. What was previously written still holdeth true. There can be no improvement unless the girls are brought up in schools and centres of learning, unless they are taught the sciences and other branches of knowledge, and unless they acquire the manifold arts, as necessary, and are divinely trained. For the day will come when these girls will become mothers. Mothers are the first educators of children, who establish virtues in the child's inner nature. They encourage the child to acquire perfections and goodly manners, warn him against unbecoming qualities, and encourage him to show forth resolve, firmness, and endurance under hardship, and to advance on the high road to progress. Due regard for the education of girls is, therefore, necessary. This is a very important subject, and it should be administered and organized under the aegis of the Spiritual Assembly...

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, THE COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 2, PAGE 374

...it is incumbent upon the girls of this glorious era to be fully versed in the various branches of knowledge, in sciences and the arts and all the wonders of this pre-eminent time, that they may then educate their children and train them from their earliest days in the ways of perfection.

He promulgated the adoption of the same course of education for man and woman. Daughters and sons must follow the same curriculum of study, thereby promoting unity of the sexes. When all mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality of men and women be realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed.

^ABDU'L-BAHÁ: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE**, PAGES 174-

175

Why should a woman be left mentally undeveloped? Science is praiseworthy - whether investigated by the intellect of man or woman. So, little by little, woman advanced, giving increasing evidence of equal capabilities with man -whether in scientific research, political ability or any other sphere of human activity. The conclusion is evident that woman has been outdistanced through lack of education and intellectual facilities. If given the same educational opportunities or course of study, she would develop the same capacity and abilities.

^ABDU'L-BAHÁ: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE**, PAGE 281

Bahá'u'lláh has announced that inasmuch as ignorance and lack of education are barriers of separation among mankind, all must receive training and instruction. Through this provision the lack of mutual understanding will be remedied and the unity of mankind furthered and advanced. Universal education is a universal law. It is, therefore, incumbent upon every father to teach and instruct his children according to his possibilities. If he is unable to educate them, the body politic, the representative of the people, must provide the means for their education.

In the Orient women were degraded and considered subordinate to man. Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed equality of the sexes - that both man and woman are servants of God before Whom there is no distinction. Whosoever has a pure heart and renders good deeds is nearer to God and the object of His favor - whether man or woman. The sex distinction which exists in the human world is due to the lack of education for woman, who has been denied equal opportunity for development and advancement. Equality of the sexes will be established in proportion to the increased opportunities afforded woman in this age, for man and woman are equally the recipients of powers and endowments from God, the Creator. God has not ordained distinction between them in His consummate purpose.

^ABDU'L-BAHÁ: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 300

The education of each child is compulsory.... In addition to this widespread education each child must be taught a profession, art, or trade, so that every member of the community will be enabled to earn his own livelihood. Work done in the spirit of service is the highest form of worship....

^ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGES 376-377

The cause of universal education, which has already enlisted in its service an army of dedicated people from every faith and nation, deserves the utmost support that the governments of the world can lend it. For ignorance is indisputably the principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples and the perpetuation of prejudice. No nation can achieve success unless education is accorded all its citizens. Lack of resources limits the ability of many nations to fulfill this necessity, imposing a certain ordering of priorities. The decision-making agencies involved would do well to consider giving first priority to the education of women and girls, since it is through educated mothers that the benefits of knowledge can be most effectively and rapidly diffused throughout society. In keeping with the requirements of the times, consideration should also be given to teaching the concept of world citizenship as part of the standard education of every child.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGES 377-378

A very important element in the attainment of such equality is Bahá'u'lláh's provision that boys and girls must follow essentially the same curriculum in schools.

ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 378

EQUALITY IN THE WORLD AT LARGE: Shifting the Balance

Purpose:

- To know that women must enter all professions.
- To understand the importance of women's contributions to the well-being of humanity as a whole.

➤ KEY



Working in small groups, carefully study the selected quotations and answer the focus questions:

What do the specific occupations mentioned by the Beloved Master have in common?
How can women entering professions be a benefit to all humanity?



Then, in these same groups, think of the young girls that you know personally and identify, to the extent possible, their talents and capacities. Imagine the future contributions to humanity of these girls and create a poster that illustrates these contributions.

Make a plan to share the poster with these girls you know, and share with them your conviction that they will make contribute their share to advancing the well-being and happiness of the entire human race.

Share the posters in the whole group.

Process the session:

Why must we teach girls the Bahá'í principles on the role of women in the world at large?

Shifting the Balance

Focus Questions:

What do the specific occupations mentioned by the Beloved Master have in common?
How can women entering professions be a benefit to all humanity?



In this Revelation of Baha'u'llah, the women go neck and neck with the men. In no movement will they be left behind. Their rights with men are equal in degree. They will enter all the administrative branches of politics. They will attain in all such a degree as will be considered the very highest station of the world of humanity and will take part in all affairs.

˘ABDU'L-BAHA: PARIS TALKS, PAGE 182

When the women attain to the ultimate degree of progress, then, according to the exigency of the time and place and their great capacity, they shall obtain extraordinary privileges. Be ye confident on these accounts. His Holiness Baha'u'llah has greatly strengthened the cause of women, and the rights and privileges of women is one of the greatest principles of Abdu'l-Baha. Rest ye assured! Ere long the days shall come when the men addressing the women, shall say: `Blessed are ye! Blessed are ye! Verily ye are worthy of every gift. Verily ye deserve to adorn your heads with the crown of everlasting glory, because in sciences and arts, in virtues and perfections ye shall become equal to man, and as regards tenderness of heart and the abundance of mercy and sympathy ye are superior'.

˘ABDU'L-BAHA: PARIS TALKS, PAGES 183-184

As long as women are prevented from attaining their highest possibilities, so long will men be unable to achieve the greatness which might be theirs.

˘ABDU'L-BAHA: PARIS TALKS, PAGE 133

Again, it is well established in history that where woman has not participated in human affairs the outcomes have never attained a state of completion and perfection. On the other hand, every influential undertaking of the human world wherein woman has been a participant has attained importance.

˘ABDU'L-BAHA: PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGE 134

And let it be known once more that until woman and man recognize and realize equality, social and political progress here or anywhere will not be possible. For the world of humanity consists of two parts or members; one is woman; the other is man. Until these two members are equal in strength, the oneness of humanity cannot be established, and the happiness and felicity of mankind will not be a reality.

˘ABDU'L-BAHÁ: PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGE 77

Woman must especially devote her energies and abilities toward the industrial and agricultural sciences, seeking to assist mankind in that which is most needful. By this means she will demonstrate capability and ensure recognition of equality in the social and economic equation.

˘ABDU'L-BAHA: PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 283

Thus, imbued with the same virtues as man, rising through all the degrees of human attainment, women will become the peers of men, and until this equality is established, true progress and attainment for the human race will not be facilitated.

‘ABDU’L-BAHA: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 375

So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will cease; for woman will be the obstacle and hindrance to it.

‘ABDU’L-BAHA: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 135

The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes, is one of the most important, though less acknowledged prerequisites of peace. The denial of such equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical, or biological, upon which such denial can be justified. Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields of human endeavour will the moral and psychological climate be created in which international peace can emerge. (October 1985 to the Peoples of the World)

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 2*, PAGE 392

...Baha'u'llah Himself has envisaged that women as well as men would be breadwinners....

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 1*, PAGE 416

Equality: A Shared Responsibility

Purpose:

To know the assignments given in our Writings to men, to women, and to both men and women for promoting the principle of equality.

≈ KEY

Working individually, or in teams of two, read with care the following passages from the Writings. Mark each passage with “M” when it indicates an assignment for men, with “W” when it indicates an assignment for women, and “B” when it indicates an assignment for both men and women. Be careful to watch for both attitudes and actions as they are assigned.

As participants read through the quotations, divide a flip chart page into three columns, headed as follows:

Required of men

Required of women

Required of both men and women

In the whole group, complete the chart with brief passages from the Writings that indicate the actions and attitudes assigned to men, to women, and to both men and women.

Then briefly discuss the questions:

1. In what ways do the actions and attitudes assigned in our Writings distinguish the Bahá'í approach from the various modes of thinking and acting in society at large?
2. What will be the impact on society at large as Bahá'í men and women are able to increasingly reflect in our daily lives the transformative patterns of thought and action enjoined by our Faith?

Process the session:

How will our communities be different when aggression and use of force are replaced with cooperation and consultation?

Equality: A Shared Responsibility



All should know, and in this regard attain the splendours of the sun of certitude, and be illumined thereby: Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God. The Dawning-Place of the Light of God sheddeth its radiance upon all with the same effulgence. Verily God created women for men, and men for women. The most beloved of people before God are the most steadfast and those who have surpassed others in their love for God, exalted be His glory....

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 379

The happiness of mankind will be realized when women and men coordinate and advance equally, for each is the complement and helpmeet of the other.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, P. 182

The handmaidens of God and the bondswomen in His divine Court should reveal such attributes and attitudes amongst the women of the world as would cause them to stand out and achieve renown in the circles of women. That is, they should associate with them with supreme chastity and steadfast decency, with unshakable faith, articulate speech, and eloquent tongue, irrefutable testimony and high resolve. Beseech God that thou mayest attain unto all these bounties.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, QUOTED IN *MESSAGES FROM THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE*, 1963-1986, PAGE 707

Woman must endeavour then to attain greater perfection, to be man's equal in every respect, to make progress in all in which she has been backward, so that man will be compelled to acknowledge her equality of capacity and attainment.

In Europe women have made greater progress than in the East, but there is still much to be done! When students have arrived at the end of their school term an examination takes place, and the result thereof determines the knowledge and capacity of each student. So will it be with woman; her actions will show her power, there will no longer be any need to proclaim it by words. It is my hope that women of the East, as well as their Western sisters, will progress rapidly until humanity shall reach perfection. God's Bounty is for all and gives power for all progress. When men own the equality of women there will be no need for them to struggle for their rights! One of the principles then of Baha'u'llah is the equality of sex. Women must make the greatest effort to acquire spiritual power and to increase in the virtue of wisdom and holiness until their enlightenment and striving succeeds in bringing about the unity of mankind. They must work with a burning enthusiasm to spread the Teaching of Baha'u'llah among the peoples, so that the radiant light of the Divine Bounty may envelop the souls of all the nations of the world!

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, PP. 162-63

In this wondrous Dispensation the favours of the Glorious Lord are vouchsafed unto the handmaidens of the Merciful. Therefore, they should, like unto men, seize the prize and excel in the field, so that it will be proven and made manifest that the penetrative influence of the Word of God in this new Dispensation hath caused women to be equal with men, and that in the arena of tests they will outdo others. Therefore, the true bondswomen of the Blessed Beauty must be revived by the spirit of detachment, and refreshed by the breezes of attraction. With hearts overflowing with the love of God, with souls gladdened by the heavenly glad-tidings, and with extreme humility and lowliness, let them speak out with eloquent speech, and praise and glorify the Great Lord, for they are the manifestations of His bounty and adorned with the crown of splendour.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGES 396-397

Divine Justice demands that the rights of both sexes should be equally respected since neither is superior to the other in the eyes of Heaven.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *PARIS TALKS*, P. 162.

In brief, the assumption of superiority by man will continue to be depressing to the ambition of woman, as if her attainment to equality was creationally impossible; woman's aspiration toward advancement will be checked by it, and she will gradually become hopeless. On the contrary, we must declare that her capacity is equal, even greater than man's. This will inspire her with hope and ambition, and her susceptibilities for advancement will continually increase. She must not be told and taught that she is weaker and inferior in capacity and qualification. If a pupil is told that his intelligence is less than his fellow pupils, it is a very great drawback and handicap to his progress. He must be encouraged to advance by the statement, "You are most capable, and if you endeavor, you will attain the highest degree."

‘ABDU’L-BAHA: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGES 76-77

Bahá’í men have the opportunity to demonstrate to the world around them a new approach to the relationship between the sexes, where aggression and the use of force are eliminated and replaced by cooperation and consultation.

LETTER ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE DATED JANUARY 24, 1993 TO AN INDIVIDUAL;
PUBLISHED IN THE AMERICAN BAHÁ’Í, NOV. 23, 1993

Purpose:

To understand the value of specific actions for promoting equality.
To appreciate the views of others as we work together to promote equality.

∞ KEY

Working in teams of two, listen with care while you and your partner take turns answering the following questions. Then invite each team to share one brief highlight of their conversation with the whole group.

Recall a specific situation in your own life that you feel demonstrates the positive aspects of equality, of women and men working together, cooperating to get something done. What was the situation? Who was involved? Why did it work? What were you doing? What were other people doing?

Working individually, complete the worksheet, *Working Together for Equality*.

While participants are writing their answers, label one sheet of chart paper “Women’s Perspectives” and label another sheet of chart paper “Men’s Perspectives.” Draw a line down each sheet of chart paper. Create headings that read “Women can promote equality by...” and “Men can promote equality by...” on each of the sheets of chart paper. (If the group is large, you may need to prepare more than one set of charts, to allow more room to write answers.) See examples below.

Women’s Perspectives

Women Can Promote Equality by...

Men Can Promote Equality by...

Men’s Perspectives

Women Can Promote Equality by...

Men Can Promote Equality by...

Invite the friends to complete the charts by writing from their worksheets on the chart paper. After completing the charts, read through the entire list in the whole group. Then briefly discuss the questions:

- What did you learn about the views of others that confirmed your understanding of the Writings studied earlier in this workshop?
- What did you learn about the views of others that changed your understanding of the Writings studied earlier in this workshop?
- What are the advantages of listening to the views of others as we strive together to implement the principle of the equality of women and men?

Process the session:

Invite the friends to turn to their journals and record their insights into the actions that promote equality. Invite the friends to write their plan to undertake one specific action that they themselves can do to promote equality.

The Bahá'í Community: A Light and Haven for All

Purpose:

- To understand the relationship between equality and Bahá'í community life.
- To demonstrate approaches for welcoming all humanity into true patterns of community life.

∞ KEY



In groups of four or five participants, read aloud the following quotations and answer the focus questions:

- What specific patterns of actions distinguish Bahá'í community life?
- How do these patterns of action promote the principle of the equality of women and men?
- How do these patterns of action create a community that welcomes all with the light of oneness?

Then demonstrate your answers in the whole group in the form of a human sculpture bearing the title, “The Bahá'í Community: A Light and Haven for All.”



After all groups have shown their human sculpture, briefly discuss the questions:

How do these sculptures illustrate what we need to do as a community to welcome the participation

- of men and women?
- Bahá'ís and others?
- Families with young children?
- Single parents?
- The aged?

Process the session:

What barriers do we need to overcome to create a true welcoming community for everyone?

The Bahá'í Community: A Light and Haven for All



Focus Questions:

- What specific patterns of actions distinguish Bahá'í community life?
- How do these patterns of action promote the principle of the equality of women and men?
- How do these patterns of action create a community that welcomes all with the light of oneness?

...welcome all with the light of oneness.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, QUOTED BY SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE ADVENT OF DIVINE JUSTICE*, PAGE 37

The Cause in ... is growing very rapidly, and the more it spreads the more the attention of the public will be fixed upon it. This imposes a heavy responsibility on the believers, as they must show forth such a spirit of love and unity among themselves as will attract the hearts of others and encourage them to enter the Faith in large numbers. We must always remember that the Teachings are perfect, and that the only reason more of our fellow men have not as yet embraced them is because we Bahá'ís, the world over, are ourselves not yet as selfless and radiant mirrors of Bahá'u'lláh's Truth as we should and could be! We must constantly strive to better exemplify His Teachings.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 2*, PAGES 17-18

Without the spirit of real love for Bahá'u'lláh, for His Faith and its Institutions, and the believers for each other, the Cause can never really bring in large numbers of people. For it is not preaching and rules the world wants, but love and action.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *DIRECTIVES OF THE GUARDIAN*, PAGE 72

The greater the patience, the loving understanding and the forbearance the believers show towards each other and their shortcomings, the greater will be the progress of the whole Bahá'í community at large.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, IN *LIVING THE LIFE*, P. 9

The Bahá'í community life provides you with an indispensable laboratory, where you can translate into living and constructive action the principles which you imbibe from the Teachings. By becoming a real part of that living organism you can catch the real spirit which runs throughout the Bahá'í Teachings. To study the principles, and to try to live according to them, are, therefore, the two essential mediums through which you can ensure the development and progress of your inner spiritual life and of your outer existence as well.

ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE COMPILATIONS: VOLUME ONE*, PAGE 219

As you know, the Bahá'ís are distinguished not by their perfection or their immunity from the negative influences of the wider society in which they live, but by their acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh's vision and willingness to work toward it. Each of us must strike a balance between realistically facing our community's shortcomings, and focusing on Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings rather than our fellow believers as our standard of faith. This comment is not intended to belittle your concerns, but rather to place them in perspective so that you may not become discouraged as you strive toward the ideal.

ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, LETTER DATED MARCH 5, 1979.

... the Bahá'ís ... should initiate and implement programs which will stimulate and promote the full and equal participation of women in all aspects of Bahá'í community life, so that through their accomplishments the friends will demonstrate the distinction of the Cause of God in this field of human endeavor.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, LETTER DATED MAY 25, 1975, IN *MESSAGES FROM THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE*, 1963-1986, P. 309.

Such close interaction, such complete cohesion, such continual harmony and fellowship between the various agencies that contribute to the organic life, and constitute the basic framework, of every properly functioning Bahá'í community, is a phenomenon which offers a striking contrast to the disruptive tendencies which the discordant elements of present-day society so tragically manifest.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *THE ADVENT OF DIVINE JUSTICE*, P. 2

...As we read in one of the letters written on behalf of the Guardian: "Until the public sees in the Bahá'í Community a true pattern, in action, of something better than it already has, it will not respond to the Faith in large numbers." When people embrace the Cause, they should then, through the Teachings, develop their relationships with each other and with their fellow-citizens to gradually produce a truly Bahá'í community, a light and haven for the bewildered.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, RIDVAN 1994

...the friends should love each other, constantly encourage each other, work together, be as one soul in one body, and in so doing become a true, organic, healthy body animated and illumined by the spirit. In such a body all will receive spiritual health and vitality from the organism itself, and the most perfect flowers and fruits will be brought forth.

MESSAGES FROM THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, 1963-1986, PAGE 43

It [the principle of the oneness of humankind] has widespread implications which affect and remold all dimensions of human activity. It calls for a fundamental change in the manner in which people relate to each other, and the eradication of those age-old practices which deny the intrinsic human right of every individual to be treated with consideration and respect.

ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, IN *THE AMERICAN BAHÁ'Í*, 24, NO. 17 (NOVEMBER 23, 1993), PP. 10-11.

This principle [the equality of the sexes] is far more than the enunciation of admirable ideals; it has profound implications in all aspects of human relations and must be an integral element of Bahá'í domestic and community life. The application of this principle gives rise to changes in habits and practices which have prevailed for many centuries.

ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, LETTER DATED JANUARY 24, 1993 TO AN INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER, IN *EXTRACTS ON WOMEN*

The community, as distinguished from the individual and the institutions, assumes its own character and identity as it grows in size. This is a necessary development to which much attention is required both with respect to places where large-scale enrollment has occurred and in anticipation of more numerous instances of entry by troops. A community is of course more than the sum of its membership; it is a comprehensive unit of civilization composed of individuals, families and institutions that are originators and encouragers of systems, agencies and organizations working together with a common purpose for the welfare of people both within and beyond its own borders; it is a composition of diverse, interacting participants that are achieving unity in an unremitting quest for spiritual and social progress. Since Bahá'ís everywhere are at the very beginning of the process of community building, enormous effort must be devoted to the tasks at hand.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, TO THE WORLD, RIDVAN 1996

The National Spiritual Assembly Promotes Equality

Purpose:

To respond to the National Spiritual Assembly's call for equality in the Bahá'í community.

➤ KEY



In the December 31, 1998 edition of *The American Bahá'í*, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States published the following letter to all Bahá'ís in this country. Read the following excerpts from the letter aloud in the whole group. Mention that the rest of the letter deals with the teaching campaign using the video and the statement, both titled *Two Wings of a Bird: The Equality of Women and Men*, to proclaim the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh to the world at large and to leaders of thought. We introduced the video and statement in Module One of this course program. We will explore their further use in Module Four. This activity focuses on the parts of the letter directing our attention to the implications of the principle of equality to community life.

After reading the letter, discuss the questions raised in the letter by our beloved National Spiritual Assembly. Record the suggested strategies that seem most workable and most important to the entire group. Invite volunteers to draft a response to those questions which can be sent to the National Spiritual Assembly with a copy to the Local Spiritual Assembly. We will complete this letter by adding plans to make greater use of the *Two Wings* statement in Module Four of this course program.

The draft response to the questions below should be prepared during breaks in the course program and brought back to the entire group for editing and approval. After completing it in Module Four and final edits, we'll invite the signatures of everyone present before sending it to the National and Local Assemblies.

Process the session:

How can we build unity of thought and action to promote the principle of equality in our community?

December 31, 1998

Dearly loved Friends,

Bahá'u'lláh, the Sun of Truth, has assured us that the only remedy for prejudice – an opinion held in disregard of the facts – is the true spirit of equality and unity. The American Bahá'í Community has the ability to serve as a model to our nation in the promotion of these issues. As you know, the National Spiritual Assembly has adopted the equality of women and men together with racial harmony as our twin foci for the duration of the Four Year Plan. We must seize the opportunities afforded at this time to make a difference in the life of our nation. Our progress will help insure the achievement of human rights for all people, and ultimately, to the attainment of peace.

In the arena of gender equality our role is to emphasize the need for a true partnership between women and men. Most individuals are aware of the advances that are needed for equality in education and employment. But let us consider the subtler challenges. We must question whether deep-rooted prejudices about women are affecting our daily behavior. In Bahá'í communities we must examine whether women occupy equally important positions as men; whether their voices are truly heard in consultation; whether their capacities are considered in each election; and whether women and men are sharing in the tasks necessary for community functioning, such as implementing children's programs, providing food, administering meetings, speaking at events, and executing teaching plans.

The role of Bahá'í men, as partners in this process, is critical. Bahá'í men must make a concerted effort to assist, encourage, and support women to realize and fulfill the high aspirations that are held for them in the Bahá'í Writings. We call upon Bahá'í men to confront the attitudes, assumptions, and behaviors that promote the world's currently deplorable moral climate that denigrates women. Bahá'í men can and must explore ways in which to support the often unspoken aspirations of Bahá'í women in their midst and encourage them to step forward in action....

We invite you to consider the following questions in your families, communities and Spiritual Assembly meetings:

1. What should our community do to become a true model of equality?
2. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated, "When men own the equality of women there will be no need for them to struggle for their rights!" ('Abdu'l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, p. 163) How can men "own" equality?
3. How are we raising our children to practice equality in their lives?
4. How can we reach out to the community at large to share the Bahá'í view on equality?...

We look forward to receiving reports of the results of your consultations. Be assured of our ongoing prayers for your success in the closing months of this Century of Light.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

Women in the Administrative Order

Purpose:

To know that women serve at all levels of the Administrative Order of the Bahá'í Faith, local, national, and international.

∞ KEY



Read aloud the following summary by Janet Kahn and Peter Kahn (*Advancement of Women*, page 122) which illustrates the profound importance of women throughout the Administrative Order of the Bahá'í faith, unlike the role of women in other religions:

The Bahá'í Faith stands in direct contrast to the historical precedent. Its Administrative Order, based directly on explicit statements of Bahá'u'lláh Himself, has as one of its most striking and distinctive features the involvement of women in positions of responsibility at local, national, and international levels. Women serve as Hands of the Cause of God and as Counselor members of the International Teaching Center, discharging vital responsibilities worldwide in stimulating the expansion of the Bahá'í community, preserving its integrity, and fostering its spiritual life. Each of the five Continental Boards of Counselors includes women as well as men among its members, and women are elected as members of National and Local Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world and participate at the grassroots level of Bahá'í community life, consulting at the Nineteen Day Feast and at conventions and conferences.

Then read aloud the following passage from the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, describing the guidelines which must be followed for all Bahá'í elections:

...It is incumbent upon the chosen delegates to consider without the least trace of passion and prejudice, and irrespective of any material consideration, the names of only those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHA'Í ADMINISTRATION*, PAGE 88

Briefly discuss the question:

What is the role of women in the Administrative Order, the precursor to the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh?

Women and the Universal House of Justice

Purpose:

To understand that the reason for exclusion of women from the Universal House of Justice will become clear in the future, after the evolution of society.

To answer questions about the exclusion of women from the Universal House of Justice.

∞ KEY

Invite the friends to close their eyes and reflect on a time when they were first learning about the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh (whether raised as a Bahá'í or discovered the Faith at a later age).

- Think of a Bahá'í principle, or law, or quotation that was initially troubling to you that now makes perfect sense.
- How does this simple memory help us understand that our own level of understanding does not necessarily determine the validity of an aspect of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh?



In light of the consistent and long-term initiatives of the Head of the Bahá'í Faith, from Bahá'u'lláh to the present actions of the Universal House of Justice, it is understandable if those inquiring into the Bahá'í teachings raise questions about the teachings that clearly specify that membership on the Universal House of Justice, the supreme administrative body of the Bahá'í Faith, is confined to men.

In teams of two, carefully study the passages on the handout, *Women and the Universal House of Justice*, then prepare answers to questions that people investigating the truth of the Bahá'í Faith sometimes ask about the beloved Universal House of Justice. Share all answers in the entire group, then give each team the opportunity to refine their answers to these questions, if they so desire.

Process the session:

How does our understanding of the Covenant assist us to answer these important questions about the membership of the Universal House of Justice?

Women and the Universal House of Justice

Focus questions:

Why don't women serve on the Universal House of Justice?

How can Bahá'ís be sure that the Universal House of Justice will continue to uphold the principle of equality of women and men if all the members are men?



We exhort the men of the House of Justice and command them to ensure the protection and safeguarding of men, women and children. It is incumbent upon them to have the utmost regard for the interests of the people at all times and under all conditions. Blessed is the ruler who succoureth the captive, and the rich one who careth for the poor, and the just one who secureth from the wrong doer the rights of the downtrodden, and happy the trustee who observeth that which the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days hath prescribed unto him.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, PAGES 69-70

And now, concerning the House of Justice which God hath ordained as the source of all good and freed from all error, it must be elected by universal suffrage, that is, by the believers. Its members must be manifestations of the fear of God and daysprings of knowledge and understanding, must be steadfast in God's faith and the well-wishers of all mankind. By this House is meant the Universal House of Justice, that is, in all countries, a secondary House of Justice must be instituted, and these secondary Houses of Justice must elect the members of the Universal one. Unto this body all things must be referred. It enacteth all ordinances and regulations that are not to be found in the explicit Holy Text.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION, PAGE 10

The House of Justice, however, according to the explicit text of the Law of God, is confined to men; this for a wisdom of the Lord God's, which will ere long be made manifest as clearly as the sun at high noon.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: SELECTIONS ... ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, PAGE 80

Regarding your question, the Master said the wisdom of having no women on the International House of Justice, would become manifest in the future. We have no other indication than this.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: DIRECTIVES OF THE GUARDIAN, PAGE 80

As regards your question concerning the membership of the Universal House of Justice, there is a Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in which He definitely states that the membership of the Universal House is confined to men and that the wisdom of it will be fully revealed in the future. In the local, as well as the National Houses of Justice, however, women have the full right of membership. It is therefore, only to the International House that they cannot be elected. The Bahá'ís should accept this statement of the Master in a spirit of deep faith, confident that there is a divine guidance and wisdom behind it, which will be gradually unfolded to the eyes of the world."

SHOGHI EFFENDI, DIRECTIVES FROM THE GUARDIAN, P. 79-80

Further, in response to a number of questions about eligibility for membership and procedures for election of the Universal House of Justice, the Guardian's secretary writing on his behalf distinguished between those questions which could be answered by reference to the "explicitly revealed" Text and those which could not. Membership of the Universal House of Justice fits into the former category. The letter stated:

The membership of the Universal House of Justice is confined to men. Fixing the number of members, the procedures for election and the term of membership will be known later, as these are not explicitly revealed in the Holy Text. (27 May 1940)

Hence, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Guardian progressively have revealed, in accordance with divine inspiration, the meaning and implications of Bahá'u'lláh's seminal teachings. Their interpretations are fundamental statements of truth which cannot be varied through legislation by the Universal House of Justice.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, QUOTED IN JANET A. KAHN AND PETER J. KAHN, *ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGE 125

Bahá'ís believe that to gain a fuller understanding of the reason women are excused from membership of the Universal House of Justice, we must await the evolution of society, and, we are confident that the wisdom of women's exclusion will become manifest as society develops and becomes more united.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, QUOTED IN JANET A. KAHN AND PETER J. KAHN, *ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGE 127

Though at the preset time it may be difficult for the believers to appreciate the reason for the circumscription of the membership on the Universal House of Justice to men, we call upon the friends to remain assured by the Master's promise that clarity of understanding will be achieved in due course. The friends, both women and men, must accept this with faith that the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh will aid them and the institutions of His World Order to see the realization of every principle ordained by His unerring Pen, including the equality of men and women, as expounded in the Writings of the Cause.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, QUOTED IN JANET A. KAHN AND PETER J. KAHN, *ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGES 128-129

While individuals are free to speculate on the reason for the membership of the Universal House of Justice being confined to men, there is no authoritative text to support the assertion that it is due to women being so compassionate as to be unable to make objective decisions. Indeed, it might well be argued that if this were the reason, the teachings would have provided also for the exclusion of women from Local and National Spiritual Assemblies, whereas a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer contains this statement: "In local, as well as national Houses of Justice, however, women have the full right of membership.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, QUOTED IN JANET A. KAHN AND PETER J. KAHN, *ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGE 129

With regard to the status of women, the important point for Bahá'ís to remember is that in face of the categorical pronouncements in Bahá'í Scripture establishing the equality of men and women, the ineligibility of women for membership of the Universal House of Justice does not constitute evidence of the superiority of men over women. It must also be borne in mind that women are not excluded from any other international institution of the Faith. They are found among the ranks of the Hands of the Cause and as Continental Counselors. And there is nothing in the Text to preclude the participation of women in such future international bodies as the Supreme Tribunal.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, QUOTED IN JANET A. KAHN AND PETER J. KAHN, *ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGES 130-131

Purpose:

To perceive the importance of encouragement
in transforming ourselves and transforming society.
To perceive the contributions of others to the cause of
equality.

∞ KEY



Prepare the following demonstration of the role of encouragement:

Equipment

- A bowl of water
- An ice cube
- A length of string
- Some salt

Ask the friends, "Who can lift this ice cube with the string?" Invite experimentation.

Float the ice cube in the bowl of water and lay the string on top of the cube. Then sprinkle a little salt around the string. Soon it will be frozen into the ice cube and you will be able to use the string to lift the ice.

Mention that sometimes transforming ourselves and our communities feels like a slippery task, like lifting an ice cube with a string. Yet sometimes the smallest factors can entirely change the circumstances and make the task surprisingly simple to accomplish.

The Blessed Perfection assures us that He can use us to accomplish His purposes. Encouragement is one of the simple but powerful ways we can support each other in this work. Encouragement can be like the salt – it makes a difficult task suddenly become easy.

In groups of three or four participants, read aloud the brief quotations on the handout *Power of Encouragement*.

Acknowledge that each person present is contributing to the happiness and well-being of the entire human race by promoting the principle of equality. Invite each person to write on a small piece of paper an action that they have observed each other person in that small group undertake to promote the principle of equality. While still in the small groups, read these statements aloud, then give to each person the statements made about him or her as a gift.

Process the session:

How can we create a climate of encouragement in our community?

Power of Encouragement



How often have things been simple and easy of accomplishment, and yet most men have been heedless, and busied themselves with that which wasteth their time!

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *EPISTLE TO THE SON OF THE WOLF*, PAGE 137

It is incumbent upon every one of us to encourage each other....

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, QUOTED IN A LETTER OF BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM*, PAGES 163-164

Joy gives us wings! In times of joy our strength is more vital, our intellect keener, and our understanding less clouded. We seem better able to cope with the world and to find our sphere of usefulness.

'ABDU'L-BAHA: *PARIS TALKS*, PAGE 109

Child Development Centered Community: Brilliant Star activities

Purpose:

To plan a community celebration that promotes the principle of equality for all ages for Bahá'ís and others interested in the principle of equality.

➤ KEY

Prior to conducting this activity gather as many of the sources listed below and have them available for the participants to use. Before asking the teams to begin their work, show the materials and describe their possible use.

Then invite the participants, working in teams of three or four, to plan a Holy Day celebration, fireside, spiritual gathering, picnic or other event suited for all ages, infants through aged, youth and adults, Bahá'ís and interested others alike.

Using the forms provided, consult about the specific population you plan to serve:

- Is it an entire community or several families getting together?
- Is it hosted by a family or by a group of individuals?
- Will it be in a private or public location?
- How will you invite the guests?
- How will you involve children, youth, adults, and seniors?
- Will you serve refreshments?
- When do you plan to carry out this activity?
- How will you know that it is successful?

You may wish to consider using stories or activities from the *Brilliant Star* magazine included in the Resource Guide of stories and activities suited for all ages.

Circulate among all teams to offer encouragement and answer questions as they complete their plans.

Ask each group to share their plans with the whole group and to teach a 3-5 minute segment of their plan to the participants (enough time for one story, or to demonstrate a single activity).

Invite the friends to celebrate this collection of plans and encourage each other in their completion by completing statements such as:

- I really appreciated it when you....
- I learned a lot when you....
- I can tell that this activity will work for the ages you have in mind because...

Process the session:

How does this sort of community-building activity promote the equality of women and men?

Resource Guide

Stories and Activities Suited for All Ages

Using Stories as a Resource

Many stories illustrate the attitudes and behaviors of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. These stories reflect Their regard for and confidence in both female family members and women outside the family. An excellent source of such stories is *Advancement of Women*, especially pp. 142-161, 172-194.

Other sources include:

- *The Chosen Highway*, especially the spoken chronicles of three ladies of the holy family, such pp. 47, 89-90, 98, 101
- *Stories of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 26-27
- *Vignettes of the Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*.

At your community event, plan to read the stories you selected, tell them in your own words, or give a dramatic reading. Ask participants, after each story, what elements of the story had meaning or significance to them.

Alternately, provide copies of the stories you selected. Make these copies available to participants to read silently. Invite volunteers to tell their favorite story, in their own words, to the group and explain why it had particular meaning to them.

Mention the power of storytelling and example. Encourage participants to tell their favorite stories of Bahá'u'lláh's and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's attitudes towards women to the children and youth of their family and community

Using *Brilliant Star* as a Resource

Make available copies of *Brilliant Star* which focus on the advancement of women and the equality of the sexes, such as those editions listed below. Invite the groups to select an activity that could be used at their community event in the near future.

- July/August 1993 – entire magazine is devoted to the role of women
- Nov/Dec 1993, “Expanding Resources,” p. 29
- Jan/Feb 1994, “What Does Mom Do? What Does Dad Do?,” pp. 2-3
- Special Edition 1994, “The Two Wings of a Bird,” p. 27
- Mar/Apr 1996, “With Two Wings,” pp. 8-9

Review the learning objectives for Module Two.



While playing quiet music, invite the friends to turn to their journals to refine their personal spiritual development, service and teaching plan. Based on the activities we've completed together, consider the following questions:

- What specific actions will I complete using my own resources to encourage girls and women to enter all fields of human endeavor?
- How shall I collaborate with others to encourage girls and women to use their talents in service to humanity?
- What will I do, using entirely my own resources, to build an ideal Bahá'í community?
- How shall I collaborate with others to build an ideal Bahá'í community?
- What actions do I need to take to carry out my plan for an age-integrated community building activity?



Close the session with group prayers.

SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN
CORE CURRICULUM
FOR A SPIRITUAL EDUCATION



MODULE THREE

Equality in the Family

Learning Objectives

≈ KEY

KNOWLEDGE

- To become aware of traditional conversation patterns
- To know the requisites and conditions for effective consultation
- To know some of the Bahá'í writings that describe the conditions for equality and unity in marriage
- To know the importance of child-rearing to the advancement of human civilization
- To know that tyranny, conflict and aggressive domination are forbidden by Bahá'u'lláh
- To become more familiar with the circumstances of the lives of individuals in the Holy Family.

WISDOM

- To understand the relationship between family life and the peace of nations
- To understand the impact of speech patterns on conversation
- To understand that spiritual education and training promote violence-free communities
- To understand that Bahá'í law transcends the common idea of a legal system
- To gain a deeper appreciation of the spiritual qualities which enabled members of the Holy Family to serve in the household of Bahá'u'lláh and in the unfoldment of the Faith

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION

- To perceive the importance of consultation in establishing harmonious family life
- To perceive that equality in marriage strengthens the marriage bond and promotes the happiness of the couple
- To appreciate that equality in status can include differences in function between women and men
- To reflect on the deep love and respect the members of the Holy Family had for each other
- To perceive the members of the Holy Family as role models for women and men today

ELOQUENT 'SPEECH'

- To demonstrate the requisites and conditions of effective consultation
- To explain to others the relationship between the fundamental principle of the equality of women and men, and the role of mothers as the first, but not only, educator of children
- To explain to others the relationship of the principle of equality to passages in the Kitab-I-Aqdas that differentiate between women and men
- To exemplify one or more of the qualities of the Holy Family in one's continuing work to achieve the equality of women and men

Review and Introduction to Module Three

∞ KEY

Devotions

Open module three with devotions and music.

Review Modules One and Two

Introduce Module Three

- Handout, project on the screen, or display a poster of Module Three themes and objectives.
- Read through these aloud.
- If some time has elapsed since completing Modules One and Two, invite the friends to share the results of their actions to promote equality.

Introduction: Bahá'u'lláh and The Holy Family

Purpose:

To become more familiar with
Bahá'u'lláh's interactions with the
Holy Family.

∞ KEY

Bahá'u'lláh, the Ancient Beauty, the most precious Being to have ever walked on earth, the Mouthpiece of God Himself, engaged in loving and tender family life, setting the tone for a whole new cycle of equality and fulfillment in human life.

Invite some of the friends to read eloquently the following brief anecdotes from His family life that illustrate the some of the patterns of life in the holy family.

Process the session:

What aspects of loving and harmonious family life are illustrated by these stories?

Bahá'u'lláh and the Holy Family



The Greatest Holy Leaf recalls:

Asíyih Khánúm, my dear mother, was in delicate health, her strength was diminished by the hardships she had undergone, but she always worked beyond her force.

Sometimes my father himself helped in the cooking, as that hard work was too much for the dainty, refined, gentle lady. The hardships she had endured saddened the heart of her divine husband, who was also her beloved Lord.

THE SPOKEN CHRONICLE OF BAHÍYIYH KHÁNÚM, DAUGHTER OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, IN *THE CHOSEN HIGHWAY* BY LADY BLOMFIELD, PAGE 47

Túbá Khánúm, granddaughter of Bahá'u'lláh, remembers:

When my little sister, Ruh-Angiz Asíyih, arrived, there was some disappointment that she was not a boy.

Bahá'u'lláh said, "I will love her more than all the rest; you must not wish that she had been a boy."

THE SPOKEN CHRONICLE OF TÚBÁ KHÁNÚM, DAUGHTER OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, GRAND-DAUGHTER OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, IN *THE CHOSEN HIGHWAY* BY LADY BLOMFIELD, PAGE 103

We children looked upon Bahá'u'lláh as another loving Father; to Him we carried all our little difficulties and troubles. He took an interest in everything which concerned us.

He used to send a servant to Beirut every year to buy stuff for our clothes. Bahá'u'lláh would then call for us to choose which we liked best for our frocks. My mother, my aunt, and the children would make this cotton material into garments....

All our holidays, all our treats and our happiness came from Him in those days; when boxes of sweets were brought to Him He would set some aside for us.

Put that box of sweets over there, or Aqá will give it away to the people,' He would say in fun.

'Let the dear children come in, and have some dessert,' He often said, when we were being sent off to bed-my Father and my mother not wishing that we should disturb Him-but He always welcomed us with loving words.

How we adored Him!

'Now children, to-morrow you shall come with Me for a picnic to the Ridván,' He would say, and our night was so full of joy we could scarcely sleep.

THE SPOKEN CHRONICLE OF TÚBÁ KHÁNÚM, DAUGHTER OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, IN *THE CHOSEN HIGHWAY* BY LADY BLOMFIELD, PAGE 98

Family Life in an Ever Advancing Civilization

≈ KEY

Purpose:

To understand the relationship between family life and the peace of nations.

In small groups, study the selected quotations and answer the focus questions:

- What practical expressions of co-operation, mutual aid and reciprocity strengthen family life?
- How can families assist children to learn the attitudes and habits that foster equality, harmony and unity in the family, and that transfer the workplace, political life, and international relations?

Please be as specific as possible in your answers.

Then create a dynamic model (a model with moving parts) using tinker toys or other construction materials to show the relationship of family life to the peace, prosperity and well-being of nations.

After allowing time for the friends to study the passages and create their models, invite each group to display their models in the whole group.

Process the session:

Which steps shall I take to foster equality, harmony and unity in my own family? What steps shall I take today?

Family Life in an Ever Advancing Civilization

Focus Questions:

What practical expressions of co-operation, mutual aid and reciprocity strengthen family life?

How can families assist children to learn the attitudes and habits that foster equality, harmony and unity in the family, and that transfer the workplace, political life, and international relations?

Please be as specific as possible in your answers.



Compare the nations of the world to the members of a family. A family is a nation in miniature. Simply enlarge the circle of the household, and you have the nation. Enlarge the circle of nations, and you have all humanity. The conditions surrounding the family surround the nation. The happenings in the family are the happenings in the life of the nation. Would it add to the progress and advancement of a family if dissensions should arise among its members, all fighting, pillaging each other, jealous and revengeful of injury, seeking selfish advantage? Nay, this would be the cause of the effacement of progress and advancement. So it is in the great family of nations, for nations are but an aggregate of families.

‘ABDU’L-BAHA: PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGE 157

Consider the harmful effect of discord and dissension in a family; then reflect upon the favors and blessings which descend upon that family when unity exists among its various members. What incalculable benefits and blessings would descend upon the great human family if unity and brotherhood were established!

‘ABDU’L-BAHA: PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGE 230

According to the teachings of Baha'u'llah the family, being a human unit, must be educated according to the rules of sanctity. All the virtues must be taught the family. The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed. The rights of the son, the father, the mother - none of them must be transgressed, none of them must be arbitrary. Just as the son has certain obligations to his father, the father, likewise, has certain obligations to his son. The mother, the sister and other members of the household have their certain prerogatives. All these rights and prerogatives must be conserved, yet the unity of the family must be sustained. The injury of one shall be considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honor of one, the honor of all.

‘ABDU’L-BAHA: PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, PAGE 168

Were one to observe with an eye that discovereth the realities of all things, it would become clear that the greatest relationship that bindeth the world of being together lieth in the range of created things themselves, and that co-operation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly. ...

The more this inter-relationship is strengthened and expanded, the more will human society advance in progress and prosperity. Indeed without these vital ties it would be wholly impossible for the world of humanity to attain true felicity and success.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, THE COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 1, PAGES 509-510

The denial of...equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, THE COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 2, PAGE 392

Consultation: The Panacea for Domestic Conflict

Purpose:

To perceive the importance of consultation
in establishing harmonious family life.

≈ KEY

According to the Universal House of Justice, consciousness of the oneness of humanity and the use of consultation, provide the foundation for peace. Read aloud the selected handout passages, *Family Life in an Ever Advancing Civilization*, from the Universal House of Justice in the whole group.

Then in teams of two, discuss the focus questions:

- What different types of consultation occur within the family?
- What do you value most about effective consultation?
- When does this happen for you?
- Who and what is involved in the best types of family consultation?

After each team has had a chance to discuss the questions, invite a few of the friends to share highlights of their consultation in the whole group.

Process the session:

Why is effective consultation good for you, for the family, and for the world?

Consultation: The Panacea for Domestic Conflict



Focus Questions:

- What different types of consultation occur within the family?
- What do you value most about effective consultation?
- When does this happen for you?
- Who and what is involved in the best types of family consultation?

The primary question to be resolved is how the present world, with its entrenched pattern of conflict, can change to a world in which harmony and co-operation will prevail. World order can be founded only on an unshakable consciousness of the oneness of mankind, a spiritual truth which all the human sciences confirm. Anthropology, physiology, psychology, recognize only one human species, albeit infinitely varied in the secondary aspects of life. Recognition of this truth requires abandonment of prejudice - prejudice of every kind - race, class, colour, creed, nation, sex, degree of material civilization, everything which enables people to consider themselves superior to others.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 371

Family consultation employing full and frank discussion, and animated by awareness of the need for moderation and balance, can be the panacea for domestic conflict.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 453

Purpose:

- To become aware of traditional conversation patterns.
- To understand the impact of speech patterns on conversation.

∞ KEY

This activity requires 55 colored pieces of paper (or cards, or poker chips) for *each* small working group of 4-6 participants:

- 27 small white pieces of paper
- 19 small red pieces of paper
- 9 small blue pieces of paper

Acknowledge to the friends that in most of our cultural backgrounds, men are trained to speak decisively and present their statements with certainty, while women are trained to speak more tentatively by asking questions, offering suggestions and drawing out the comments of others. While all of these speech patterns can be helpful in consultation, our Writings call upon us to weigh inherited patterns according to the standard given in our Writings.

Invite the friends to work in small groups of 4-6 participants, perhaps around a table. Assign each person randomly a red badge or a blue badge. Place the group's 55 colored pieces of paper where each person can reach them. The conversation is organized by using these papers.

The white papers are 'asking papers.' They are used anytime a person wants to ask a question or solicit information from others. When the white papers are gone, there is no more asking.

The blue and red papers are 'telling papers,' which are to be used each time a person offers an opinion or makes a statement. Participants wearing a blue badge only use the blue 'telling papers.' Participants wearing a red badge only use the red 'telling papers.' When all the blue papers are gone, the friends wearing blue badges can do no more telling. When all the red papers are gone, the friends wearing red badges can do no more telling.

When all the papers are gone, the conversation is over.

Invite the friends to begin their conversations by responding to the following questions, which are posted where all groups can see:

1. Are you more comfortable using the 'telling papers' or the 'asking papers?' How do your preferences compare with the preferences of others in your group?
2. Each group has more red papers than blue papers. How does it feel to be a 'red' person? A 'blue' person?
3. What differences are there in the amounts of time that people spoke per paper? How do you account for these differences?

After about ten minutes conversation time, reconvene the entire group.

continued next page...

Share with the friends the information that research indicates that women sometimes feel that men don't really listen; and that men sometimes feel that women don't speak their minds.

This activity provides an opportunity to experience the sorts of conversational patterns that are sometimes taught to men, and speech patterns sometimes taught to women.

Briefly discuss the following questions, in the entire group:

1. How did it feel to have your ability to speak artificially controlled by the 'asking and telling' papers? How did the papers affect the group process?
2. What did you learn about yourself? About the communication styles of others? About how communication styles affect group process?
3. How does asking questions influence the conversation? How does making statements influence the conversation? What implications might there be for men and women who want to promote the principle of equality?
4. In what ways did this activity reflect your own experience? What parts of it were realistic or unrealistic?
5. How can this activity assist us to foster the true spirit of consultation in home and community life?

Purpose:

To know the requisites and conditions for effective consultation.
To demonstrate the requisites and conditions of effective consultation.

∞ KEY



Returning to the same small groups, invite the friends to carefully study the handout *Consultation* and discuss the focus questions:

- How do the requisites and conditions for consultation help reveal the truth of the matter?
- How can consultation become an effective guide to action?
- What are the similarities and differences among various types of consultation: consultation as a member of a spiritual assembly, consultation at the Nineteen-Day Feast, consultation between husband and wife, and consultation between parents and children?

After studying the passages and answering the focus questions, invite each group to create a two-minute skit that demonstrates effective consultation.

Process the session:

In what ways can effective consultation patterns foster the equality of women and men in our homes, our communities, and our professional lives?

Consultation



Focus Questions:

How do the requisites and conditions for consultation help reveal the truth of the matter?

How can consultation become an effective guide to action?

What are the similarities and differences among various types of consultation: consultation as a member of a spiritual assembly, consultation at the Nineteen-Day Feast, consultation between husband and wife, and consultation between parents and children?

Consultation bestoweth greater awareness and transmuteth conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leadeth the way and guideth. For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity. The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 1, PAGE 93

The prime requisites for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties and servitude to His exalted Threshold. Should they be graciously aided to acquire these attributes, victory from the unseen Kingdom of Baha shall be vouchsafed to them. In this day, assemblies of consultation are of the greatest importance and a vital necessity. Obedience unto them is essential and obligatory. The members thereof must take counsel together in such wise that no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise. This can be attained when every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should any one oppose, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed. The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, QUOTED IN SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION*, PAGE 21

The first condition [for consultation] is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the assembly. They must be wholly free from estrangement and must manifest in themselves the Unity of God, for they are the waves of one sea, the drops of one river, the stars of one heaven, the rays of one sun, the trees of one orchard, the flowers of one garden. Should harmony of thought and absolute unity be non-existent, that gathering shall be dispersed and that assembly be brought to naught. The second condition: - They must when coming together turn their faces to the Kingdom on High and ask aid from the Realm of Glory. They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views. They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one's views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden. The honored members must with all freedom express their own thoughts, and it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another, nay, he must with moderation set forth the truth, and should differences of opinion arise a majority of voices must prevail, and all must obey and submit to the majority. It is again not permitted that any one of the honored members object to or censure, whether in or out of the meeting, any decision arrived at previously, though that decision be not right, for such criticism would prevent any decision from being enforced. In short, whatsoever thing is arranged in harmony and with love and purity of motive, its result is light, and should the least trace of estrangement prevail the result shall be darkness upon darkness....

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, QUOTED IN SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION*, PAGE 22

Every one of the friends should highly praise the other and each should regard himself as evanescent and as naught in the presence of others.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 1, PAGE 97

The honoured members of the Spiritual Assembly should exert their efforts so that no differences may occur, and if such differences do occur, they should not reach the point of causing conflict, hatred and antagonism, which lead to threats. When you notice that a stage has been reached when enmity and threats are about to occur, you should immediately postpone discussion of the subject, until wranglings, disputations, and loud talk vanish, and a propitious time is at hand.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 1, PAGE 98

The purpose is to emphasize the statement that consultation must have for its object the investigation of truth. He who expresses an opinion should not voice it as correct and right but set it forth as a contribution to the consensus of opinion, for the light of reality becomes apparent when two opinions coincide. A spark is produced when flint and steel come together. Man should weigh his opinions with the utmost serenity, calmness and composure. Before expressing his own views he should carefully consider the views already advanced by others. If he finds that a previously expressed opinion is more true and worthy, he should accept it immediately and not willfully hold to an opinion of his own. By this excellent method he endeavors to arrive at unity and truth.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 72

Let us also bear in mind that the keynote of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation. Nothing short of the spirit of a true Bahá'í can hope to reconcile the principles of mercy and justice, of freedom and submission, of the sanctity of the right of the individual and of self-surrender, of vigilance, discretion and prudence on the one hand, and fellowship, candor, and courage on the other.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION*, PAGES 63-64

Not infrequently, nay oftentimes, the most lowly, untutored and inexperienced among the friends will, by the sheer inspiring force of selfless and ardent devotion, contribute a distinct and memorable share to a highly involved discussion in any given Assembly.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION*, PAGE 79

In any group, however loving the consultation, there are nevertheless points on which, from time to time, agreement cannot be reached. In a Spiritual Assembly this dilemma is resolved by a majority vote. There can, however, be no majority where only two parties are involved, as in the case of a husband and wife. There are, therefore, times when a wife should defer to her husband, and times when a husband should defer to his wife, but neither should ever unjustly dominate the other. In short, the relationship between husband and wife should be as held forth in the prayer revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá which is often read at Baha'í weddings: "Verily, they are married in obedience to Thy command. Cause them to become the signs of harmony and unity until the end of time."

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 1, PAGE 415

Bahá'u'lláh also stressed the importance of consultation. We should not think this worthwhile method of seeking solutions is confined to the administrative institutions of the Cause. Family consultation employing full and frank discussion, and animated by awareness of the need for moderation and balance, can be the panacea for domestic conflict. Wives should not attempt to dominate their husbands, nor husbands their wives....

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 383

MARRIAGE: A FORTRESS FOR Well-Being and Salvation

Purpose:

To know some of the Bahá'í Writings that describe the conditions for equality and unity in marriage.
To perceive that equality in marriage strengthens the marriage bond and promotes the happiness of the couple.

≈ KEY

Working individually, carefully read the passages on the handout *Marriage: A Fortress for Well-Being and Salvation*. While reading, mark the passages indicating factors that promote equality and unity in marriage.

After reading and marking the factors that promote unity, reflect on the happiest married couples that you know personally:

- What can you observe about the couples' relationship with each other, with their children, with others in the community?
- What leads you to believe that these couples have a happy marriages?
- What evidences of equality do you see in these happy marriages?

After answering the questions individually, share your reflections with the person beside you, without mentioning the names of the couples you've identified.

Process the session:

In what ways does equality in a marriage strengthen the marriage bond?

Marriage: A Fortress for Well-Being and Salvation

Focus:

Mark the passages indicating factors that promote equality and unity in marriage.



Verily God created women for men, and men for women.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 379

And when He desired to manifest grace and beneficence to men, and to set the world in order, He revealed observances and created laws; among them He established the law of marriage, made it as a fortress for well-being and salvation, and enjoined it upon us in that which was sent down out of the heaven of sanctity in His Most Holy Book. He saith, great is His glory: "Marry, O people, that from you may appear he who will remember Me amongst My servants; this is one of My commandments unto you; obey it as an assistance to yourselves."

BAHA'U'LLAH: *BAHÁ'Í PRAYERS* (US), PAGE 105

"We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God."

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *AQDAS: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS*, PAGE 105

The pledge of marriage, the verse to be spoken individually by the bride and the bridegroom in the presence of at least two witnesses acceptable to the Spiritual Assembly is, as stipulated in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (The Most Holy Book):

"We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God."

ʿABDU'L-BAHÁ: *BAHÁ'Í PRAYERS* (US EDITION), PAGE 104

O ye two believers in God! The Lord, peerless is He, hath made woman and man to abide with each other in the closest companionship, and to be even as a single soul. They are two helpmates, two intimate friends, who should be concerned about the welfare of each other.

If they live thus, they will pass through this world with perfect contentment, bliss, and peace of heart, and become the object of divine grace and favour in the Kingdom of heaven. But if they do other than this, they will live out their lives in great bitterness, longing at every moment for death, and will be shamefaced in the heavenly realm.

Strive, then, to abide, heart and soul, with each other as two doves in the nest, for this is to be blessed in both worlds.

ʿABDU'L-BAHÁ: *SELECTIONS ... ʿABDU'L-BAHÁ*, PAGE 122

From separation doth every kind of hurt and harm proceed, but the union of created things doth ever yield most laudable results. From the pairing of even the smallest particles in the world of being are the grace and bounty of God made manifest; and the higher the degree, the more momentous is the union. `Glory be to Him Who hath created all the pairs, of such things as earth produceth, and out of men themselves, and of things beyond their ken.' And above all other unions is that between human beings, especially when it cometh to pass in the love of God. Thus is the primal oneness made to appear; thus is laid the foundation of love in the spirit.

ʿABDU'L-BAHÁ: *SELECTIONS ... ʿABDU'L-BAHÁ*, PAGE 119

You have asked whether a husband would be able to prevent his wife from embracing the divine light or a wife dissuade her husband from gaining entry into the Kingdom of God. In truth neither of them could prevent the other from entering into the Kingdom, unless the husband hath an excessive attachment to the wife or the wife to the husband. Indeed when either of the two worshippeth the other to the exclusion of God, then each could prevent the other from seeking admittance into His Kingdom.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 381

The relationship between husband and wife must be viewed in the context of the Baha'i ideal of family life. Bahá'u'lláh came to bring unity to the world, and a fundamental unity is that of the family. Therefore, one must believe that the Faith is intended to strengthen the family, not weaken it, and one of the keys to a strengthening of unity is loving consultation. The atmosphere within a Bahá'í family as within the community as a whole should express "the keynote of the Cause of God" which, the beloved Guardian has stated, "is not dictatorial authority, but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation...."

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGES 455-456

You have asked, however, for specific rules of conduct to govern the relationships of husbands and wives. This the House of Justice does not wish to do, and it feels that there is already adequate guidance included in the compilation on this subject; for example, the principle that the rights of each and all in the family unit must be upheld, and the advice that loving consultation should be the keynote, that all matters must be settled in harmony and love, and that there are times when the husband and wife should defer to the wishes of the other. Exactly under what circumstances such deference should take place is a matter for each couple to determine. If, God forbid, they fail to agree, and their disagreement leads to estrangement, they should seek counsel from those they trust and in whose sincerity and sound judgement they have confidence, in order to preserve and strengthen their ties as a united family.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGES 456

In considering the problems that you and your wife are experiencing, the House of Justice points out that the unity of your family should take priority over any other consideration. Bahá'u'lláh came to bring unity to the world, and a fundamental unity is that of the family. Therefore, we must believe that the Faith is intended to strengthen the family, not weaken it. For example, service to the Cause should not produce neglect of the family. It is important for you to arrange your time so that your family life is harmonious and your household receives the attention it requires.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 453

Purpose:

- To know the importance of child-rearing to the advancement of human civilization.
- To explain to others the relationship between the fundamental principle of the equality of women and men, and the role of mothers as the first, but not only, educator of children.

≈ KEY

Working with the same partner, carefully read the passages on the handout Parents and Children and answer the focus questions:

- What is the importance of child-rearing in an ever-advancing civilization?
- How does the Bahá'í view of child-rearing differ from some of the views in contemporary society?
- How can child-rearing become increasingly valued, supported and encouraged as a contribution to human civilization without confining women to the home?



Keeping in mind the people you know who may be unfamiliar with Bahá'í teachings on equality and family life, write answers to the focus questions that incorporate words and short phrases from the Writings provided.

Read your answers in the whole group.

Process the session:

Why is it important to be able to explain to others the relationship of the principle of equality to the principles of loving and unified family life?

Parents and Children

Focus Questions:

What is the importance of child-rearing in an ever-advancing civilization?

How does the Bahá'í view of child-rearing differ from some of the views in contemporary society?

How can child-rearing become increasingly valued, supported and encouraged as a contribution to human civilization without confining women to the home?



The Ancient of Days hath turned His countenance towards thee, making mention of thee, and exhorting the people of God to educate their children. Should a father neglect this most weighty commandment laid down in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas by the Pen of the Eternal King, he shall forfeit rights of fatherhood, and be accounted guilty before God.

BAHÁ'ULLÁH: *KITÁB-I-AQDAS*: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS, PAGE 138

O ye loving mothers, know ye that in God's sight, the best of all ways to worship Him is to educate the children and train them in all the perfections of humankind; and no nobler deed than this can be imagined.

ABDU'L-BAHA: *SELECTIONS ...* ABDU'L-BAHÁ, PAGE 139

O handmaid of God!... To the mothers must be given the divine Teachings and effective counsel, and they must be encouraged and made eager to train their children, for the mother is the first educator of the child. It is she who must, at the very beginning, suckle the newborn at the breast of God's Faith and God's Law, that divine love may enter into him even with his mother's milk, and be with him till his final breath.

So long as the mother faileth to train her children, and start them on a proper way of life, the training which they receive later on will not take its full effect. It is incumbent upon the Spiritual Assemblies to provide the mothers with a well-planned programme for the education of children, showing how, from infancy, the child must be watched over and taught. These instructions must be given to every mother to serve her as a guide, so that each will train and nurture her children in accordance with the Teachings.

ABDU'L-BAHÁ: *SELECTIONS ...* ABDU'L-BAHÁ, PAGE 138

Furthermore, the education of woman is more necessary and important than that of man, for woman is the trainer of the child from its infancy. If she be defective and imperfect herself, the child will necessarily be deficient; therefore, imperfection of woman implies a condition of imperfection in all mankind, for it is the mother who rears, nurtures and guides the growth of the child. This is not the function of the father. If the educator be incompetent, the educated will be correspondingly lacking. This is evident and incontrovertible. Could the student be brilliant and accomplished if the teacher is illiterate and ignorant? The mothers are the first educators of mankind; if they be imperfect, alas for the condition and future of the race.

ABDU'L-BAHÁ: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGES 133-134

The members of a family all have duties and responsibilities towards one another and to the family as a whole, and these duties and responsibilities vary from member to member because of their natural relationships. The parents have the inescapable duty to educate their children - but not vice versa; the children have the duty to obey their parents - the parents do not obey the children; the mother - not the father - bears the children, nurses them in babyhood, and is thus their first educator; hence daughters have a prior right to education over sons and, as the Guardian's secretary has written on his behalf, "The task of bringing up a Bahá'í child, as emphasized time and again in Bahá'í Writings, is the chief responsibility of the mother, whose unique privilege is indeed to create in her home such conditions as would be most conducive to both his material and spiritual welfare and advancement. The training which a child first receives through his mother constitutes the strongest foundation for his future development..." A corollary of this responsibility of the mother is her right to be supported by her husband - a husband has no explicit right to be supported by his wife.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 1, PAGE 414

The great importance attached to the mother's role derives from the fact that she is the first educator of the child. Her attitude, her prayers, even what she eats and her physical condition have a great influence on the child when it is still in the womb. When the child is born, it is she who has been endowed by God with the milk which is the first food designed for it, and it is intended that, if possible, she should be with the baby to train and nurture it in its earliest days and months. This does not mean that the father does not also love, pray for, and care for his baby, but as he has the primary responsibility of providing for the family, his time to be with his child is usually limited, while the mother is usually closely associated with the baby during this intensely formative time when it is growing and developing faster than it ever will again during the whole of its life. As the child grows older and more independent, the relative nature of its relationship with its mother and father modifies and the father can play a greater role.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 386

...there is a much wider sphere of relationships between men and women than in the home, and this too we should consider in the context of Baha'i society, not in that of past or present social norms. For example, although the mother is the first educator of the child, and the most important formative influence in his development, the father also has the responsibility of educating his children, and this responsibility is so weighty that Bahá'u'lláh has stated that a father who fails to exercise it forfeits his rights of fatherhood. Similarly, although the primary responsibility for supporting the family financially is placed upon the husband, this does not by any means imply that the place of woman is confined to the home.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 392

With regard to your question whether mothers should work outside the home, it is helpful to consider the matter from the perspective of the concept of a Baha'i family. This concept is based on the principle that the man has primary responsibility for the financial support of the family, and the woman is the chief and primary educator of the children. This by no means implies that these functions are inflexibly fixed and cannot be changed and adjusted to suit particular family situations, nor does it mean that the place of the woman is confined to the home. Rather, while primary responsibility is assigned, it is anticipated that fathers would play a significant role in the education of the children and women could also be breadwinners. As you rightly indicated, 'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraged women to "participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world".

In relation to your specific queries, the decision concerning the amount of time a mother may spend in working outside the home depends on circumstances existing within the home, which may vary from time to time. Family consultation will help to provide the answers....

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 386

The duty of women in being the first educators of mankind is clearly set forth in the Writings. It is for every woman, if and when she becomes a mother, to determine how best she can discharge on the one hand her chief responsibility as a mother and on the other, to the extent possible, to participate in other aspects of the activities of the society of which she forms a part....

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 393

Purpose:

To know that tyranny, conflict and aggressive domination are forbidden by Bahá'u'lláh.
To understand that spiritual education and training promote violence-free communities.

∞ KEY

While in the whole group, read aloud the selected handout passages from the Bahá'í writings and discuss the focus questions:

- How does the promotion of equality in home and community life help create violence-free communities?
- What sort of education and training programs overcome patterns of violence in home and community life?
- How can the Bahá'í community promote the protection and safeguarding of men, women and children from violence?



Inform the friends of the programs of the National Spiritual Assembly designed to promote the family and community life that fosters an ever-advancing civilization. Consult about which programs would be most timely in the local community for fostering a violence-free community.

Spiritual Parenting Courses

The Parenting Program assists parents to fulfill their role as primary educators of children, to establish the spiritual practices of prayer and daily readings in the home; to practice the skills of encouraging, guiding, educating and training their children; and to pursue their own ongoing spiritual and practical development as parents.

Spiritual Foundations for Marriage and Family Life

The Marriage and Family Life Program offers workshops on marriage both to married couples and to youth and adults preparing for marriage, and fosters the skills needed for vibrant and loving family life, the bedrock of growing communities. Marriage workshops relate self-knowledge to success in marriage, develop the skill of consultation, explore roles and relationships within marriage, and offer strategies to solve problems and preserve marriages.

Spiritual Foundations for Race Unity

The Race Unity Program, based on direct study of the Sacred Text, establishes loving, spiritual environments for addressing the complexities of the most challenging issue in America. This program trains individuals to foster unity at Feast, in firesides and public meetings, and in every aspect of community life.

Training for Teachers of Children and Junior Youth

The Teacher Training Program raises up the human resources necessary for the systematic spiritual education of children and youth. This training enables teachers to implement a comprehensive curriculum that educates children and youth in the fundamental verities of the Bahá'í Faith, including strands on the Central Figures, the Covenant, the Institutions, and the Principle of Oneness.

Youth Empowerment

Youth facilitators empower youth to arise to teach and serve this great Cause, live lives of such heroic virtue that they attract the attention of their peers, and spearhead victory after victory as the Cause marches on to embrace all humanity and create that Kingdom for which every heart longs. Youth training at the local or regional level assists youth to arise to fulfill their heroic mission at this critical period in human history.

Invite the friends to turn to their journals and record their personal plan for replacing habits of conflict with patterns of peace.

Process the session:

Did we come up with any ideas during this discussion that should be forwarded to the Local Spiritual Assembly for the Assembly's consideration?

Violence-Free Communities

Focus Questions:

How can the promotion of equality in home and community life help create violence-free communities?
What sort of education and training programs overcome patterns of violence in home and community life?
How can the Bahá'í community promote the protection and safeguarding of men, women and children from violence?



We exhort the men of the House of Justice and command them to ensure the protection and safeguarding of men, women and children. It is incumbent upon them to have the utmost regard for the interests of the people at all times and under all conditions.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, PAGES 69-70

The friends of God must be adorned with the ornament of justice, equity, kindness and love. As they do not allow themselves to be the object of cruelty and transgression, in like manner they should not allow such tyranny to visit the handmaidens of God. He, verily, speaketh the truth and commandeth that which benefitteth His servants and handmaidens.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, THE COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 2, PAGE 379

In formulating the principles and laws a part hath been devoted to penalties which form an effective instrument for the security and protection of men. However, dread of the penalties maketh people desist only outwardly from committing vile and contemptible deeds, while that which guardeth and restraineth man both outwardly and inwardly hath been and still is the fear of God. It is man's true protector and his spiritual guardian. It behoveth him to cleave tenaciously unto that which will lead to the appearance of this supreme bounty. Well is it with him who giveth ear unto whatsoever My Pen of Glory hath proclaimed and observeth that whereunto he is bidden by the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days.

Incline your hearts, O people of God, unto the counsels of your true, your incomparable Friend. The Word of God may be likened unto a sapling, whose roots have been implanted in the hearts of men. It is incumbent upon you to foster its growth through the living waters of wisdom, of sanctified and holy words, so that its root may become firmly fixed and its branches may spread out as high as the heavens and beyond.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, PAGES 93-94

The world in the past has been ruled by force, and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the balance is already shifting; force is losing its dominance, and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, THE COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 2, PAGE 369

The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed. The rights of the son, the father, the mother - none of them must be transgressed, none of them must be arbitrary. Just as the son has certain obligations to his father, the father, likewise, has certain obligations to his son. The mother, the sister and other members of the household have their certain prerogatives. All these rights and prerogatives must be conserved, yet the unity of the family must be sustained. The injury of one shall be considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honor of one, the honor of all.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE*, PAGE 168

...if such differences do occur, they should not reach the point of causing conflict, hatred and antagonism, which lead to threats. When you notice that a stage has been reached when enmity and threats are about to occur, you should immediately postpone discussion of the subject, until wranglings, disputations, and loud talk vanish, and a propitious time is at hand.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 1*, PAGE 98

Divine civilization, however, so traineth every member of society that no one, with the exception of a negligible few, will undertake to commit a crime. There is thus a great difference between the prevention of crime through measures that are violent and retaliatory, and so training the people, and enlightening them, and spiritualizing them, that without any fear of punishment or vengeance to come, they will shun all criminal acts. They will, indeed, look upon the very commission of a crime as a great disgrace and in itself the harshest of punishments. They will become enamoured of human perfections, and will consecrate their lives to whatever will bring light to the world and will further those qualities which are acceptable at the Holy Threshold of God.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ: *SELECTIONS ... ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ*, PAGES 132-133

In this sacred Dispensation, conflict and contention are in no wise permitted. Every aggressor deprives himself of God's grace. It is incumbent upon everyone to show the utmost love, rectitude of conduct, straightforwardness and sincere kindness unto all the peoples and kindreds of the world, be they friends or strangers.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÁ’Í ADMINISTRATION*, PAGE 9

Family consultation employing full and frank discussion, and animated by awareness of the need for moderation and balance, can be the panacea for domestic conflict.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, *THE COMPILATIONS: VOLUME 2*, PAGE 453

Purpose:

- To understand that Bahá'í law transcends the common idea of a legal system.
- To appreciate that equality in status can include differences in function between women and men.
- To explain to others the relationship of the principle of equality to passages in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas that differentiate between women and men.

∞ KEY

In the whole group, read aloud the following passages, and then briefly discuss the questions:

- Why is it important to read all the laws of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* in light of the principle of equality?
- How might the 'chaotic conditions that prevail today' influence our perceptions of Bahá'u'lláh's laws?

O ye peoples of the world! Know assuredly that My commandments are the lamps of My loving providence among My servants, and the keys of My mercy for My creatures. Thus hath it been sent down from the heaven of the Will of your Lord, the Lord of Revelation. Were any man to taste the sweetness of the words which the lips of the All-Merciful have willed to utter, he would, though the treasures of the earth be in his possession, renounce them one and all, that he might vindicate the truth of even one of His commandments, shining above the Dayspring of His bountiful care and loving-kindness.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 3, PAGE 20

...The Laws revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in the Aqdas are, whenever practical and not in direct conflict with the Civil laws of the land, absolutely binding on every believer or Bahá'í institution whether in the East or in the West. Certain laws, such as fasting, obligatory prayers, the consent of the parents before marriage, avoidance of alcoholic drinks, monogamy, should be regarded by all believers as universally and vitally applicable at the present time. Others have been formulated in anticipation of a state of society destined to emerge from the chaotic conditions that prevail today.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *DIRECTIVES OF THE GUARDIAN*, PAGES 3-4

In general, the laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas are stated succinctly. An example of this conciseness can be seen in the fact that many are expressed only as they apply to a man, but it is apparent from the Guardian's writings that, where Bahá'u'lláh has given a law as between a man and a woman, it applies mutatis mutandis between a woman and a man unless the context makes this impossible. For example, the text of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas forbids a man to marry his father's wife (i.e. his stepmother), and the Guardian has indicated that likewise a woman is forbidden to marry her stepfather. This understanding of the implications of the Law has far-reaching effects in light of the fundamental Bahá'í principle of the equality of the sexes, and should be borne in mind when the sacred Text is studied. That men and women differ from one another in certain characteristics and functions is an inescapable fact of nature and makes possible their complementary roles in certain areas of the life of society; but it is significant that 'Abdu'l-Bahá has stated that in this Dispensation "Equality of men and women, except in some negligible instances, has been fully and categorically announced."

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: *INTRODUCTION TO THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PAGE 7

continued on next page...

Jigsaw Learning Activity

After discussing the above quotations, divide the group into three small working groups. Assign each of the groups to study one of the handouts:

- Spiritual Practices
- Marriage and Dowry
- Inheritance

Prepare answers to the related focus questions.

Allow the groups approximately 30 minutes to study their respective quotations.

Reconvene the whole group, then divide the friends into new groups, so that each of the new groups has one member from the initial study groups.

In these new groups, ask each participant to share the answers to the focus questions that their previous group discussed. In this way, each participant has the opportunity to teach others the concepts learned in their original group.

After allowing about 30 minutes for the friends to share their answers in their new groups, reconvene the whole group.

Allow several of the friends to briefly describe their learning process as they first studied one aspect of Bahá'í law and then learned from others about additional aspects of Bahá'í law.

Process the session:

Invite the friends to turn to their journals and record their insights into the relationship between Bahá'í law and future society.

Spiritual Practices



Focus Questions:

In light of the fundamental principle of equality, what is the significance of the fact that these laws explain exemptions rather than prohibitions?

In what way could these exemptions indicate a “mercy on His part?”

How can our understanding of the Station of the Manifestation of God assist us to explain these teachings to friends who have not yet embraced the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh?

Prayer and Fasting

God hath exempted women who are in their courses from obligatory prayer and fasting. Let them, instead, after performance of their ablutions, give praise unto God, repeating ninety-five times between the noon of one day and the next "Glorified be God, the Lord of Splendour and Beauty". Thus hath it been decreed in the Book, if ye be of them that comprehend.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 13, PAGES 23-24

God hath, likewise, as a bounty from His presence, abolished the concept of "uncleanness", whereby divers things and peoples have been held to be impure. He, of a certainty, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous. Verily, all created things were immersed in the sea of purification when, on that first day of Ridván, We shed upon the whole of creation the splendours of Our most excellent Names and Our most exalted Attributes. This, verily, is a token of My loving providence, which hath encompassed all the worlds. Consort ye then with the followers of all religions, and proclaim ye the Cause of your Lord, the Most Compassionate; this is the very crown of deeds, if ye be of them who understand.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 75, PAGE 47

Note 20. God hath exempted women who are in their courses from obligatory prayer and fasting. # 13

Exemption from obligatory prayer and fasting is granted to women who are menstruating; they should, instead, perform their ablutions (see note 34) and repeat 95 times a day between one noon and the next, the verse "Glorified be God, the Lord of Splendour and Beauty". This provision has its antecedent in the Arabic Bayán, where a similar dispensation was granted.

In some earlier religious Dispensations, women in their courses were considered ritually unclean and were forbidden to observe the duties of prayer and fasting. The concept of ritual uncleanness has been abolished by Bahá'u'lláh (see note 106).

The Universal House of Justice has clarified that the provisions in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas granting exemptions from certain duties and responsibilities are, as the word indicates, exemptions and not prohibitions. Any believer is, therefore, free to avail himself or herself of an applicable exemption if he or she so wishes. However, the House of Justice counsels that, in deciding whether to do so or not, the believer should use wisdom and realize that Bahá'u'lláh has granted these exemptions for good reason.

The prescribed exemption from obligatory prayer, originally related to the Obligatory Prayer consisting of nine rak'ahs, is now applicable to the three Obligatory Prayers which superseded it.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: *AQDAS*: NOTES, PAGES 173-174

Pilgrimage

The Lord hath ordained that those of you who are able shall make pilgrimage to the sacred House, and from this He hath exempted women as a mercy on His part. He, of a truth, is the All-Bountiful, the Most Generous.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 32, PAGE 30

Note 55. and from this He hath exempted women as a mercy on His part. # 32

In the Bayán, the Báb enjoined the ordinance of pilgrimage once in a lifetime upon those of His followers who were financially able to undertake the journey. He stated that the obligation was not binding on women in order to spare them the rigours of travel.

Bahá'u'lláh likewise exempts women from His pilgrimage requirements. The Universal House of Justice has clarified that this exemption is not a prohibition, and that women are free to perform the pilgrimage.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: *AQDAS*: NOTES, PAGES 191-192

Marriage and Dowry



Focus questions:

- How can we understand the wisdom of the gradual implementation of the law of monogamy?
- How does the Bahá'í dowry differ from traditional practices that subjugate women?
- How does the symbolic gift of the dowry indicate the wife's freedom to hold property in her own name?

Marriage

God hath prescribed matrimony unto you. Beware that ye take not unto yourselves more wives than two. Whoso contenteth himself with a single partner from among the maidservants of God, both he and she shall live in tranquillity. And he who would take into his service a maid may do so with propriety. Such is the ordinance which, in truth and justice, hath been recorded by the Pen of Revelation. Enter into wedlock, O people, that ye may bring forth one who will make mention of Me amid My servants. This is My bidding unto you; hold fast to it as an assistance to yourselves.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 63, PAGE 41

Note 89. Beware that ye take not unto yourselves more wives than two. Whoso contenteth himself with a single partner from among the maidservants of God, both he and she shall live in tranquillity. # 63

While the text of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas appears to permit bigamy, Bahá'u'lláh counsels that tranquillity and contentment derive from monogamy. In another Tablet, He underlines the importance of the individual's acting in such a way as to "bring comfort to himself and to his partner". 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the authorized Interpreter of the Bahá'í Writings, states that in the text of the Aqdas monogamy is in effect enjoined. He elaborates this theme in a number of Tablets, including the following:

Know thou that polygamy is not permitted under the law of God, for contentment with one wife hath been clearly stipulated. Taking a second wife is made dependent upon equity and justice being upheld between the two wives, under all conditions. However, observance of justice and equity towards two wives is utterly impossible. The fact that bigamy has been made dependent upon an impossible condition is clear proof of its absolute prohibition. Therefore it is not permissible for a man to have more than one wife.

Polygamy is a very ancient practice among the majority of humanity. The introduction of monogamy has been only gradually accomplished by the Manifestations of God. Jesus, for example, did not prohibit polygamy, but abolished divorce except in the case of fornication; Muhammad limited the number of wives to four, but making plurality of wives contingent on justice, and reintroducing permission for divorce; Bahá'u'lláh, Who was revealing His Teachings in the milieu of a Muslim society, introduced the question of monogamy gradually in accordance with the principles of wisdom and the progressive unfoldment of His purpose. The fact that He left His followers with an infallible Interpreter of His Writings enabled Him to outwardly permit two wives in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas but uphold a condition that enabled 'Abdu'l-Bahá to elucidate later that the intention of the law was to enforce monogamy.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: *AQDAS*: NOTES, PAGES 205-206

Note 90. He who would take into his service a maid may do so with propriety. # 63

Bahá'u'lláh states that a man may employ a maiden for domestic service. This was not permissible under Shí'ih Muslim practice unless the employer entered into a marriage contract with her. Bahá'u'lláh emphasizes that the "service" referred to in this verse is solely "such as is performed by any other class of servants, be they young or old, in exchange for wages" (Q and A 30). An employer has no sexual rights over his maid. She is "free to choose a husband at whatever time she pleaseth", for the purchase of women is forbidden (Q and A 30).

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: AQDAS: NOTES, PAGES 206-207

Dowry

No marriage may be contracted without payment of a dowry, which hath been fixed for city-dwellers at nineteen mithqáls of pure gold, and for village-dwellers at the same amount in silver. Whoso wisheth to increase this sum, it is forbidden him to exceed the limit of ninety-five mithqáls. Thus hath the command been writ in majesty and power. If he content himself, however, with a payment of the lowest level, it shall be better for him according to the Book. God, verily, enricheth whomsoever He willeth through both heavenly and earthly means, and He, in truth, hath power over all things.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS, PARAGRAPH 66, PAGE 42

Note 93. No marriage may be contracted without payment of a dowry # 66

The Synopsis and Codification, section IV.C.1.j.i.-v., summarizes the main provisions concerning the dowry. These provisions have their antecedents in the Bayán.

The dowry is to be paid by the bridegroom to the bride. It is fixed at 19 mithqáls of pure gold for city-dwellers, and 19 mithqáls of silver for village-dwellers (see note 94). Bahá'u'lláh indicates that, if, at the time of the wedding, the bridegroom is unable to pay the dowry in full, it is permissible for him to issue a promissory note to the bride (Q and A 39).

With the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh many familiar concepts, customs and institutions are redefined and take on new meaning. One of these is the dowry. The institution of dowry is a very ancient practice in many cultures and takes many forms. In some countries it is a payment made by the parents of the bride to the bridegroom; in others it is a payment made by the bridegroom to the parents of the bride, called a "bride-price". In both such cases the amount is often quite considerable. The law of Bahá'u'lláh abolishes all such variants and converts the dowry into a symbolic act whereby the bridegroom presents a gift of a certain limited value to the bride.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: AQDAS: NOTES, PAGES 206-207

Inheritance



Focus questions:

How is the well-being of human society strengthened by the instruction that each person write a will?
What might be the relationship between the financial responsibilities of fathers and the laws of dividing an estate when the deceased has not left a will?
In what ways could the principles of equality and family unity be upheld by the provision that if a will has not been made, the eldest son inherits the residence along with the obligation to care for his mother?

Unto everyone hath been enjoined the writing of a will.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 109, PAGE 59

We have divided inheritance into seven categories: to the children, We have allotted nine parts comprising five hundred and forty shares; to the wife, eight parts comprising four hundred and eighty shares; to the father, seven parts comprising four hundred and twenty shares; to the mother, six parts comprising three hundred and sixty shares; to the brothers, five parts or three hundred shares; to the sisters, four parts or two hundred and forty shares; and to the teachers, three parts or one hundred and eighty shares. Such was the ordinance of My Forerunner, He Who extolleth My Name in the night season and at the break of day. When We heard the clamour of the children as yet unborn, We doubled their share and decreased those of the rest. He, of a truth, hath power to ordain whatsoever He desireth, and He doeth as He pleaseth by virtue of His sovereign might.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 20, PAGE 26

We have assigned the residence and personal clothing of the deceased to the male, not female, offspring, nor to the other heirs. He, verily, is the Munificent, the All-Bountiful.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: *THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS*, PARAGRAPH 25, PAGES 27-28

Note 38. We have divided inheritance into seven categories. # 20

The Bahá'í laws of inheritance apply only in case of intestacy, that is, when the individual dies without leaving a will. In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (# 109), Bahá'u'lláh instructs every believer to write a will. He elsewhere clearly states that the individual has full jurisdiction over his property and is free to determine the manner in which his or her estate is to be divided and to designate, in the will, those, whether Bahá'í or non-Bahá'í, who should inherit (Q and A 69). In this connection, a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi explains that:

...even though a Bahá'í is permitted in his will to dispose of his wealth in the way he wishes, yet he is morally and conscientiously bound to always bear in mind, while writing his will, the necessity of his upholding the principle of Bahá'u'lláh regarding the social function of wealth, and the consequent necessity of avoiding its over-accumulation and concentration in a few individuals or groups of individuals.

This verse of the Aqdas introduces a lengthy passage in which Bahá'u'lláh elaborates the Bahá'í law of inheritance. In reading this passage one should bear in mind that the law is formulated with the presumption that the deceased is a man; its provisions apply, mutatis mutandis, when the deceased is a woman.

The system of inheritance which provides for distribution of the deceased's estate among seven categories of heirs (children, spouse, father, mother, brothers, sisters, and teachers) is based on the provisions set out by the Báb in the Bayán. The major features of the Bahá'í laws of inheritance in the case of intestacy are:

1. *If the deceased is a father and his estate includes a personal residence, such residence passes to the eldest son (Q and A 34).*
2. *If the deceased has no male descendants, two thirds of the residence pass to his female descendants and the remaining third passes to the House of Justice (Q and A 41, 72). See note 42 concerning the levels of the institution of the House of Justice to which this law applies. (See also note 44.)*
3. *The remainder of the estate is divided among the seven categories of heirs. For details of the number of shares to be received by each group, see Questions and Answers, number 5, and Synopsis and Codification, section IV.C.3.a.*
4. *In case there is more than one heir in any category the share allotted to that class should be divided between them equally, be they male or female.*
5. *In cases where there is no issue, the share of the children reverts to the House of Justice (Q and A 7, 41).*
6. *Should one leave offspring, but either part or all of the other categories of heirs be non-existent, two thirds of their shares revert to the offspring and one third to the House of Justice (Q and A 7).*
7. *Should none of the specified categories exist, two thirds of the estate revert to the nephews and nieces of the deceased. If these do not exist, the same shares revert to the aunts and uncles; lacking these, to their sons and daughters. In any case the remaining third reverts to the House of Justice.*
8. *Should one leave none of the aforementioned heirs, the entire estate reverts to the House of Justice.*
9. *Bahá'u'lláh states that non-Bahá'ís have no right to inherit from their Bahá'í parents or relatives (Q and A 34). Shoghi Effendi in a letter written on his behalf indicates that this restriction applies "only to such cases when a Bahá'í dies without leaving a will and when, therefore, his property will have to be divided in accordance with the rules set forth in the Aqdas. Otherwise, a Bahá'í is free to bequeath his property to any person, irrespective of religion, provided however he leaves a will, specifying his wishes." It is always possible, therefore, for a Bahá'í to provide for his or her non-Bahá'í partner, children or relatives by leaving a will.*

Additional details of the laws of inheritance are summarized in the Synopsis and Codification, section IV.C.3.a.-o.

39. *to the brothers, five parts ... to the sisters, four parts # 20*

Questions and Answers amplifies the provisions of the law as it relates to the shares of the inheritance allocated to the brothers and sisters of the deceased. If the brother or sister is from the same father as the deceased, he or she will inherit his or her full allotted share. If, however, the brother or sister is from another father he or she will inherit only two thirds of the allotted share, the remaining one third reverting to the House of Justice (Q and A 6). Further, in the case where the deceased has full brothers or full sisters among his heirs, half-brothers and half-sisters from the mother's side do not inherit (Q and A 53). The half-brothers and half-sisters will, of course, be due to receive inheritance from their own father's estate.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: AQDAS: NOTES, PAGES 182-185

Note 44. We have assigned the residence and personal clothing of the deceased to the male, not female, offspring, nor to the other heirs. # 25

In a Tablet, 'Abdu'l-Bahá indicates that the residence and personal clothing of a deceased man remain in the male line. They pass to the eldest son and in the absence of the eldest son, they pass to the second-eldest son, and so on. He explains that this provision is an expression of the law of primogeniture, which has invariably been upheld by the Law of God. In a Tablet to a follower of the Faith in Persia He wrote: "In all the Divine Dispensations the eldest son hath been given extraordinary distinctions. Even the station of prophethood hath been his birthright." With the distinctions given to the eldest son, however, go concomitant duties. For example, he has the moral responsibility, for the sake of God, to care for his mother and also to consider the needs of the other heirs.

Bahá'u'lláh clarifies various aspects of this part of the law of inheritance. He specifies that if there be more than one residence, the principal and most important one passes to the male offspring. The remaining residences will, together with the other possessions of the deceased, have to be divided among the heirs (Q and A 34), and He indicates that in the absence of male offspring, two thirds of the principal residence and the personal clothing of the deceased father will revert to the female issue and one third to the House of Justice (Q and A 72). Further, when the deceased is a woman, Bahá'u'lláh states that all her used clothing is to be equally divided amongst her daughters. Her unworn clothing, jewels and property must be divided among her heirs, as well as her used clothing if she leaves no daughter (Q and A 37).

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE: AQDAS: NOTES, PAGES 186-187

Purpose:

- To become more familiar with the circumstances of the lives of individuals in the Holy Family.
- To gain a deeper appreciation of the spiritual qualities which enabled members of the Holy Family to serve in the household of Bahá'u'lláh and in the unfoldment of the Faith.
- To reflect on the deep love and respect the members of the Holy Family had for each other.
- To perceive the members of the Holy Family as role models for women and men today.
- To exemplify one or more of the qualities of the Holy Family in one's continuing work to achieve the equality of women and men.

Introduce the activity by reading aloud the following passage from 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

My home is the home of peace. My home is the home of joy and delight. My home is the home of laughter and exultation. Whosoever enters through the portals of this home, must go out with gladsome heart. This is the home of light; whosoever enters here must become illumined....

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 1, PAGE 397

Then invite the friends to divide themselves into small working groups according to their interest in one of the arts: dance, music, drama, mime, poetry or visual art. Assign each of the groups one or more of the following stories:

'Abdu'l-Bahá and His Sister, the Greatest Holy Leaf
The Marriage of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Munírih Khánum
Gifts of the Greatest Holy Leaf
The Children's Education
Shoghi Effendi's Tenderness

Invite the friends to read their story aloud and to reflect on the qualities of the members of the holy family that the story illustrates, a quality that enabled that individual to serve selflessly in the household of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Invite them to choose one of the qualities and then prepare a creative representation of how that quality, so beautifully demonstrated in the holy family, can assist us to achieve equality in the world today.

After allowing work time in the small group invite each working group to share in the whole group:

- the story
- the quality they identified
- their creative expression of how that quality can assist us to achieve equality in the world today.

Process the session:

Invite the friends to write quietly in their journals answers to the questions:

How can the qualities illustrated by the holy family be expressed in my family?

What practical steps, however small, shall I take this week to more fully express the principle of equality in my family?

Group One: 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His Sister, the Greatest Holy Leaf



Bahíyyih Khánum recalls:

The journey to Adrianople, although occupying but nine days, was the most terrible experience of travel we had thus far had. It was the beginning of winter, and very cold; heavy snow fell most of the time; and destitute as we were of proper clothing or food, it was a miracle that we survived it. We arrived at Adrianople all sick - even the young and strong....

Our family, numbering eleven persons, was lodged in a house of three rooms just outside the city of Adrianople. It was like a prison; without comforts and surrounded by a guard of soldiers. Our only food was the prison fare allowed us, which was unsuitable for the children and the sick.

That winter was a period of intense suffering, due to cold, hunger, and, above all, to the torments of vermin, with which the house was swarming. These made even the days horrible, and the nights still more so. When they were so intolerable that it was impossible to sleep, my brother would light a lamp (which somewhat intimidated the vermin) and by singing and laughing seek to restore the spirits of the family."

THE MASTER IN 'AKKÁ BY MYRON H. PHELPS, PAGES 47-48

'Abdu'l-Bahá provides for His sister's comfort during a later journey by writing to His daughter:

O Diya! It is incumbent upon thee, throughout the journey, to be a close, a constant and cheerful companion to my honoured and distinguished sister. Unceasingly, with the utmost vigour and devotion, exert thyself, by day and night, to gladden her blessed heart; for all her days she was denied a moment of tranquillity. She was astir and restless every hour of her life. Moth-like she circled in adoration round the undying flame of the Divine Candle, her spirit ablaze and her heart consumed by the fire of His love....

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ: BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM, PAGES 10

Group Two: The Marriage of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Munírih Khánum



Munírih Khánum recalls:

It is impossible to put into words the delight of being with the Master; I seemed to be in a glorious realm of sacred happiness whilst in His company.

You have known Him in His later years, but then, in the youth of His beauty and manly vigour, with His unfailing love, His kindness, His cheerfulness, His sense of humour, His untiring consideration for everybody, He was marvelous, without equal, surely in all the earth!...

For fifty years my Beloved and I were together. Never were we separated, save during His visits to Egypt, Europe, and America.

O my Beloved husband and my Lord! How shall I speak of Him?

You, who have known Him, can imagine what my fifty years have been – how they fled by in an atmosphere of love and joy and the perfection of that Peace which passeth all understanding, in the radiant light of which I await the day when I shall be called to join Him, in the celestial garden of transfiguration.

SPOKEN CHRONICLE OF MUNÍRIH KHÁNUM, *THE CHOSEN HIGHWAY*, PAGE 89-90

Group Three: Gifts of the Greatest Holy Leaf



Early pilgrims share remembrances of the Greatest Holy Leaf:

It is a charming Persian habit to wrap a gift in an embroidered silk or linen cloth, as fine in its way as the thing enclosed. So, always, she [Bahíyyih Khánúm] gave a gift within the gift. You took the happy warmth of contentment you felt when you were with her and only later came to realize that this was the fine wrapping of a deeper joy, a richer core....

She was seldom alone.... Her room was the heart of the house. Around the glow of her brazier in winter or when she sat on her window divan in full sunlight, old and young would gather near her, filtering in one by one, slipping out again to work or play, or pausing for a moment in a busy day at the doorway for a glimpse. You left your shoes at the threshold of that room and you left, too, any outer covering of pose or manner you might have made for yourself for protection in a bleak world. Here was no need for pretense and brave showing: here in the light of her shining simplicity you became simple.

THE PASSING OF BAHÍYYIH KHÁNÚM, BY MARJORY MORTEN, IN *CRYSTALLIZATIONS*, PAGE 168 & 170

Among the visitors was a widow from the Middle East, who had arrived on what seemed to be a permanent pilgrimage. I do not recall the source of this lady's permanent melancholy. True, she would help some of the people there on occasion, sitting on the floor according to the lingering custom and working on the vegetables and other ingredients of the patriarchal dinner dishes that would feed so many mouths. But she would take little part in the conversations, being mostly wrapped in unadulterated grief. One day, there she came, and sat, heaving her usual sighs, her face clouded with sorrow. Gently the Greatest Holy Leaf leaned over and addressed her. "There are not frontiers to the world of gloom," she said.... "You will never get to the end of it, no matter how far and how fast you gallop your steed."

MARZIEH GAIL, KHÁNÚM, *THE GREATEST HOLY LEAF*, PAGE 25

Group Four: The Children's Education



From the earliest days of the small Bahá'í community centered around Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land, the education of children – both boys and girls – was emphasized, within the limits imposed by the confinement of the family and companions as prisoners of the Ottoman Turks, and by the meager facilities available to them. The emphasis on education was constant. Lady Blomfield, and early Bahá'í, describes how, when the family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was evacuated temporarily from Haifa to the village of Abu-Sinan during the period of World War I when Haifa was in danger of bombardment, 'Abdu'l-Bahá arranged for schools to be set up in that village to ensure that the children's education was not neglected.

JANET A. KAHN AND PETER J. KAHN, *ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGE 183

'Abdu'l-Bahá took particular care in Shoghi Effendi's education:

“At this time, the British world empire is the greatest of all and is still advancing. Its language is a world language. My Vizier shall receive his education in England itself, after acquiring the Oriental languages and the wisdom of the East in this place.”

The doctor ventured to object: Would not Western education “check his active spirit”, rigidly bind it, “stifle his Oriental non-rationalities and intuition into dogmas and conventionalities,” so that he would turn from being a servant of the Most High and become “a slave of Western opportunism and the trite and commonplace”?

A long pause. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá stood up and said in a firm voice, “I am not giving my Elisha to the British for education: I am consecrating him to Almighty God. May His eyes watch over my child...even at Oxford.”

MARZIEH GAIL, *KHÁNUM, THE GREATEST HOLY LEAF*, PAGES 33-34

Group Five: Shoghi Effendi's Tenderness



Rúhíyyih Khánum shares this personal story about the Guardian:

In 1940 my mother, animated by a passionate desire to render the Cause some service ... decided to go to South America and help in teaching the Faith in Argentina The Guardian, my father and I had consented to this long journey, but at such an age, and with a heart very far from sound, it was a risk, to say the least.

The reason I record all these personal things is because behind them, in them, pervading them was the spirit of the Guardian and his tender heart, ... which were all reflected in the events that followed. My mother reached Buenos Aires and died almost immediately of a heart attack. The three cables that came, one from her asking for his prayers, one from my father saying she was very ill and to prepare me, and one from my cousin Jeanne Bolles, who had accompanied her, saying she had died, were all handed by me to Shoghi Effendi. As he read them I saw his face change and he looked at me with an expression of intense anxiety and concern. Then of course, gradually, he had to tell me she was dead. I cannot conceive that any human being ever received such pure kindness as I did from the Guardian during that period of shock and grief. His praises of her sacrifice, his descriptions of her state of joy in the next world, ... his vivid depiction of her as she wandered about the Abhá Kingdom making a thorough nuisance of herself because all she wanted to talk about was her beloved daughter on earth!-all combined to lift me into a state of such happiness that many times I would find myself laughing with him over the things he seemed to be actually divining.

THE PRICELESS PEARL BY RÚHÍYYIH RABBÁNÍ, PAGES 154-155

Purpose:

To plan a line of action to promote the equality of women and men in family life.

∞ KEY

Review the learning objectives for Module Three and discuss how they were achieved.

Invite the friends to reflect individually on the following questions, looking back over their work in this module to assist them in this action plan:

Action Planning

...Each individual...must make a conscious decision as to what he or she will do to serve the Plan, and as to how, where and when to do it. This determination enables the individual to check the progress of his actions and, if necessary, to modify the steps being taken. Becoming accustomed to such a procedure of systematic striving lends meaning and fulfilment to the life of any Bahá'í.

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, RIDVÁN 155

1. What practical strategies will I undertake to promote the principle of equality in my family?
2. What steps can I take to support other families in my community and encourage their participation in Bahá'í community life?
3. Which other programs of our National Spiritual Assembly shall I request my Assembly or Training Institute to initiate in our community?
4. When and where shall I share stories of the Holy Family with children?
5. Shall I plan a joyful family celebration of the principle of equality?
6. What spiritual capabilities do I need to develop to become an effective promoter of equality? What is my first step in developing those capabilities? How shall I know that I'm becoming more effective as an equality worker?

Conclude Module Three with devotions and music.

**SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN
CORE CURRICULUM
FOR A SPIRITUAL EDUCATION**



MODULE FOUR

Teaching Equality "Can Attract Much Notice"

Learning Objectives

≈ KEY

KNOWLEDGE

To know some of the facts about Tahirih's life and accomplishments
To know about some of the Bahá'í heroines in the history of the Bahá'í faith
To know about some of the world-wide efforts to promote the equality of women and men

WISDOM

To understand Tahirih's role as foremost heroine of the Bábí dispensation
To understand the main points of *Two Wings of a Bird* statement
To understand the importance of the arts and consultation in promoting equality
To understand the power of unified action

**SPIRITUAL
PERCEPTION**

To appreciate some of the qualities of service that Bahá'u'lláh expects of girls and women
To plan to distribute the statement to friends, acquaintances and leaders of thought
To plan specific opportunities to teach others about equality
To perceive the equality of women and men as an aspect of an ideal Bahá'í community
To reflect on Bahíyyih Khánúm's life of selfless service to the Head of the Faith

**ELOQUENT
'SPEECH'**

To encourage girls and women with the words of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá
To prepare a presentation about a Bahá'í heroine to teach others about the role of women in the Bahá'í faith
To memorize and use the Writings to teach others about equality
To anticipate and answer questions about the principle of the equality of women and men
To respond to the National Spiritual Assembly's call for equality in the Bahá'í community
To articulate a vision of equality as aspect of the ideal community
To identify and initiate unified lines of action for equality
To prepare a statement on service to the head of the Faith

Review and Introduction to Module Four

∞ KEY

Devotions

Open module four with devotions and music.

Review Modules One, Two, and Three

Introduce Module Four

- Handout, project on the screen, or display a poster of Module Four themes and objectives.
- Read through these aloud.
- If some time has elapsed since completing Module Three, invite the friends to share the results of their actions to promote equality.

Introduction: Táhirih, Peerless Woman of the Bábí Dispensation

Purpose:

- To know some of the facts about Táhirih's life and accomplishments.
- To understand Táhirih's role as foremost heroine of the Bábí dispensation.

∞ KEY

Consider setting the environment by playing a recording of Táhirih's poetry. Some possibilities include:

- audio tape *In Memory of the Martyrs* by Shokouh Rezai, side two
- selections from the CD: "Talaate Quds" on *In His Remembrance* by Sombol
- selection from the CD: "Desire of the Heart" on *Desire of the Heart* by Narges

You may also:

- show slides, transparencies or illustrations of the conditions of women in Iran in the nineteenth century. Photograph sources include:
 - *The Dawn-Breakers*, page 624
 - *Táhirih: The Pure* by Martha Root, pages 23 and 55
- explore public libraries and some contemporary news stories about Middle Eastern countries.

Also consider inviting one of the Persian friends to demonstrate wearing the chador or heavy veil required by fundamentalist Islamic regimes.

Invite several of the friends to eloquently read aloud the following descriptions of Táhirih, the outstanding woman of the Bábí Dispensation.

Process the session:

Why is it important to know at least as much about Táhirih's life as about her death?

How did Táhirih rise above the conditions of her society to serve the Primal Point, the Báb?

Táhirih, Peerless Woman of the Bábí Dispensation



THE FOLLOWING EXCEPTS, INCLUDING SELECTIONS FROM JOURNAL ASIATIQUE AND MEMORIALS OF THE FAITHFUL, ARE TAKEN FROM SUSAN STILES MANECK, "TÁHIRIH: A RELIGIOUS PARADIGM OF WOMANHOOD", JOURNAL OF BAHÁ'Í STUDIES, 2:2, 1989

How could it be that a woman, in Persia where woman is considered so weak a creature, and above all in a city like Qazvín, where the clergy possessed so great an influence, where the 'Ullamá, by their number and importance, attracted the attention of the government and of the people - how could it be that there, precisely under such untoward circumstances, a woman could have organized so strong a group of heretics? There lies a question which puzzles even the Persian historian, Siphir, for such an occurrence was without precedent! (JOURNAL ASIATIQUE)

Táhirih's background was certainly inauspicious for one who would later emerge as a preeminent leader of the militantly anticlerical Bábí religion and who would become in Shoghi Effendi's words "the first woman suffrage martyr." Fátimih Zarrin Táj Baraghání, known to Bahá'ís by her titles Qurratu'l-'Ayn and Táhirih, was born to the most prominent family of 'ulamá of Qazvín (circa 1817-18 A.D.)...

Táhirih and her younger sister Marziyih were brought up in a strictly religious yet affluent environment. Her father, recognizing Táhirih's extraordinary abilities, had permitted her to continue her studies beyond the elementary level that was expected of a woman of her station. She far surpassed her brothers in theological and juridical knowledge.

At the age of thirteen Táhirih was married to the eldest son of her uncle...She bore three children from that marriage, two sons and a daughter. Family tensions soon developed after Táhirih became attracted to the teachings of the Shaykhís. Her father, husband, and uncle all tried to dissuade her from supporting the views of Siyyid Kázim Rashtí but to no avail. Through her Shaykhí relatives she corresponded with the leader of that school and wrote a treatise vindicating it... Táhirih's relations with her husband quickly deteriorated, and after her father-in-law publicly began to denounce the Shaykhís from the pulpit, she decided to leave her husband and children and return to her father's house. Shortly afterwards she set out of Karbilá and joined the circle of Shaykhís there....

When the Báb arose claiming to be the Promised One, Táhirih immediately accepted his claim and persuaded most of the Shaykhí community in Karbilá to do the same....

Claiming that much of Islamic law was no longer binding on the Bábís, she refused to perform the daily ritual prayers. At the same time she instituted a number of innovations within the Bábí community at Karbilá. Her most dangerous and unconventional act was appearing unveiled in a gathering of believers...The circle of women who gathered around her appear to have formed the earliest group of female Iranians to attain an awareness of their deprivations as women. Yet Táhirih's activities did not represent a woman's liberation movement in the modern sense of the word. Táhirih clearly saw the unveiling of women as an act of religious innovation....

Táhirih's activities became quite controversial...She frequently issued challenges to debate the 'ulamá. During the month of Muharram, 1847, while Shí'ite Muslims donned mourning clothes to commemorate the martyrdom of the Imám Husayn, Táhirih deliberately excited their reaction by dressing in gay colors and appearing unveiled. She urged the Bábís to celebrate the Báb's birthday, which fell on the first day of that month. The enraged 'ulamá incited a mob to attack Siyyid Kázim's house. Finally, the governor of Karbilá intervened and had Táhirih placed under house arrest for three months before allowing her to be sent to Baghdad.

Accompanied by the leading Bábí women of Karbilá, along with a number of Shaykhís who were her devoted followers, Táhirih set out for Baghdad, where she continued her activities, offering public lectures from behind a curtain. Often the 'ulamá would attend these lectures to refute her. On one of these occasions the Shah's Jewish physician...was present and became thoroughly convinced of the validity of Táhirih's message. This physician, Dr. Hakím Masih, became the first Bábí of Jewish origin.

This conversion aroused further opposition and caused Táhirih to be imprisoned in the house of the Muftí of Baghdad [who] later wrote these observations in regards to Táhirih:

...Verily, I saw in her such a degree of merit and accomplishment as I rarely saw in men. She was a wise and decent woman who was unique in virtue and chastity...there is no doubt about her knowledge...

Táhirih's father dispatched a relative to Iraq who induced the governor to order her deportation to Iran. Wherever she travelled en route more excitement was raised. In the village of Karand some 1200 people immediately offered her their allegiance...In Kirmánsháh, however, her activities caused such an uproar that the Bábís were attacked by a mob and driven out of the city, but not before Táhirih had been able to expound the teachings before the leading women of Kirmánsháh, among them the governor's wife, who had long been a patron of the Shaykhís. In Hamadán Táhirih met with both the leading 'ulamá and the most notable women of the city, whose number included members of the royal family...

... Táhirih escaped with the assistance of Bahá'u'lláh, who hid her in his home in Tehran. 'Abdu'l-Bahá recalled those days:

When word of this spread through out Tihrán, the Government hunted for her high and low; nevertheless, the friends [Bábís] kept arriving to see her, in a steady stream, and Táhirih, seated behind a curtain, would converse with them. One day the great Siyyid Yahyá, surnamed Váhid, was present there. As he sat without, Táhirih listened to him from behind the veil. I was then a child, and sitting on her lap. With eloquence and fervor, Váhid was discoursing on the signs and verses that bore witness to the advent of the new Manifestation. She suddenly interrupted him and, raising her voice, vehemently declared: 'O Yahyá! Let deeds, not words, testify to thy faith, if thou art a man of learning. Cease idly repeating the traditions of the past, for the day of service, of steadfast action, is come. Now is the time to show forth the true signs of God, to rend asunder the veils of idle fancy, to promote the Word of God, and to sacrifice ourselves in His path. Let deeds, not words, be our adorning.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ: MEMORIALS OF THE FAITHFUL, PAGE 200

Later, following a general call upon the Bábís to gather in Khurásán, both Táhirih and Bahá'u'lláh travelled to a place called Badasht where eighty-one Bábí leaders had gathered to...discuss the future direction of the Bábí community. At that meeting tension developed between Táhirih (who headed the more radical Bábís advocating a complete break with Islam as well as the militant defence of their community) and the more conservative Quddús...At one time when Quddús was rapt in his devotions, Táhirih rushed out of her tent brandishing a sword. "Now is not the time for prayers and prostrations," she declared, "rather on to the field of love and sacrifice!"



It was to her doors, during the height of her fame and popularity in Tihrán, that the flower of feminine society in the capital flocked to hear her brilliant discourses on the matchless tenets of her Faith. It was the magic of her words which won the wedding guests away from the festivities, on the occasion of the marriage of the son of Mahmud Khan-i-Kalantar - in whose house she was confined - and gathered them about her, eager to drink in her every word. It was her passionate and unqualified affirmation of the claims and distinguishing features of the new Revelation, in a series of seven conferences with the deputies of the Grand Vizir commissioned to interrogate her, which she held while confined in that same house, which finally precipitated the sentence of her death. It was from her pen that odes had flowed attesting, in unmistakable language, not only her faith in the Revelation of the Báb, but also her recognition of the exalted and as yet undisclosed mission of Bahá'u'lláh. And last but not least it was owing to her initiative, while participating in the Conference of Badasht, that the most challenging implications of a revolutionary and as yet but dimly grasped Dispensation were laid bare before her fellow-disciples and the new Order permanently divorced from the laws and institutions of Islam. Such marvelous achievements were now to be crowned by, and attain their final consummation in, her martyrdom in the midst of the storm that was raging throughout the capital.

One night, aware that the hour of her death was at hand, she put on the attire of a bride, and anointed herself with perfume, and, sending for the wife of the Kalantar, she communicated to her the secret of her impending martyrdom, and confided to her her last wishes. Then, closeting herself in her chambers, she awaited, in prayer and meditation, the hour which was to witness her reunion with her Beloved. She was pacing the floor of her room, chanting a litany expressive of both grief and triumph, when the farrashes of Aziz Khan-i-Sardar arrived, in the dead of night, to conduct her to the Ilkhani garden, which lay beyond the city gates, and which was to be the site of her martyrdom. When she arrived the Sardar was in the midst of a drunken debauch with his lieutenants, and was roaring with laughter; he ordered offhand that she be strangled at once and thrown into a pit. With that same silken kerchief which she had intuitively reserved for that purpose, and delivered in her last moments to the son of Kalantar who accompanied her, the death of this immortal heroine was accomplished. Her body was lowered into a well, which was then filled with earth and stones, in the manner she herself had desired.

Thus ended the life of this great Bábí heroine, the first woman suffrage martyr, who, at her death, turning to the one in whose custody she had been placed, had boldly declared: "You can kill me as soon as you like, but you cannot stop the emancipation of women."

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *GOD PASSES BY*, PAGES 74-75

Purpose:

To appreciate some of the qualities of service that Bahá'u'lláh expects of girls and women.
To encourage girls and women with the words of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

∞ KEY

Invite the friends to read the handout passages *What Can a Woman Do* aloud eloquently in the whole group.

Invite each participant to turn to the person beside them and briefly discuss the focus questions:

1. What are some examples of using the power of utterance to achieve the goals described by 'Abdu'l-Bahá?
2. How is it possible in this day to "to ride on a charger and penetrate the army of the ignorant, defeat the mighty regiments and subvert the foundations of error and violation?"
3. What practical steps can we take to assist girls and women to serve as described in these passages?

Then ask the participants to work individually to identify a girl or woman they'd like to encourage, choose one of the following passages, copy it onto beautiful paper, illustrate it as they like, and plan to present their gift in the near future.

Process the session:

How can these words of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá be a powerful factor in promoting the advancement of girls and women?

What a Woman Can Do



Focus Questions:

What are some examples of using the power of utterance to achieve the goals described by 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

How is it possible in this day to "to ride on a charger and penetrate the army of the ignorant, defeat the mighty regiments and subvert the foundations of error and violation?"

What practical steps can we take to assist girls and women to serve as described in these passages?

We beseech the True One to adorn His handmaidens with the ornament of chastity, of trustworthiness, of righteousness and of purity. Verily, He is the All-Bestowing, the All-Generous. We make mention of the handmaidens of God at this time and announce unto them the glad-tidings of the tokens of the mercy and compassion of God and His consideration for them, glorified be He, and We supplicate Him for all His assistance to perform such deeds as are the cause of the exaltation of His Word. He verily speaketh the truth and enjoineth upon His servants and His handmaidens that which will profit them in every world of His worlds. He, verily, is the All-Forgiving, the All-Merciful.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 394

The effulgence of the rays of the Sun of Truth is abundant and the favours of the Blessed Beauty surround the women believers and the handmaidens who have attained unto certitude. At every moment a bounteous bestowal is revealed. The handmaidens of the Merciful should seize the opportunities afforded in these days. Each one should strive to draw nigh unto the divine Threshold and seek bounties from the Source of existence. She should attain such a state and be confirmed with such a power as to make, with but the utterance of one word, a lowly person to be held in reverence, initiate him who is deprived into the world of the spirit, impart hope to the despondent, endow the portionless one with a share of the great bestowal, and confer knowledge and insight upon the ignorant and the blind, and alertness and vigilance on the indolent and heedless. This is the attribute of the handmaidens of the Merciful. This is the characteristic of the bondswomen of God's Threshold.

O ye leaves who have attained certitude! In the countries of Europe and America the maidservants of the Merciful have won the prize of excellence and advancement from the arena of men, and in the fields of teaching and spreading the divine fragrances they have shown a brilliant hand. Soon they will soar like the birds of the Concourse on high in the far corners of the world and will guide the people and reveal to them the divine mysteries. Ye, who are the blessed leaves from the East, should burn more brightly, and engage in spreading the sweet savours of the Lord and in reciting the verses of God. Arise, therefore, and exert yourselves to fulfil the exhortations and counsels of the Blessed Beauty, that all hopes may be realized and that the plain of streams and orchards may become the garden of oneness.

Upon ye, men and women, be the glory of glories.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGES 394-395

In this great Cycle and wondrous Dispensation some women have been raised up who were the emblems of unity and ensigns of oneness, for the revelation of divine bestowals is received by men and women in equal measure. "Verily the most honoured in the sight of God is the most virtuous amongst you" is applicable to both men and women, to servants and handmaidens. All are under the shadow of the Word of God and all derive their strength from the bounties of the Lord. Therefore, do not consider thyself to be insignificant by doubting what a handmaiden living behind the veil can do....

With a firm heart, a steadfast step and an eloquent tongue arise to spread the Word of God and say: "O God, although I am sitting concealed behind the screen of chastity and am restricted by the veil and exigencies of modesty, my cherished hope is to raise the banner of service and to become a maidservant at Thy Holy Threshold; to ride on a charger and penetrate the army of the ignorant, defeat the mighty regiments and subvert the foundations of error and violation. Thou art the Helper of the weak, Thou art the Sustainer of the poor, Thou art the Succourer of the handmaidens. Verily, Thou art the Almighty and All-Powerful."

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 395

Purpose:

- To know about some of the Bahá'í heroines in the history of the Bahá'í faith.
- To prepare a presentation about a Bahá'í heroine to teach others about the role of women in the Bahá'í Faith.

≈ KEY

Make available some or all of the brief biographies of heroines from the heroic and formative ages of the Bahá'í Faith (Appendix B).

Invite the friends to work in teams of their own choosing to:

- Select a story from the short biographies provided.
- Carefully study that particular story to discover its key elements.
- Prepare an artistic representation of the main points in the story using music, dance, drama, poetry, or visual art.
- Plan to use their presentation to teach seekers or Bahá'í friends (including children and youth) about these great heroines of the Cause of God.
- Share with the whole group their artistic presentation and their plan to use it to teach others.

After the friends have all made their presentations, remind them that these are all waiting souls in the Concourse on high, and encourage the friends to call on their assistance as they teach the principle of equality within the Bahá'í community and to others.

Process the session:

Why is it important to know the legacy of equality in the Bahá'í Faith?

Purpose:

- To memorize and use the Writings to teach others about equality.
To plan specific opportunities to teach others about equality.

∞ KEY

In the whole group, memorize the following two quotations, possibly using the following method:

1. Write the quotation on a chalk board, illustrating key words with simple line drawings.
2. Read in unison the entire quotation several times.
3. After reading the quotation several times, begin to erase every fourth word so that the words are gradually removed from the board.
4. When the friends are reciting more and more from memory, finally erase every word, and possibly even the drawings.
5. When the passage is entirely memorized, invite volunteers to recite from memory the entire passage.

All should know.... Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, *THE COMPILATIONS*: VOLUME 2, PAGE 379

The world in the past has been ruled by force, and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the balance is already shifting; force is losing its dominance, and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy. Hence the new age will be an age less masculine and more permeated with the feminine ideals, or, to speak more exactly, will be an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more evenly balanced.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, CITED IN J. E. ESSLEMONT, *BAHA'U'LLAH AND THE NEW ERA*, PAGE 149

Invite the friends to call to mind their friends and acquaintances, whether children, youth or adults; families, co-workers or fellow students; like-minded individuals or groups; individuals either from their own or from different cultural backgrounds.

Still thinking about these souls:

- imagine teaching them about the principle of the equality of women and men
- imagine which aspects of this principle are most likely to gain their positive response, page back through the manual and mark the quotations that will support this teaching process.

Then working in teams of two or three, invite the friends to select one of the passages that may be of particular significance to their friends and memorize it.

After allowing a short time to work on this memorization, invite volunteers to recite this additional passage they have memorized.

Ask the friends to turn to their journals and record their plan for engaging in conversations with their friends in which they can share these newly memorized passages.

Process the session:

What is the importance of using the Word of God when teaching searching souls about the message of Bahá'u'lláh?

What is the value of making specific teaching plans?

Answering Difficult Questions: Research Activity

Purpose:

To anticipate and answer questions about the principle of the equality of women and men.

∞ KEY

Invite the friends to work silently for several minutes to again reflect on their friends, acquaintances and family members that they plan to teach about the Bahá'í principle of equality:

- remembering their plan to present this teaching using the passages from the Bahá'í writings that seem likely to attract the hearts of their friends
- imagine the aspects of Bahá'í teachings on equality that are most likely to be confusing to their friends, or to be difficult to explain
- identify difficult questions that their friends may ask and write those questions on note cards, each question on a separate card.

After the friends have had time to write their questions, read all of the questions aloud in the entire group.

Invite the friends to select a partner, and divide all the questions according to topic, so that each team of two has several questions to research. Ask each team to write out answers to those questions, clearly basing their answers on passages from the Bahá'í writings, and including the specific citations.

In addition to using the handouts of this course as resource materials for answering these questions, provide as many of the following reference materials as possible:

Sacred Text: Books and Compilations

The Kitáb-i-Aqdas

Women

Family Life

Marriage and Family Life

Preserving Marriage

Divorce

Bahá'í Education

Foundations for a Spiritual Education

Compilation of Compilations

Messages of the Universal House of Justice: 1963-1986

Computer assisted search programs of the Bahá'í Writings

Other Sources

The Advancement of Women, Janet Kahn and Peter Kahn

The Honor Which Might be Theirs, Bahá'í International Community

Two Wings of a Bird: The Equality of Women and Men, A Statement of the United States National Spiritual Assembly

After the friends have prepared their answers, invite them to share their answers in the whole group.

Process the session:

What is the advantage of anticipating difficult questions and preparing answers to those questions that are based on the sacred writings of our Faith?

Purpose:
 To understand the main points of *Two Wings of a Bird*.
 To plan to distribute the statement to friends, acquaintances and leaders of thought.

Two Wings of the Bird: A Statement of the National Spiritual Assembly

☞ KEY

Create a jigsaw learning experience:

- Divide the friends into four study groups, assigning each group one of the four sections of the *Two Wings of a Bird* statement.
- Ask each study group to carefully read aloud their section of the statement; identifying and re-stating in one or two sentences the main ideas expressed in that section of the statement. Each member of the group should be prepared to share those sentences with others.
- Reconvene the entire group, then divide the friends into new groups, so that each new group includes one member of each of the previous four study groups. In this way, the new groups will have a participant who can share the main ideas of the section they just studied.
- Ask each participant in the new groups to share the main ideas that they studied with the other members of their new groups.

Plan to distribute the *Two Wings of a Bird* statement:

- While still in these new groups, brainstorm possibilities for sharing these ideas with friends and family members, co-workers and acquaintances.
- Remind the friends that a nationwide effort was initiated in early 1999, in which each Local Spiritual Assembly was asked to present the statement *Two Wings of a Bird: The Equality of Women and Men* to the Mayor and City Council in their respective communities and to report their results to the National Committee for the Equality of Women and Men.
- Also remind the friends of the "One Voice" campaign, in which college and university Bahá'í clubs are asked to present the *Two Wings* statement to campus leaders and to promote the principles of race unity and gender equality among the entire student body.

Keeping in mind the responsibility of the Local Spiritual Assembly to represent the Bahá'í Faith in contacts with leaders of thought in the local community, ask each team to make a plan to use the statement in their individual teaching work.

Ask each team also to prepare a proposal to submit to their Local Spiritual Assembly, in which they offer suggestions on how the statement might be used to proclaim this important teaching of Bahá'u'lláh to local leaders of thought. Think through the details of time, place, individuals involved, publicity, and other considerations, so that the proposal they offer the Assembly is as thorough, as detailed and as practical as possible.

Ask each team to also plan when and how they will offer their teaching plan to the Local Spiritual Assembly. Conclude this activity with prayers for success in the teaching work.

Process the session:

What is the importance of teaching this principle to friends, co-workers and leaders of thought?

What is the wisdom of the Bahá'í principle of public statements and contacts with prominent people being under the supervision of the Local Spiritual Assembly?

Two Wings of a Bird: The Equality of Women and Men

Section One

The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes is essential to human progress and the transformation of society. Inequality retards not only the advancement of women but the progress of civilization itself. The persistent denial of equality to one-half of the world's population is an affront to human dignity. It promotes destructive attitudes and habits in men and women that pass from the family to the work place, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. On no grounds, moral, biological, or traditional can inequality be justified. The moral and psychological climate necessary to enable our nation to establish social justice and to contribute to global peace will be created only when women attain full partnership with men in all fields of endeavor.

The systematic oppression of women is a conspicuous and tragic fact of history. Restricted to narrow spheres of activity in the life of society, denied educational opportunities and basic human rights, subjected to violence, and frequently treated as less than human, women have been prevented from realizing their true potential. Age-old patterns of subordination, reflected in popular culture, literature and art, law, and even religious scriptures, continue to pervade every aspect of life. Despite the advancement of political and civil rights for women in America and the widespread acceptance of equality in principle, full equality has not been achieved.

The damaging effects of gender prejudice are a fault line beneath the foundation of our national life. The gains for women rest uneasily on unchanged, often unexamined, inherited assumptions. Much remains to be done. The achievement of full equality requires a new understanding of who we are, what is our purpose in life, and how we relate to one another--an understanding that will compel us to reshape our lives and thereby our society.

At no time since the founding of the women's rights movement in America has the need to focus on this issue been greater. We stand at the threshold of a new century and a new millennium. Their challenges are already upon us, influencing our families, our lifestyles, our nation, our world. In the process of human evolution, the ages of infancy and childhood are past. The turbulence of adolescence is slowly and painfully preparing us for the age of maturity, when prejudice and exploitation will be abolished and unity established. The elements necessary to unify peoples and nations are precisely those needed to bring about equality of the sexes and to improve the relationships between women and men. The effort to overcome the history of inequality requires the full participation of every man, woman, youth, and child.

Two Wings of a Bird: The Equality of Women and Men

Section Two

Over a century ago, for the first time in religious history, Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, in announcing God's purpose for the age, proclaimed the principle of the equality of women and men, saying: "Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God."¹ The establishment of equal rights and privileges for women and men, Bahá'u'lláh says, is a precondition for the attainment of a wider unity that will ensure the well-being and security of all peoples. The Bahá'í Writings state emphatically that "When all mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality of men and women be realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed."²

Thus the Bahá'í vision of equality between the sexes rests on the central spiritual principle of the oneness of humankind. The principle of oneness requires that we "regard humanity as a single individual, and one's own self as a member of that corporeal form,"³ and that we foster an unshakable consciousness that "if pain or injury afflicts any member of that body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest."⁴

Bahá'u'lláh teaches that the divine purpose of creation is the achievement of unity among all peoples: *Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest.*⁵

The full and equal participation of women in all spheres of life is essential to social and economic development, the abolition of war, and the ultimate establishment of a united world. In the Bahá'í Scriptures the equality of the sexes is a cornerstone of God's plan for human development and prosperity:

The world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength, the bird will not fly. Until womankind reaches the same degree as man, until she enjoys the same arena of activity, extraordinary attainment for humanity will not be realized; humanity cannot wing its way to heights of real attainment. When the two wings . . . become equivalent in strength, enjoying the same prerogatives, the flight of man will be exceedingly lofty and extraordinary.⁶

Notes

1. Bahá'u'lláh, from a Tablet translated from the Persian and Arabic, quoted in *Women: Extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice, comp. Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Thornhill, Ontario: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, 1986), no. 54.
2. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, comp. Howard MacNutt, 2d ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 175.
3. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, trans. Marzieh Gail and Ali-Kuli Khan, 1st ps ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), p. 39.
4. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 39.
5. Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, trans. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1939), p. 20.
6. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, p. 375.

Two Wings of a Bird: The Equality of Women and Men

Section Three

The Bahá'í Writings state that to proclaim equality is not to deny that differences in function between women and men exist but rather to affirm the complementary roles men and women fulfill in the home and society at large. Stating that the acquisition of knowledge serves as "a ladder for [human] ascent,"⁷ Bahá'u'lláh prescribes identical education for women and men but stipulates that when resources are limited first priority should be given to the education of women and girls. The education of girls is particularly important because, although both parents have responsibilities for the rearing of children, it is through educated mothers that the benefits of knowledge can be most effectively diffused throughout society.

Reverence for, and protection of, motherhood have often been used as justification for keeping women socially and economically disadvantaged. It is this discriminatory and injurious result that must change. Great honor and nobility are rightly conferred on the station of motherhood and the importance of training children. Addressing the high station of motherhood, the Bahá'í Writings state, "O ye loving mothers, know ye that in God's sight, the best of all ways to worship Him is to educate the children and train them in all the perfections of humankind. . . ." ⁸ The great challenge facing society is to make social and economic provisions for the full and equal participation of women in all aspects of life while simultaneously reinforcing the critical functions of motherhood.

Asserting that women and men share similar "station and rank" and "are equally the recipients of powers and endowments from God,"⁹ the Bahá'í teachings offer a model of equality based on the concept of partnership. Only when women become full participants in all domains of life and enter the important arenas of decision-making will humanity be prepared to embark on the next stage of its collective development.

Bahá'í Scripture emphatically states that women will be the greatest factor in establishing universal peace and international arbitration. "So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will cease; for woman will be the obstacle and hindrance to it."¹⁰

Notes

7. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas*, comp. Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, trans. Habib Taherzadeh et al., 1st ps ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988), p. 51.
8. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, comp. Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, trans. Committee at the Bahá'í World Centre and Marzieh Gail (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1997), 114.1.
9. Bahá'u'lláh, Tablet translated from the Persian and Arabic, quoted in *Women*, no. 2; 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, p. 300.
10. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, p. 135.

Two Wings of a Bird: The Equality of Women and Men

Section Four

The elimination of discrimination against women is a spiritual and moral imperative that must ultimately reshape existing legal, economic, and social arrangements. Promoting the entry of greater numbers of women into positions of prominence and authority is a necessary but not sufficient step in creating a just social order. Without fundamental changes in the attitudes and values of individuals and in the underlying ethos of social institutions, full equality between women and men cannot be achieved. A community based on partnership, a community in which aggression and the use of force are supplanted by cooperation and consultation, requires the transformation of the human heart.

The world in the past has been ruled by force, and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the balance is already shifting; force is losing its dominance, and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy. Hence the new age will be an age less masculine and more permeated with the feminine ideals . . . an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more evenly balanced.¹¹

Men have an inescapable duty to promote the equality of women. The presumption of superiority by men thwarts the ambition of women and inhibits the creation of an environment in which equality may reign. The destructive effects of inequality prevent men from maturing and developing the qualities necessary to meet the challenges of the new millennium. "As long as women are prevented from attaining their highest possibilities," the Bahá'í Writings state, "so long will men be unable to achieve the greatness which might be theirs."¹² It is essential that men engage in a careful, deliberate examination of attitudes, feelings, and behavior deeply rooted in cultural habit, that block the equal participation of women and stifle the growth of men. The willingness of men to take responsibility for equality will create an optimum environment for progress: "When men own the equality of women there will be no need for them to struggle for their rights!"¹³

The long-standing and deeply rooted condition of inequality must be eliminated. To overcome such a condition requires the exercise of nothing short of "genuine love, extreme patience, true humility, consummate tact, sound initiative, mature wisdom, and deliberate, persistent, and prayerful effort."¹⁴ Ultimately, Bahá'u'lláh promises, a day will come when men will welcome women in all aspects of life. Now is the time to move decisively toward that promised future.

Notes

11. Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in Wendell Phillips Dodge, "Abdul-Baha's Arrival in America," in *Star of the West* 3 (April 28, 1912), no. 3, p. 4.
12. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks: Addresses Given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris in 1911*, 12th ed. (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1995), 40.33
13. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, 50.14.
14. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 40.

Purpose:
To respond to the National Spiritual Assembly's call for equality in the Bahá'í community.

The National Spiritual Assembly Promotes Equality

∞ KEY

As we studied in Module 2, the December 31, 1998 message from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States to all Bahá'ís in this country calls for study, consultation and action. Module 2 of this course includes preparation of a draft response to many of the questions raised in that letter. This activity focuses study on the remaining portions of that letter, and provides a forum for preparing an answer to the remaining question posed by the National Spiritual Assembly, a question about our use of the statement, *Two Wings of a Bird: The Equality of Women and Men*.

Read the entire letter aloud in the whole group, with particular attention to the paragraphs and question in **bold** print, which were not studied in Module Two.

After reading the letter, invite the group to prepare an answer to Question 5, based on their individual and/or collaborative action plans for the distribution of the *Two Wings of a Bird* statement.

When the entire letter to the National Spiritual Assembly is complete, invite the signatures of everyone present before sending it to the National Assembly, with a copy to the relevant Local Spiritual Assemblies. Plan to mail the letters immediately.

Make a plan to provide follow-up reports to the National Spiritual Assembly as plans are carried through to completion.

Process the session:

What is the importance of reporting our teaching plans to the Institutions of the Faith?

December 31, 1998

Dearly loved Friends,

Bahá'u'lláh, the Sun of Truth, has assured us that the only remedy for prejudice - an opinion held in disregard of the facts - is the true spirit of equality and unity. The American Bahá'í Community has the ability to serve as a model to our nation in the promotion of these issues. As you know, the National Spiritual Assembly has adopted the equality of women and men together with racial harmony as our twin foci for the duration of the Four Year Plan. We must seize the opportunities afforded at this time to make a difference in the life of our nation. Our progress will help insure the achievement of human rights for all people, and ultimately, to the attainment of peace.

In the arena of gender equality our role is to emphasize the need for a true partnership between women and men. Most individuals are aware of the advances that are needed for equality in education and employment. But let us consider the subtler challenges. We must question whether deep-rooted prejudices about women are affecting our daily behavior. In Bahá'í communities we must examine whether women occupy equally important positions as men; whether their voices are truly heard in consultation; whether their capacities are considered in each election; and whether women and men are sharing in the tasks necessary for community functioning, such as implementing children's programs, providing food, administering meetings, speaking at events, and executing teaching plans.

The role of Bahá'í men, as partners in this process, is critical. Bahá'í men must make a concerted effort to assist, encourage, and support women to realize and fulfill the high aspirations that are held for them in the Bahá'í Writings. We call upon Bahá'í men to confront the attitudes, assumptions, and behaviors that promote the world's currently deplorable moral climate that denigrates women. Bahá'í men can and must explore ways in which to support the often unspoken aspirations of Bahá'í women in their midst and encourage them to step forward in action.

We invite you to consider the following questions in your families, communities and Spiritual Assembly meetings:

1. What should our community do to become a true model of equality?
2. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated, "When men own the equality of women there will be no need for them to struggle for their rights!" ('Abdu'l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, p. 163) How can men "own" equality?
3. How are we raising our children to practice equality in their lives?
4. How can we reach out to the community at large to share the Bahá'í view on equality?
5. How can we use the *Two Wings of a Bird* statement more effectively?

We look forward to receiving reports of the results of your consultations.

Be assured of our ongoing prayers for your success in the closing months of this Century of Light.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

Purpose:

To know about some of the world-wide efforts to promote the equality of women and men.
To understand the importance of the arts and consultation in promoting equality.

**Equality:
A World-Embracing Vision**

∞ KEY

Read the following passages aloud in the whole group:

The equality of men and women is not, at the present time, universally applied. In those areas where traditional inequality still hampers its progress we must take the lead in practicing this Bahá'í principle. Bahá'í women and girls must be encouraged to take part in the social, spiritual and administrative activities of their communities....

UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, RIDVÁN 1984 TO THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE WORLD

People everywhere have customs which must be abandoned so as to clear the path along which their societies must evolve towards that glorious, new civilization which is to be the fruit of Bahá'u'lláh's stupendous Revelation. Indeed, in no society on earth can there be found practices which adequately mirror the standards of His Cause.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE, FOUR YEAR PLAN MESSAGE TO AFRICA, 1996

Show the Bahá'í International Community video *Two Wings* which illustrates the use of traditional media to explore the principle of the equality of women and men. This highly effective project illustrates the power of the arts and of consultation to address this important topic.

After viewing the video, briefly discuss the following questions:

1. How does this video illustrate effective use of the arts in promoting the equality of women and men?
2. How can we make better use of the arts to promote equality in our communities?
3. How does this video illustrate effective use of consultation in promoting the equality of women and men?
4. How can we make better use of consultation to promote equality in our communities?

Process the session:

How does our awareness of the efforts of Bahá'ís to promote equality around the world assist us in our efforts to promote equality in our own communities?

Purpose:

To understand the power of unified action.

∞ KEY

Demonstration 1: The Ruler and the Paper

Place a ruler on the edge of a table so that about 1/3 of it sticks out over the edge and 2/3 of the ruler is on the table. Cover the ruler with a large piece of paper. Invite the friends to lift the paper by pressing down on the ruler.

After allowing time for several trials, explain that it is the cumulative pressure of the air molecules that holds the ruler in its place. In the same way, our own individual actions, when combined with others, can exert an unexpectedly great force.

Demonstration 2: Lifting Books

Show the friends a heavy stack of books. Invite them to lift these books using only the power of air. After several trials, if the friends have not yet achieved the goal, show them the solution.

Lay a large plastic bag on the table, with the open end of the bag extending off the edge of the table. Place the heavy stack of books on the bag. Gather the open end of the bag in your hand and blow into the bag. With patience, and lots of blowing, the compressed air in the bag will lift the stack of books.

Again, it is the collective action of the air and perseverance in action that accomplishes this seemingly impossible task.

Process the session:

How can simple demonstrations of this sort assist us to understand the power of unified action?

Purpose:

- To perceive the equality of women and men as an aspect of an ideal Bahá'í community.
- To articulate a vision of equality as aspect of the ideal community.
- Identify and initiate lines of action for equality.

∞ KEY

1. CREATE CONSULTATION STATIONS Hang four sizeable sheets of paper on the wall — separated from each other as much as is reasonable in the room. The sheets of paper should be large enough that a small group of people can easily gather around one such sheet to consult and write on the paper as a group. Using flip chart paper, for instance, you will want to tape 3-4 sheet together to make one station.

2. ASSIGN FOUR GROUPS Use some means to divide participants into four groups — assuring that similar sized groups having a mixture of men and women are created.

3. PLACE EACH GROUP AT ONE OF THE CONSULTATION STATIONS When each group is gathered at one of the consultation stations, give each station one of the following assignments and ask that they write, or use images to express, their answers on the paper sheet at their station.

- **Station #1:** What do you see that the Bahá'í community is already doing, or has already achieved, that reflects the principle of the equality of women and men, as we have studied in the passages throughout this course? What passages from the Holy Writings guide and inspire these positive actions that currently occur?
- **Station #2:** Imagine the Bahá'í community nine years in the future, having experienced growth in size and in spirit, and now increasingly reflecting the principle of the equality of women and men in harmony with the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Imagine scenes from family life or community life in such a community. What is happening in families and in the community that makes this future community such a happy, healthy, and productive place? What passages from the Holy Writings are helpful in inspiring and guiding action toward this bright future?
- **Station #3:** Consider the Bahá'í community and its efforts to truly manifest the principle of equality among men and women. Identify practical needs that exist, including those of families and singles, seekers and friends of the Faith, young and older, relating to the principle of equality. For example:

Is practical assistance needed to enable single parents or individuals to participate fully in Bahá'í community life?

Do children and youth have appropriate ways to learn to express the principle of equality in their daily lives?

Are there girl children or youth that would benefit from tutoring, practical support, or special encouragement to help assure that they advance and/or complete their education?

Are there other pressing needs in local communities that would help advance the principle of equality?

- **Station #4:** Consider the future ideal Bahá'í community which will be effectively and beautifully manifesting the principle of equality in all its elements. Identify specific aspects of this vision that would represent significant progress toward this vision — focus especially on ideas that could reasonably be achieved within the coming year. Reflect on the spiritual, human and material resources of the community, keeping in mind that the current national media campaign includes teaching the community at large about the Bahá'í principle of the equality of women and men. What specific plans of action would you suggest? Is there a specific line of action that you yourselves feel you can work to achieve? What would be your first steps?

4. CYCLE EACH GROUP THROUGH EACH STATION Give each group 10 minutes at each station. Each group should add its own contributions onto the sheet at each station.

5. EACH PERSON EVALUATE When each group has had a chance to work at each station, provide 5 minutes for each person, as an individual, to circulate freely to each station and consider the various contributions on each sheet. Ask them to place a "star" on up to five contributions (total across all sheets) that they personally feel are the most important. Either have participants use markers to draw the stars, or provide each participant with five stick-on stars to use.

6. JOURNAL TIME Provide 10 minutes for each person to select one specific – simple and doable – line of action that they themselves feel they can work to achieve within the coming year and outline an initial plan in their journal. How will they begin? How will the local Bahá'í community, or community-at-large, be touched? What time frame will be needed? How will they know if they are successful? Who will they be able to work with? How will family and other responsibilities harmonize with the plan? What forms of approval or assistance may be needed from the Local Spiritual Assembly? Invite the friends to consider sharing their plan with the National Spiritual Assembly in a letter.

Process the session:

What are your positive images of the future function of individuals, families, communities, and of society at large?

The Greatest Holy Leaf: Service to the Head of the Faith

Purpose:

To reflect on Bahíyyih Khánum's life of selfless service to the Head of the Faith.
To prepare a statement on service to the head of the Faith.

∞ KEY

Throughout the Ministries of Bahá'u'lláh, Her Father, the Manifestation of God for this age, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Her Brother, the Center of the Covenant, and Shoghi Effendi, her grand-nephew, the Guardian of the Cause of God, Bahíyyih Khánum's actions transcended family relationships to demonstrate a record of service to the Head of the Faith unmatched by any other believer. In the whole group, invite several friends to read aloud the handout descriptions of her life of service to the Head of the Faith.

After reading these passages aloud, ask the friends to reflect individually and prepare their own statement of service to the Head of the Faith. Invite each to consider:

What are the actions that I can commit to achieving in my own life of service to the Head of the Faith?

After about five minutes have elapsed, invite the friends to also consider the question:

How can I weave the attributes reflected by the Greatest Holy Leaf into my own life?

Such attributes include:

- "purity of life that reflected itself in even the minutest details of her daily occupations"
- "tenderness of heart that obliterated every distinction of creed, class and colour"
- "resignation and serenity that evoked to the mind the calm and heroic fortitude of the Báb"
- "unaffected simplicity of manners"
- "generosity, a love, at once disinterested and indiscriminating"

After allowing additional time for private reflection and writing, invite several of the friends to share excerpts from their statements if they like.

The Greatest Holy Leaf: Service to the Head of the Faith



Verily, We have elevated thee [Bahíyyih Khánúm] to the rank of one of the most distinguished among thy sex, and granted thee, in My court, a station such as none other woman hath surpassed

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH: BAHÍYYIH KHÁNÚM, THE GREATEST HOLY LEAF, PAGE 3

In the days of the Commission of Investigation, she was a staunch and trusted supporter of the peerless Branch of Bahá'u'lláh, and a companion to Him beyond compare. At the time of His absence in the western world, she was His competent deputy, His representative and vicegerent, with none to equal her.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: BAHÍYYIH KHÁNÚM, PAGES 28-29

And when, in pursuance of God's inscrutable Wisdom, the ban on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's confinement was lifted and the Plan which He, in the darkest hours of His confinement, had conceived materialized, He with unhesitating confidence, invested His trusted and honoured sister with the responsibility of attending to the multitudinous details arising out of His protracted absence from the Holy Land.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION, PAGE 192

Soon after the passing of the Master, Shoghi Effendi, grief stricken and entangled in the troubles created by covenant breakers within the Master's family, left the Holy Land for several months to seek rest and healing and to prepare himself for the Guardianship. He wrote at that time:

For this reason, unable to do otherwise, I have left for a time the affairs of the Cause both at home and abroad, under the supervision of the Holy Family and the headship of the Greatest Holy Leaf until, by the Grace of God, having gained health, strength, self-confidence and spiritual energy, and having taken into my hands, in accordance with my aim and desire, entirely and regularly the work of service I shall attain to my utmost spiritual hope and aspiration.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: BAHÍYYIH KHÁNÚM, PAGE 21

Rúhíyyih Khánúm describes the Greatest Holy Leaf during these days:

She had already - so frail, so quiet, so modest at all times - shown herself in these past weeks to be a strong rock to which the believers clung in the midst of the tempest that had so suddenly burst upon them. The calibre of her soul, her breeding, her station, fitted her for the role she played in the Cause and in Shoghi Effendi's life during this extremely difficult and dangerous period.

RÚHÍYYIH RABBÁNÍ: THE PRICELESS PEARL, PAGE 42

Bahíyyih Khánúm describes her childhood terror when Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned in the Síyáh-Chál:

"Every morning one or more of these brave and devoted friends would be taken out to be tortured and killed in various ways of horror....

"These terrible sounds I well remember, as we three children clung to our mother, she not knowing whether the victim was her own adored husband. She could not find out whether he was still alive or not until late at night, or very early in the morning, when she determined to venture out, in defiance of the danger to herself and to us, for neither women or children were spared.

"How well I remember cowering in the dark, with my little brother, Mirzá Mihdí, the Purest Branch, at that time two years old, in my arms, which were not very strong, as I was only six. I was shivering with terror, for I knew of some of the horrible things that were happening, and was aware that they might have seized even my mother.

"So I waited and waited until she should come back."

THE SPOKEN CHRONICLE OF BAHÍYYIH KHÁNÚM, IN THE CHOSEN HIGHWAY BY LADY BLOMFIELD, PAGES 42-43

Lady Blomfield also describes Bahíyyih Khánum's childhood and youth:

"During the period of the sojourn in Baghdad, Bahíyyih Khánum, the Greatest Holy Leaf, was her mother's loving helper, working always beyond her strength, in the various household tasks. No childish pleasures or companions were hers. Always with eyes on her mother, alert to spare her any fatigue, she rejoiced beyond measure when she could minister in any way to her or her illustrious father.

"My mother,' she said, 'sometimes gave lessons to my brother 'Abbás; at other times Mírzá Músá would teach Him, and on some occasions he would be taught by His father.'

"And your lessons?' I asked.

"But I never had any time for studies,' she said, in a tone which spoke volumes of absolute self-effacement, and this is the keynote of her whole life, no thought of her unselfishness entered her mind.

"Her thoughtfulness and consideration for all who came near her; the countless acts of never-failing kindness, were, in her eyes, all to be taken as a matter of course. Her one joy was to devote every moment of her existence to being of use to her mother and father, to whom she was passionately attached. This loving service was extended, as He grew older, to her brother 'Abbás, Sarkár-i-Aqá, and these three were her being's end and aim.

"Her life was spent in prayer to God and service to her loved ones....

"After those terrible days in Tihrán, and the not less terrible journey to Baghdád, during the sojourn in this city, she grew into a beautiful girl, very much like her lovely mother in grace of body and character, a gentle, slender maiden with large, grey-blue eyes, golden-brown hair, and warm, ivory-coloured skin. Her sense of humour was keen and her intelligence remarkable.

"As she grew up, she implored her father to allow her to remain unmarried, that she might the better devote herself to her three dearly loved ones.

"And so it was."

LADY BLOMFIELD: *THE CHOSEN HIGHWAY*, PAGES 68-69

She had moulded her life to the bounds of her sphere, pouring into it the resources of her own spirit, and had found scope for all her qualities.

MARJORIE MORTEN: *THE PASSING OF BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM*, IN *CRYSTALLIZATIONS*, PAGE 167

Something greater than forgiveness she had shown in meeting the cruelties and strictures in her own life. To be hurt and to forgive is saintly but far beyond this is the power to comprehend and not be hurt. This power she had.... She was never known to complain or lament. It was not that she made the best of things, but that she found in everything, even in calamity itself, the germs of enduring wisdom.

MARJORIE MORTEN: *THE PASSING OF BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM*, IN *CRYSTALLIZATIONS*, PAGE 174

Even in the thick of the worst ordeals, she would smile like an opening rose...

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHÁNUM*, PAGE 79

Marzieh Gail writes:

On this first pilgrimage of mine, the third anniversary of the Master's passing came due. The wound was raw, and there was a great outburst of Eastern grief: tears, loud cries and sobs; and seeing the adults in disarray, the children began whimpering and running about, not knowing where to turn. The house was full of people, and the sounds of weeping were all about, when I happened to walk by the open doorway of a lighted room, and there, through the door, was the Greatest Holy Leaf. She was seated in the midst of the children, they standing close to her as if all were in her embrace; she still and quiet, sitting there detached from the storm, her face composed, a comfort and safe haven.

MARZIEH GAIL: *KHÁNUM, THE GREATEST HOLY LEAF*, PAGE 20

All I can find to say is that she was a quietness, a focal point of peace; that she pervaded the room like a sweet scent, or lit her corner like a sun-ray shining through a crystal vase; that despite her rank and great dignity, she was self-effacing, gentle-voiced; and that she spoke little, but you remembered.

MARZIEH GAIL: *KHĀNUM, THE GREATEST HOLY LEAF*, PAGE 15

Always she moved with the larger rhythm, the wider sweep, toward the ultimate goal.

MARJORY MORTEN: *THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD*, "THE PASSING OF BAHÍYYIH *KHĀNUM*", VOL. 5 (1932-34); 181-85

It would take me too long to make even a brief allusion to those incidents of her life, each of which eloquently proclaims her as a daughter, worthy to inherit that priceless heritage bequeathed to her by Bahá'u'lláh. A purity of life that reflected itself in even the minutest details of her daily occupations and activities; a tenderness of heart that obliterated every distinction of creed, class and colour; a resignation and serenity that evoked to the mind the calm and heroic fortitude of the Báb; a natural fondness of flowers and children that was so characteristic of Bahá'u'lláh; an unaffected simplicity of manners; an extreme sociability which made her accessible to all; a generosity, a love, at once disinterested and indiscriminating, that reflected so clearly the attributes of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's character; a sweetness of temper; a cheerfulness that no amount of sorrow could becloud; a quiet and unassuming disposition that served to enhance a thousandfold the prestige of her exalted rank; a forgiving nature that instantly disarmed the most unyielding enemy.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *BAHÍYYIH KHĀNUM*, PAGES 42-43

Purpose:

To reflect upon the knowledge, spiritual insights and skills gained in this training program.

To express appreciation for the efforts of oneself and others to increasingly express the principle of equality in daily life

**Conclusion
Summary and Appreciation**

∞ KEY

Invite the friends to recall the times of study, reflection, action planning and prayer that we have enjoyed together in this program, designed to assist the Bahá'í community to increasingly express the principle of the equality of women and men in our own lives and to teach it to others.

Then invite the friends to share with the whole group their response to the question:

What do you value most about yourself, your family members, colleagues, and friends, and the community as a whole, as we work together to implement and to teach Bahá'u'lláh's principle of the equality of women and men?

Purpose:
To reflect on the training process.
To suggest ways to improve the training program.

Evaluation of the Course

∞ KEY

Distribute the evaluation forms and invite the participants to carefully respond to the questions provided.

Core Curriculum for Spiritual Education

held on

Equality Course

in

Evaluation

facilitated by

sponsored by

This opportunity to work with you has truly been a pleasure. Please candidly share your feelings and reactions. This information will be invaluable to us in planning future workshops.

	Exceptional	very good	fair	poor
The presenters were organized and clear in their presentation.				
The purpose of the course and the individual modules was made clear.				
The materials were supportive of the presentations.				
Adequate time was provided for reflection upon and recording of your observations.				
The course demonstrated the use of different teaching methods, teaching tools and modalities of learning.				
The Sacred Writings were sufficiently utilized to elevate the spirit of the participants and lay the foundation for the work before them?				
The expectations and directions for your role as a worker for equality was made clear and seems sufficient?				

Please take time to expand on any of the items listed above, particularly if any ate rated fair or poor so that we might improve the delivery of the course.

What was most helpful to you?

What was least helpful to you?

What would you recommend for future workshops?

Purpose:

To give the participants a sense of completion.
To reaffirm promises of divine assistance in this work.

≈ KEY

Invite the friends to continue to support each other as they strive to complete their individual and group plans made during this course program.

Remind the friends that the beloved Master has promised that transformation is achieved "little by little, day by day."

Remind the friends to report the actions that they complete to the National Spiritual Assembly.

Assure them of the prayers of the National Spiritual Assembly, the National Committee for the Equality of Women and Men, the National Bahá'í Education Task Force, the National Bahá'í Education Task Force, and of each other.

Consider closing the session with the following readings, possibly presenting one of these quotations as a closing gift.

Closing Readings

(Male reader)

In the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, women are advancing side by side with men. There is no area or instance where they will lag behind: they have equal rights with men, and will enter, in the future, into all branches of the administration of society. Such will be their elevation that, in every area of endeavour, they will occupy the highest levels in the human world. Rest thou assured. Look not upon their present state. In future, the world of womankind will shine with lustrous brilliance, for such is the will and purpose of Bahá'u'lláh.... No soul can retard or prevent it.

(Female reader)

...the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh will aid them and the institutions of His World Order to see the realization of every principle ordained by His unerring Pen, including the equality of men and women, as expounded in the Writings of the Cause.

LETTER DATED MAY 31, 1988 TO A NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY, P. 4, QUOTED IN *ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN*, PAGE 296

(Male reader)

O loved handmaidens of God! Consider not your present merits and capacities, rather fix your gaze on the favours and confirmations of the Blessed Beauty, because His everlasting grace will make of the insignificant plant a blessed tree, will turn the mirage into cool water and wine; will cause the forsaken atom to become the very essence of being, the puny one erudite in the school of knowledge.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, IN *WOMEN*, PAGE 50, #99

(Female reader)

O Thou Incomparable God! O Thou Lord of the Kingdom! These souls are Thy heavenly army. Assist them and, with the cohorts of the Supreme Concourse, make them victorious, so that each one of them may become like unto a regiment and conquer these countries through the love of God and the illumination of divine teachings.

O God! Be Thou their supporter and their helper, and in the wilderness, the mountain, the valley, the forests, the prairies and the seas, be Thou their confidant – so that they may cry out through the power of the Kingdom and the breath of the Holy Spirit.

Verily, Thou art the Powerful, the Mighty and the Omnipotent, and Thou art the Wise, the Hearing and the Seeing.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ: *TABLETS OF THE DIVINE PLAN*, PAGE 35

THE EQUALITY FACILITATOR

PREPARING FOR YOUR EQUALITY COURSE



Facilitator Role and Administrative Process

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- . Guidelines for Core Curriculum Equality facilitators p. 3
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Setting up the Course

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EQUALITY COURSES
National Bahá'í Education Task Force

Purpose of the Training



The purpose of Spiritual Foundations for the Equality of Women and Men is to participate as learners in a formal workshop process that seeks to prepare teachers, parents, facilitators, and other community members who desire that we bridge barriers to equality of women and men. Courses are offered in collaboration with Local Spiritual Assemblies or Regional Training Institutes on behalf of and in concert with the National Bahá'í Education Task Force.

GUIDELINES FOR CORE CURRICULUM EQUALITY FACILITATORS



Equality Facilitator Role

The role of the Core Curriculum Equality Facilitator is to enhance sensitivity and consciousness concerning issues of Equality for teachers, parents and community members, empowering them to take action in designing Equality projects and creating harmonious environments that promote and exhibit equality.

Planning and Implementation Procedure

Equality Facilitators collaborate with sponsoring Bahá'í Institutions on the set-up and delivery of Equality Courses, using the following:

- Core Curriculum Equality Courses require institutional sponsorship.
- If a sponsoring institution is not aware of or is not able to locate qualified Equality Facilitators, they should contact the National Bahá'í Education Task Force to request assistance in finding facilitators.
- Once located, sponsoring institutions invite the Equality Facilitators to serve.
- Equality Facilitators may wish to consult, schedule and plan with the assistance of teacher trainers and other Core Curriculum facilitators. The role of other Core Curriculum facilitators may be one of collaboration, logistical support and encouragement.

The Role of the Equality Facilitators

Situations Beyond the Scope of the Core Curriculum Program



While the role of the Equality facilitators is one of profound service to Bahá'í institutions, families and the community, sometimes situations can arise that are beyond the scope of the Core Curriculum Equality Program.

Ask:

- Based on what we already know, what situations might be beyond the scope of this program?

List:

- (Some examples include abuse, deeply emotional issues, legal matters, etc.)

Ask:

- What can we do should such a situation arise?

List:

- (Some steps include: one facilitator stepping out of the room to listen and show love, while the other continues the workshop; refer the situation to a Bahá'í institution such as the Local Spiritual Assembly, an Auxiliary Board Member or an Assistant.)

Consider the following story as analogy:

There once was a village hospital which every day saw a consistent stream of bloodied, battered people coming with the same injuries. The doctors and nurses were so busy patching people up they had no time to investigate the cause. Finally a youthful, inquisitive soul investigated and found that a commonly used footpath passed a dangerous cliff, and many people were falling off this cliff. The village people then built a fence, and the problem was solved.

As Equality facilitators, we know there are lots of injured people among us; there are others trained to treat the injured. We are the fence-builders, uniting our communities to work for change.

Process:

How can you make sure that you consistently maintain your role as facilitator?

WORKING WITH BAHÁ'Í INSTITUTIONS

These Bahá'í children are of such great importance to the future. They will live in times, and have to meet problems, which never faced their elders. And the Cause alone can equip them to properly serve the needs of a future, war-weary, disillusioned, unhappy humanity. So their task will be very great and a very responsible one, and too much care cannot be devoted to their upbringing and preparation.

-from a letter dated January 11, 1942,
written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer BE #146, p. 58

Bahá'í institutions are to be lovingly encouraged to assume their rightful leadership role in educating the community. For example, teachers and parents can meet many, but not all, of the needs of children. The Core Curriculum will have greater impact if spiritual education comes to be seen as central to, rather than separate from, the issue of community development. The promotion and living embodiment of the principle of equality is a critical element of this development.

Local Spiritual Assemblies/Regional Training Institutes that sponsor Equality Facilitators should be graciously thanked, informed, and collaborated with in offering Equality Course Sessions. Equality Facilitator procedures include:

1. Partners schedule a meeting with their sponsoring institution.
2. Partners pray for guidance, review objectives and appropriate materials.
3. Share information about the Equality Course, including content, course time, and who might participate. Create a vision of how the Equality Course program assists the community to realize equality.
4. Demonstrate course methods in your presentations: focus on relevant passages from the sacred Writings; use prayer and music to help create the desired atmosphere; emphasize the importance of diversity and consultation, of the Local Spiritual Assembly/RTI's role.
5. Review specific needs, requirements, costs, timetables, etc. Provide sample schedules for your assembly or whatever you think might be helpful to you and to them. (Don't assume they know about course needs.)
6. Decide who will be responsible for invitations, logistics, etc. Determine a specific date that names/addresses/phone numbers of those to be trained will be furnished.
7. Obtain firm commitments for sponsorship of courses. Be certain that the nature and extent of the required support is understood. Ask course sponsors to assume responsibility for physical arrangements and as much of the communications as possible (leave your time and energy free to consult and plan with your partner for the spiritual and educational aspects of the course program).
8. Provide a report following the course, thanking the assembly/training institute for sponsorship and showering them with love for their service to the community.

Creating the Equality Course Experience

Well-prepared facilitators are key to the success of the Equality Program. Review the following suggestions as a guide for your preparation.

A Joyous Environment

Create an atmosphere of love, joy, cooperation and discovery throughout your workshop sessions. To enable closer interaction, sharing and fuller participation among the group members, it is strongly suggested that the number of participants range from 8 to 24.

Emphasis on the Sacred Texts

Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas, and convictions of the children of men.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *TDP* p. 95

The Bahá'í Writings are the foundation, the standard and the inspiration of the Core Curriculum. Therefore, the study of the Sacred Texts, the writings of the Guardian and those of the Universal House of Justice is the most essential element of any Core Curriculum program. Any content of the program beyond the actual Writings represents the striving of the designers to apply the principles and characteristics of Bahá'í Education to the dynamic practice of teaching.

Distinctive Characteristics of Bahá'í Education

Among the Bahá'í principles and characteristics which are integral to this course are:

- Reliance upon God through prayer and a spiritual attitude
- Use of the Creative Word as a foundation for learning
- Significance of meditation and reflection in the learning process
- Use of memorization
- Use of consultation to develop true understanding
- The relationship of diversity to the growth of the individual, to creativity and to the unity of the group (ethnicity, gender, personality, learning style, capacity, experience, knowledge)
- Teaching the Faith in word and deed as the ultimate outcome of growth and transformation
- Service to humanity as a primary purpose of education
- Respect for each person's unique contribution to the learning process
- Excellence in all things as a standard for all Bahá'í activity
- Genuine love and recognition of each person's spiritual reality
- Recognition of parents as primary educators of the children
- Use of the arts to deepen spiritual perception and richness of the learning experience

Consistent Conceptual Organization

Each Core Curriculum Session or Module is organized around the following quotation from Bahá'u'lláh,

Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception, and eloquent speech.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Bahá'í Education*, #9

Modeling and the Principle of Example

O thou spiritual teacher! In thy school, instruct thou God 's children in the customs of the Kingdom. Be thou a teacher of love, in a school of unity. Train thou the children of the friends of the Merciful in the rules and ways of His loving-kindness. Tend the young trees of the Abhá Paradise with the welling waters of His grace and peace and joy. Make them flourish under the downpour of His bounty. Strive with all thy powers that the children may stand out and grow fresh, delicate and sweet, like the ideal trees in the gardens of Heaven.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í Education*, #64 p. 24

The conducting of Equality Courses should mirror for participants the distinctive qualities of a Bahá'í educational process. This will be reflected in the set-up of the physical environment, in your loving attitude toward the friends and in your appreciation and honoring of the diversity of your participants. 'Abdu'l-Bahá example and presence should be a constant, conscious and primary reference throughout.

Team Facilitators

A diverse team of facilitators is suggested. This provides a consultative and supportive learning/teaching model. Sessions should be conducted by two facilitators; no more than three facilitators should be present at any particular session. Any special circumstances need to be discussed with your advisor or the National Bahá'í Education Task Force.

The Learning Experience

Core Curriculum is designed so that the participants are actively engaged in their own learning. Consultation and interactive learning activities are an integral part of the course experience. As a facilitator, you will be modeling and utilizing a variety of learning tools and instructional methods as described in the Bahá'í Writings, as well as considering a wide array of different learning modalities. Among these are direct use of the Writings, including memorization of the Writings, experiential learning activities, creative expression and use of music. The arts are fully incorporated into the learning process as a means to deepen understanding and apply knowledge.

While facilitators are free to adapt lessons to fit their own style and to meet the styles of their participants, it is important that content and purpose remain. It is also important to maintain a diversity of methodologies as a model for participants in their own work. Learning activities have been carefully chosen to reflect a diverse range, meeting diverse learning needs; they should be modified only after well-considered consultation with one's advisor or the National Bahá'í Education Task Force.

Conscious Knowledge

Throughout the course the facilitators will be engaging the participants in processing activities which enables the spiritual and educational principles and practices being modeled and taught to be identified. This conscious knowledge will enable participants to consider how they can apply such principles and practices in their own lives.

Journal Work

The journal is a powerful tool to assist participants in directing their spiritual development process. It can provide:

- time to reflect and process the events, new concepts and activities in the session
- a place to record ideas, insights, questions and concerns· a place to recognize understanding, consider past events, and engage in self-evaluation
- a place to describe aspirations and future action steps

Participants in the course are encouraged to use the journal to record thoughts, feelings, visions, fantasy, questions, themes, patterns, memories, mood, personal goals and progress.

The journal is most effective when it is used on a regular basis. Questions or prompts for journal reflections are suggested throughout the manual.

Resources

Collaborating with other parents and educators and making use of available resources is an important part of the implementation process for the Core Curriculum. Participants will be referred to the *Catalog of Bahá'í Educational Materials* and to *Brilliant Star Magazine* as well as being encouraged to develop their own resources and activities.

Working in Groups

Even the ways in which the group are divided up can be diverse. Some examples:

- Table Groups: those people already sitting together may form a group.
- Counting Off: decide how many groups you need, ask participants to count off (I, 2, 3.. . or A, B, C...)
- Thematic: have participants gather in designated spots in the room according to themes, such as "everyone whose favorite color is red," "...who has visited another continent..." Let those who fit more than one category fill in where needed for group size.
- Seat Markers: during a break, place small objects (such as paper clips, pennies, rocks) at each place. When it is time to divide into groups draw attention to the object and form groups accordingly.
- Sounding Off: pass out or leave small pictures or names of animals at each seat. At a signal, everyone begins making the noise of and/or acting out their animal, trying to locate their group members.
- Scavenger Hunt: give out slips of paper with instructions like, "find three people with the same color shoes as you" or, " find two people who have been Bahá'ís longer than you have" and form groups with the results.

Group Sharing

Once the groups have been formed and been given their tasks. you will be asking them to share the results of their consultations and/or work with the whole group at a designated time. There are a number of ways to achieve this. Use a variety in your course. Examples are:

- Verbal Reporting: one or more spokes-people, or all members of the group simply tell the large group their results. Major points may be listed on chart paper by one of the facilitators (hint: alternate colors of pen for each statement.)
- Overhead Projector: give each group a blank transparency sheet and pens in advance, for recording their main points, then share their notes with everyone on the overhead.
- Visual Arts: have each group create a visual art piece (drawing, painting, diagram, sculpture, construction, etc.) which expresses their findings. They may verbally explain their creation.
- Performing Arts: ask that each group express their findings through either dance, drama, roleplay, music, song or other performance. Some verbal explanation may accompany the piece.

Group Learning: ‘Jigsaw’ as a group learning method

Jigsaw will work best when there are at least 8 participants in the course and there is a large body of material to be read and understood by the group. Jigsaw is a Cooperative Learning strategy. It is a relatively simple technique designed to increase group interdependence and to increase students' sense of responsibility for their learning. The idea is for each member of a learning team to become an expert on one part of the material. Once the "experts" have grasped the material they teach it to the others in their team.

Organizing a Jigsaw

Before the Course Session:

- Divide the material into specified topics, determining how many participants will become “experts” on each topic. For example, if there are 5 community roles to study, then you will need 5 groups of experts – one for each role. If there are 15 workshop participants, then $15(\text{total participants}) \div 5(\text{roles}) = 3$ (“expert” participants in each group of community roles). The number of “expert” participants for each topic determines the second number of groups; in this example there are 3 “expert” participants in each group, so there would be three groups of 5 participants (one representing each community role) when teams are reformed.

At the Course Session:

Step 1:

Assign teams. Grouping methods include:

- Participants number off. If there are 3 topics, number off 1-3; if there are 4 topics, number off 1-4, etc. Number 1’s take topic #1, number 2’s take topic #2, etc. Once participants have become “expert” on their topic, reform groups by having the first set that numbered off 1-2-3 work together, the second group that numbered off 1-2-3 work together, etc. (This insures that there is an expert from topic 1, topic 2 and topic 3 in each group.)
- Prior to the course: Write each topic on a sheet of paper and photocopy onto different colored paper (one different color sheet for each 2nd group that will be formed). Cut apart the topics on each page, and mix the slips of paper randomly. During the course: pass out slips of paper. Groups form first by topic written on their slip of paper. Once they have become “experts” on their topic, new groups form by color of paper.

Step 2:

Instruct participants that they are to become “experts” on their topic. Their task is to read the material, grasp its content, consult on its meaning, and decide on clever or insightful ways to teach it to members of a second group.

Step 3:

Instruct participants to form new groups (see suggested grouping methods above). Assign the second task, which fulfills the lesson purpose. Each “expert” is now a vital member of the second group, and must “teach” them his/her topic in order to successfully complete the assignment.

Note that studies indicate jigsaw grouping is a powerful tool to eliminate prejudice, since each member becomes an equally vital part of the team.

Step 4

Assess team learning through group presentation, art display, or drama as indicated in the learning activity.

Details! Details! Material Needs and Preparation



Site Considerations

Core Curriculum courses have been held in places as diverse as homes, Bahá'í centers, colleges, hotels, rustic conference centers and pre-schools. There are a number of factors to consider, in consultation with the sponsoring institution:

Space Avoid being cramped! You'll need adequate room for:

- tables and chairs to be arranged to facilitate consultation and note taking
- room for small group break out work, for presentations, for stretching and movement activities and for fellowship and visiting
- comfortable reception and registration area
- meditation, prayer or quiet study area
- space for doing messy crafts (including appropriate floor space and covering)
- storage area for teaching supplies, coats and luggage
- outdoor area with convenient access to yard, park, garden or woods for the nature walk as well as for fresh air and sunshine!
- child care classrooms if children will be attending
- dining area for sit down meals and snacks

All of the above can be creatively arranged in a large hall, dividing areas with furniture or rugs.

Acoustics To facilitate both presentations and group consultation, acoustics need to be good. Also check for excessive noise from traffic, heat and air systems or other groups of people.

Aesthetics If the facility doesn't lend itself to a reverential, inspirational course, choose another or work to make it so!

You will wish to prepare and maintain a reverential, dignified, and beautiful environment throughout the course. Some possibilities for enhancing the environment are:

- arrangements of fresh or dried flowers in vases
- photographs of 'Abdu'l-Bahá
- bowls of potpourri or drops of rose oil
- candles
- tablecloths
- soft instrumental music from diverse cultural backgrounds
- sharing devotions in a separate location from the work area
- photographs of great teachers, heroines and heroes

Accommodations Arrangements for overnight guests may be necessary.

Setting Up Arts, Crafts and Music Resources Identify a special area in your course facility for arts, crafts and musical supplies. These materials should be available throughout the course for the friends to express themselves and their ideas. Encourage the friends to make creative use of these supplies.

Food Check into the facility's policies pertaining to food service. Ideally you will have beverages such as water, tea, coffee, and juice available and easily accessible all day. Meals can be on site in a separate area from the course classroom. If meals are offsite, adjust the agenda to allow extra time. Some options for meals are outdoor picnic (bring-your-own or provided by sponsor), nearby restaurants, on-site kitchen with volunteer staff, catered meals by the local community.

Visual Aids You will want to use some visual aids during your course. Some suggestions are:

- Use an overhead projector. Copy shops can make transparencies for you from pages in the manual.
- Copy the graphic onto transparency film; project it onto the wall adjusting the distance of your overhead projector until you have the desired size; tape a piece of poster board on the wall at the point of projection; trace the image with a pencil or pen.
- Make posters from enlargements. Some copy centers are equipped to make poster size enlargements from an 8 1/2" x 11" original. You may also wish to protect posters you've made by having them laminated or covering them with clear contact paper yourself.
- Make your own beautiful posters using calligraphy and color!
- Some posters/overheads you may wish to prepare for use as visual aids are:
 - The organizing quotation, "*Then so much as capacity and capability allow...*"
 - Definitions for knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent 'speech'
 - The theme and objectives for each module/session
 - The suggested journal prompt

Personnel Assistants can perform the following duties:

- Receptionist(s)/hosts/guides/servers
- Treasurer or designated assistant (for payments/receipts).
- People to help cook, set-up, run errands, clean up.

Involve everyone in your community--encourage children to participate!

Possible Devotional Activities

Consider a variety of reverential and inspirational ways to share the Sacred Writings and prayers together. Some possibilities are:

- share prayers in different languages
- listen to prayers and sacred Writings recited with music as a background
- encourage chanting, singing and melodious recitation of prayers
- share recordings of prayers or passages that have been set to music
- encourage incorporating movement, dance or sign language into the recital of prayers
- prepare in an attractive manner, preselected devotional readings for distribution
- prepare preselected passages on small slips of paper, rolled up and tied with a ribbon; present these on a tray as 'special treats'.

Breaks, Time for Reflection, Fellowship and Devotions

- In your advance planning, schedule lunches and breaks where they seem appropriate in your own course sessions.
- Plan to open and close all sessions with devotions and to set an example by encouraging the use of memorized devotions and music.
- Provide sufficient time for fellowship and consultation. Part of the joy and excitement of the course is the opportunity to share with others.

Miscellaneous Provide if possible:

- Child care -- determine needs and provide for quality care (on-site or off-site)
- Photographer for candid and group pictures.
- Transportation to/from site for those using public conveyances (arrange for shuttling to secondary sites as needed).

Equality Participant Handbook

Course materials will need to be copied onto 3-hole punch paper and put into binders with tabs (preferably labeled).

You may assemble binders ahead of time or hand each set of papers out as you cover them in the session. (or use a combination, with some materials in the binder and selected handouts to be distributed at appropriate times).

- * If the Workshop will be offered over several weeks, or on more than one weekend, it is suggested that materials for each session be distributed the day of the session or the beginning of the weekend – thus, enticing participants to return for new materials. Consider having these materials well-organized and beautifully placed at each participant’s place, perhaps tied with a ribbon to signify the “new gift”.

Journal pages should be included as part of the handbook, or a separate journal book prepared.

Additional Supplies and Equipment

are listed on the following page

Supplies & Equipment The following is a list of suggested supplies and materials to have on hand for use in the course. Share this list with the sponsoring institution to determine what is available and what needs to be purchased or collected.

Material to be ordered:

from Bahá'í Distribution Service or National Bahá'í Education Task Force

- ___ *Foundations for a Spiritual Education (optional)*
- ___ *Core Curriculum Equality Lesson Planning Guides*

For the Facilitators

- ___ pad of large chart paper
- ___ easel for chart paper
- ___ felt markers for chart paper
- ___ white board & pens or chalk board & chalk
- ___ overhead projector, transparencies, pens
- ___ projection screen or wall
- ___ masking tape
- ___ audio cassette/CD player
- ___ receipt book
- ___ stapler, staples, paper clips
- ___ TV & VCR

For the Participants

- ___ name tags
- ___ binder/divider tabs
- ___ extra paper
- ___ pens, pencils
- ___ boxes of tissue
- ___ butcher paper &/or poster board
- ___ paper: construction, tissue, wrapping (scraps)
- ___ felt markers & crayons
- ___ glue, glue sticks
- ___ tape: transparent & masking
- ___ scissors
- ___ ribbon, sequins, feathers, beads, pipe cleaners, popsicle sticks...
- ___ musical instruments (if available)
- ___ containers to hold and display art material

For the Environment

- ___ photos of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Bahíyyih Khánúm
- ___ recorded music: instrumental, prayers, cultural
- ___ throw pillows, floor mats...
- ___ potpourri, candles, table cloths

Books

- ___ dictionaries
- ___ *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*
- ___ *The Hidden Words*
- ___ *Bahá'í Education*
- ___ *Some Answered Questions*
- ___ *Compilation of Compilations*
- ___ *Lights of Guidance*
- ___ *Gleanings*
- ___ *Stirring of the Spirit: 19 Day Feast*
- ___ *Consultation: A Compilation*

Printed Materials to Photocopy

- ___ agendas
- ___ maps (to restaurants, park, child care or overnight facilities)
- ___ handouts
- ___ participant roster
- ___ binders, divider tabs to organize Participant Handbooks

Cultural Sensitivity



The course environment is created through physical surroundings and material preparations that reflect love and sensitivity for the individual teacher's capacities, capabilities, and cultural diversity.

The National Bahá'í Education Task Force trusts that Equality Facilitators will closely follow activity direction, ensuring consistent course experiences across the country, and will share elements that work well and those that need refinement. At the same time, facilitators must seek a balance between stretching participants' capacity to facilitate growth, and respecting cultural differences.

The following examples illustrate strategies to bridge cultural differences:

- **Working in pairs:** If close interaction with the opposite sex is culturally inappropriate and the activity suggests working in pairs, direct friends to choose male-male and female-female partners or arrange pairs in advance to quietly accommodate this need.
- **Recognition of individuals:** For those who often find public recognition of individual attributes immodest, try setting the stage by sharing that every attribute is a gift from God. Avoid directing praise to individuals. Note that God's gift of strong families allows attributes of God to shine forth within the community.
- **Any activity that uses posters or two-dimensional art expression:** Some friends come from backgrounds that seldom use two-dimensional, paper art for expression. Clarify that visual art work may be three-dimensional, using a wide range of materials for creation.
- **Music throughout the training:** Diverse music - and lots of music - enhances any environment. Some favorites include:
Dastam Begir (any version, such as Music of the World Congress) when considering the Example of the Master.
Keepers of the Dream by Kevin Locke
The Gift - "Unity in Diversity" by Gordi Munro introducing *Appreciating Diversity*, and concluding with *Amazing Grace*.
We Have come to Sing Praises - "In this Day Bahá'u'lláh" by the Bahá'í Gospel Choir at the conclusion of a session.
There are many choices to explore!

Purpose:

To develop discussion guidelines using the Writings.

**SUGGESTED GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES**

- Have participants divide into groups of 3-5 people.
- In groups, read “Guidelines for Discussion” quotes.
- Ask the friends to develop 5-6 guideline points while in their small groups.
- Invite each group to share the guidelines they develop, then in the whole group agree on the guidelines that will guide the whole group during this course.
- Write the whole group’s guidelines on chart paper; these points should be similar to those listed below.

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Invite God's assistance.

Speak your own thoughts--with love, courtesy, care and moderation.

Welcome different opinions.

Maintain confidentiality.

Listen more than you talk. Share the time.

Look for the good in each other. Avoid criticism.

Process the Session

How can it assist a group to effectively study the Writings when they first agree on discussion guidelines?

Note to Facilitator:

One way to manage group interaction is to establish discussion guidelines at the beginning. It is important that the participants are asked for input and that they agree to the final choices. The suggested guidelines listed above, based on the Writings, are generally accepted by most participants, but they may want to put them into their own words, or clarify them for their situation. This is also a good point in time to discuss such things as: Can crying babies be in the group? When will breaks be? How strict will we be about the starting time? Is smoking allowed? Once these verbal agreements are established, your job will be much simpler. You merely need to remind the group what they decided. Of course, if a guideline isn't working, the group can always decide to modify it.

Guidelines for Discussion



They must when coming together turn their faces to the Kingdom on High and ask aid from the realm of Glory.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Consultation: A Compilation*, p. 6

Put your whole trust and confidence in God, Who hath created you, and seek ye His help in all your affairs.

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, *Proclamation of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 9

. . . when we put our trust in Him, Bahá’u’lláh solves our problems and opens the way.

LETTER ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Power of Divine Assistance*, p. 23

Therefore true consultation is spiritual conference in the attitude and atmosphere of love. Members must love each other in the spirit of fellowship in order that good results may be forthcoming.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 72-3

They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, dignity, care and moderation to express their views.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Consultation: A Compilation*, p. 6

Patience and restraint, however, should at all times characterize the discussions and deliberations . . . and no fruitless and hairsplitting discussions indulged in, under any circumstances.

LETTER ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Consultation: A Compilation*, p. 16-17

The prime requisites for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties and servitude to his exalted Threshold.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Consultation: A Compilation*, p. 5

In view of this important administrative principle of frank and open consultation, the Guardian would advise you to give up the method of asking other members to voice your opinion and suggestions. This indirect way of expressing your views . . . would lead to many misunderstandings and complications.

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 177

. . . every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should anyone oppose, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Consultation: A Compilation*, p. 5

They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one's views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden.

Bahá’í Administration, p. 22

Guidelines for Discussion, cont.

In discussions . . . Let no one assert and insist upon his own mere opinion; nay, rather, let each investigate reality with the greatest love and fellowship.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 183

When you meet those whose opinions differ from your own, do not turn away your face from them. All are seeking truth, and there are many roads leading thereto. Truth has many aspects, but it remains always and forever one. . . . Do not allow differences of opinion, or diversity of thought to separate you from your fellow-men, or to be the cause of dispute, hatred, and strife in your hearts.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Paris Talks*, p. 53

. . . it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Consultation: A Compilation*, p. 6

Remember above all the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh concerning gossip and unseemly talk about others. Stories repeated about others are seldom good. A silent tongue is safest. Even good may be harmful if spoken at the wrong time or to the wrong person.

Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 131

It is an important principle of the Faith that one must not promise what one is not going to fulfil. Therefore, if a Baha'i accepts confidential information either by virtue of his profession (e.g., as a doctor, a lawyer, etc.), or by permitting another person to confide in him, he is duty bound to preserve that confidentiality.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 335

Man should weigh his opinions with the utmost serenity, calmness and composure. Before expressing his own views he should carefully consider the views already advanced by others.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 72

They must also learn to listen to the opinions of their fellow members without taking offence or belittling the views of another.

SHOGHI EFFENDI: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 180

Every one of the friends should highly praise the other and each should regard himself as evanescent and as naught in the presence of others.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Consultation*, page 97

If we show love, patience, and understanding of the weakness of others, if we seek to never criticize but rather encourage, others will do likewise . . .

SHOGHI EFFENDI, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 90

. . . be silent concerning the faults of others. . . look always at the good and not at the bad.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*

Sample Agenda for Spiritual Foundation for the Equality of Women and Men



Sample One – Four Day-long sessions

Day One – Introduction and Module One (8 hours)

Introduction

Welcome & Devotions – 20 minutes
Logistics – 5 minutes
Introduction Activity – 20 minutes
Historical Overview of the Core Curriculum – 5 minutes
Organizational Schema – 10 minutes
Presentation of the Binder – 5 minutes
Overview of the Equality Course – 5 minutes
Summary: Personal Journal – 5 minutes

Break – 15 minutes

Module One: Your Role as an Equality Worker

Introduce Module One – 5 minutes
Bahíyyih Khánum, The Greatest Holy Leaf – 20 minutes
This Radiant Century – 20 minutes
Equality: A Key to Peace – 30 minutes
The Talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá – 60 minutes

Lunch

Equality, Complementary and Balance – 30 minutes
Examining Assumptions – 20 minutes
Inherited Assumptions and Investigating Truth – 20 minutes
Effective Strategies for Promoting Equality – 60 minutes

Break – 15 minutes

National Teaching Initiative – 70 minutes
The Example of Bahíyyih Khánum – 20 minutes
Spiritual Development of the Equality Worker – 20 minutes

Day Two – Module Two (Total 8 hours)

Devotions – 20 minutes

Module Two: Equality in the World at Large

Introduction to Module Two – 5 minutes
Example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá – 20 minutes
Education for Equality – 40 minutes
Equality in the World at Large – 40 minutes

Break – 15 minutes

Equality: A Shared Responsibility – 40 minutes
Working Together for Equality – 40 minutes

Lunch

The Bahá'í Community: A Light and Haven for All – 40 minutes
The National Spiritual Assembly Promotes Equality – 30 minutes
Women in the Administrative Order – 10 minutes
Women and the Universal House of Justice – 60 minutes

Break – 15 minutes

The Power of Encouragement – 30 minutes
Child Development Centered Community – 60 minutes
Closing Activities – 15 minutes

Day Three – Module Three (Total 8 hours)

Devotions – 15 minutes

Module Three: Equality in the Family

Introduction to Module Three – 5 minutes

Bahá'u'lláh and the Holy Family – 10 minutes

Family Life in an Ever Advancing Civilization – 40 minutes

Consultation: The Panacea for Domestic Conflict – 30 minutes

Break – 15 minutes

Examining Conversation Patterns – 60 minutes

Consultation – 60 minutes

Lunch

Marriage: A Fortress for Well-Being and Salvation – 30 minutes

Parents and Children – 60 minutes

Violence-Free Communities – 30 minutes

Break – 15 minutes

Equality and Bahá'í Law – 60 minutes

Glimpses of the Holy Family – 40 minutes

Action Planning and Closing Devotions – 10 minutes

Day Four – Module Four and Conclusion (8 hours)

Devotions – 15 minutes

Module Four: Teaching Equality "Can Attract Much Notice"

Review and Introduction to Module Four – 5 minutes

Introduction: Táhirih, Peerless Woman of the Bábí Dispensation – 25 minutes

What a Woman Can Do – 20 minutes

The Legacy of Equality – 40 minutes

Break – 15 minutes

Teaching Equality – 40 minutes

Answering Difficult Questions: Research Activity – 50 minutes

Lunch

Two Wings of the Bird: A Statement of the National Spiritual Assembly – 45 minutes

The National Spiritual Assembly Promotes Equality – 20 minutes

Equality: A World-Embracing Vision – 40 minutes

Break – 15 minutes

The Power of Unified Action – 10 minutes

Envisioning Equality – 45 minutes

Unified Action for Equality – 45 minutes

The Greatest Holy Leaf: Service to the Head of the Faith – 20 minutes

Conclusion

Summary and Appreciation – 20 minutes

Evaluation of the Course – 5 minutes

Closure – 5 minutes

Sample Two – Study Circle Format – 12 Sessions



Session One

- Logistics – 5 minutes
- Introduction Activity – 20 minutes
- Historical Overview of the Core Curriculum – 5 minutes
- Organizational Schema – 10 minutes
- Presentation of the Binder – 5 minutes
- Overview of the Equality Course – 5 minutes
- Summary: Personal Journal – 5 minutes
- Introduce Module One – 5 minutes
- Bahíyyih Khánum, The Greatest Holy Leaf – 20 minutes
- This Radiant Century – 20 minutes
- Equality: A Key to Peace – 30 minutes

Session Two

- The Talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá – 60 minutes
- Equality, Complementary and Balance – 30 minutes
- Examining Assumptions – 20 minutes
- Inherited Assumptions and Investigating Truth – 20 minutes

Session Three

- Effective Strategies for Promoting Equality – 60 minutes
- National Teaching Initiative – 70 minutes
- The Example of Bahíyyih Khánum – 20 minutes
- Spiritual Development of the Equality Worker – 20 minutes

Session Four

- Introduction to Module Two – 5 minutes
- Example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá – 20 minutes
- Education for Equality – 40 minutes
- Equality in the World at Large – 40 minutes
- Equality: A Shared Responsibility – 40 minutes

Session Five

- Working Together for Equality – 40 minutes
- The Bahá'í Community: A Light and Haven for All – 40 minutes
- The National Spiritual Assembly Promotes Equality – 30 minutes
- Women in the Administrative Order – 10 minutes
- Women and the Universal House of Justice – 60 minutes

Session Six

- The Power of Encouragement – 30 minutes
- Child Development Centered Community – 60 minutes
- Closing Activities – 15 minutes

Session Seven

- Introduction to Module Three – 5 minutes
- Bahá'u'lláh and the Holy Family – 10 minutes
- Family Life in an Ever Advancing Civilization – 40 minutes
- Consultation: The Panacea for Domestic Conflict – 30 minutes
- Examining Conversation Patterns – 60 minutes

Session Eight

- Consultation – 60 minutes
- Marriage: A Fortress for Well-Being and Salvation – 30 minutes
- Parents and Children – 60 minutes

Session Nine

- Violence-Free Communities – 30 minutes
- Equality and Bahá'í Law – 60 minutes
- Glimpses of the Holy Family – 40 minutes
- Action Planning and Closing Devotions – 10 minutes

Session Ten

- Review and Introduction to Module Four – 5 minutes
- Introduction: Táhirih, Peerless Woman of the Bábí Dispensation – 25 minutes
- What a Woman Can Do – 20 minutes
- The Legacy of Equality – 40 minutes
- Teaching Equality – 40 minutes
- Answering Difficult Questions: Research Activity – 50 minutes

Session Eleven

- Two Wings of the Bird: A Statement of the National Spiritual Assembly – 45 minutes
- The National Spiritual Assembly Promotes Equality – 20 minutes
- Equality: A World-Embracing Vision – 40 minutes
- The Power of Unified Action – 10 minutes
- Envisioning Equality – 45 minutes

Session Twelve

- Unified Action for Equality – 45 minutes
- The Greatest Holy Leaf: Service to the Head of the Faith – 20 minutes
- ***Conclusion***

REPORT FOR SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN

Facilitators are requested to complete this form and send it to the:
*National Bahá'í Education Task Force, Office of Education and Schools, Bahá'í National Center,
1233 Central St., Evanston, IL 60201*
within two weeks of the completion of the course.
(Typewritten reports prepared using this format are welcome!)
Please also enclose roster of participants and summary or copy of their evaluations.

FACILITATORS

Names _____

Addresses _____

Phone #s _____

LOGISTICS

Sponsoring Institution _____ Location of Course _____

Dates of Course _____

Total # of participants _____ # completing all modules _____

Heritage:

____ African American

____ Hispanic

____ Pacific Islands

____ Anglo American

____ Interracial

____ Persian

____ Asian

____ Native American

Auxiliary Board Members present _____

Assistants to the Auxiliary Boards _____

EVALUATION

1. Did you follow the procedures outlined?

2. What were the highlights of the program for you and for the participants?

3. What problems did you encounter, if any?

4. How far did you achieve the goals of each module?

COURSE REPORT FOR CORE CURRICULUM EQUALITY COURSE (CONTINUED)

5. What provisions were established by the sponsoring institution for..
follow through?

continued support?

networking?

materials development?

evaluation of equality work in the local Bahá'í community?

6. Further comments:

We love you and appreciate your noble service!

APPENDIX B
Heroines of the Bahá'í Faith

Bahíyyih <u>Khán</u> um.....	2
Leonora Armstrong.....	4
Dorothy Baker.....	6
Sara, Lady Blomfield - Sitaríh <u>Khán</u> um.....	8
Magdalene M. Carney.....	9
Yvonne Cuellar.....	10
Shírín Dalvand.....	11
Daw Thoung Khin.....	12
Dagmar Dole.....	13
Sarah Farmer.....	14
Nellie Stevison French.....	15
Yuri Mochizuk Furukawa.....	16
Lua Getsinger.....	17
Helen M. Goodall.....	18
Mariam Haney.....	19
Marion Jack.....	20
Bertha Hyde Kirkpatrick.....	22
Mary Lesch.....	23
Marion Little.....	24
Melba Whetung Loft - “Kinaaj-Kwe”	25
Muna Mahmudnizhad	27
Loulie Albee Mathews.....	28
May Ellis Maxwell	29
Zarrin Moghimi.....	30
Susan Moody.....	32
Mahshíd Nírúmand.....	33
Mabel Hyde Paine.....	34
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Queen Marie of Rumania.....	37
Keith Ransom-Kehler.....	39
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Zaynab.....	53

Bahíyyih Khánum

On July 17, 1932, the Guardian wrote to the Bahá'ís of America and Canada a letter which is perhaps the most poignant one ever penned during his entire ministry. Described as a communication in which he was "pouring forth his love in an unforgettable torrent of words", we read: "Dearly-beloved Greatest Holy Leaf! Through the mist of tears that fill my eyes I can clearly see, as I pen these lines, thy noble figure before me, and can recognize the serenity of thy kindly face. I can still gaze, though the shadow of the grave separate us, into thy blue, love-deep eyes, and can feel in its calm intensity, the immense love thou didst bear for the Cause of thine Almighty Father...." This unique testimonial was offered to none other than Bahíyyih Khánum, the daughter of Bahá'u'lláh, who was given the title of Varáqiyih 'Ulya (the Greatest Holy Leaf of the Tree of Life) and whose demise had occurred on July 15, 1932.

Designated as the greatest woman in the Bahá'í Dispensation, it is still difficult, 50 years after her passing, to fully understand the services which earned her such a supreme station. A casual study of Bahá'í history reveals little of her role, and at no time does one associate her with any dramatic or stupendous victory for the Faith. Bahíyyih Khánum? What did she do? Most Bahá'ís pause when posed with this question. And in this pause lies her greatest glory, her true greatness. For to have served unstintingly and unceasingly for eight decades, and to have yet concealed such service, must surely rank as the epitome of heroism and dedication.

Every one of us, for instance, knows from our study of Bahá'í history that 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sufferings in the path of His Father's Cause began at the tender age of eight. But how many of us realize that for His sister Bahíyyih Khánum these same sufferings began at the even more tender age of six? Or that the Family's 24-hour transition from riches to rags inflicted perhaps the greatest trauma on this little member, depriving her as it did of dolls and frocks and frills so especially dear to little girls' hearts? From the day of their Father's arrest, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Bahíyyih Khánum were made to forfeit their childhood. While 'Abdu'l-Bahá's energies were directed towards the protection of His Father, those of Bahíyyih Khánum were directed towards the protection of her mother, the gentle Navaáb. Forced to watch in agonizing proximity as this elegant lady's life was reduced to that of a menial, Bahíyyih Khánum spared herself nothing in an attempt to be of assistance. Decades later she would still remember the strain of carrying the enormous samovar in her frail arms and the aching hours spent drawing water from a well. She was also her mother's only helper and companion during an anxiety-filled pregnancy; our minds balk at the thought of what this six-year-old exile and her mother were made to endure.

Neither were their troubles over with their arrival at the first port of exile, Baghdad. For here, despite being confined to the home, Bahíyyih Khánum's acute perception picked up the discord which had been instigated within the Bábí community. She saw the blind egoism of a few individuals unleash a campaign of malice and vilification against her beloved Father. And she saw the crippling effects it had on Him, culminating in His sudden withdrawal to the mountains of Sulaymáníyyih. Added to this Absence was the presence of Mírzá Yahyá (Bahá'u'lláh's half-brother) at their home. And under his unheeding, tyrannical behaviour, Bahíyyih Khánum watched her beloved baby brother, born and raised against such cruel odds, die for want of medical attention and be handed over to a passing stranger for burial. No wonder that 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote of her: "Whenever I recall thine afflictions, tears that I cannot repress rain down from mine eyes...."

'Akká, however, after the initial ordeals it inflicted, saw Bahíyyih Khánum settle down and grow into an exquisite young lady. There was obviously no dearth of suitors; but Bahíyyih Khánum had other plans. In an age where it was still unthinkable for a young girl to renounce the security of a husband and children Bahíyyih Khánum did so. The decision was her own, and she appealed to her Parents to accept it that she might better serve Them and her Brother. And the service she rendered can best be imagined through this tribute paid to her by none other than Bahá'u'lláh: "How sweet thy presence before Me; how sweet to gaze upon thy face, to bestow upon thee My loving-kindness, to favor thee with My tender care...."

After living through the heartbreak of her mother's death, and then her Father's ascension, Bahíyyih Khánum had only 'Abdu'l-Bahá left as the object of her care and devotion. She was his comforter and confidant during the upheaval caused by Muhammad 'Ali and other covenant-breakers; she was the gracious hostess who entertained officials and their wives, cultivating contacts that might smooth 'Abdu'l-Bahá's path of service; she was the housekeeper "par excellence" who anticipated and provided for His every need.

While reading of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's generous charity, we tend to forget that the provisions and money He distributed were largely available due the sacrifice, co-operation and management of Bahíyyih Khánum. But one burden she bore alone, and most heroically, was the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The extent of her grief can barely be imagined; and yet she subjugated her personal devastation to arise and stand by one who stood in even greater need of support--Shoghi Effendi at the beginning of his Guardianship.

There is sufficient testimony as to how news of the Guardianship shattered Shoghi Effendi. Added to this was the trauma of a sudden spate of covenant-breaking, mostly within his closest family; and as he faced the ranks of his faithless relatives--alone, vulnerable and defenseless--it was Bahíyyih Khánum who moved to his side and taught him the lessons she had herself learnt in her allegiance to a Cause she loved so dearly and served so well.

In the years that followed, this support and guidance deepened to become the closest relationship the Guardian shared with anyone. Until Bahíyyih Khánum's death, it was his custom to have his single daily meal alone with her; it was the gold Bahá'í ring she had given him years before that he placed on the finger of Rúhíyyih Khánum, his chosen wife; and it was in her room and in her presence that the simple marriage ceremony was performed. On news of her death he personally visited Italy to choose for her grave a memorial of brilliant white Carrara marble; and in the tribute he paid her, he declared that only future generations, and pens abler than his own, could befittingly applaud the towering grandeur of her spiritual life.

Those of us who wish to know of Bahíyyih Khánum today cannot hope to find her in the stark two-dimensional pages of print. Rather, we will need to draw close to her spirit, to transport ourselves to her time, and inhale from the rarified atmosphere of Bahá'í history the fragrance of its greatest heroine.

Leonora Armstrong

Leonora Stirling Holsapple Armstrong was born June 23, 1895, into a wealthy family. Deprived of her mother at the age of five, she spent a lonely and rather loveless childhood. It was her maternal grandmother, Leonora G. Stirling, who gave her the spiritual guidance that she longed for and needed.

She was graduated at the age of 19 with a B.A. degree from Cornell. "For five years following graduation," she said later, "I taught Latin in high schools and did social work, the latter for about two years in Boston, where I had the opportunity to be with a number of Bahá'ís, notably the Obers, near whom I had lived for some time in Cambridge, and May Maxwell, who came often to Boston and also to New York City where I was sometimes able to be with her. More than anyone else, May helped me to feel the great love of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the reality of love that I had longed to feel, and a deep bond was formed between us, which gave me the greatest joy I had known. Another privilege, which I would only years later come to fully realize, was my association with May's little daughter, Mary, who was destined to become Rúhíyyih Khánum, the wife of the Guardian and a Hand of the Cause of God. Often when she was a child I would take her for walks when her mother was ill and wished to rest. Each time I returned from Brazil I would see how she was developing and growing more and more like her beloved mother."

In 1919, Leonora attended the Bahá'í convention in New York City at which were revealed the Master's *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, which she said first gave her the idea of becoming a pioneer. She immediately wrote to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, telling him of her wish, and received a Tablet in reply dated July 1919. In it the Master expressed the hope that she might become a "spiritual physician," and this hope of His became her highest aspiration. Early in 1920, while reading 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablet to Martha Root in which He commended her teaching work in South America and stressed the importance of its being followed up by others, it suddenly seemed to Leonora that South America might be a definite goal for her. She wrote to Miss Root, expressing that idea, and received an immediate reply in which she was given the utmost encouragement and advised to go to Argentina. With that in mind, Leonora began to study Spanish. So it was that Leonora sailed from New York City on January 15, 1921, aboard the S. S. Vasari bound for Brazil. The people on the ship were quite friendly, and Leonora told everyone about the Faith including a young woman who was returning home to Brazil and who gave Leonora her first lesson in Portuguese. Upon their arrival in Rio de Janeiro on February 1, the young woman insisted on accompanying Leonora to her hotel and staying there with her. It must be remembered that a young woman of good moral character never traveled alone in those times, not to mention the fact that she didn't speak Portuguese.

Leonora's teaching brought in little money, and the next two years were quite difficult--she said later there were times when she lived only on bananas. But with courage born of her faith in Bahá'u'lláh and the promises of the Master, she went forward unwaveringly. By the end of her second year in Brazil, Leonora, weakened by a bout with typhoid fever, wrote to her family and received enough money from her father to pay for her passage home and a side trip to the Amazon River. During her eight-day trip up the Amazon to Manaus, Leonora made many contacts for the Faith, and in every city where the boat stopped there are now Bahá'í communities that grew from the seeds she planted so many years ago.

After spending about a year in the U.S. Leonora could no longer resist the call of the Faith in South America, and so she returned, together with an eager young Bahá'í, Maud Mickle, and settled in Salvador, Baia state, where she would remain for about the next 15 years. Leonora moved from city to city as the need arose, establishing new localities in which the Light of Bahá'u'lláh might shine. While living in Recife she was married to Harold Armstrong, an English engineer, who became a Bahá'í after having lived for several years in the midst of her shining example. Before his death in 1973, and during their marriage of 32 years, he was able to take from her the burden of having to make a living, which enabled her to devote full time to translating the Writings, traveling on behalf of the Faith, and teaching.

In 1930 Leonora had the bounty of making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. She had gone to Spain to study the language, but while there was struck by scarlet fever. During the long weeks of her recovery, she received a request from the Guardian to come to Haifa. It was with absolute joy that she was able to visit the Holy Places for a brief time, and to experience in person the great strength that she had felt before then only through the loving letters of Shoghi Effendi. In 1973, Leonora was named a Continental Counselor for South America by the Universal House of Justice. She trained her Auxiliary Board members to teach the

great masses of people, and as she carefully chose those Board members for their unique capacities, she helped launch some of Brazil's most outstanding Bahá'í speakers. Her great love, and her lasting contribution to the Faith in Brazil, was the many books she translated into Portuguese. Included were almost all of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, many of those of the beloved Guardian, and many of the more recent books published on behalf of the Universal House of Justice.

Having endured several severe ailments during the later years of her life, and having recently undergone surgery for cancer, Leonora passed from this life into the next on October 17, 1980. The Universal House of Justice cabled, "Hearts saddened passing distinguished Counselor Leonora Stirling Armstrong Herald of the Kingdom beloved handmaiden 'Abdu'l-Bahá, spiritual mother of South America. Her sixty years valiant service Cause Brazil shed lustre annals Faith that promising land."

Dorothy Baker

When Dorothy Beecher was 13 years old, her grandmother took her to New York to see the Master ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Dorothy was terrified. Normally a happy child, she was also psychic; events of extreme emotion caused her to tremble. Her parents were not Bahá’ís, and young Dorothy knew little of her grandmother’s faith, yet she sensed that something of a tremendous nature was about to occur. As she and her grandmother entered the room, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá greeted Mother Beecher but made no overture to Dorothy other than to motion for her to sit on a footstool at His feet, facing the audience. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke Dorothy turned slightly on her stool, peering at Him from the corners of her eyes. The longer He spoke, the more she turned until, toward the end of the talk, she was gazing at Him in adoration. There was, however, no verbal communication between them.

Several days later Dorothy told her grandmother, "I want to write to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá." "Well, I think you should," Mother Beecher replied. Shortly afterward a note arrived. In tiny handwriting it said, "Oh, dearest child. I will pray that your great desire may be fulfilled and that you serve this Cause." Mother Beecher became ill a day or two later, but received word that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wished to see her. Hurrying from her sick-bed, she asked, "What have I done?" "I called you," the Master said, "to tell you that your granddaughter is my own daughter. You must train her for me."

Mother Beecher’s life was dedicated to the Bahá’í Faith and to her granddaughter; she was conscientious in training the girl in the teachings, especially during the summers at Green Acre School in Maine. On or about her 15th birthday, Dorothy declared her acceptance of the Word of Bahá’u’lláh.

Dorothy was educated at the Montclair Normal College in New Jersey and graduated in 1918. She accepted a position in the Newark public school system. In September 1920, she met Frank Baker, a very nice middle-aged man, Dorothy thought, with two children. On June 21, 1921, they were married at Budd Lake, New Jersey. Dorothy not only had a husband, she was now the mother of two young children, Conrad and Sally. Discipline was difficult: "You’re not our mother," they would complain. Before long it would be, "Oh, mother, I love you so." Their own daughter, Winifred Louise, was born on May 24, 1922 and the family settled in Buffalo, New York, where William King Baker was born on November 26, 1923. In 1926 Dorothy was elected to serve on the Spiritual Assembly of Buffalo. The family moved to Lima, Ohio in 1927. The next year, Dorothy went to the Convention in Wilmette. She sat in the front row of Foundation Hall listening to the reports of the past year’s Bahá’í activities. She felt ill and more than a little upset. Leaving the hall, she walked out to the cornerstone, the limestone rock that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself had placed in the ground some 17 years before. Dorothy never forgot those moments at the cornerstone. It was then that she laid her heart at the feet of her Beloved.

Back in Lima, Dorothy immersed herself in learning more about the teachings, studying the words of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with Mother Beecher for an hour or more each day. In 1932, Mother Beecher passed away. The Bakers began holding informal meetings in their home about a month after Mother Beecher’s passing in August 1932, meetings at which Dorothy gave one-hour talks that were followed by question-and answer sessions with as many as 40 people seeking to learn more about this Faith. Her life was now dedicated to teaching, including three years of summer schools at Louhelen, and trips to Columbia and Venezuela, and Europe.

On December 24, 1951, a cablegram came from Shoghi Effendi naming Dorothy Baker a Hand of the Cause of God. Dorothy lost her voice. For three days she had laryngitis. Her duties as a Hand took her all over the world, Africa and India. On January 10, 1954, Dorothy was en route home from India. Over the Mediterranean island of Elba the plane exploded. There were no survivors; only a Bahá’í pamphlet floated on the water.

The daughter of an Arabian sheik had also been aboard the ill-fated plane; her parents were known to the Bahá’ís. Calling upon the bereaved mother, one Bahá’í showed her a photo of Dorothy Baker. The woman reacted most strongly, weeping violently, and related a dream she had several times: "This woman in the picture has come to me over and over again and has told me, 'You must be happy for your daughter. She is with me. I am caring for her.'" Others had similar dreams. One, before the news of Dorothy’s death had been made known, dreamed that she wore a shimmering white gown. She had spoken to him: "I never knew that passing was so easy. I never went down." Another person reported an identical dream in which

Dorothy said, "Oh, it was so easy. I stepped straight into the arms of My Lord." Still another, in Jamaica, reported that Dorothy had appeared to him, saying, "It's all right. I'm with my Lord. Don't worry. I wasn't on that plane at all. I was with Bahá'u'lláh the whole time."

Dorothy Beecher Baker's worldly mission had ended at age 55. The radiance of her smile, the spirituality of her presence, the joy she brought to so many, the love of her faith that she so readily shared with everyone--the fire was extinguished.

Sara, Lady Blomfield - Sitarih Khánum

She, whom ‘Abdu’l-Bahá named "Sitarih Khánum," passed away peacefully on the last day of the year 1939, at the age of eighty. In the overwhelming sorrow of parting from a wonderful personality and a deeply loved mother, it is hard to rejoice in the gladness that is hers, but that must be the predominant note in this account of her beautiful life by one who knew and loved her so well. For I can remember, from the earliest days, her valiant spirit meeting sadness and difficulties with radiant acquiescence and invincible faith. It was as if she knew what rare privilege awaited her, since she it was who welcomed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to her home when he came to England. She was one of those "Waiting Servants" who, down the ages, have recognized and acclaimed the Messengers of God in this Day.

How ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came to London, and my mother's part in welcoming Him, how she first heard of the Bahá'í Revelation, the prelude to this wonderful visit, is fully told by herself in her book *The Chosen Highway*, which she completed on the eve of her passing. I can see her, eager, vital, full of sublime enthusiasm, never losing a word or a movement of the Master's, fully realizing that this visit was an event which belonged to the world. At this time she had the beauty of a nature soul. The molding of her face was lovely, and she remained beautiful to the last. Her facial expressions, ever changing, reflected the spiritual harmony within. Her dress, not fashionable in the ordinary sense, was distinctive and individual, without being strange. She wore garments with long flowing lines which made her seem taller than her natural height, and she was as upright always in her outward stature as she was in her soul. Her favorite color was blue, and she would wear it with her gray or black dresses, in a scarf or a veil which she sometimes bound about her head. I can see her, her eyes shining, welcoming the pilgrim guests to the presence of the Master....

When the war was over we intended to go to Haifa, but were prevented from going, to my mother's lasting regret, by some domestic affairs at home. I shall never forget the day news came of the passing of the Master. The Guardian was in London at the time, and his grief was heart-breaking to witness. My mother traveled with him to Haifa, and I believe her companionship and help were of service to him, stricken with overwhelming sorrow as he was.

When she had been there some weeks, Munírih Khánum, the widow of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in a letter to my husband explaining some point of teaching for which he had asked an interpretation, said:

"We are all very glad to have the honourable lady, Sitarih Khánum, Lady Blomfield in our midst. Her presence gives us much joy. We look upon her, not only as a friend, but as one of our own dear family." While she was staying at Haifa, she gathered together some of the notes from which she compiled *The Chosen Highway*. She also wrote a letter which was published as a pamphlet, called "The Passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá." The rest of the material for *The Chosen Highway* was garnered from the witnesses of the early days of the Revelation during her second visit to Palestine, eight years later.

Magdalene M. Carney

DEEPLY GRIEVED SUDDEN PASSING STALWART MAIDSERVANT BAHÁ'U'LLÁH MEMBER INTERNATIONAL TEACHING CENTER MAGDALENE M. CARNEY. HER WELL NIGH THREE DECADES UNBROKEN SERVICE CAUSE GOD EXERTED IMMENSE INFLUENCE TEACHING WORK SOUTHERN REGION UNITED STATES. INVOLVED THIRTEEN YEARS MEMBERSHIP NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY THAT COUNTRY UNTIL HER APPOINTMENT IN 1983 TO INTERNATIONAL TEACHING CENTER. INDOMITABLE FAITH, UNSWERVING DEVOTION COVENANT, SELFLESS SPIRIT, OPEN CANDOR, WHOLEHEARTED COMMITMENT EDUCATION CHILDREN AND YOUTH ARE AMONG QUALITIES THAT WILL EVER BE ASSOCIATED WITH GOLDEN MEMORIES HER HIGHLY ACTIVE LIFE. ARDENTLY PRAYING HOLY THRESHOLD PROGRESS HER STERLING SOUL THROUGHOUT DIVINE WORLDS.

ADVISE HOLD MEMORIAL SERVICES HER HONOR ALL HOUSES OF WORSHIP AND IN BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

Universal House of Justice
October 10, 1991

Dr. Magdalene M. Carney, who served from 1970-83 as a member of the U.S. National Spiritual Assembly and was appointed by the Universal House of Justice in 1983 as a Counselor member of the International Teaching Center, died October 9 in Haifa, Israel. She was 61 years old.

Dr. Carney taught in elementary and secondary schools in Nashville for 15 years, completing her tenure there as chairman of the English department at Cameron High School. In 1969 she coordinated a successful desegregation program in the Canton, Mississippi, school system while serving as a classroom teacher and chairman of the English department at Rogers High School.

During that time Dr. Carney, who became a Bahá'í in 1962, was a leader, as a member of the National Teaching Committee and later secretary of the Deep South Committee, in mass-teaching efforts that led to the enrollment in the Faith of thousands of people in the southern states from Virginia and North and South Carolina to Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Louisiana.

She received the Ford Fellowship in 1972 and was awarded her doctorate degree in 1977. Among her special interests were teacher training and the role of ideals in human development, and she worked with early childhood development programs in Suffield, Connecticut; Hampden, Maine; and the Appalachian region of Ohio.

Dr. Carney was the author of a number of books and articles on education including *Teaching: Issues, Perspectives and Definitions* (1974), "Teaching Competence: An ANISA Definition" in *The Constructive Triangle* (1975), and (with Susan Theroux) *Family Life and Child Rearing Practices Among Black Americans: A Review of the Research Literature* (1977).

In November 1978 Dr. Carney came to Wilmette, Illinois, as the National Assembly's assistant secretary, a position in which she served until appointed a Counselor in May 1983.

As a member of the International Teaching Center she helped coordinate, stimulate and direct the work of five Continental Boards of Counselors in promoting the spiritual, intellectual and social development of Bahá'í communities all over the world.

Dr. Carney had only recently returned to Haifa from the U.S. where she visited Bahá'í communities in a number of states as an unofficial "traveling teacher," offering her love, support and counsel to those whose paths she crossed.

Her last formal appearance in this country was as presenter of the Louis Gregory Institute's Peace Award during Peace Fest '91 to the Rev. Antoine Campbell.

Yvonne Cuellar

A world citizen she was. Yvonne Cuellar, the "Spiritual Mother of Bolivia," exemplified love, devotion and a fervent Bahá'í spirit during her lifetime while tirelessly teaching the Cause on several continents. Born March 11, 1896, in Paris, she began her world travels while still a young woman. Her indomitable spirit and firm ideas about justice, the equality of men and women, and the independent investigation of truth prepared the way for her acceptance of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

When at last she heard the word "Bahá'í," while living in Bolivia with her husband, Arturo Cuellar, she immediately fell in love with the Message of Bahá'u'lláh and soon afterward became the first declared Bahá'í in Bolivia. Mrs. Cuellar was a flame of fire in her teaching efforts, igniting many souls and opening the door of search and acceptance for many believers in the years to follow. It wasn't long before her loving Bahá'í presence moved the first two Indians in Bolivia to accept the new teachings and take up the banner of Bahá'u'lláh. So great were her efforts in serving the Faith that the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, bestowed upon her the title, "Mother of Bolivia." Her fervent cry always was "teach, teach, teach," and her vibrant energy lit many candles as she marched from door to door and city to city proclaiming the truth of the new Revelation.

After teaching in Bolivia for more than 20 years, the Cuellars moved to the United States in 1969 to live near their daughter. They settled in Littleton, Colorado, and made their home a center of Bahá'í activity where many declarations occurred, many elaborate programs were lovingly and carefully prepared, and firesides, deepenings and prayer sessions were always memorable. Such occasions always served to increase Mrs. Cuellar's awareness of the tremendous needs and responsibilities of the Faith, and she strived constantly to reach out, to teach, to pray and to serve, meanwhile searching always for those souls who might be receptive to the Message of Bahá'u'lláh.

Yvonne Cuellar died December 7, 1983, at the age of 87, leaving an indelible legacy of love, sacrifice and devotion for the many Bahá'ís and other friends who knew and loved her. Over a period of many years she had contributed her help and dedication to the establishment of many Bahá'í localities and helped to strengthen a large number of Spiritual Assemblies in Colorado and elsewhere.

Her love for Bolivia never waned, and she dreamed always of returning. As a tribute to her memory, the Bahá'ís of Bolivia ordered an engraved plaque to be placed on her grave, mentioning that she was the spiritual mother of that country. Mrs. Cuellar expressed her deep love for the Faith through constant service and total devotion in teaching the oneness of religion, of God's messengers, and of mankind.

Shírín Dalvand

Shírín Dalvand was born into a Bahá'í family in Shíráz in 1956. Her real name was Shahin, but because she was such a lovely child she was always called Shírín, which means "sweetness." Shírín was very calm, caring and affectionate. Not only was she extremely loving towards people, she had a very soft heart for animals and even plants. Her mother told me there was a plant that Shírín was allergic to growing in the family's backyard. Her father wanted to uproot it, but she wouldn't let him do that. She preferred to cover her face every time she passed the plant rather than have it destroyed.

Throughout her school years Shírín always earned the highest grades. She was accepted into the Pahlavi University in Shíráz at nineteen, majoring in sociology. While there she researched and wrote a thesis about drug addiction and what it was that made certain people more prone to it than others. Her report was so thorough and contained such useful insights from her interviews with addicts that it was later used by her professors when teaching their own classes. As well as working hard at her studies, Shírín was an enthusiastic member of the Youth Committee and later the Bahá'í Education Committee. Just before her arrest, she had been appointed to serve as a liaison for the Local Spiritual Assembly of Shíráz. At the beginning of the revolution Shírín's family, herself included, had left Iran for England, but Shírín had returned because of her studies and was living with her grandmother. She was arrested in December of 1982, along with many other Bahá'í men and women. Shírín told me the story of her arrest.

"I was at Mrs. Jahanpur's house for dinner. At eleven o'clock, the guards burst in and asked everyone to identify themselves. When I told them my name they looked on their list and said, 'Your name is on here. You must come with us.' They wanted Rúhíyyih to come too. My family and friends had suggested that I leave Shíráz for awhile and go to Tehran because there was a danger I might be arrested, but I couldn't bring myself to leave them all at this critical time. This was an opportunity to sacrifice and be firm. The Bahá'ís desperately needed each other's support. How could I leave Shíráz?"

Thinking back to happier times was our way of escaping the present. Shírín always used to say, "If I was free I would go to a restaurant in Tehrán and eat chelo kabob"--a minced meat kabob with rice that is one of the tastiest and most popular dishes in Iran. She always made our mouths water talking about it. There were a few occasions in prison when the situation looked bad for Shírín, but the minute she became unhappy enough to cry, something would happen and the impossible would be achieved. She was a special being.

After the second stage of Shírín's trial in Adelabad, she returned looking happy, and gave us the good news that she was to be released from prison. "The prosecutor ordered my release, along with Rúhíyyih, Mínú and Mítira, on a security bond of 400,000 tuman each." The prosecutor later increased the security bond required for Rúhíyyih and Shírín to 800,000 tuman each. The next day at noon Rúhíyyih's family brought a document to the court and she was released.

Shírín meanwhile was eagerly expecting her grandmother to bring the security bond and rescue her. Three days passed. Then Shírín's grandmother came in. She was holding the security bond for her granddaughter. She came forward and presented the document to him, saying "Your honour, this is the document you requested for Shírín's freedom." He looked at her coldly and said, "It is three days since I ordered her release. You were supposed to bring it earlier." "I needed some time to prepare it, your honour," she pleaded. "You are too late," he said dismissively. "Only today I sent her file over to the Religious Magistrate for her final trial."

The poor old woman began begging him to find the file and release her granddaughter. But nothing she could say touched his heart. The helpless woman at last left the room in despair, but she returned three times, each time pleading desperately for Shírín's freedom.

On the 18th of June, 1983, Shírín and nine other women were ordered to board a bus. They were transferred to the execution site. Each woman was asked, "Just say once that you are not a Bahá'í and we will let you go." But none of them did. They all preferred to die. At 10 p.m. the bodies of the ten women were taken to the morgue. The news spread like wildfire and profoundly affected everyone in Shíráz and eventually to the Bahá'ís all over the world.

Daw Thoung Khin

The death of Daw Thoung Khin on 10 January 1986, in her seventy-fourth year, was a great loss to the Burmese Bahá'í community to which she was--in the words of her cousin—"like the central axis; her dedication and services were unequaled."

Daw Thoung Khin was born on 1 August 1912 in Mandalay, Burma, a third-generation Bahá'í, her grandparents having embraced the Faith about 1879 through the teaching efforts of Jamal Effendi and Siyyid Mustafá Rumi. Her parents were well educated. They founded an English private school and a printing firm that published the Taing Chit newspaper as well as some Bahá'í books, including the Burmese translations of Esslemont's *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*. Her father also produced films.

Daw Thoung Khin was an active and bright youngster. At an early age she took an interest in the Bahá'í Cause and from her pocket money contributed to the fund for the construction of the House of Worship in Wilmette. After completing high school Daw Thoung Khin attended Rangoon Teachers' Training College where she obtained her Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education degrees. She taught in various schools and took part in Bahá'í community affairs. After the war, Daw Thoung Khin was promoted to Head Mistress, a post in which she served until she resigned in 1963 to found a boarding house for girls and to tutor in English. By this means she increased her income and the time she had available to serve the Faith. She taught classes for women and children, presented courses at summer and winter schools and at youth conferences, and was chairman of the LSA of Mandalay from 1959 until her death. At age forty she married U Thoung Nhue. Their union was without issue and tragically her husband died in 1976 as a result of a car accident. In April 1959 when the first NSA of Burma was elected, Daw Thoung Khin and her aunt, Daw Hla Hla, were its only women members. Daw Thoung Khin took a very active part in the centenary celebrations of the Bahá'í community of Burma in 1978.

Throughout her life Daw Thoung Khin was loved by those who knew her. She was always generous to the poor, she took care of children, she extended assistance to the aged and sheltered the displaced regardless of colour, class or creed. After the great fire of Mandalay in 1985 some homeless Bahá'í friends and others were placed in her home; she assisted them for a long time until they were able to resettle. She lived the life of a true believer in Bahá'u'lláh, and in addition to her personal assistance to others she was generous in supporting the Bahá'í Fund. Many Bahá'í institutions benefited under the provisions of her will. Her translations of Bahá'í literature into Burmese include, in addition to a collection of Bahá'í prayers and numerous notes and compilations, excerpts from the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*; excerpts from *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*; the *Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*; *Bahá'u'lláh, the King of Glory*; and excerpts from *Release the Sun*, her earlier completed translations of which perished in Mandalay's great fire. She also provided an improved translation of *Paris Talks*.

In March 1985 her health began to fail. Although her spirit remained very strong, in July her condition worsened. On 1 January 1986 she was admitted to hospital and passed away on 10 January. Nearly one thousand people attended her funeral on 12 January. Memorial meetings were held throughout the country in her honour.

Dagmar Dole

The idea of pioneering was not new to Dagmar Dole when she first learned of the Faith and almost immediately became a Bahá'í. Dagmar's great-grandfather and his wife had left Massachusetts in 1841 to become Protestant missionaries in the Hawaiian Islands. Her grandfather was born in Hawaii.

Dagmar was born June 14, 1902, in San Francisco, California. Soon after becoming a Bahá'í she moved with her close friend, Virginia Orbison, to Glendale, California, to help maintain a Spiritual Assembly there under the first Seven Year Plan. She became active in committee work for the teaching efforts in Central and South America, serving as chairman of the Inter-America Committee, the first international pioneering committee in the U.S. Miss Dole later pioneered to Anchorage, Alaska, to help with consolidation activities there.

From Anchorage she traveled to the Bristol Bay area near the Bering Sea where she worked among the Eskimos and Alaskan Indians who were employed in the fishing industry. Offering her love and compassion to the people she met, Dagmar soon won their friendship.

When the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, announced the second Seven Year Plan in 1946, the call was raised for pioneers to travel to Europe. Miss Dole volunteered her services and was assigned to Copenhagen, Denmark, the home of her mother's family. She, along with other pioneers, was instrumental in bringing 47 people into the Faith in Denmark. Her last pioneering post was in Italy where she served in both Naples and Milan. In spite of an illness she had suffered from for some months, Miss Dole arrived in Luxembourg at the end of August 1952 for the fifth annual European Teaching Conference, but became too ill to participate.

Arrangements were made for her to be sent to the Valmont Clinic in Switzerland where she received medical treatment for two months.

Miss Dole lapsed into a coma on November 8, 1952, and passed away five days later. Members of her family gathered with Bahá'ís from all over Switzerland for the funeral service. Burial was in the village of Glion, high on the slopes of the Alps. "Her spiritual station is very high," said the Guardian. "Her grave will be a great blessing to Switzerland--to all Europe. She is the first to give her life for the Cause in the European project. Her resting-place is important."

When first informed of her passing, the Guardian cabled: "Grieved passing distinguished, consecrated pioneer Dagmar Dole, outstanding record unforgettable, reward bountiful. Praying progress soul Kingdom."

Sarah Farmer

Sarah Jane Farmer, the founder of Green Acre, was an extraordinary woman with a powerful personality. Her father was a well-known inventor, her mother a humanitarian. On July 4, 1894, the ceremony that opened Green Acre was held, a ceremony that ended with the raising of flag of world peace. The Green Acre Conferences attracted many prominent figures. The lectures were often well attended. Sarah Farmer had not as yet become a Bahá'í.

In 1900, while aboard ship en route to Europe on a trip to benefit her health, Miss Farmer heard about a great spiritual Figure, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who was at that time a prisoner. She changed her plans, traveled to the Holy Land, there met 'Abdu'l-Bahá, was profoundly moved by the experience, and became a Bahá'í. After her return to America, Bahá'ís began to visit Green Acre and to participate in the programs. Notable among them was the great Bahá'í teacher and scholar, Mírzá 'Abu'l-Fadl. Sarah Farmer wrote a number of letters to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and received at least 28 Tablets in return.

In 1912 'Abdu'l-Bahá made His historic journey to the United States and Canada. The Master came to Green Acre from Dublin, New Hampshire, in an automobile brought for Him by Alfred E. Lunt and was at Green Acre from August 16 to August 23. At that time Sarah Farmer was ill and confined to a sanitarium in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. But she was able to spend a few happy hours with Him at Green Acre. While at Green Acre, 'Abdu'l-Bahá walked with a group of people on Monsalvat and described where the House of Worship and its accessories would be located. Alfred E. Lunt, an eyewitness wrote: "We can never forget the Master's prophetic saying, when He stood on Mount Salvat, in Green Acre, and definitely pointed to the spot where the second Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in America would be built, and beside it the great institution of learning. These projects, He said, were ordained matters."

After 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to Green Acre, Sarah Farmer was taken from the sanitarium, where she had suffered for several years under poor conditions, to her home in Eliot, Maine. Before her passing in 1916, she "... prayed that Green Acre might live and flourish and become the great educational and spiritual center that 'Abdu'l-Bahá predicted for it, a Center of advanced service, a flag of peace, a torch of higher education and a kingdom of unity, the dwelling place of God's approval." Sarah Farmer's physical remains were buried in Eliot. But the spirit of her great hopes and vision for Monsalvat and Green Acre live on.

Bahá'ís all over the world share the hope expressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá for Green Acre during His historic visit to that memorable spot in 1912: "Are you well and happy? This is a delightful spot; the scenery is beautiful and an atmosphere of spirituality halos everything. In the future, God willing, Green Acre shall become a great center, the cause of the unity of the world of humanity, the cause of uniting hearts and binding together the east and the west. This is my hope."

Nellie Stevison French

For Nellie Stevison French, service to the Cause of God included overseas pioneering that resulted in her being named a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh; international travel teaching; membership on the U.S. National Spiritual Assembly, a continental teaching committee, and the first U.S. pioneer committee; and editing and translating Bahá'í publications.

Born October 19, 1868, in Peoria, Illinois, she became a Bahá'í in 1897 after studying the Faith with Dr. Ibrahim Khayrullah, a Bahá'í who had come to the U.S. from Beirut. She had learned French and Italian during a four-year stay in Italy where she took voice lessons, but scarlet fever permanently damaged her vocal chords, ending her dream of a musical career.

Nellie married a childhood companion, Stuart Whitney French, in 1894. In 1900 they moved to Bisbee, Arizona, and in 1918 to Pasadena, California. During 1921 Mrs. French made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land where her dedication to the Cause was reaffirmed and strengthened. From 1930 to 1946 she served as chairman of the editorial committee for *The Bahá'í World* during which time she assembled materials for Volumes IV-X of that publication. She also translated Bahá'í literature into French and Italian for publication in those languages. In 1931 Mrs. French made permanent Braille plates for *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* and the *Kitáb-i-Iqán*. For several years she wrote a column for the *Pasadena Star-News* entitled "The Loom of Reality."

Mrs. French served on the National Spiritual Assembly of the U.S. and Canada from 1928-37 and was chairman of the Spiritual Assembly of Pasadena for a 10-year period. From 1940-44 she was a member of the Inter-America Committee, the first international pioneering committee in the U.S. As the committee's secretary, Mrs. French presided over a session of the Faith's Centenary Celebration in 1944. For many years she and her husband spent every summer in Europe and visited the friends in many cities. Nellie used every one of these opportunities to teach. Her travels ranged from Spitzbergen, north of Norway, to South America and even as far as Melbourne, Australia. She also served as a member of the European Teaching Committee and helped support the teaching work in Europe through the International Bahá'í bureau in Geneva, Switzerland, that was established with the approval and support of the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi.

In the meantime, she was an active teacher on the U.S. homefront, participating in many proclamation and deepening efforts including the Indian teaching campaigns in Macy, Nebraska, the site of the first Spiritual Assembly in this country composed entirely of Native American Bahá'ís. Widowed in 1946, Mrs. French made her second pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1952 to meet the beloved Guardian. During the following year, which marked the beginning of the Ten Year Crusade, she pioneered at the age of 85 to the principality of Monaco, for which service she was designated a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh.

Mrs. French passed away on January 3, 1954. On the following day the Guardian sent this cable: "Deeply regret passing valiant pioneer. Long record services highly meritorious. Praying progress soul Kingdom."

Yuri Mochizuki Furukawa

Agnes Alexander had arrived in Japan in November 1914 and had been there about three years. She was busy every day meeting people, writing articles on the Bahá'í Faith, and making many friends and connections. Through one of them she was able to write an article for one of the women's magazines. She had great empathy for Japanese women in a country where women were considered disadvantaged. Her article was titled "A Message of Love to the Women of Japan." Agnes sent her article to a young school girl living in the countryside who contacted her after reading about the Faith in a magazine article written by a friend of Agnes's. The girl, Yuri Mochizuki, who was almost 17, wrote that she had left the home of her adoptive parents and was trying to take care of herself by writing. At that time, she did not know English. In future years not only would this young woman become completely fluent in both English and French, but she was to become a famous poet. She also developed into a great beauty. But, at that time, she wrote to Agnes asking if she might come and live with her; that she would do any humble work. It touched Agnes's heart and she invited the girl to come to Tokyo. Agnes wrote that someone said to her: "You do not know her." But Agnes replied: "She is God's child." When the girl arrived, they could not talk but, as Agnes later said, they conversed in the language of love.

Agnes Alexander always encouraged people to write to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Yuri wrote to Him and received three Tablets from Him. She accepted the teachings of the Faith and had written of her love for Him and for Agnes. 'Abdu'l-Bahá told her to start a Bahá'í journal, and she continued the journal for several years. Thus a girl of 17 became the first woman of her race to accept Bahá'u'lláh.

Agnes left Japan to return to her home in Hawaii and was gone for two years. She had made arrangements for Yuri to stay with Mr. and Mrs. Torii, staunch Bahá'ís and devoted friends of Agnes. Yuri was able to finish her education this way. Agnes told of how she hoped that on her return to Japan she and Yuri might work together for the advancement of women. By this time, the young girl was working in a newspaper office. Agnes wrote that after they settled in a home, every morning before Yuri left for work, they would read a verse from *The Hidden Words*. Yuri gradually translated the whole book and it was eventually printed in Japanese.

In the 1920s, Yuri went to live in France where she became acquainted with Agnes's Bahá'í teacher, May Maxwell and her daughter, Mary, who in future years was to become Rúhíyyih Khánum. Yuri and Rúhíyyih Khánum had a warm meeting 50 years later in Japan, in 1977.

Lua Getsinger

Louisa Aurora Getsinger, affectionately known as "Lua," was among the first group of American pilgrims to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Akká in 1898. Mrs. Getsinger, the wife of Dr. Edward Getsinger, was 27 years old when that historic trip was made. From that time until her death 18 years later, she made several other trips to the Holy Land to receive guidance and instructions from the Master. 'Abdu'l-Bahá referred to her as the "Herald of the Covenant" and entrusted her with many delicate and difficult teaching missions that took her to Europe, Africa and India as well as to the U.S.

During her tour of India, Mrs. Getsinger, accompanied by her husband, met with people of many creeds and spoke of the Faith to large audiences. Her most important interview in that country was with the Maharajah of Jalowar, whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá had met while in London. In Paris, Mrs. Getsinger met with Muzaffari'd-Din Shah of Persia, presenting him with a petition asking that he intercede to stop the martyrdoms of Bahá'ís in his kingdom. The Shah promised her that he would grant the request.

In December 1910, while the Getsingers were living in Washington, D.C., there was an exchange of letters with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, with Mrs. Getsinger writing on behalf of the friends. The recurring theme in these letters was the possibility of the Master visiting the U.S. To help foster the unity and love described by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as a prerequisite to his visiting America, and to further the teaching work, Mrs. Getsinger and Dr. Ameen Fareed traveled to California where they proclaimed the Faith in a number of cities and even aboard the battleship "California."

More than 900 people were present when Lua addressed the Jewish Ladies Council in San Francisco. She also spoke at various club meetings, to the World Spiritual Congress in Long Beach, and at functions of the Masons and Knights Templar. With Dr. Fareed, she spoke at a Unitarian Church in Alameda. In Los Angeles, she addressed an audience of around 400. Mrs. Getsinger spoke to students and faculty at Stanford University, thus helping to prepare the way for 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit there the following year. When the Master arrived in the U.S. in 1912, Mrs. Getsinger was among a group of Bahá'ís that included May Maxwell and Juliet Thompson, who had the privilege of being constantly with Him and serving Him throughout His visit to America.

Later, Mrs. Getsinger suffered a heart attack and thereafter was often ill for long periods of time. This required her to spend considerable time in bed to regain her strength. In January 1915, however, she again went to the Holy Land where she remained for seven months as a guest of the Holy Family. When a U.S. gunboat arrived at Haifa and news was received of the possibility of the U.S. declaring war, 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent Mrs. Getsinger to try and re-establish communication with the friends who had been cut off from the Holy Land because of war. She traveled first to Port Said, Egypt, and then to Cairo, planning to leave from there for America, but she became ill in Cairo and was forced to remain there. Even in her weakened condition Mrs. Getsinger continued to teach the Faith among young men, as they were the only Egyptians who could speak English.

During the night of May 2, 1916, she awoke with severe chest pains. Although a doctor was quickly summoned, Mrs. Getsinger passed away before he arrived. The friends purchased a choice site in Cairo for her final resting place and conducted a loving memorial service for her. The beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, paid tribute to Lua Getsinger as "the mother teacher of the West."

Helen M. Goodall

Helen S. Mirrell, a native of Maine, moved to San Francisco in 1864 where she became a teacher and where in 1868, she married Edwin Goodall. Her daughter, Ella Frances, who later was to share many of her mother's Bahá'í experiences, was born in 1870. By 1898 Mrs. Goodall and her daughter had heard enough about the Faith to be quite attracted to it and eager to learn more. Because Lua Getsinger had left California for the Holy Land in the party of Mrs. Phoebe Hearst, Mrs. Goodall and her daughter were left without a Bahá'í teacher. So they traveled by train to New York City where they were able to learn more about the Faith from a Syrian believer. By February 1899 Mrs. Goodall had returned to Oakland, California, while Ella had sailed for Cairo to join Mrs. Hearst's party who were making the first pilgrimage by Westerners to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá. When Ella returned home in the spring of 1899 she found that her mother had already attracted a small group of people to the Faith.

'Abdu'l-Bahá often revealed Tablets for Mrs. Goodall and her daughter that included advice, encouragement and praise. In one of them, the Master warned Mrs. Goodall of a disaster that soon would strike San Francisco. Four years later, in 1906, the San Francisco earthquake and fire destroyed a large part of the city. With 'Abdu'l-Bahá's permission, Mrs. Goodall and her daughter traveled to 'Akká, arriving there for a two-week stay on January 4, 1908. The two women later wrote a brief account of their experiences entitled *Daily Lessons Received at 'Akká*. They described how 'Abdu'l-Bahá would come to the door of their room each day to invite them to have lunch with Him.

Following the death of her husband in 1909, Mrs. Goodall moved to San Francisco but continued to use her house in Oakland for Bahá'í meetings. She was one of the earliest members of the Bahá'í community in San Francisco and helped establish that city's first Spiritual Assembly in 1910. As early as 1903 the Master had given the two women His support in their efforts toward the construction of a House of Worship in America, and Mrs. Goodall served for a number of years as a member of the Bahá'í Temple Unity. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived in Washington, D.C., in 1912, Mrs. Goodall and her daughter were among the friends who greeted Him. Staying in the same hotel as the Master, they often were able to be with Him privately. They saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá again in Chicago, New York City and California. The Master stayed in a house in San Francisco that Mrs. Goodall had rented for Him and the Persian friends who accompanied Him. During His stay in California 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke on three occasions in Mrs. Goodall's home in Oakland. On October 18, Mrs. Goodall drove the Master to the train depot for His trip to Los Angeles to visit the grave of Thornton Chase, the first Bahá'í in the U. S. She hadn't expected to make the trip herself, and had brought nothing for traveling, but 'Abdu'l-Bahá insisted that she accompany Him, so she traveled with Him to Los Angeles. During the next few years Mrs. Goodall visited Bahá'í Groups and new Assemblies on the Pacific Coast, speaking to them about the meaning of the Covenant and drawing upon the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in speaking of His station.

In 1914 she and her daughter were among a group of five believers selected by the Spiritual Assembly of San Francisco to serve on an executive committee to organize an International Bahá'í Congress to take place during San Francisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition. In 1916 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent the first five of the Tablets that are now known as the *Tablets of the Divine Plan* to the American Bahá'í community. Mrs. Goodall received the "Tablet to the Western States." She sent copies to the Assemblies in the area and urged the editors of "Star of the West" to publish it without delay. In 1920 Mrs. Goodall and her daughter again received permission from the Master to visit the Holy Land. Although she was by now quite frail, the joy of being able to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá again gave Mrs. Goodall the strength to make the arduous journey. During that pilgrimage she recovered some of her former strength.

It was not long after their return to the U.S. that word was received of the Master's passing, and Mrs. Goodall gradually became weaker. On February 19, 1922, less than three months after His Ascension, she passed away.

In *God Passes By*, the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, mentions Mrs. Goodall as being among those who "...stand out as the most prominent among those who, in those early years, awakened to the call of the New Day, and consecrated their lives to the service of the newly proclaimed Covenant."

Mariam Haney

In 1912, while on board the steamship "Celtic," Mariam Haney had the responsibility of recording the never-to-be-forgotten words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá upon His departure from the U.S.

Her notes comprise the final address by the master published in *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*. Ten years earlier Mariam had accompanied Lua Getsinger to Paris where, at the bidding of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Lua presented to the Shah of Iran a petition from the Master on behalf of the persecuted Bahá'ís of Iran.

Mariam Haney was born Mary Ida Parkhurst on November 13, 1872, in New York City. As a young woman she moved from church to church searching for truth, but never being satisfied that she had found it. In Minneapolis, Minnesota, she met Charles Freeborn Haney. They were married in 1893 and together continued to search for spiritual reality. Seven years later, in Chicago, the Haney's met Charles and Elizabeth Greenleaf. The Greenleafs, finding them receptive, told them about the Bahá'í faith, and soon the Haney's declared their belief in Bahá'u'lláh. Not long afterward, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave Mary Ida the name "Mariam," which she used from that time on.

During her first five years as a Bahá'í, while living in New York City, Mrs. Haney worked closely with Ellen (Mother) Beecher, the grandmother of the future Hand of the Cause of God Dorothy Beecher Baker. Mariam began to make copies of the many Tablets revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and to see that they were distributed to the American Bahá'í community. Very little Bahá'í literature had been translated into English at that time, and Mrs. Haney continued to perform this valuable service until the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1921. In 1908 the Haney's were given permission to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land and spent nine days there in February 1909. Mrs. Haney, a skillful secretary, took stenographic notes of much that the Master said. Later the Master read her notes and asked that they be published, which the Haney's did under the title *A Heavenly Feast*. While Charles and Mariam were in His presence, 'Abdu'l-Bahá blessed their unborn child. Mariam showed little emotion as they left the Holy Land, but once on board ship her tears flowed freely from the sadness of leaving 'Abdu'l-Bahá. After stopping to visit with the friends in Egypt, France and England, the Haney's returned to the U.S. Mariam found waiting for her a Tablet from the Master in which He said, "I was with you when you were weeping on the ship." The Haney's son, Paul, who was to become a Hand of the Cause of God, was born August 20, 1909, in Washington, D.C. Mr. and Mrs. Haney were living in Washington in 1912 when 'Abdu'l-Bahá twice visited the nation's capital, and thus they had the bounty of participating in many of the events during His memorable stays there.

Later, the Haney's moved for a time to Los Angeles, but early in 1919 business brought them back to Washington where Mariam was elected one of its two delegates to the sixth convention of Bahá'í Temple Unity in Chicago. While they were in Evanston, Illinois, Mr. Haney suddenly became seriously ill. He died in Evanston in the fall of 1919. A year later, the executive board of Bahá'í Temple Unity, which was the forerunner of the National Spiritual Assembly, asked Mariam to serve as secretary of the recently established National Teaching Committee.

In 1921 she helped Agnes Parsons organize, at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's request, the first U.S. Bahá'í Race Amity Conference, which was held in May of that year in Washington. Mrs. Haney served as a member of the editorial committee for publication of the first two volumes of *The Bahá'í World*. In 1924 she was named associate editor of the "Star of the West," which was soon to become "The Bahá'í Magazine," serving in that capacity until March 1935.

Mariam Haney died September 1, 1965, less than two months before her 93rd birthday. The Universal House of Justice promptly sent the following cable to the U.S. National Assembly: "Grieved announce passing Mariam Haney devoted servant Bahá'u'lláh mother beloved Hand Cause Paul Haney. Her total dedication Faith spanning period more than sixty-five years staunch upholder Covenant earliest days of testing tireless activities circulating Tablets Master services national and international level wholehearted loyalty steadfastness assure loving welcome Abhá Kingdom...."

Marion Jack

Born in St. John, New Brunswick, Canada, December 1, 1866, Marion Elizabeth Jack was the third of six children of Henry Jack, who worked in a law office, a bank, as an insurance agent and also served as Vice-Consul for Spain, and Annie Jack, a frail woman who was from a prominent family and spent much of her time in public service. When Marion was 11, the family home was burned to the ground in a disastrous fire that swept through St. John while they were out of town. Also while Marion was still a child, her mother's health deteriorated rapidly and she died in 1882, when Marion was 16. Henry Jack was so stricken with grief that he lived only two years past Annie's death and died in 1884.

In the years between 1880 and 1884, Marion began to paint. She took private lessons, attended classes at the Women's Art Institute and, in 1885, left New Brunswick to study at the Lambeth School of Art in South London and under Charles Lazar in Paris. She lived sparingly, saving her money to travel and paint throughout Europe.

Early in the 1900s, while studying in Paris, Marion first heard of the Bahá'í Faith from Charles Mason Remey. In the 1890s and 1900s Marion Jack spent summers in America and winters in Europe. In 1908, 'Abdu'l-Bahá invited her to spend several months in 'Akká. While there, she painted and taught English to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's grandchildren.

In 1911, Marion was in London at the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit there. During this time, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave her the nickname "General Jack." His accounts of Marion reveal her to be a warm-hearted, cheerful individual, full of fun and sparkle. However, even as early as 1912, when Marion was only 48 years old, she was already plagued by the health problems that would remain with her for the rest of her life.

In 1919, she set out for Nome, Alaska, in response to the *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, in which 'Abdu'l-Bahá singled out Alaska for special attention. Between 1920 and 1931, Marion continued her service to the Faith living in Vancouver and New Brunswick, Canada, and on the east coast of the United States, especially Green Acre and in Florida, always with the purpose of teaching the Faith and helping to develop communities.

In March 1931, at the age of 65, Marion made her second visit to Haifa at the invitation of Shoghi Effendi. During this visit, Shoghi Effendi asked her to travel to Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria. She went there directly from Haifa with only a few suitcases, expecting to spend a few months, and remained until her death, 23 years later. When Marion Jack arrived in Bulgaria, she took a room in a hotel and began to make friends and to teach the Faith. In addition to physical weakness and a limited budget, Marion was unable to speak Bulgarian. She had never learned the language as she did not expect to stay long in the country. She never had a home or even an apartment of her own in Bulgaria, but would invite seekers to her small hotel room where she would give "talks" from *Paris Talks* by having her words translated into French or German by one guest, then translated again into Bulgarian. In November 1931, when Marion had been in Sofia for about eight months, the Guardian wrote to her: "Your splendid services, rendered with such faith, such humility, such perseverance and devotion, have at last been crowned with success. You have achieved a task that will ever live in, nay adorn and enrich, the annals of God's immortal Faith. What is now necessary is to consolidate the work already achieved...."

Despite certain restrictions which the authorities placed in 1933 on the teaching activities of the Baha'is, the teaching work went ahead and earned continual praise and encouragement from Shoghi Effendi. By July 1932, the first local Spiritual Assembly of Sofia was elected from a community of more than 30 believers. Although the Guardian indicated to her that she could move on to another post, Marion Jack chose to stay on in Bulgaria. As the decade of the '30s drew to a close, Bulgaria became the center of the European spy system, and the outbreak of open conflict in Europe became inevitable. Although the Guardian first advised Marion to return to Canada, when it became clear that it would not be possible for another Bahá'í to replace her, she was then advised to stay on. She was, by this time, 73 years old. There were now approximately 150 Bahá'ís and friends of the Faith in Sofia, meetings were held three times a week and Feasts were held regularly.

During World War II correspondence with Bulgaria was limited. In March 1941, when Nazi troops secretly entered the country, Bulgaria signed an agreement with Germany and thus entered the conflict on the side of the Axis powers. Marion Jack had a British passport and was in constant danger of imprisonment until the end of the war. When Sofia was bombed in January 1944, the house where Marion lived was

destroyed, as was the house where all the Bulgarian editions of *Bahá'u'lláh the New Era* were stored. Marion was evacuated from the city and all her luggage was stolen. She commented at that time, "It seems wonderful what one can do without."

In September 1944, Soviet troops entered Bulgaria and the country switched to the Soviet side in the war. By the end of 1947 a communist regime was firmly established in Bulgaria. As soon as she was allowed, Marion returned to Sofia to rebuild the Bahá'í community and to continue the teaching work. She suffered from cold, inadequate food and housing and continual health problems, but she persevered cheerfully. It was no longer possible to hold meetings, a few Bahá'ís had been killed in the bombings and many had emigrated. But Marion adapted to every change with good spirits. Her room was little more than a cubbyhole with one end stacked high with firewood for the stove. One-third of her small income was spent for heat.

Although a number of friends sent help, parcels for her often failed to arrive and the exchange rate fluctuated so dramatically that she often lost funds intended for her support. In 1948 Shoghi Effendi wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly of the U.S. through his secretary: "He (Shoghi Effendi) feels that the spirit of Marion Jack, her evident desire to stay with the community she loves so dearly and has fostered through thick and thin, reflects glory not only on the North American community but on the entire Faith. She should be left free to remain in Bulgaria, and your Assembly should see to it that she receives a sufficient income to end her life in peace and with no more hardships to be endured. She is a heroic soul, the finest example of the pioneer spirit which we have anywhere in the world and the guardian feels deeply indebted to her, and loves her very dearly."

During the last months of her life she was bedridden and suffered greatly, but her worry was for those who cared for her. Marion Jack died on March 27, 1954, at age 87, and was buried in the British Military Cemetery in Sofia. "Young or old could never find a more inspiring pioneer in whose footsteps to walk than this wonderful soul.... He thinks that every Bahá'í and most particularly those who have left their homes and gone to serve in foreign fields, should know of, and turn their gaze to Marion Jack."

Bertha Hyde Kirkpatrick

Bertha Hyde Kirkpatrick has earned a place in the literary and educational history of the American Bahá'í community--but deserves greater recognition. She played important roles in the life of two major Bahá'í publications and was among those who initiated an institution the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, would acclaim as a major educational and cultural centre of the community. She won over to the Bahá'í Faith a Congregational minister who had spent years antagonistic to the Faith and helped establish the first Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly of Ann Arbor.

Despite these accomplishments, she remains generally unknown.

Bertha Hyde Kirkpatrick was born in Rockville, Connecticut, on June 16, 1874, into a devout Christian family. When she was six her father died. The family, with five children, was left destitute and eked out a living by taking in boarders. Despite the struggle, four of the children eventually graduated from college. Bertha graduated from Holyoke in 1898. For the next 10 years she taught science in schools in Connecticut, New York and Pennsylvania. In 1908 she agreed to come to Topeka, Kansas, where her brother, Arthur Hyde, taught history at Washburn College. His wife had died that September, leaving him on his own with a young son. Bertha came to help out.

It is likely that Bertha's sister, Mabel Paine, was the first of the two to hear of the Bahá'í Faith when she attended a talk by Lua Getsinger in Urbana, Illinois, in 1912. It could not have been long before she shared the news with Bertha, who was deeply attracted but puzzled. Finally the realisation dawned on her: here was the return of Christ. By 1915 both had accepted the new faith. When the 1921-22 school year ended, Bertha left Topeka and settled two years later in Olivet, Michigan, married to Dr. Kirkpatrick. He was now teaching at Olivet College. The years in Olivet were quiet ones, once the truce was drawn not to discuss religion. John, before teaching, was ordained a Congregational minister in Seabrook, Kansas in 1895. When he first heard of the Bahá'í Faith, he found it strange and uncomfortable. Bertha would not compromise her beliefs, though in the first years of their marriage she was not as involved as earlier. They agreed to disagree.

Her husband became ill in the late '20s and by 1931 his condition was critical. They traveled to Topeka to be near his family and doctor. Even after he was hospitalised they continued a practice begun much earlier. In addition study of the Bible, they had added the Bahá'í writings, particularly *The Divine Art of Living*, compiled by Bertha's sister, Mabel Paine. In a letter to a friend, Bertha later wrote of John's last days. "Before dawn on the day before his ascension I was called to his bedside. He signified his desire for pencil and paper. Slowly his weakened hand, unable to hold the pencil without aid, formed the almost illegible words, 'One thing only, to be a good'—“ Then for a moment there seemed to be a great influx of strength and spirit as with firm hand he completed the sentence with the word, 'Bahá'í,' in large clear letters."

It was his last significant communication; evidence of a radical change of heart and fulfillment of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's assurance to Bertha of a "spiritual victory."

This confirmation stimulated her service to the Faith. That summer Bertha was one of the Bahá'ís who initiated and planned the first session of Louhelen Bahá'í School. The next year she was appointed to the school committee and was reappointed every year for the rest of her life. Most of those 16 years she was the secretary. In that capacity she wrote often to the Guardian to appraise him of plans, ask for guidance or report accomplishments. Most of his statements about Louhelen are from letters sent to her. In 1927 she had begun writing for "Star of the West," and later *World Order*. For the next 15 years she was also a member of the editorial board. To her last days, her efforts were in service to the Faith. On Sunday, 15 May, 1948, on the way home to Olivet from a school committee meeting at Louhelen, her car in which she was a passenger, went out of control and veered into the lane of an approaching car. Three people were killed instantly. Bertha died the next Thursday of internal injuries. Bertha's services of more than 30 years to the cause of Bahá'u'lláh had come to an end.

Bertha Hyde Kirkpatrick's contributions to the American Bahá'í community were many, varied and invaluable. How many souls did she help confirm and deepen through her articles in *World Order*? What would the American Bahá'í community be without Louhelen? All are testimonies to her years of dedication.

Mary Lesch

The first publication of *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, a collection of talks by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that were given in the U.S. in 1912, was made possible by Mary Lesch, manager of the Bahá’í Publishing Society from 1910-1922. Her capable management helped accumulate the funds needed to produce this important book.

Born in Chicago in 1863, Miss Lesch was 35 years old when she became a Bahá’í in 1898. Her brother, George, served as secretary of Chicago's House of Spirituality, the forerunner of the Local Spiritual assembly. During her 12 years at the Bahá’í Publishing Society, an early forerunner of the Publishing Trust, Miss Lesch took care of orders, stocking, and distribution of all materials offered by the Society. Her vital services were offered as an unpaid volunteer and were carried out in addition to the time she spent earning a livelihood. Although the number of books and other Bahá’í materials available in the U.S. was quite small by present day standards, Miss Lesch, who worked alone, had a challenging responsibility.

In 1926, the magazine "Star of the West" advertised some 26 publications. Not long afterward, the Society's offerings were increased by the addition of *The Baha’i Proofs* and a new American edition of *Some Answered Questions*. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá entrusted the editing of His addresses in the U.S. to Howard MacNutt of Brooklyn, New York. During the printing and binding of the book, which was handled by Albert Windust, word was received from the Master that the compilation should be titled *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*. Mr. Windust wrote this tribute to Mary Lesch regarding the addition of this important volume to the materials offered by the Bahá’í Publishing Society: "...This was a fitting climax to a decade and more of service to the Faith, and a splendid memorial to her who rendered it."

Following Miss Lesch's passing on March 24, 1945, the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, sent the following cable: "Deeply grieve passing of indefatigable, staunch pioneer of Faith in the Day of the Covenant. The record of her services imperishable, her reward great in the Abhá Kingdom."

Marion Little

"Excellent production eminently satisfactory every respect abiding gratitude." Such were the sentiments cabled April 12, 1932, by the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, to Marion Little, secretary of the Bahá'í Publishing Committee, upon its publication of *The Dawn-Breakers*.

Mrs. Little, who was in effect the business and production manager of the Publishing Committee in New York City, had worked for more than a year under the close supervision and direction of the Guardian on the challenging task of publishing *The Dawn-Breakers*. It was she who suggested to the Guardian that instead of a photograph of the inner Shrine of the Báb for use as a frontispiece in the book, that he consider using an artist's rendition, a suggestion that was graciously accepted by Shoghi Effendi.

Marian Mellen, born October 2, 1891, in New Orleans, Louisiana, was reared as a Roman Catholic and was educated at the Sacred Heart Convent in New Orleans. Marion was in her 20s when, after hearing of the Faith in New York City from Loulie Mathews, she immediately accepted Bahá'u'lláh. Marion and Loulie carried out several Bahá'í-related tasks together including successful summer school sessions at Mrs. Mathews' "Temerity Ranch" in Pine Valley, Colorado, which had been established especially to prepare Bahá'í pioneers for Latin America. By 1928, Mrs. Little had become involved in serving the Faith as secretary of the Bahá'í Publishing Committee. As such, she was responsible for the production of Volume III of *The Bahá'í World*, for which Shoghi Effendi expressed his "...unqualified gratitude...."

In 1931 Mrs. Little's husband, Raymond, a prominent New York publisher, died unexpectedly. She then returned to Louisiana and became known throughout the Southern states as an able and dedicated traveling teacher. When the Guardian announced the second Seven Year Plan, which began in 1946, Mrs. Little was among those who responded. She left for war-torn Europe as a traveling teacher in 1947, and remained in Europe as a pioneer for the rest of her earthly life.

Serving in Luxembourg, Spain, Italy, Switzerland and France, she helped form the second Local Spiritual Assembly in Spain, and in 1949, the first Spiritual Assembly of Florence, Italy. The 1953 convention that brought into being the Italo-Swiss Regional National Spiritual Assembly was held in Mrs. Little's apartment in Florence. She was elected a member of that historic National Assembly. Later, she pioneered to Vevey and Lausanne, Switzerland, and helped organize the annual international conferences and Summer School sessions for Europe.

Mrs. Little's last pioneering post was in Metz, France, a difficult teaching goal. Although her health was failing, she helped bring about the formation of the first Spiritual Assembly of Metz. Upon receiving news of her passing in 1973, the Universal House of Justice sent the following cable dated March 12: "Ascension Abhá Kingdom Marion Little steadfast devoted servant Bahá'u'lláh more than 50 years teaching publishing pioneering United States South America Europe deprives American Bahá'í community one its brightest ornaments Europe one most radiant pioneers. Her loyalty cheerfulness courage uplifted spirits friends assures bounteous reward. Offering prayers sacred threshold progress her soul recommend German National Assembly hold befitting memorial service Mother Temple Europe."

Melba Whetung Loft - “Kinaaj-Kwe”

Sarah Melba Whetung was born on the Curve Lake Indian Reserve, near Peterborough, Ontario, Canada, on 24 December 1912. Curve Lake is an Ojibwa Reserve. Melba was the eldest daughter of Arthur Whetung, a trapper, and his wife, Bella. Melba finished grade school at twelve years of age and with her mother's help and encouragement continued her education in Peterborough. At seventeen years of age she met Alfred James Loft, a Mohawk. They married several years later and lived in Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A. where Jim worked at the Chrysler automobile plant. Their two sons, James Gordon (Sam) and Arthur Edwin were born in Detroit. In 1936, Jim was transferred to the plant in Marysville, Michigan, where he bought a home. In 1938, a daughter, Evelyn, was born to Jim and Melba. It was shortly after this that Melba became restless and searching. She became close friends with her neighbor, Emma Lenk. Returning from church service one day Melba said, "There's got to be something besides this!" Shortly after that Melba and Emma learned of the Bahá'í Faith and embraced it.

Melba described herself as having been, in the years before Jim became a believer, “an armchair Bahá'í.” She read and studied, attended meetings, and sent the children to the Louhelen Bahá'í School at Davison, Michigan. Jim became a Bahá'í in 1948 and was at once moved to write Shoghi Effendi asking for guidance in the service he might perform. The Guardian's reply, written by his secretary on his behalf, said "He would greatly welcome your returning to your own tribe, and giving them this great message you and your dear wife have accepted....”

Winter was setting in but arrangements were made immediately to move to the Tyendinaga Reserve in Ontario where the family endured great physical hardships. Their house had no heat or electricity; animals had been living in it when they moved in; and it had only three rooms. Jim and Melba were unable to find any work, and in 1950, at a time when they did not know where the next meal was coming from, Jim wrote another letter to Shoghi Effendi. The reply said that the Guardian “does not feel it is right for you and your family to impoverish yourselves further in order to remain on the Reservation, on the other hand your being here and living amongst the people is undoubtedly the best way to teach them.”

The Guardian's letter, which included, in his own hand, “assurance of my abiding and deepest appreciation of your services to our beloved Faith, of my heartfelt admiration for the spirit that animates you, and of my ardent prayers for the success of every effort you exert for its promotion and consolidation,” and which was signed “Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi,” marked yet another turning point in their lives. Jim was able to set up an auto body shop on the Reserve as a means of livelihood, though they still had no running water or indoor plumbing, and almost all of Melba's good furniture had to be sold to buy equipment for the garage. The Lofts had visits from many Bahá'ís in those early years, many of them on their way to pioneering posts all over the world. The Lofts supported the teaching work in the nearby towns of Kingston and Belleville by offering encouragement.

Jim died suddenly on 22 May 1973. Melba continued to live alone for the next eight years. An occasion for rejoicing occurred in November 1976 when Indian Bahá'ís from Ontario to the Maritimes gathered at Tyendinaga Reserve for the first Canadian Native Council. Although the Indian Band Council had been generally unsympathetic towards the Faith over the years, not permitting public messages to be held and denying the Bahá'ís access to the village meeting hall, a victory came in February 1977. Just prior to attending the Bahá'í International Conference in Merida, Melba approached the Chief and the Council to ask whether they wished to send a message through her to the Mayan Indians of Mexico and, to her deep joy, the Chief responded by writing a letter. Not only did this message reach the Mayans but it reverberated all through the Caribbean, for Melba was invited, along with other Canadian Indian participants at the conference, to be interviewed on television, and she responded by reading the Chief's letter, thus enabling the greeting to span the continents. The patience with which she had for so long endured rejection and suspicion won, in the end. At Naw-Rúz 1977 permission was granted by the authorities for the holding of a public New Year observance on the Tyendinaga Reserve; it was attended by one hundred and fifty guests.

The remaining years of Melba's life were highlighted by her participation in many historic Bahá'í events, such as “the Gathering”; native councils; a teaching trip in 1978 to Denmark, England, Ireland, Austria and Switzerland, which she viewed as one of the crowning events of her life; the formation in 1979 of the first Spiritual Assembly of the bas of Tyendinaga, the reward of her long years of steadfastness; and the invitation to be a special guest at the 1981 'Vision Quest--Bahá'í', National Native Council,” near

Rawdon, Quebec. To that gathering she sent a touching message in which she wrote, "one must pray every day ... for we must remember, all we are, our spiritual knowledge of God born through Bahá'u'lláh ... we must go forward, put on our spiritual armour of Bahá'u'lláh, as he never leaves us alone. I know I never feel alone; I am happy to be living in this Day to see how our Faith has grown over the years and to have the prayers and guidance, and I know I have been fully blessed and I am thankful."

Melba and Jim Loft are buried side by side on the Tyendinaga Reserve. The beautiful marker over their grave contains the symbol of the nine-pointed star and the native symbol of the Thunderbird, and reads: "Alfred Jim Loft and Melba Whetung Loft, The Guardian's Obedient Servants."

Muna Mahmudnizhad

The youngest of the 10 women martyrs of 18 June 1983 was Muna Mahmudnizhad, aged seventeen. The daughter of Farkhundih and Yadullah Mahmudnizhad, she was born on 10 September 1965 in Yemen where her parents served as pioneers during the Ten Year Crusade. In 1969, when the Government of Yemen expelled all foreigners, Muna's parents returned to Iran, settling first in Isfahán, then in Kirmánsháh, and finally in Tabríz. When Muna was nine, the family moved to Shíráz. Muna had a warm and loving nature, possessed a fine singing voice, and distinguished herself as a student. She took a conscientious interest in both her intellectual and spiritual growth and as a result, was very mature for her age. She considered 10 September 1980, the day she reached the age of fifteen and was officially registered as a Bahá'í youth, as her true birthday. She was delighted to be recognized as a member of the Bahá'í community and spared no effort to serve the Faith. She acted as a liaison for the youth committee in the Nineteen Day Feast, and conducted Bahá'í children's classes for the child education committee. She tried in various ways to make her efforts more effective. For example, by going to school on foot instead of riding the bus, she saved enough from her pocket money to buy coloured crayons, notebooks and pencils, which she gave as a prize to her students in the children's class; and she compiled a small booklet of prayers which she gave to the children to memorize.

An essay written by Muna for school on the assigned topic of conscience and liberty as fruits of Islam, in which she explored with clarity and force the restrictions placed upon her as a Bahá'í in discussing the principles of the Bahá'í Faith with Muslim students, and argued that the source of spiritual freedom is God and His endowment cannot be withheld or conditioned by man, brought down the wrath of the school principal, a fanatical individual, who forthwith forbade her to mention the Faith in school ever again, an unjust injunction with which she nevertheless obediently complied.

At 9:00 p.m. on 23 October 1982, when Muna was preparing for an English test, five revolutionary guards stormed into her home, searched, attempted to terrorize and intimidate Muna and her parents, and at 11:30 arrested them. Although her mother was subsequently released after many months of imprisonment, Muna's father was executed on 12 March 1983.

One of the guards who was present when Muna was also hanged related that she asked to be the last to die, and that she prayed for the souls of those who executed her friends. She is said to have lightly kissed the hangman's hand, then kissed the rope and placed it around her own throat.

Loulie Albee Mathews

"...thou shalt become 'Abdu'l-Bahá's lion and roar across the Seven Seas" was the Master's promise to Loulie Albee Mathews during her early days as a Bahá'í. In fulfillment of that promise, Mrs. Mathews' life of service to the Cause included pioneering in Paris in the early years of the Faith's establishment there; her creation of an international lending library in Italy; teaching trips to Hawaii, New Guinea, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand, South Africa, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Chile, Argentina and Brazil, and the establishment of a training center for pioneers at her ranch in Colorado.

Loulie Mathews was in her mid-40s when, in 1913, she first learned of the Faith in New York City and received a copy of the *Kitáb-i-Iqán* from Asa Cocheran, her first teacher. It was in Mrs. Cocheran's home that Mrs. Mathews first saw a photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and was captivated by it even before she had any idea who the Person in the photograph was. After returning to the U.S. from a short, and as she described it, "disastrous" visit to Paris to see World War I first-hand, Mrs. Mathews again saw a photograph of the Master--this time as she gained consciousness following an automobile accident in New Hampshire. After the accident she was taken to a nearby home, and it was there that the photograph was hanging on a wall. When she had regained her strength Mrs. Mathews became a Bahá'í.

While pioneering in Paris in 1916 Mrs. Mathews began a letter to 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Dear 'Abdu'l-Bahá, I think I'd better go home--I don't know enough about the Faith to conduct a center and besides, I am not good enough." She hadn't yet mailed the letter when a Persian arrived that same day from Haifa and handed her a letter in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's handwriting. Mrs. Mathews had the letter translated as quickly as possible, and learned that the Master had written, "Thy determination to return home is very dear to the heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The home is the center from which life radiates to all horizons. Do thou go home and be humble and bye and bye, thou shall become 'Abdu'l-Bahá's lion and roar across the Seven Seas." Mrs. Mathews took the Master's advice about returning to the U.S. and spend the rest of her life fulfilling the last part of his message. She served the Guardian faithfully and sought his guidance in deciding where she could best serve the Faith. While in England in 1929, Mrs. Mathews was stricken with pneumonia, and her doctor said she would die. Her daughter, Wanden, cabled the Guardian to ask for prayers on her mother's behalf. Shoghi Effendi replied that "...your mother's work is not finished and she will live to complete it." Mrs. Mathews' doctor later said that nothing in his medical career had prepared him for her recovery.

During her early years as a Bahá'í, Mrs. Mathews was heavily involved in interracial teaching work, serving as chairman of the Inter Racial Amity Committee in 1931 and as a member of that committee the following year. In 1933 Mrs. Mathews, accompanied by her husband, undertook a teaching trip to the Antipodes and the Pacific. Later, she sought the Guardian's advice about her desire to travel to India, and he urged her to travel instead to South America. She then began her teaching work in Central and South America and established the pioneer training center at her ranch for prospective pioneers to Latin America.

In the area of Bahá'í publications Mrs. Mathews, as a contributing editor to *The American Bahá'í*, served on the National Publishing Committee, and was responsible for compiling the 1929 edition of the Bahá'í prayer book. She also contributed articles to *The Bahá'í World* and published a booklet entitled "Whence Comes the Light?" She served for many years as a member of the Spiritual Assembly of New York City and was elected a delegate to the Bahá'í National Convention for more than 10 years. Her autobiography, *Not Every Sea Hath Pearls*, was published in 1951.

Loulie Mathews died in 1966 at about the age of 97.

May Ellis Maxwell

"Whosoever meets her feels from her association the susceptibilities of the Kingdom. Her company uplifts and develops the soul..." Thus did the Master, 'Abdu'l-Bahá describe the special qualities of May Maxwell.

Born January 14, 1870, in Englewood, New Jersey, May Ellis Bolles spent her early years in the home of her maternal grandfather. As a child and throughout her life she suffered from ill health. With other members of her family, May made two visits to France including one period during which she was in a convent school and an 11-year-long residence in Paris where her brother, Randolph, was studying architecture. It was while she was in Paris in November 1898 that Mrs. Phoebe Hearst, a close friend of the family, arrived with a party of Americans including Lua Getsinger who were en route to the Holy Land to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá. May was immediately attracted to the Faith, and was invited by Mrs. Hearst to join the group of pilgrims.

She later wrote of her transforming experiences with 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a booklet entitled *An Early Pilgrimage*, which was published in 1917. Under the Master's direction, she returned to Paris and began her long and extensive teaching activities. May gathered about her a group that by 1901-02 numbered about 30 Bahá'ís and included Hippolyte Dreyfus, the first French Bahá'í; Thomas Breakwell, the first English Bahá'í; Herbert Hooper, Laura Clifford Barney, and Agnes Alexander.

In 1899, her brother, Randolph, had introduced her to William Sutherland Maxwell, a Canadian who also was studying architecture in Paris. May and Sutherland were married in London in 1902 and settled in Montreal, Canada. Accompanied by her husband, Mrs. Maxwell visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land again in 1909. Later during His visit to North America in 1912, the Master accepted an invitation from the Maxwells and stayed for four days in their home in Montreal where He gave four talks. Afterward, 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent Tablets addressed to the Canadian Bahá'ís through Mrs. Maxwell. Mrs. Maxwell served from 1918-21 as a member of the executive board of the Bahá'í Temple Unity, forerunner of the National Spiritual Assembly of the U.S. and Canada. She was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly in 1924-25 and again from 1927-29. She also served from 1927-29 on the National Teaching Committee and on the National and Regional Teaching Committee in Canada.

In 1935, responding to a call from the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, the Maxwells traveled to Europe where Mrs. Maxwell took part in teaching activities in Belgium, France and Germany. It was during an extended pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1937 that the Maxwells' only child, Mary, was married to the Guardian and became known as Amatu'l-Baha Ruhyyih Khánum. In December 1939 and January 1940 the Maxwells traveled and taught in New York City, Washington and Philadelphia. Then, in spite of her age (70) and with the consent of her husband and physician as well as the approval of the Guardian, Mrs. Maxwell acted on a long-cherished wish to teach the Faith in South America.

On January 24, 1940, accompanied by her niece, Jeanne Bolles, she sailed for Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Before departing that city for Buenos Aires, her ultimate destination, Mrs. Maxwell spoke at three meetings in a hotel in Rio and to the president of the city's Homeopathic College. Mrs. Maxwell arrived in Buenos Aires on February 27. Three days later she succumbed to a sudden heart attack.

On learning of her passing the Guardian cabled: "'Abdu'l-Bahá's beloved handmaid, distinguished disciple May Maxwell gathered glory Abhá Kingdom. Her earthly life, so rich, eventful, incomparably blessed worthily ended. To sacred tie her signal services had forged, priceless honor martyr's death now added. Double crown deservedly won. Seven Year Plan, particularly South American campaign, derives fresh impetus example her glorious sacrifice...."

Shoghi Effendi asked Mr. Maxwell to design a suitable monument at her resting place in Buenos Aires which the Guardian erected on that spot.

Zarrin Moghimi

Zarrin was born in 1954, the youngest of three children. Our mother, while expecting Zarrin, was on a short visit to her home town, Ebyaneh, and Zarrin was born there. Father was traveling at the time and on his return, without knowing whether his new-born was a daughter or son, asked the ladies, "Where is my Zarrin?" Our parents returned with Zarrin to Tehr an when she was only 15 days old and she lived in that city till she completed her education at the age of 21 years. From early childhood, Zarrin had a warm and expressive voice. I recall her as a mere five year old, standing on a chair and reciting poems at Bah  '  meetings. When she was 15 years old, she became a teacher at the morals class. She would constantly repeat the stories of the Bah  '  martyrs to the children.

Devoted to both her parents, Zarrin had a particular love for our father. The two of them would sit for hours on end and discuss the Faith. While studying in University, Zarrin pursued her Bah  '  studies with equal intensity and underwent the four-year course in Bah  '  studies conducted by Dr. Ghadimi. After graduating from University, she could not wait to go pioneering and she particularly wished to go to Ebyaneh, her birthplace, however, the government refused to let her go as she was a Bah  ' . Instead, she began working as a translator, accountant and administrative assistant in a petrochemical factory in Sh r z. Zarrin's first two years in Sh r z were ones of great distress for her. She constantly burnt with the sorrow of not being able to render any service to the Faith. She was constantly praying and weeping. Then one day she had a dream: "I dreamt that Bah  ' ll h came to the House of the B b in Sh r z. All the Bah  ' s went to visit Him. I went too, but did not dare to enter and stood outside the door. I saw the Bah  ' s pay their respects to Bah  ' ll h and finally they left one by one. Still I stood outside. Then Bah  ' ll h rose and prepared to ascend the steps of the House. I thought to myself. "Woe is me. Even at this time, when the opportunity is at hand, I cannot go to Him. I do not deserve to see Him!" Suddenly, Bah  ' ll h turned towards me and motioned me to enter. I entered and went to Him. He embraced me and put my head against His heart. Then placing His hand on my head, He said: "Why are you so troubled? You will finally attain to that which you desire."

Soon after the revolution in Iran, Zarrin lost her office job because she was a Bah  ' . Zarrin later wrote to me that she had no job nor was she looking for one. In fact, even if her last job was offered again to her, she would decline it as she was so busy serving the Faith. Finally she was at peace with herself. Zarrin was appointed as an assistant to an Auxiliary Board Member. She was a member of the Youth Committee and the Teaching Committee. She also conducted three different Bah  '  classes simultaneously and visited the Bah  ' s in prison.

Finally, in December 1982, Zarrin was arrested along with our parents and some other Bah  ' s. The revolutionary guards invaded the house at midnight and arrested them. Mother was set free after four months of imprisonment, but Zarrin and father were retained. Mother, when writing to me, would often say: "Your father and Zarrin are in fine spirits. I do not know why, but whenever I visit Zarrin, she says to me, "Do not be hopeful for my release. Give me up. Prepare yourself." Zarrin was subjected to numerous trials, one of which lasted for over eleven hours and during which she was blindfolded. When Zarrin was taken for her final trial, the religious magistrate told her, as he would tell all others, "Either you renounce your Faith or prepare to be executed." She said in reply, "I have found the way to reality and I am not prepared to give it up for any price. Therefore I submit to the Court's verdict." The judge rudely repeated the same proposal. Zarrin started crying and with a loud voice said, "In what language do you want me to tell you? Why don't you leave me alone? My whole being is Bah  ' ll h! My heart is dedicated to Bah  ' ll h!" The infuriated judge shouted, "Then I will pull out your heart from your chest!" Zarrin replied, "Yet my heart will continue to cry out Bah  ' ll h! Bah  ' ll h!" Startled by this display of sentiment, the judge left the room.

After eight months of oppressive, intolerable imprisonment, Zarrin and her companions met their death with songs in praise of God. After Zarrin's martyrdom, Mother described the event for me over the phone: "I was allowed to go into the cold room. What I went through that day, and what I was in this historic moment, I cannot describe. I entered the cold room. O, my God! I saw ten angels lying motionless next to each other. I know all of them; I had been in the same prison with them. O ... What force kept me on my feet and breathing I don't know! I looked at all the ten angels and found Zarrin among them. I embraced her cold body, put my cheek on her delicate and cold cheek and kissed the mark of the rope on her lovely neck on behalf of all of you. Her face looked natural and composed."

Before her execution, Zarrin had instructed all her friends in prison: "No one should wear mourning black for me or cry loudly. Only my mother may cry a little because I know she cannot bear the separation."

Susan Moody

Susan I. Moody had studied art in Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and Paris, but an irresistible urge impelled her to study medicine in Chicago. There, she became a Bahá'í in 1903 and taught Bahá'í children's classes. Then, in 1908, word came from the Master: would Dr. Moody go to Iran to help her oppressed sisters there? "I knew then," she later remarked, "why I felt the urge so strongly to study medicine." On her way to Iran, she spent three days in the Holy Land with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Those three days, she said, were her whole life. She made a vow: "All that I have, and all that I hope to have, I dedicate to Thee, O God." The Master named her 'Amatu'l-A'lá, the Handmaid of the Most High.

For 15 years she served in Iran, often praying for the patience advised her by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and remembering his promise that whether living or dead, He would always be with her. She became fluent in Persian and established a medical practice. She helped start a Bahá'í hospital and a school for girls. "I cannot describe to you how they are deprived," she wrote of the Persian women. And during a disastrous famine and influenza epidemic she wrote, "Oh what a mercy that we are alive and awakened and trying to serve in the Kingdom of Abhá."

She was in the United States from 1925 to 1928, and she poured her energy into traveling teaching. She also raised funds for the girls' school and lauded the services of other Bahá'í women who had served with her in Iran; Elisabeth Stewart; Sarah A. Clock; and Lillian Kappes, who died there.

At the Guardian's request, she returned to Iran at the age of 77. During her last years she received many visitors and spoke Persian by preference, even to American friends. Asked for some statement regarding her meritorious life she only said, "Let it go, let it pass into the infinite." But when she died in Tíhrán in October, 1934, the Guardian cabled that "through her indomitable spirit, ceaseless services," she "forged first link chain uniting spiritual destinies cradle of our Faith and community stalwart defenders in great American Republic."

Mahshíd Nírúmand

Mahshíd Nírúmand, who was arrested in Shíráz on 8 December 1982, had been born in that city in 1955. Although she graduated in physics from the University of Shíráz in 1979 she was not given a degree because of her being a Bahá'í. She was active in the Bahá'í community, serving as an assistant to a member of the Auxiliary Board, and on a number of service committees. She was also a youth advisor.

There were two waves of arrests of Bahá'ís in the autumn and winter months of 1982, and Mahshíd was caught and imprisoned in the second wave. She was at home with her two sisters at 7:00 p.m. on the night she was arrested. Seven revolutionary guards entered the home, checked the girls' identity cards and then left. There was some confusion about Mahshíd's identity. The guards returned, however, with a list on which her name appeared correctly, and the terror began. Mahshíd was ordered to stand in a corner silently while the men searched and overturned her room, confiscating all Bahá'í materials and even leafing through non-Bahá'í books in which it was thought she might have concealed Bahá'í documents. Mahshíd's copy of the *Qur'án* was also seized because, the guards explained, it was not fitting that the holy book of Islam should be in the home of an "infidel." Mahshíd was courageous throughout the entire ordeal, her sisters reported. At 1:30 a.m. Mahshíd was taken away by the guards who, in a curious gesture of sympathy, invited her father to follow in his car in order that the family would know Mahshíd's whereabouts.

Although she was by nature pensive and retiring, and had a calm and soothing disposition, Mahshíd was capable of defending the Faith with great force, conviction and dignity. Even under cross examination, she was demure and unperturbed, breaking her silence only to give brief replies which illustrated effectively her profound knowledge of the Bahá'í teachings.

Throughout her long imprisonment, Mahshíd remained strong and steadfast. She was solicitous of others, often shared her food with her fellow prisoners, and encouraged them to be staunch. When the bodies of the ten martyred women were viewed by one of the Bahá'ís after the hanging, it was reported that Mahshíd appeared to be in a deep and peaceful sleep, and that she cradled on her shoulder the head of the youngest girl, Muna Mahmudnizhad.

Mabel Hyde Paine

Mabel Hyde Paine was one of those Bahá'ís who is like strong foundation stones to the communities they help to form. Her spiritual qualities, deep faith, courage and perseverance, thoroughness, and ability to rise above personalities were not only manifested in her personal life, but flowed into the administrative life of her community and helped it grow steadily in knowledge and obedience. There are some people whom the Bahá'í Faith changes completely. In others, it illumines and perfects those capacities with which, by inheritance and training, they already are endowed and directs them to their greatest usefulness in the service of God. Mabel Paine come to the Bahá'í Faith with a sound family background, a brilliant and well-trained mind, a disciplined conscience, and great spiritual aspiration.

She was born December 7, 1877, in Rockville, Connecticut. The desperate poverty of Mabel's childhood schooled her in hardship and gave her a great sense of responsibility. She was a serious girl. Later she said that she had worried a great deal, small as she was, for fear that there might not be enough money to pay the rent. After her graduation from high school (at the head of her class), she taught in a country school to earn money to go to college. With scholarship help, she was able to enter Wellesley College, but after a few weeks she had to return home and give up all study because of an attack of typhoid fever. Faced with the task of beginning again, she persevered. Again she taught school and re-entered Wellesley, from which she was graduated in 1902.

She was married, in 1908, to Ellery Burton Paine, of the Electrical Engineering Department at the University of Illinois, and came to live in Urbana, which was to be her home until the end of her life. Her marriage was a singularly happy and harmonious one. Once when she asked the Guardian whether she ought to put her husband's happiness or the Faith first, he answered, "Both," and this she was able to do, for Professor Paine was to say, "I cannot imagine two people who ever lived more happily together." Their tastes were similar and there was a great love between them. Professor Paine's ideals were always in close harmony with the Bahá'í ideals, and he had a deep respect for his wife's devotion. He remained until his death a firm friend of the Faith and of the Bahá'ís.

It was in Urbana that Mabel Paine first heard the Bahá'í Message. In writing to one of her friends about the Bahá'í history of Urbana, she said: "My memory begins with Mrs. Getsinger's (about 1912) and Mr. Remey's (1913) speaking at the Unity Club." She attended classes on "The Art of Living" and on Bible study from a Bahá'í point of view, which were conducted by Albert Vail, then minister of the Unitarian Church. In 1915 she became a Bahá'í and began her long service to the Cause. In September 1920, with her daughter, Sylvia, she visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Haifa, and for the rest of her life she was to share with the Urbana friends the great deepening and confirming Power that was poured out on her there. Mabel Paine and Sylvia made another pilgrimage to Haifa in 1931, this time to see the Guardian. One could always feel, when she mentioned the Guardian or recited the prayers for him, the great depth of her love.

After returning from her pilgrimage to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, she made a teaching trip to Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. She enjoyed this very much, but ill health prevented her from going on with this kind of teaching. During the first quarter-century of her marriage, she had three major operations, and much of the time was unable to go out much or be very active physically, but she used her enforced leisure for a thorough study of the Bahá'í Writings, bringing to it all the mental acumen she had shown in college. She became, indeed, a Bahá'í scholar. If any of us wanted to know, at any time, where to find a certain quotation, we had only to ask Mabel Paine and she could tell us almost at once. She wrote articles for "Star of the West." Perhaps she is best known now as the compiler of *The Divine Art of Living*, a book that is unique as an introduction to the Faith and as a source of meditation for Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís alike. Her insistence on perfection showed itself in her editorial work, in her teaching, and in her administrative service. She was often troubled by careless writing submitted for publication, for she wished the Cause to be represented only by the best. One could always rely on the accuracy of her work, and to read proof with her was to know what it is to be exact.

In teaching the Faith, she was especially good at preparing new believers for membership. She was careful that they should know the basic teachings well and be quite ready to accept them. She was rather retiring by nature and preferred not to do a great deal of public speaking, but she would never refuse to do anything that might further the Cause. Her talks were always clear, thought-provoking, and impressive with

their strong spirit of sincere devotion. When she made her last talk, she was really too weak to stand, but, having undertaken to do this thing for Bahá'u'lláh she carried it through to the end.

In spite of the undoubted importance of her literary and editorial work for the Faith, I think that one of Mabel Paine's greatest contributions was administrative. She was a member of the Spiritual Assembly of Urbana from its formation, in 1920, until her last illness, in 1955. She was many times its chairman, always one of its officers, and several times a delegate to the National Convention. Her support of Bahá'í institutions was steadfast in every way, especially by means of the Fund. Her contribution was always regular and generous to the point of sacrifice. She had the good fortune to begin her Bahá'í life in the Apostolic age, to serve through the 25 years of the formation of the Administrative Order in America, to see the dedication of the Temple, and the beginning of the Ten Year Crusade. She died on August 15, 1955.

It is to Mabel Paine's everlasting credit that, without thought of praise for herself or personal recognition, she so used her qualities, merging them with those of her fellow workers, as to build a strong Bahá'í community. In this, and in many individual Bahá'ís, her character lives on. As to her soul, in a letter to her daughter written by Leroy Ioas on behalf of the Guardian, he says: "The beloved Guardian deeply values the long and devoted services of your mother in the pathway of the Cause of God. She has ascended to the Abhá Kingdom and is now receiving a rich reward, from the Master whom she served so efficiently and so diligently."

Sarah Martin Pereira

Sarah Martin Pereira was born December 12, 1909 in Cleveland, Ohio, the daughter of Alexander Hamilton Martin and Mary Brown Martin. She had one sister, Lydia J. Martin (d. 1983) and two brothers; Alex Martin, Jr. (d. 1981) and Stuart B. Martin (d. 1984). She had one son, Carlos M. Pereira. She died on April 5, 1995.

Sarah Martin Pereira embraced the Bahá'í Faith in Cleveland, along with her parents, in 1913. She was long an active member of the Bahá'í community and served on its Spiritual Assembly from 1947-1952. She later served on Assemblies in Nashville, Tennessee (1958-1962), Washington, D.C. (1962-1971), and Montgomery County, Maryland (1971-1973). The national committees she served on included the National Programming Committee (1951-1955) and the Interracial Teaching Committee (1953-1958). She pioneered to Central America in 1950, giving Bahá'í talks in Spanish while in Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala. She also spoke at Green Acre Bahá'í School and at the National Convention and the National Headquarters of Canada. She served as homefront pioneer in Institute, West Virginia during 1952-1953 and her travel teaching trips took her to dozens of sites across the country. Dr. Pereira was appointed an Auxiliary Board member in 1954 and was reappointed through 1964. She was first elected to the National Spiritual Assembly in 1961 and served on the body until July 1973 when she was appointed by the Universal House of Justice to the Continental Board of Counsellors for North America. In 1980 her appointment was renewed for a five-year term on the Board of Counsellors for the Americas. In 1984 she moved to Charlotte, North Carolina to retire, but was engaged to teach Spanish at The Johnson C. Smith University. She retired again in 1989. She maintained her local Bahá'í activity, however, serving for some years as secretary of the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Charlotte, as well as being a Bahá'í lecturer.

After graduating from high school in Cleveland, Sarah Martin Pereira attended the Ohio State University, where she was elected Phi Beta Kappa and graduated with honors and with an A.B. degree, with distinction in French. Her M.A. in French came from Case Western Reserve University and she received her PhD. in Romance Languages from Ohio State. Her academic honors include membership in Phi Beta Kappa (Liberal Arts), Kappa Delta Pi (Education), Delta Sigma Pi (Spanish), Phi Delta Kappa (French), and Phi Lambda Beta (Portugese). The professional organizations in which she held membership include the American Association of Teachers of French, the Southern Association of Modern Languages, the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, and the American Association of Higher Education. She received fellowships for the furtherance of study in foreign languages at Case Western Reserve University, Vanderbilt University, Catholic University, Georgetown University, and Ohio State University. Some of her many articles on language and the humanities have been published by the *Columbian Educational Journal* and *World Order* magazine.

After serving as Professor of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of the District of Columbia and as Academic Dean of the College of Education and Arts and Sciences at that institution, she accepted appointment in 1984 as Visiting Professor of Spanish at The Johnson C. Smith University, which post she held until her retirement in 1989. For 18 months she had also helped launch the Honors College program at Johnson C. Smith, serving as the College's first director for planning and implementation.

Queen Marie of Rumania

The first Queen of the world to study and to promote Bahá'u'lláh's great Teachings has been Her Majesty Queen Marie of Rumania, one of the queens of this twentieth century who stands highest in intellect, in vision, in clear understanding of the new universal epoch now opening. Her Majesty received the book *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* by Dr. J. E. Esslemont and a note from the writer of this article who first visited Bucharest, Rumania, in January, 1926. The Rumanian Queen, grand-daughter of the renowned Queen Victoria of the British Empire and of Czar Alexander II of Russia, both of whom received Tablets from Bahá'u'lláh in their day, read this volume until three o'clock in the morning and two days later, on January 30, 1926, received me in audience in Controceni Palace, in Bucharest. Her first words after the greeting were, "I believe these Teachings are the solution for the world's problems today!" The account of that historic morning appeared in "The Bahá'í Magazine" in Washington, in June, 1926, but very illuminating letters written by Her Majesty that same year show how deep was her confirmation. Here is one written to her loved friend Loie Fuller, an American then residing in Paris, which after these ten years can be published for the first time:

"Lately great hope has come to me from one, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a personal follower of Christ. Reading, I have found in his and his father Bahá'u'lláh's message of faith all my yearnings for real religion satisfied. If you ever hear of Bahá'u'lláh or of the Bahá'í movement which is known in America you will know what that is! What I mean, these books have strengthened me beyond belief and I am now ready to die any day full of hope; but I pray God not to take me away yet, for I still have a lot of work to do."

Other letters record that first of all she was teaching her young daughter Ileana about these beautiful truths. For ten years Her Majesty and her daughter, H.R.H. Princess Ileana (now Archduchess Anton), have read with interest each new book about the Bahá'í Movement as soon as it come from the press....

Then in the audience in Controceni Palace on February 16, 1934, when Her Majesty was told that the Rumanian translation of *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* had just been published in Bucharest, she said she was so happy that her people were to have the blessing of reading this precious Teaching. How beautiful she looked that afternoon--as always--for her loving eyes mirror her mighty spirit; a most unusual Queen is she, a consummate artist, a lover of beauty and wherever she is there is glory. Perhaps too, a Queen is a symbol, people like to have their Queen beautiful and certainly Queen Marie of Rumania is one of the most lovely in this world today. Her clothes, designed by herself, are always a "tout ensemble" creation so harmonious in colors they seem to dress her soul. She received me in her private library where a cheerful fire glowed in the quaint, built-in fireplace; tea was served on a low table, the gold service set being wrought in flowers. There were flowers everywhere.... Then the conversation turned again to the Bahá'í Teachings and she gave a greeting to be sent to Shoghi Effendi in Haifa. Later she mentioned an incident in Hamburg when she was en route to Iceland in the summer of 1933. As she passed through the street, a charming girl tossed a little note to her into the motor car. It was: "I am so happy to see you in Hamburg, because you are a Bahá'í." Her majesty remarked that they recognized a Bahá'í and this shows a spirit of unity in the Bahá'í Movement.

Her Majesty said to me, "In my heart I am entirely Bahá'í," and she sent me this wonderful appreciation: "The Bahá'í Teaching brings peace to the soul and hope to the heart. To those in search of assurance the Words of the Father are as a fountain in the desert after long wandering." I asked her if I could perhaps speak of the brooch which historically is precious to her, and she replied, "Yes, you may." Once, and it was in 1928, Her dear Majesty had given the writer a gift, a lovely and rare brooch which had been a gift to the queen from Her Royal Relatives in Russia some years ago. It was two little wings of wrought gold and silver, set with tiny diamond chips and joined together with one large pearl. "Always you are giving gifts to others, and I am going to give you a gift from me," said the Queen smiling, and she herself clasped it onto my dress. The wings and the pearl made it seem "Light-bearing," Bahá'í! It was sent the same week to Chicago as a gift to the Bahá'í Temple, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, and at the national Bahá'í Convention which was in session that spring, a demure was made--should a gift from the Queen be sold? Should it not be kept as a souvenir of the first Queen who arose to promote the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh? However, it was sold immediately and the money given to the Temple, for all Bahá'ís were giving to the utmost to forward this mighty structure, the first of its kind in the United States. Mr. Willard Hatch, a Bahá'í of Los Angeles, California, who bought the exquisite brooch, took it to Haifa, Palestine, in 1931 and placed it in the archives on Mt. Carmel where down the ages it will rest with the Bahá'í treasures.

Inadequate as is any one article to portray Her Majesty Queen Marie of Rumania's splendid spiritual attitude, still these few glimpses do show that she stands strong for the highest Truth, and as an historical record they will present a little of what the first Queen did for the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

Keith Ransom-Kehler

'Abdu'l-Bahá raised up Susan Moody to aid the Persian friends. Shoghi Effendi, during another bleak time for the Faith in Iran, sent Keith Ransom-Kehler to cheer and defend them. Keith had been part of Chicago's elite society world when she became a Bahá'í. She had also been a Christian minister, and was an excellent speaker. She taught all over the United States, Europe, India, and Australia, where she met the chief of the Maoris. Keith gave up her social station for the Cause, and she must have suffered. In 1923, probably in the early part of her life as a Bahá'í, she wrote to May Maxwell, "Pray for me, May, it is my only refuge.... Through this bitter storm of trial in which every attribute of light is obscure or withdrawn, you still stand, a dazzling presence on the further shore toward which I struggle, a gift and evidence lent me by the Master...."

The suffering of the Guardian deeply touched her. She was in Haifa in 1926, only five years after the passing of the blessed Master. She wrote about the Guardian to the 18th Annual United States Bahá'í Convention: "... this youth under thirty, laboring day and night for us, sacrificing every human desire and tendency to further our efforts ... with no more personal life than a graven image, no more thought of self than a breeze or a flower, just a hollow reed for the divine melody. Any one of us is ready to die for him, but can we conscientiously number ourselves among those who are willing to live for him?"

In 1932, Keith was again in Haifa, where the Guardian personally trained her. The Guardian's secretary informed the National Spiritual Assembly that "she rendered wonderful services in both Australia and India and Shoghi Effendi trusts that she will do the same in Persia." He asked her to obtain permission from the authorities to bring Bahá'í literature into Persia. The heartbreak of this task, which seemed a constant round of meetings with suave, pleasant, but hypocritical officials, was somewhat softened by her many meetings with the Persian Bahá'ís, who dearly loved her, and whom she was able to encourage and strengthen. For a year, she pursued her mission. "How strange the ways of God," she wrote, "that I, a poor, feeble old woman from the distant west, should be pleading for liberty and justice in the land of Bahá'u'lláh...."

Exhausted by her work, she died during a smallpox epidemic in October 1933. A month before her death, she had addressed a gathering in honor of the Anniversary of the Declaration of the Báb, pointing out that the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are the only solution to the world's problems. "Keith's precious life," cabled the Guardian, "offered up in sacrifice to beloved Cause in Bahá'u'lláh's native land." He named her a Hand of the Cause of God, and the first American martyr, and mourned his "earthly separation" from her, his "invaluable collaborator," "unfailing counselor," and "esteemed and faithful friend."

"...I have fallen," Keith wrote during that year of trial, "though I never faltered. Months of effort with nothing accomplished is the record that confronts me. If anyone in future should be interested in this thwarted adventure of mine, he alone can say whether near or far from the seemingly impregnable heights of complaisance and indifference my tired old body fell. The smoke and din of battle are today too dense for me to ascertain whether I moved forward or was slain in my tracks. Nothing in the world is meaningless, suffering least of all. Sacrifice with its attendant agony is a germ, an organism. Man cannot blight its fruition as he can the seeds of earth. Once sown it blooms. I think forever, in the sweet fields of eternity. Mine will be a very modest flower, perhaps like the single, tiny forget-me-not, watered by the blood of Quddús, that I plucked in the Sabzih-Maydán of Barfurúsh; should it ever catch the eye, may one who seems to be struggling in vain garner it in the name of Shoghi Effendi and cherish it for his dear remembrance."

Orcella Rexford

Orcella Rexford used her nearly 30-year career as a professional lecturer to good advantage in carrying out a personal traveling teaching campaign that took her across the U.S. and to Mexico, Alaska and Hawaii with the message of Bahá'u'lláh.

Born June 12, 1887, in Tracy, Minnesota, Orcella was graduated from the University of California at Berkeley where she had studied four languages and majored in education to prepare for a career as a college professor. She undertook graduate work in philosophy and psychology, discovered that her interests had changed, and instead became a lecturer and writer. She also changed her name from Louise Cutts-Powell to Orcella Rexford, a cryptogram made up of letters chosen for her by an acquaintance. To Orcella, the new name symbolized her wish to link her personality to cosmic forces for good which would give here the greatest impetus for development.

Orcella studied the Faith with Dr. Edward Getsinger in Boston and became a Bahá'í there in 1918 or 1919. To Orcella, belief and action were inseparable. While studying with Dr. Getsinger she brought along two students from her own classes who also became Bahá'ís. Soon she began organizing Bahá'í study classes for Dr. Getsinger. In response to the *Tablets of the Divine Plan* in which 'Abdu'l-Bahá called for pioneers to arise, Orcella left for Alaska in 1922.

Dr. Gayne Gregory, a dentist in Anchorage, was the first person in Alaska to become a Bahá'í through Orcella's efforts. They were later married, and Dr. Gregory gave up his practice to become business manager for his wife's lecture tours.

In 1925 the Gregorys left Alaska for Honolulu, Hawaii. After teaching there, they returned to the mainland for extensive traveling teaching work. When speaking to an audience on various topics including diet, fashion or interior decorating, Orcella would refer them to a presentation on the Faith that would follow the paid lecture. Her teaching method was fruitful. In Denver, for example, 1,800 people attended meetings on each of two nights to hear her speak about the Faith, and a study class of 435 people was formed. At one time or another Orcella spoke in California, Washington, Montana, Colorado, Arizona, Nebraska, Minnesota, Texas, Oklahoma, Illinois, Wisconsin, New York, Michigan, Massachusetts, Georgia and Florida. She also traveled to Mexico. In 1926 the Gregorys received permission to visit the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, in Haifa, and afterward returned to the U.S. with renewed spiritual strength. In Phoenix, Arizona, Orcella was injured in a fall, an accident that was to end her career as a lecturer. After convalescing in Hollywood, California, she attended the 38th Bahá'í National Convention in Wilmette, Illinois, and on her way home spoke about the Faith in various cities and at the Geyserville Bahá'í School.

Three months later, on August 11, 1946, Orcella Rexford passed away suddenly. Among the many tributes that came from all over the world was one from Mamie L. Seto who wrote of Orcella, "...she gave one of the most convincing opening talks on the Faith I have ever heard.... I can think of few people who loved a new idea as much as Orcella did.... She was born to conquer and overcome those obstacles which stand between one and his goal...." The Guardian cabled to Dr. Gregory: "Deplore loss indefatigable, gifted promoter Faith. Heartfelt sympathy. Fervent prayers. Shoghi." Orcella Rexford's earthly remains were laid to rest in Inglewood Park Cemetery, near the grave of Thornton Chase, the first American Bahá'í.

Martha Root

To Martha Root, that archetype of Bahá'í itinerant teachers and the foremost Hand raised by Bahá'u'lláh since 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing, must be awarded, if her manifold services and the supreme act of her life are to be correctly appraised, the title of leading ambadress of the Faith and Pride of Bahá'í teachers, whether men or women, in both the East and the West.

The first to arise, in the very year the *Tablets of the Divine Plan* were unveiled in the United States of America, in response to the epoch-making summons voiced in them by 'Abdu'l-Bahá; embarking, with unswerving resolve and a spirit of sublime detachment, on her world journeys, covering an almost uninterrupted period of 20 years and carrying her four times round the globe, in the course of which she traveled four times to China and Japan and three times to India, visited every important city in South America, transmitted the message of the new Day to kings, queens, princes and princesses, presidents of republics, ministers and statesmen, publicists, professors, clergy men and poets, as well as a vast number of people in various walks of life, and contacted, both officially and informally, religious congresses, peace societies, Esperanto associations, socialist congresses, Theosophical societies, women's clubs and other kindred organizations, this indomitable soul has by virtue of the character of her exertions and the quality of the victories she has won, established a record that constitutes the nearest approach to the example set by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself to His disciples in the course of His journeys throughout the West.

Her eight successive audiences with Queen Marie of Rumania, the first of which took place in January 1926 in Controceni Palace in Bucharest, the second in 1927 in Pelisor in Sinaia, followed by a visit in January of the ensuing year to her majesty and her daughter Princess Ileana, at the royal palace in Belgrade, where they were staying as guests of the King and Queen of Yugoslavia, and later, in October, 1929, at the Queen's summer palace "Tehna Yuva," at Baltic, on the Black Sea, and again, in August 1932 and February 1933 at the home of Princess Ileana (now Arch-Duchess Anton of Austria) at Modling, near Vienna, followed a year later, in February 1936, in that same palace--these audiences stand out, by reason of the profound influence exerted by the visitor on her royal hostess, as witnessed by the successive encomiums from the Queen's own pen, as the most outstanding feature of those memorable journeys.

The three invitations which that indefatigable champion of the Faith received to call on Prince Paul and Princess Olga of Yugoslavia at the Royal Palace in Belgrade; the lectures which she delivered in over 400 universities and colleges in both the East and the West; her twice repeated visits to all German universities with the exception of two, as well as to nearly a hundred universities, colleges and schools in China; the innumerable articles which she published in newspapers and magazines in practically every country she visited; the numerous broadcasts which she delivered and the unnumbered books she placed in private and state libraries; her personal meetings with the statesmen of more than 50 countries, during her three-months stay in Geneva, in 1932, at the time of the Disarmament conference; the painstaking efforts she exerted, while on her arduous journeys, in supervising the translation and production of a large number of versions of Dr. Esslemont's *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*; the correspondence exchanged with, and the presentation of Bahá'í books to, men of eminence and learning; her pilgrimage to Persia, and the touching homage paid by her to the memory of the heroes of the Faith when visiting the Bahá'í historic sites in that country; her visit to Adrianople, where, in her overflowing love for Bahá'u'lláh, she searched out the houses where He had dwelt and the people whom He had met during His exile to that city, and where she was entrained by its governor and mayor; the ready and unfailing assistance extended by her to the administrators of the Faith in all countries where its institutions had been erected or were being established--these may be regarded as the highlights of a service which, in many of its aspects, is without parallel in the entire history of the first Bahá'í century.

No less impressive is the list of the names of those whom she interviewed in the course of the execution of her mission, including, in addition to those already mentioned, such royal personages and distinguished figures as King Haakon of Norway; King Feisal of Iraq; King Zog of Albania and members of his family; Princess Marina of Greece (now the Duchess of Kent); Princess Elizabeth of Greece.... Neither age nor ill-health, neither the paucity of literature which hampered her early efforts, nor the meagre resources which imposed an added burden on her labours, neither the extremities of the climates to which she was exposed, nor the political disturbances which she encountered in the course of her journeys, could damp the zeal or deflect the purpose of this spiritually dynamic and saintly woman. Single-handed and, on more than

one occasion, in extremely perilous circumstances, she continued to call, in clarion tones, men of diverse creeds, colours and classes to the Message of Bahá'u'lláh until, while in spite of a deadly and painful disease, the onslaught of which she endured with heroic fortitude, she hastened homeward to help in the recently launched Seven Year Plan.

She was stricken down on the way, in far off Honolulu. There in that symbolic spot between the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, in both of which she had laboured so mightily, she died, on September 28, 1939, and brought to its close a life which may well be regarded as the fairest fruit as yet yielded by the Formative Age of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh.

Simin Sabiri

Simin Sabiri, her mother has written, was only twenty-four years and four months old at the time of her execution. Simin was born in the village of Dahbid in Fars Province, Iran, on 2 March 1958, the youngest of five children. Her mother, Tavus Pampusiyan, had come from a Jewish family who had recognized and embraced the Faith, and who were severely persecuted during their lives. Simin's father, a former Muslim, had independently investigated and accepted the Bahá'í teachings. He was a widower at the time of his marriage to Tavus Pampusiyan and two of the six children from his earlier union were still young girls and needed a mother's care. Mrs. Sabiri has recorded that Simin, as a child, was extraordinarily well-mannered, tidy and fastidious. She was intelligent, quick-witted and artistic, and had an intense interest in art and handicrafts.

Simin was a good pupil and achieved high grades at school, and she was an avid student of the Baha'i writings. After completing high school she studied commercial subjects including secretarial skills and typing, and found employment in an agricultural firm. "One day," her mother wrote, "she ran towards me with a happy smile and announced her appointment as an assistant to the Auxiliary Board member." She is thought to be the youngest assistant to have been appointed in Iran. As well, she served on the Bahá'í education committee.

On 16 November 1978 angry mobs attacked, looted and set afire the homes of a number of Bahá'í families in Shíráz. The Sabiri home was attacked, its windows broken, and stones were thrown. Despite being injured by broken glass, Simin remained cheerful. Although she and her family took refuge with relatives and thus escaped further bodily harm, not long after their home was confiscated, as were the homes of many other Bahá'í families. On 26 October 1982 Simin was imprisoned and subjected to the four indoctrination sessions to which all prisoners were exposed. These were designed to explore and hold up to ridicule and sinister accusation their Bahá'í activities, correct their "misguided" thinking, invite them to recant and to embrace Islam. If the prisoners would but cooperate, their lives were to be spared, they were to be freed and feted by the media, and celebrated as duped victims of a vile heresy, of evil and murky intent, from whose eyes the veils had fallen enabling them to return to the clear light of Islám.

Simin was soon recognized as one of the most fearless and outspoken of the Bahá'í prisoners. She saw in the interrogations arising from the imprisonment of Bahá'ís throughout Iran a God-given opportunity to acquaint judges and others at high levels of authority with the true nature of the Bahá'í Faith, the goals of its administrative order, its severance from political concerns. For her, each session held the potentiality of having the truth of the Bahá'í Faith bear in on the minds and hearts of the interrogators. Fluently, lucidly, passionately she fielded the questions put to her in her examinations by the judge. "It is important that the truth is being made known to judges all across the country in order that they might understand that the Bahá'í Faith is a religion, not a political movement," a fellow prisoner reports her to have said. But she was under no illusions. After her fourth interrogation, having foreseen the outcome, she gently tried to prepare her parents for final separation. On one occasion she said to her mother, "Don't expect that I shall be released." And whenever her family visited she urged them to realize that she was content with the will of God and prayed that they would reconcile themselves to her loss. Simin's mother, admitted for a few moments to the room where the bodies of the martyrs lay, has written that as she bent to kiss her daughter's face, her heart scalded with grief, she exclaimed, "My dearest Simin, I have given you in the path of God!"

Dorothy Kedibone Senne

She stood in the doorway of the small school in Alexandra, Johannesburg – a friendly, sparkling person. The three pioneers who were helping to teach handcrafts in the school paused to say goodbye. "Wait," Dorothy said, "I have a question. There's something different about you; what is it that you have?" Helen Miller spoke for the other two, Doris Ballard and Bahíyyih Ford. "We're Bahá'ís," she said. That was the beginning.

Dorothy was born in Alexandra Township in February 1931, the fifth daughter in a family of six children. She was of the well-known Sebolao family of Thaba'nchu in the Orange Free State, the ancestral home of Tswana people. She attended Holy Cross Mission School, Moroka High School, and Ohlange College in Natal. She taught in several places and in 1972 became principal of Mokoena Community School. She had decided when she was a child that she wanted to become a teacher.

In 1953, Dorothy and Ephens Nti Senne were married at Kgale in Phokeng, Rustenburg, Transvaal. On the wedding day, Ephens introduced her to a guest as "one of my best friends." This was a touching and significant compliment and Dorothy remembered it all her life. Four daughters and a son were born to the Sennes.

Dorothy became interested in the Bahá'í Faith from the time she asked her first question. Early in her study, she spoke of her husband living at Rustenburg, wishing that she could share with him what she was learning. The pioneers delightedly arranged to take Dorothy to Rustenburg. Arriving at Dorothy's home early in the morning, the pioneers were introduced to a fine-looking man, Dorothy's brother-in-law, William Masehla (now a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors in the Southern African zone) who was to chaperon her because she was venturing out alone with strangers.

It was a happy day with singing and laughter on the way. The pioneers met Mr. Senne and other members of his family. At noon the picnic basket was unpacked and typical American picnic fare was spread out – cold ham, potato salad and apple pie. The pioneers did not realize that such food was strange to their guests but the unfailing courtesy of the African people prevailed and the lunch seemed to be eaten with relish. Ever since, the Sennes have said that in South Africa it was not tea, like in the days of the Báb, that captured hearts, but ham and potato salad!

On the journey back to Johannesburg, Mr. Masehla joined Dorothy in asking questions about the Faith. The little car sped along carrying two souls who were to become the earliest pillars of the Faith in Southern Africa.

Dorothy became a Bahá'í in January 1955, the first African woman in South Africa to embrace its truth. She began at once to teach the Faith and many hearts were attracted. She was deeply sincere, clear-thinking and honest in her approach to life and desired to build her life on truth. When she found the answer to her seeking, her enthusiasm knew no bounds. Her gay, outgoing spirit drew people to her; she taught with conviction and love. Dorothy had a superlative capacity to adjust herself to people of all walks of life; she was comfortable and happy with those who could not read and write as well as with the educated. The Faith grew. Bahá'í communities in and around Rustenburg were born. In addition, through her efforts and those of Bula Stewart who had settled in Pretoria as a pioneer, more than forty-five people embraced the Faith.

As the years passed, Dorothy's favourite study became the Covenant. Her last talk, at the national teaching conference in 1976, dealt with this subject which is at the heart of commitment to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. She passed from this life on 9 June 1977. Her funeral was as she would have wanted it to be, a means of teaching the Faith. Over one thousand people, including many non-Bahá'ís, gathered to pay tribute to one who had been a source of happiness, spiritual rebirth and love. Voices were raised on all sides: "Our mother has left us." Her husband, now a member of the Auxiliary Board, movingly paid tribute: "Up to the time of her death, Dorothy remained loyal, devoted, dedicated, God-loving and God-fearing in rendering service to the divine Cause of God."

The following cable dated 9 June 1977 was received from the Universal House of Justice:

GRIEVED PASSING DOROTHY SENNE FIRST AFRICAN WOMAN BELIEVER SOUTH AFRICA STOP KINDLY EXTEND OUR WARMEST SYMPATHY HER FAMILY AND FRIENDS STOP PRAYING HOLY SHRINES PROGRESS HER SOUL ABHA KINGDOM.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, in the Divine Plan Tablets, has written: *It is said that in South Africa, a diamond mine is discovered. Although the mine is most valuable, yet after all it is stone. Perchance, God willing, the mine of humanity may be discovered and the brilliant pearls of the Kingdom be found.*

Mamie L. Seto

Mamie Loretta O'Connor Seto's many services to the Cause of God, spanning more than 50 years, included pioneering and traveling teaching from the Canadian Maritime Provinces to Hawaii and Hong Kong.

Born April 10, 1885, near Port Huron, Michigan, Mamie had a happy childhood with her brothers and sisters. As a young woman, she visited a neighbor whose son had brought a fellow law student home with him one weekend from the Detroit College of Law. The student's name was Anthony Yuen Seto, and he and Mamie were immediately attracted to each other. They were married August 1, 1919, and both became Bahá'ís two years later. When Mr. Seto was admitted to law practice in his native Hawaii, the couple moved to Honolulu where Mrs. Seto served on the Spiritual Assembly of Honolulu and also taught Bahá'í children's classes for several years. The Setos' only child, a son, was stillborn.

Mrs. Seto was especially concerned about support for the Bahá'í Fund, and at the request of the National Spiritual Assembly, she traveled extensively to speak to Bahá'ís about the Fund. In 1932, the Setos moved from Hawaii to San Francisco where they continued to teach the Faith and make public appearances. They spent six months in 1944 visiting the Maritime Provinces of Canada, arriving first on Prince Edward Island.

Back in San Francisco, the Setos spoke about the Faith to representatives from many countries who were attending ceremonies marking the formation of the United Nations in 1945. In September 1954, they responded to the message inaugurating the Ten Year Crusade by pioneering to Hong Kong. Upon learning of their decision to pioneer, the Guardian wrote: "...your determination to pioneer in one of the virgin areas of the globe will serve as a glorious crown to the highly meritorious services which you have rendered." Because of their involvement in programs of the United Nations Association and the Hong Kong Council of Women, the Setos were able to meet many prominent Chinese, Indian and English residents of Hong Kong, and to present talks at many public meetings. Press coverage of these meetings and at-home interviews with the Setos resulted in considerable publicity of the Faith. Two years after their arrival in Hong Kong, the Setos had to return to the U.S. so that Mr. Seto could receive medical treatment for a heart condition. Returning to Hong Kong in February 1957, they attended the first National Convention of the Bahá'ís of North East Asia in Tokyo, Japan, at which the area's new National Spiritual Assembly was elected. At the very hour of their departure from Tokyo, Mr. Seto suddenly passed away and was buried in the International Cemetery in Yokohama.

In spite of her own failing health, Mrs. Seto remained at her pioneering post in Hong Kong until 1963 when she moved to Burlingame, California. After her husband's death Mrs. Seto had made a pilgrimage to the Bahá'í World Centre, and she also traveled to London for the World Congress in 1963.

When Mrs. Seto died on April 15, 1970, at the age of 85, the Universal House of Justice cabled: "Grieved learn passing devoted maidservant Bahá'u'lláh Mamie Seto. Her exemplary services Cause God spanning more than half-century marked by effective contributions national, local administrative institutions distinguished by highly fruitful teaching America and pioneering with husband Asia. Praying rich reward Abhá Kingdom."

Táhirih

Táhirih stands as a complex, elusive, and contradictory figure--almost a legend rather than a flesh and blood person. Perhaps we will never understand her completely, but we can appreciate, however dimly through the veils of culture, language, and time, her exquisite beauty, the mystical force that impelled her to faith and to her expression of that faith.

It began with a dream. A youth appeared to her, wearing the garb of a siyyid, a descendent of Muhammad. He stood suspended in the air, reciting verses, his hands upraised. Waking, Táhirih wrote the verses from the dream in her notebook. Later, when she saw for the first time the writings of the Báb, the verses from her dream were among them. She immediately declared her faith in the Báb as the One promised in all the holy books and became one of the first 18 souls in the world to recognize the arrival of this new revelation from God. She never met the Báb; her faith was through His Words.

Her father had always seen the keenness of her mind. Now, to his dismay, that mind turned towards the eloquent defense of this new faith. Her mouth expounded arguments in favour of the Báb, her tongue sang his praises--and who could resist the beauty of her logic, the poetry of her expression, the fervour of her conviction. She traveled; she taught. When arrested for the ferment her activities caused, she taught still. How could she be silent after such a vision of paradise?

When I think of Táhirih, it is in a series of mental snapshots. The first is of her seated behind the heavy curtain in her father's house, separated from the men who were her intellectual inferiors correcting their erroneous ideas, their faulty logic. The second snapshot is of her sitting, in a golden glow, like a rich pot of honey at the centre of a group of bejewelled Iranian women who buzz about her like bees as she tells them about the Báb. "Abdu'l-Bahá describes one such gathering in his book, *Memorials of the Faithful*: "It happened that there was a celebration at the Mayor's house for the marriage of his son; a nuptial banquet was prepared, and the house adorned. The flower of Tehran's Ladies were invited, the princesses, the wives of vazirs and other great women. A splendid wedding it was, with instrumental music and vocal melodies--by day and night the lute, the bells and songs. Then Táhirih began to speak; and so bewitched were the great ladies that they forsook the cithern and the drum and all the pleasures of the wedding feast, to crowd about Táhirih and listen to the sweet words of her mouth."

My third snapshot is of her standing defiant, joyous, triumphant, and unveiled, before the group of Bábís at the conference at Badasht, affirming, "I am the Word which the Promised One is to utter, the Word which shall put to flight the chiefs and nobles of the earth!" In this moment, the faces of the men contrast vividly to her own--their expressions are of consternation, confusion, shock, despair. They have not yet fully grasped the sweeping changes inherent in this new Faith, the new vision required by it, its new melody. Except for one, Bahá'u'lláh, who gazes at her with knowing eyes.

Perhaps my favorite snapshot is of her sitting in her room alone, writing poems of yearning, anguished love. Her face is flushed with pain as the pen poises over the paper. Is she thinking of all she has abandoned for this love--the comfortable, secure family life with husband, children who will grow up hating her? More probably, she is concerned with singing the beauty of her Beloved in a language worthy of His station.

If mine eyes should ever see Thee,
Gaze on brow and lip and cheek,
I would tell Thee of my yearning,
Of love's anguish I would speak.

From house to house, or door to door
Lonely as the wind I go,
Past every lane and every turning,
Ever must Thy presence seek.

Never think it's tears I'm shedding,
Or but grief I'm feeling--no,
Like a raging river burning

Lifeblood's streaming down my cheek

Though bound by the restrictions of classical Persian style, how sweetly she sings, infusing the traditional images with the resonance of a new vision. And so her poems have echoed, beautifully and insistently, through generations of Persian readers. She wrote, "The effulgence of the Abhá Beauty hath pierced the veil of night; behold souls of his lovers dancing, moth-like, in the light that has flashed from his face." She, too, danced moth-like, and at last she was consumed by that flame.

My final snapshot: Táhirih the Pure, Qurratu'l-'Ayn, solace of the Eyes, stands by the well in her white silk dress, as her killers approach, ready to put around her throat the silk scarf she has given them for the task. They think to silence her. "You can kill me as soon as you like," she exclaims, "but you cannot stop the emancipation of women." This in a land where women were no more than veiled shadows. Did her murderers understand her prophecy?

Her life, her voice, sing on today, in women all over the world. They are inspired by her example to make of their lives beautiful poems, beautiful prayers to God, to be fearless and eloquent teachers of the faith they love. To be moths dancing around one orb of shining light. To become filled with that Light. Táhirih sang,

Within herself gazed Táhirih,
The chambers of her heart to know;
Through every membrane thee discerning,
None other in the world to know.

If we gaze within ourselves, will we find such a glorious vision? Perhaps then we, too, will find the voice to sing its praise.

Juliet Thompson

From early childhood Juliet Thompson showed a talent for painting. By age 12, following the death of her father, she was able to sell some of her pastel portraits to help family finances. By 1889, when she was 16, Juliet already had acquired a reputation for her art work.

In 1901, at the invitation of Alice Barney, the mother of Laura Clifford Barney, Juliet moved from New York City to Paris to study art at the Sorbonne. She was accompanied by her mother and brother. That same year she saw a photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and immediately recognized His face as the one she had seen in a dream some years ago when she was seriously ill with diphtheria. Miss Thompson became a Bahá'í that same year after studying the Faith with May Bolles Maxwell, the mother of the Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, and thus became one of that first group of believers in Paris. Back in New York, her art studio became a center for Bahá'í meetings. Largely through her efforts, many people declared their belief in Bahá'u'lláh.

In 1908, the year after 'Abdu'l-Bahá was released from His imprisonment, Miss Thompson was one of the Kinney party to make a pilgrimage to Haifa. She saw the Master again, first in France and then in Switzerland, when she traveled in 1911 from New York to Europe. Juliet was one of the believers on hand in 1912 to greet 'Abdu'l-Bahá upon His arrival in New York City. It was she who arranged for Him to be received by the rector of the Church of the Ascension in New York during an evening service. Seated in the bishop's chair beside the altar, 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered questions about the Teachings from members of the congregation.

In February 1912, against her mother's wishes, Juliet had spoken at the Bowery Mission, a place of refuge for derelicts who often slept in parks or on doorsteps. She arranged for the Master to speak there about two months later, an invitation that He accepted. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave Miss Thompson a 1,000-franc note, asking that she exchange it for the equivalent in American quarters and meet Him at the mission with the quarters in a bag. She arrived with Dr. Edward Getsinger, each of them carrying a large bag of coins. The Mission director asked Miss Thompson to introduce 'Abdu'l-Bahá. At the end of the program He gave each person in the audience one of the quarters, the price of a bed for the night.

In June 1912, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in Juliet's studio and had agreed to sit while she painted His portrait, she was overwhelmed by the task. Later, she wrote of that moment when she had said to the Master, "...Pray for me, or I am lost. I implore You, inspire me. "I will pray," He answered, "and as you are doing this only for the sake of God, you will be inspired." "And then something happened. All fear fell away from me, and it was as though someone Else saw through my eyes...." Although Miss Thompson's original pastel portrait of the Master has been lost, reproductions of it have survived.

She kept a detailed diary of her experiences with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Later, she wrote an essay entitled "'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Center of the Covenant" and "Peace Compilation," a collection of the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the Bahá'í promise of peace, published in 1918. Her book, *I, Mary Magdalen*, was published in 1940. In 1926 Miss Thompson, with Mary Maxwell (Rúhíyyih Khánum), made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land where they met the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi.

During World War II Miss Thompson pioneered for more than a year to Mexico. After the war she lived and taught the Faith for a year in New Orleans before returning to New York. When the Ten Year Crusade began in 1953, Juliet and her friend Daisy Smyth wanted to pioneer, but Juliet's heart condition prevented it. Juliet, who had served for many years on the Spiritual Assembly of New York City, passed away on December 9, 1956.

In a cable calling for a suitable memorial service to be held at the House of Worship in Wilmette, the beloved Guardian referred to Juliet Thompson as an "outstanding, exemplary handmaid of 'Abdu'l-Bahá" who compiled "...over half-century record manifold meritorious services...."

Mary Thornburgh-Cropper

Mrs. Thornburgh-Cropper was the first Bahá'í in England and one of the first Western people to recognize the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. She received the name "Maryam Khánum" from 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Mrs. Basil Hall writes: "She put her car at the Master's disposal during His visits to London. I can see her tall, graceful figure with her serene angel face shining beneath a crown of silver hair, her blue eyes, and the soft blend of blues and purples in her dress, gracious to all, and ready to be of constant service to our exalted Guest."

In a letter to Lady Blomfield, now published in *The Chosen Highway*, Mrs. Thornburgh-Cropper tells how she became aware of the new Revelation. "Early in 1900 I received a letter from Mrs. Phoebe Hearst, my life long friend from California, telling me of a wonderful new religious teaching she had contacted. She said that she felt it would be of great interest to me and that when she came to London, she would tell me all about it. A short time later I was searching in the encyclopedia for some information about King David, about whom I had had an argument. In turning over the pages, my eye was caught by a name "Báb." There was something so moving in this story of a martyr for His Faith, that so moved me that I went to the British Museum to search for further information regarding Him and His teaching.

Mrs. Thornburgh-Cropper accompanied Mrs. Hearst to 'Akká in 1902, and later made another pilgrimage in 1906, both times being received by the Master. Of her first encounter with Him she says: "Someone went before us with a small piece of candle which cast strange shadows on the walls of this silent place. Suddenly the light caught a form, that at first seemed a vision of mist and light. It was the Master the candle light had revealed to us. His white robe and silver flowing hair and shining blue eyes gave the impression of a spirit, rather than of a human being. We tried to tell Him how deeply grateful we were at His receiving us. "No," he answered, "you are kind to come." This was spoken in a very careful English. Then He smiled, and we recognized the Light which He possessed in the radiance which moved over His fine and noble face. It was an amazing experience. We four visitors from the Western world felt that our voyage, with all its accompanying inconveniences was a small price to pay for such treasure as we received from the spirit and words of the Master Whom we had crossed mountains and seas and nations to meet. This began our work to spread the teaching, to mention the Name of Bahá'u'lláh, and acquaint the world with the Message."

To many Bahá'ís of the present generation Mrs. Thornburgh-Cropper was unknown personally. The infirmity of her declining years prevented her from active association with the friends, but she was known as a staunch and loyal servant. She passed away on March 15th, 1938.

Lydia Zamenhof

The youngest of three children, Lydia Zamenhof was born in Warsaw, Poland, on January 29, 1904. Her parents were liberal-minded Jews, and they afforded their son and daughters good education. Adam became the outstanding eye specialist of that city; Sofie was a physician; and Lydia received her L.L.M. degree from the University of Warsaw. It was inevitable that Lydia Zamenhof should be an idealist. Her father, Dr. Ludwig L. Zamenhof, was the eminent inventor of Esperanto; and her mother, Klara Zilbernik, was his self-effacing yet devoted and encouraging helpmate.

Love for all humanity pervaded the atmosphere of their home, and together the parents reared their children in the spirit of world unity and brotherhood. It followed naturally that, when she received her L.L.M. degree in 1925, Lydia decided not to practice law, but to devote her time to the spread and teaching of Esperanto. In 1913, when she was nine years old, Lydia had attended her first Universal Esperanto Congress, held in Bern, Switzerland. In the "Christian Commonwealth" for September 3, 1913, J.M. Warden published an interview with Dr. Zamenhof, who said: "I feel greatly interested in the Bahá'í movement, as it is one of the great world-movements which, like our own, is insisting upon the brotherhood of mankind, and is calling on men to understand one another and learn to love each other." On another occasion he said, "The personality of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His work I esteem most highly. I see in Him one of the greatest benefactors of the whole human race." This was probably the first contact of Dr. Zamenhof with the Bahá'í Faith.

It was through the Hand of the Cause of God Martha Root that Lydia Zamenhof came into the fold of Bahá'u'lláh. In April 1926, Miss Root was the official representative of the Bahá'ís at the unveiling of a monument on the grave of Dr. Zamenhof in Warsaw. It was there that Lydia said to her, "It seems to me that Esperanto is only a school in which future Bahá'ís educate themselves. The Bahá'í Movement is a forward step, it is larger." Several months later, the 185th Universal Esperanto Congress was held in Edinburgh, Scotland. On August 2 a Bahá'í Esperanto convention was held as part of this Congress. Martha Root, again an official representative of the Bahá'í Faith, spoke on the "The Positive Power of Universal Religion." Lydia Zamenhof was in the audience. In the city of Edinburgh, where, in the memorable year 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá delivered His classic address before Esperantists, Lydia Zamenhof attended her first Bahá'í meeting as a believer. Afire with the Message, she set herself to the difficult task of learning the English language so that she might partake in a fuller measure of the sacred Writings translated by the beloved Guardian. From that time forward her life was devoted to a two-fold purpose--spreading the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, and teaching Esperanto.

With acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith, troubles began for Lydia. Branded by some of her relatives as a "betrayor" of the Jewish religion, she was reviled and persecuted for her belief in the unity of God and the brotherhood of man. So deep-rooted was her love for God, however, that she remained steadfast and firm against all opposition and her fervor and ardor in the Path of Bahá'u'lláh increased with the passing of time. God had bountifully endowed Lydia with many talents. Her magnetic charm was unequalled. She was a born instructor and speaker, and her ability as a translator and writer was unequalled. Included among her translations are: *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, *Paris Talks*, *Bahá'í Prayers*, *Some Answered Questions*, the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* and *The Hidden Words*.

In 1937, at the request of Shoghi Effendi, the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada invited Lydia Zamenhof to visit North America. She arrived on September 29, and on October 2 she began her first Esperanto class in America. She also spoke over the radio, and before gatherings in colleges, churches, and other cultural and social groups. One of the outstanding results of her visit was the undertaking of the Esperanto translation of *The Dawn-Breakers* by an American Bahá'í. Her encouragement and invaluable assistance in this task was a contributing factor to its successful completion.

To live constantly before the public was a sacrifice for Lydia Zamenhof, for she was of a retiring nature, and liked to be alone. Her face in repose bore the expression of sadness which has become a characteristic of the Jewish countenance through centuries of persecution. But when the Name of Bahá'u'lláh was mentioned, or of the language of her father's invention, as if through a miracle her whole personality changed. The tiny gnat became a mighty falcon, and she forgot her own self as with shining eyes and vibrant voice she launched into discussion or recounted her experiences in her field of service. Especially did her face become illumined as she told of her pilgrimage to the Holy Land, her precious

moments with the Greatest Holy Leaf, her talks with the beloved Guardian, her communion with God in the Sacred Shrines.

On November 28, 1938, Lydia Zamenhof returned to her native land. The outbreak of war was imminent, and her loving heart yearned to be with her brother and sister in time of hardship. In her last letter to America, dated August 18, 1939, Lydia wrote, "Now there are five Bahá'ís in Poland, including myself. Considering the smallness of our numbers, each new soul is all the more important and is accepted with such great joy." Poland was invaded two days after the letter was received. At first Lydia and her family, together with all of the other Jews in Warsaw, were herded into the Ghetto. In 1942, the Zamenhof family was taken to a concentration camp. Previous to this, all of the professional Jewish men of Warsaw were shot to death. Included among them was her brother, Dr. Adam Zamenhof. In August 1944, Dr. Sofia Zamenhof was shot to death. A few days later, exactly 18 years after she attended her first Bahá'í meeting, Lydia Zamenhof, together with many other Jews, was cremated in the Jewish death-camp at Treblinka, near Warsaw.

To the very end of her life Lydia Zamenhof remained a heroine, ever thoughtful of the welfare and safety of others. When it became evident that the lives of the inhabitants of the Ghetto were doomed, the non-Jewish Esperantists of Warsaw approached her with offers to hide her from the invaders. She declined, for she wished to remain with her family. Besides, she said, violent death is the punishment for those who are caught hiding Jews, and she would not think of endangering the lives of her beloved Esperantist friends. So it was that she met her death. The Guardian, through his secretary, wrote: "She certainly deserves to be remembered by us all for her services to the Faith and her loyalty and devotion. Her death is a great loss, as she was so well able to serve and teach in different languages and different countries. It seems too terrible to contemplate what her end must have been!"

Zaynab

From the beginning of the Bahá'í era, youth have played a vital role in promulgating God's Revelation. Their exemplary dedication and love for the Faith have allowed them to serve with distinction and honor in the forefront of the Cause. Accounts of unselfish acts of courage, unending devotion, and supreme sacrifice can be found throughout the pages of *The Dawn-Breakers*. It is particularly in the story of Zaynab that Bahá'í youth of today can find the strength and inspiration to serve their beloved Cause.

Her name was Zaynab, her home a tiny hamlet in the neighborhood of Zanján, Persia, her time shortly following the martyrdom of the Báb. She was comely and fair of face, was fired with a lofty faith, and endowed with intrepid courage. As a disciple of the Báb, the sight of the trials and hardships which her fellow Bábí companions were made to endure during the battle of Zanján stirred in her an irrepressible yearning to disguise herself in male attire and share in repelling the repeated military attacks of the enemy.

Disguised as a man, Zaynab girded a sword, seized both musket and shield, and introduced herself into the ranks of the Bábí warriors. During battle, with incredible audacity and a prowess uncommon to a woman of those times, baring her sword and raising the cry "Ya Sahibu'z-Zaman!" she was able to keep her true identity hidden from all of her fellow Bábí warriors save one. Hujat, one of the leaders during the battle of Zanján, questioned her as to the motive behind her behavior after realizing who she was. She burst into tears and said, "My heart ached with pity and sorrow when I beheld the toil and sufferings of my fellow disciples. I advanced by an inner urge I could not resist. She added, "You alone have recognized me. I adjure you by the Báb not to withhold from me that inestimable privilege, the crown of martyrdom, the one desire of my life." Hujat, profoundly impressed by the tone and manner of her appeal, granted her request but warned her not to exceed the bounds their Faith had imposed upon them. "We are called upon to defend our lives against a treacherous assailant," he reminded her, "and not to wage holy war against him."

Zaynab continued to display her unrivaled heroism in battle for a period of no less than five months. Always at the forefront of the turmoil that raged around her, Zaynab was ever-ready to rush to the rescue of whatever post the assailant was threatening, and to lend her assistance to anyone who needed either her encouragement or support.

One day, seeing that enemy forces had enveloped her companions, Zaynab ran in distress to Hujat to implore that he allow her to rush forth to their aid. "My life, I feel, is nearing its end," she said. "I may myself fall beneath the sword of the assailant. Forgive, I entreat you, my trespasses, and intercede for me with my Master, for whose sake I yearn to lay down my life." With this, Zaynab leaped out of the gate and, raising the cry of Ya Sahibu'z Zaman!", rushed to slay the hand that had already slain a number of her companions. She was engaging in overcoming the fourth of the enemy's defenses when, beneath a shower of bullets, she fell to the ground. Not a single voice ever dared to question Zaynab's chastity or to ignore the sublimity of her faith and the enduring traits of her character. Such was her devotion that after her death not less than 20 women of her acquaintance embraced the Cause of the Báb. To them she was the incarnation of the noblest principles of human conduct, a living embodiment of the spirit that only a faith such as hers could manifest.

The stories of the heroines of the Faith are retold based on the following sources:

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