The Bahá'í Faith and African American History

Creating Racial and Religious Diversity

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Chapter 1

The Bahá'í "Pupil of the Eye" Metaphor

Promoting Ideal Race Relations in Jim Crow America

Christopher Buck

This chapter focuses on a notable contribution to promoting ideal race relations in Jim Crow America by a new religion, which, though small in number, was socially significant in its concerted efforts to foster and advance harmony between the races (primarily black and white at the time). The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "race relations" (q.v. "race, n. 6," compounds) as "the interactions and degree of concord between racial groups within a particular area." Therefore, for the purposes of this chapter, the term "ideal race relations" is conceived as "socially amicable, reciprocal, and ameliorative interactions and an optimal degree of concord between racial groups within a particular area."

The Bahá'í religion (today known as the "Bahá'í Faith") was brought to the United States during the Jim Crow era of forced legal segregation under the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) "separate but equal" doctrine.[1] During this time, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was keenly alive to the racial problem in America, which he saw firsthand in 1912 during his speaking tour in the United States and Canada.[2] "Bahá'u'lláh," 'Abdu'l-Bahá recalled, "once compared the colored people to the black pupil of the eye surrounded by the white. In this black pupil is seen the reflection of that which is before it, and through it the light of the spirit shineth forth."[3] This chapter, therefore, focuses on the role that Bahá'u'lláh's "pupil of the eye" metaphor played in Bahá'í efforts to promote ideal race relations, which, far from being "empty rhetoric," was figurative public discourse aimed at countering racial prejudice—individually and interpersonally.

The Bahá'í message of interracial harmony attracted the notice of the Black intelligentsia, which has been discussed in previous studies.[4] As a further contribution to the literature, this chapter is the first published survey of the Bahá'í pupil of the eye texts and reported statements that, all told, have so powerfully and definitively shaped and steeled the self-identity and group identity of African American Bahá'ís. The texts, though few, are poignant and, given their historical context in Jim Crow America, offered a remarkable and effective psychological antidote to the prevailing racial stereotypes of that era.

The chapter continues from where a previous study, on the same theme, left off. Richard W. Thomas, Professor Emeritus of History, Michigan State University, in 2006, published "The 'Pupil of the Eye': African-Americans and the Making of the American Bahá'í Community,"[5] later republished in a Palgrave Macmillan multi-author work that same year.[6] In "The 'Pupil of the Eye': African-Americans and the Making of the American Bahá'í Community," Thomas notes the impact of the Bahá'í pupil of the eye racial metaphor on the spiritual self-identity of African American Bahá'ís, down to the present:

> [T]he Bahá'í teachings on the spiritual qualities of Black people and their role in the growth and expansion of the Bahá'í Faith contributed to the formation of a new racial identity among Black Bahá'ís throughout the Bahá'í world. The "pupil of the eye" became the spiritual image which not only united Blacks in their service to their Faith, but also provided Bahá'ís of other racial and cultural backgrounds with a new way of looking at their Black coreligionists. Freed from the traditional anti-Black racist stereotypes, Bahá'ís could move forward in building a truly united multiracial religious community.[7]

After discussing the origin of the Bahá'í pupil of the eye metaphor, this chapter presents seven pupil of the eye tablets (letters by 'Abdu'l-Bahá):[8] (1) 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablet to Sarah Farmer (1902); (2) Abdu'l-Bahá's tablet to Alma S. Knobloch (1906); (3) 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablet to Pocahontas Pope (1906); (4) 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablet to Robert Turner (c. 1909); (5) 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablet to Ali-Kuli Khan (1909, regarding Robert Turner); (6) 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablet to Louise Washington (1910); and (7) 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablet to George A. Anderson (1914). Biographical highlights of the recipients of these tablets are offered. These pupil of the eye tablets are then placed within the wider context in Bahá'í history: first, with Bahá'u'lláh's contributions to emancipation and abolition, and then by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's public statements on ideal race relations.

ORIGIN OF THE BAHÁ'Í PUPIL OF THE EYE METAPHOR; BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S STATEMENTS (PRE-1893)

What was the origin of the Bahá'í pupil of the eye racial metaphor? When was it first coined, and by whom? There is good evidence that traces this

dignifying racial trope back to Bahá'u'lláh. In *The Advent of Divine Justice*, a lengthy letter dated December 25, 1938, written to the Bahá'ís of North America, Shoghi Effendi documents the following reported statements by Bahá'u'lláh on the issue of race:

> "O ye discerning ones!" Bahá'u'lláh has written, "Verily, the words which have descended from the heaven of the Will of God are the source of unity and harmony for the world. Close your eyes to racial differences, and welcome all with the light of oneness." "We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations," He proclaims "... that all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled." "Bahá'u'lláh hath said," writes 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "that the various races of humankind lend a composite harmony and beauty of color to the whole. Let all associate, therefore, in this great human garden even as flowers grow and blend together side by side without discord or disagreement between them." "Bahá'u'lláh," 'Abdu'l-Bahá moreover has said, "once compared the colored people to the black pupil of the eye surrounded by the white. In this black pupil is seen the reflection of that which is before it, and through it the light of the spirit shineth forth."[9]

To better understand how African Americans likely understood and appreciated Bahá'u'lláh's pupil of the eye simile and its metaphorical implications, these insights by linguist Christina Alm-Arvius may well apply in stating that "the qualities that are foregrounded in a metaphorical application are comparatively often attitudinal rather than factually descriptive. So the meaning features that dominate in many metaphors seem merely connotative."[10] Obviously, there is little resemblance between a person of African descent and the pupil of an eye, except for the "black" color that is a shared feature. Alm-Arvius speaks of a "metaphorical relaxation" that takes place when "peripheral meaning qualities in the source" are cognitively understood as a reflex of metaphorical competence (i.e., ability to "decode" figurative language).[11]

Alm-Arvius claims that "metaphorisation is an imaginative widening or generalisation of the semantic contents of some word(s) or longer stretch(es) of language use."[12] She further explains that such meaning is a "type of figurative extension" that "involves the suppression of ordinarily quite central characteristics in the source contents," thereby resulting in "a live, transparent [obvious] metaphor that spans both the basic, literal understanding and the metaphorical generalisation at the same time."[13] Here, the pupil of the eye involves a "metaphorical widening,"[14] whereby not only is the color (i.e., appearance) of the pupil significant, but, even more importantly, also its visual function.

Bahá'u'lláh's pupil of the eye image creates associative links of perceived similarity between the source—the black color of the pupil ("surrounded

by the white" [race])—and the metaphor target, "the colored peoples." The transfer of qualities of sight (i.e., insight into the human condition) from the source image (pupil of the eye) to African Americans in the Jim Crow context by way of "reflected meaning"[15] was an effective rhetorical strategy then, and remains so today in the eyes of African American Bahá'ís, as Richard W. Thomas has clearly pointed out. The pupil of the eye metaphor was expressive and rich in associative potential.

To put Bahá'u'lláh's reported statement in historical context, 'Abdu'l-Bahá recalled it in remarks at a gathering of Theosophists in London in September, 1911:

> A COLOURED man from South Africa who was visiting 'Abdu'l-Bahá, said that even now no white people really cared very much for the black man.
>
> 'Abdu'l-Bahá replies: Compare the present time and the feeling towards the coloured people now, with the state of feeling two or three hundred years ago, and see how much better it is at present. In a short time the relationship between the coloured and white people will still further improve, and bye and bye no difference will be felt between them. White doves and purple doves exist, but both kinds are doves.
>
> Bahá'u'lláh once compared the coloured people to the black pupil of the eye surrounded by the white. In this black pupil you see the reflection of that which is before it, and through it the light of the Spirit shines forth.
>
> In the sight of God colour makes no difference at all, He looks at the hearts of men. That which God desires from men is the heart. A black man with a good character is far superior to a white man with a character that is less good.[16]

The fact that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was responding to a question posed by a South African demonstrates that Bahá'u'lláh's pupil of the eye metaphor applies to all peoples of African descent in general, and not only to African Americans in particular. This is the source that historians point to in support of the proposition that the pupil of the eye metaphor originates with Bahá'u'lláh himself. Here, 'Abdu'l-Bahá reported a statement sometime prior to May 29, 1892, the date of Bahá'u'lláh's death.

For historical purposes, although the reported statements may not be 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words verbatim as no Persian original has been found, the historical gist is nevertheless regarded as reliable. Further, it was widely distributed at the time, first by the British publication, and then through its publication in the United States with the Bahá'í Publishing Society of Chicago in 1921. In 1953, Shoghi Effendi stated this directly, in the African context: "I am reminded, on this historic occasion, of the significant words uttered by Bahá'u'lláh Himself, Who as attested by the Center of the Covenant ('Abdu'l-Bahá), in His Writings, 'compared the colored people to the black pupil of the eye,' through which 'the light of the spirit shineth forth.'"[17]

As for the statement, "Bahá'u'lláh once compared the coloured people to the black pupil of the eye" in which is seen "the reflection of that which is before it, and through it the light of the Spirit shines forth,"[18] a more familiar example is readily available. The English etymology for pupil is parallel to that of Arabic and Persian. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), "pupil, n. 2" derives from the Middle French, *pupille*, for the "opening in the iris through which light passes into the eye." The *OED* entry further explains, "its etymon classical Latin *pūpilla* in same sense, transferred use of *pūpilla*, female child, also doll (feminine form corresponding to *pūpillus*), so called on account of the small reflected image seen when looking into someone's pupil." Here, "the small reflected image seen when looking into someone's pupil" as explained in the *OED* parallels Bahá'u'lláh's reported statement that in "the black pupil of the eye" is seen "the reflection of that which is before it."[19] What is "reflected" is not only the collective image of people of African descent, but also their legacy of oppression, first under slavery, and then, after abolition, of the after-effects of slavery, from violent racism to subtle racist attitudes, or "polite prejudice." In other words, the racially ennobling pupil of the eye metaphor rhetorically affirms the unique perspective of peoples of African descent in the historical experience of slavery and colonialism that they collectively suffered. While a rhetorical analysis of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's discourses on race awaits a full study, a natural place to begin is his pupil of the eye metaphor found in seven tablets to American (mostly African American) Bahá'ís, examined in roughly chronological order.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S TABLET TO SARAH FARMER (1902)

Sarah Jane Farmer (1844–1916) is best known as the founder of the Green Acre Bahá'í School in Eliot, Maine.[20] Such was the magnitude of her contributions to the establishment of the Bahá'í Faith in the United States that she was posthumously named by Shoghi Effendi as one of the nineteen "Disciples of 'Abdu'l-Bahá."[21] Farmer received several tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, mostly in Arabic, among which is the first of the several pupil of the eye tablets surveyed in this chapter. The pertinent extract from this tablet is:

> As to (Robert, Alice) and (Louise), verily the faces of these [the members of the black race] are as the pupil of the eye; although the pupil is created black, yet it is the source of light. I hope God will make these black ones the glory of the white ones and as the wellspring of the light of love of God. And I ask God to assist them under all circumstances, that they may be encompassed with the favors of their Loving Lord throughout centuries and ages.[22]

Both in the originally published translation[23] and in the more recent translation[24] when first published, the three bracketed names were deleted. They conspicuously appear in digital scans of the original manuscript translation: "Robert, Alice and Louise."[25] Instead of the names, the bracketed information, "[the members of the black race]," was inserted in the translation when first published. These three names may well refer to the following early African American Bahá'ís: Robert Turner, Alice Ashton, and Louise Washington. The identification of Alice Ashton seems quite probable, since she helped at the Green Acre school: "The Ashton family became believers and devoted adherents of the Bahá'í Faith in 1913. . . . Also for four or five summers Mrs. Ashton served the friends at Green Acre."[26] In a tablet dated August 3, 1921, 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote:

> Extend my respectful greetings to Mr. and Mrs. Mann. I supplicate to the Divine Bounties and ask that they may daily become more attracted, become two lighted candles of the love of God, and that the White and the Colored may, in their meetings, fall into each other's arms. I also ask that Mr. and Mrs. Ashton may hold luminous meetings in their house and through thy help teach the Colored.[27]

That same year, in 1902, 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed a tablet to Marie Botay, a member of the early Washington, DC, Bahá'í community, which further demonstrates his concern about race relations in the United States:

> O thou maid-servant of God!
>
> I have read thy letter which indicated thy straightforwardness in the love of God and thy desire in spreading this brilliant light among the offspring of the Africans. How good is the intention! And what an excellent aim this great aim is! Indeed the hearts of the Africans are as a blank scroll of paper upon which thou canst write any phrase; but thou must have patience and a heart as firm as a mountain, owing to the innumerable hardships that may intervene, which could be endured only by one who surrenders to grievous calamities.[28]

Given the American context, what is translated here as "Africans" clearly and primarily refers to African Americans. Although 'Abdu'l-Bahá is not explicit regarding racism, the reference to future hardships (i.e., "the innumerable hardships that may intervene") could presuppose that social context.

In 1906, in another tablet to Sarah Farmer, 'Abdu'l-Bahá includes ideal race relations as part and parcel of the Bahá'í Faith's grand vision of world unity:

> Consider thou how vast is the arena of the Kingdom—it hath environed the whole world. The splendor of Providence hath encircled all races, nations, communities and religions; the foundation of foreignness is swept away and the

> basis of Oneness is established; love hath become universal and the spiritual ties are strengthened.[29]

Racism is predicated on differences negatively valued. "Race amity" values differences in the wider social goal of "unity in diversity," a basic Bahá'í principle.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S TABLET TO ALMA S. KNOBLOCH (1906)

Alma S. Knobloch (1863–1943) taught the Bahá'í Faith to African Americans in its earliest days in America, prior to 'Abdu'l-Baha's historic visit to the United States and Canada in 1912. According to Moojan Momen, "most Bahá'í histories seem to regard Alma Knobloch as the real founder of the German Bahá'í community."[30] Of German-American ancestry, she became a Bahá'í in 1903. On July 17, 1907, she left America for Germany. In the years following, she helped establish the Bahá'í Faith in Austria and in Switzerland. In 1920, she returned to America, where she passed away on December 22, 1943.[31] In 1906, she received the following tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

> To Alma S. Knobloch.
>
> Blessed are you that to you the White and the Black are one. Whiteness is by the light of the heart and not the skin; and Blackness is the blackness of the heart and not the face. The reflection of a person is seen in the black pupil of the eye. How many there are who have black faces but their characters are white and illumined. I am most happy on account of this work which you have been doing; it is the cause of the whiteness and the illumination of your spirit. Abdu'l-Baha Abbas.[32]

This text needs to be read within the immediate social context of that day and age. "Whiteness" is shorthand for "light," and more importantly, for "enlightenment." Sunlight is often described as a "white" light. Therefore, this color is independent of race. "Blackness," by contrast, is simply the absence of light. It is, thus, also independent of race. "Light" simply serves as a physical metaphor for spiritual enlightenment.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S TABLET TO POCAHONTAS POPE (1906)

Pocahontas Pope (c. 1865–1938) was the first African American Bahá'í of Washington, DC. A salt-of-the-earth former seamstress and simultaneous

Baptist, since membership in the Bahá'í community, at that time, did not require discontinuing other religious affiliations, Pope received a beautiful letter from 'Abdu'l-Bahá that drew upon Bahá'u'lláh's pupil of the eye metaphor in a racially uplifting way. Her family history and ancestry are difficult to reconstruct. Relying largely on the sources compiled and posted online by Paula Bidwell,[33] along with newspaper articles found by Steven Kolins,[34] and by the present writer's own research, Pope's North Carolina background can tentatively be reconstructed as follows:

Pocahontas Pope's mother was Mary Cha, born Mary Sanling. John Kay was Pope's natural father. John and Mary married on January 11, 1861.[35] According to the U.S. Census, 1900, Pocahontas Pope was born in June 1863.[36] On November 11, 1876, Mary (Cha) Kay married Lundy Grizzard, who then became Pope's stepfather.[37] Lundy and Mary Grizzard went on to raise several children of their own (Pope's step-siblings). Mary Grizzard died in May 1909.[38] In her will, she named her daughter, Pocahuntas [*sic*] Pope" as the heir to her personal effects.[39]

On December 26, 1883, John W. Pope (1857–1919), born and raised in Rich Square, North Carolina[40], and Pocahontas Grizzard were married in Northampton (or Halifax) County, North Carolina. John was twenty-six. Pocahontas was nineteen. As to "race," each is listed in the Halifax County Marriage Register as "colored." At that time, and for several years, Pocahontas' husband, "J. W. Pope," was first assistant, then vice principal, and finally during the 1886–1887 academic year was promoted to principal of the Scotland Neck Normal Select Graded School, which was under the auspices of the Eastern Baptist Association in Scotland Neck, Halifax County.[41] He was also one of three "managers" of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Rich Square, North Carolina, in 1896–1897.[42] On June 12, 1887, in that AME church, Pocahontas Pope played the church organ and read an essay at the Children's Day exercises.[43] That same year, the Rev. ("Professor") John W. Pope commented on the state of race relations in his locality:

> A great many of our white friends at Jackson contributed money to our academy. We desire to return our thanks. The white people at Jackson are an open hearted, generous class of people. They believe in helping those who are willing to help themselves. I regret that I can't say that about some sections of the county.[44]

In the summer of 1898, John and Pocahontas moved to Washington, DC, where he worked for the U.S. Census Office.[45] Unfortunately, in early 1902, he was fired by Director Merriam, along with other "Negro clerks." John Pope landed a job in the U.S. Government Printing Office. In June 1902, he was

elected first vice-president of the "Second Baptist Lyceum," one of the oldest African American congregations in Washington, DC, and Pocahontas Pope became the assistant recording secretary.[46] Pocahontas Pope was described as "intensely religious": "Even among our own race the woman with a past is intensely religious."[47] The Rev. John W. Pope died on March 30, 1918.[48]

Fast forwarding to 1920, according to the U.S. Census for that year, "Pocahontas Pope" is listed as "Widowed." For "Race," she is now "Mulatto."[49] According to the U.S. Census of 1930, "Pocahontas Pope" is classified as "Negro."[50] Pope died on November 11, 1938, in Hyattsville, Prince George's County, Maryland. She is buried in National Harmony Memorial Park Cemetery.[51]

Pocahontas Pope first learned about the Bahá'í Faith from Pauline Hannen, Alma Knobloch's sister.[52] The encounter took place in 1905, in Washington, DC. She became a Bahá'í in 1906. In the context of Jim Crow America, the story of how a white woman, Pauline Hannen, decided to reach out to African Americans, is extraordinary and worth retelling.

Alma Knobloch employed Pocahontas Pope as a seamstress. Then, as fate would have it, Pauline chanced upon this passage from Bahá'u'lláh:

> 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.[53]

This passage struck Pauline in a lightning flash of sudden insight. After she realized the profound implications of Bahá'u'lláh's words regarding the oneness and equality of the human race—in the singular—this is what happened next:

> One snowy day, during the Thanksgiving season, Pauline came across a black woman trudging through the snow. Pauline noticed that the woman's shoelaces were untied. Arms full from the bundles she was carrying, the woman was unable to do anything about it. Inspired by this passage from *The Hidden Words*, Pauline knelt down in the snow to tie this woman's shoes for her. "She was astonished," Pauline recalled, "and those who saw it appeared to think I was crazy." That event marked a turning point for Pauline: she resolved to bring the Bahá'í message of unity to black people.[54]

In a letter dated May 1909, Pauline Hannen wrote: "I was the one who first gave the Message to Mrs. (Pocahontas) Pope":

> The work among the colored people was really started by my sainted Mother and Sister Alma (Knobloch,) though I was the one who first gave the Message to Mrs. (Pocahontas) Pope and Mrs. Turner. My Mother and Sister went to their home in this way, meeting others(,) giving the Message to quite a number and started Meetings. Then my sister left for Germany where she now teaches (propagates the Bahá'í Faith), I then took up the work. During the Winter of 1907 it became my great pleasure with the help of Rhoda Turner colored who opened her home for me . . . to arrange a number of very large and beautiful Meetings. Mrs. Lua Getsinger spoke to them here several times at Mrs. Pope's as Mirza Ali-Kuli Khan, Mr. (Howard) McNutt and Mr. Hooper Harris spoke in Mrs. Turner's home. Mr. (Hooper) Harris spoke at Mrs. Pope(')s (at) 12 N St. N.W. for my sister before his leaving on his trip to Acca and India. Mr. Hannen also spoke several times. My working to being to run around and arrange the meeting. At these Meetings we had from twenty to fourty [*sic*] colored people of the intellectual class.[55]

Pocahontas Pope was not famous, but a few newspaper articles mentioned her, such as the one calling her "intensely religious."[56] Here is an account, one that historians might call anecdotal:

> Mrs. J. W. Pope, who has been in the city [Washington DC] since Christmas, has returned to her home in Richsquare, N.C. [*sic*] for the summer. During her stay in Washington, Mrs. Pope has won many friends. Mrs. Pope was deeply interested in all matters of interests to the race and was an energetic worker in the Second Baptist Lyceum. Just before the close of the lyceum Mrs. Pope read a paper on race conditions, which met with unanimous indorsement and established herself as a lady of high literary attainments.[57]

This news story is a passing, albeit positive, notice of an African American citizen, whose dedication to church and racial amelioration is duly noted, and Pope's "high literary attainments" extolled. 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote to her:

> He is God! O maidservant of God!
>
> Render thanks to the Lord that among that race thou art the first believer, that thou hast engaged in spreading sweet-scented breezes, and hast arisen to guide others. It is my hope that through the bounties and favours of the Abhá Beauty thy countenance may be illumined, thy disposition pleasing, and thy fragrance diffused, that thine eyes may be seeing, thine ears attentive, thy tongue eloquent, thy heart filled with supreme glad-tidings, and thy soul refreshed by divine fragrances, so that thou mayest arise among that race and occupy thyself with the

edification of the people, and become filled with light. Although the pupil of the eye is black, it is the source of light. Thou shalt likewise be. The disposition should be bright, not the appearance. Therefore, with supreme confidence and certitude, say: "O God! Make me a radiant light, a shining lamp, and a brilliant star, so that I may illumine the hearts with an effulgent ray from Thy Kingdom of Abhá.[58]

"The first believer" of Pope's race is generally understood to mean the first African American of Washington, DC, to embrace the Bahá'í Faith, although there are other possible interpretations as well. Some have speculated that she was of Native American ancestry, partly on account of her first name, Pocahontas, and also due to the fact that the Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe lived nearby and frequently intermarried with local African Americans. As a brief commentary on the Persian and Arabic text, Nahzy Abadi Buck explains:

> In what is translated as "among that race" (میان آنقوم), Abdu'l-Bahá uses a different word for "race": قوم (*qaum*). The more common term is: جنس (*jins*), as in جنس بشر (*jins-i bashar*), the "human race"). The implication of this is that, by "قوم" (*qaum*), 'Abdu'Bahá may be referring to something other than "race," such as a "tribe" or "ethnicity."[59]

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S TABLET TO ROBERT TURNER (1909 OR BEFORE)

Robert C. Turner (1855–1909) was the faithful butler, for thirty-five years, to philanthropist Phoebe Apperson Hearst (1842–1919), and her son, William Randolph Hearst (1863–1951). The exact date of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablet to him is unknown. However, Turner died in 1909. Born on October 15, 1855, probably into slavery on a farm near Norfolk, Virginia,[60] Robert C. Turner was won over to the Bahá'í teachings in 1898 under the following circumstances:

> Turner's first exposure to the Bahá'í Faith occurred as he listened to an early American Bahá'í, Lua M. Getsinger, teach the Bahá'í Faith to his employer [Phoebe Hearst]. Turner was so affected by these teachings that he pursued opportunities to hear more. He learned more about the Bahá'í Faith and eventually became a firm believer sometime around late 1898.[61]

As for the tablet to Robert Turner, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote:

> O thou who art pure in heart, sanctified in spirit, peerless in character, beauteous in face! Thy photograph hath been received revealing thy physical frame in the

Figure 1.1 Robert Turner. *Source*: National Bahá'í Archives, United States. Courtesy of Lewis V. Walker, assistant archivist.

utmost grace and the best appearance. Thou art dark in countenance and bright in character. Thou art like unto the pupil of the eye which is dark in colour, yet it is the fount of light and the revealer of the contingent world.

I have not forgotten nor will I forget thee. I beseech God that He may graciously make thee the sign of His bounty amidst mankind, illumine thy face with the light of such blessings as are vouchsafed by the merciful Lord, single thee out for His love in this age which is distinguished among all the past ages and centuries.[62]

Nahzy Abadi Buck sheds further light on this pupil of the eye metaphor:

This tablet is in Arabic. The Arabic for "pupil of the eye": انسان العين. Fully voweled the Arabic is written as follows: إنْسان ال َعيْن . The English transliteration: *insān al-'ayn*. "*Insān*" means "man." *Insān al-'ayn* means "man of the eye"—because a person can see the reflection of his/her face in the pupil of another person's eye. "تصويرک الشّمسی" is an expression for "photograph," the second word of which literally means "sun-like" (*al-shamsī*). The phrase, اسمر الخلق ولكن ابيض الخلق (translated as "dark in countenance and bright in character") literally means: "darkest creature, yet brightest (most luminous) creature" (*asmar al-khalq wa-lakin abyāḍ al-khalq*).[63]

Further, Omid Ghaemmaghami, commenting on a similar Arabic expression found in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's 1902 tablet to Sarah Farmer, that is, "as the pupil of the eye" is كإنسان العين (*ka-insān al-'ayn*), notes that *insān al-'ayn* (literally, "human being of the eye") is a common one in Arabic for the pupil or darkest part of the eye, although *al-ḥadaqa* or *ḥadaqat al-'ayn* is more common today. The Persian, *mardumak-i chashm* (literally, "little people of the eye"), may be an old translation from Arabic or vice versa. As previously noted from the *OED*, the English "pupil of the eye" has a similar etymology, that is, the tiny image of the beholder that is seen when gazing into a mirror, for instance.[64]

This tablet appears to postdate Turner's 1898–1899 trip, when he accompanied Phoebe Hearst, who traveled to Palestine (Israel) to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which was considered to be a pilgrimage by Bahá'ís. There were several pilgrim groups. Each one had different arrival and departure dates (from November 1898 to March 1899). Turner, along with Anne Apperson and Julia Pearson, arrived in Haifa on Monday, February 20, 1899. The three were received by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the same day in Haifa.[65] May Maxwell, another member of the group, wrote an account of that encounter:

> On the morning of our arrival, after we had refreshed ourselves, the Master ['Abdu'l-Bahá] summoned us all to Him in a long room overlooking the Mediterranean. He sat in silence gazing out of the window, then looking up He asked if all were present. Seeing that one of the believers was absent, He said, "*Where is Robert?*" This was a coloured servant, whom one of the pilgrims in our party, in her [Phoebe Hearst] generosity, had sent to 'Akka. In a moment Robert's radiant face appeared in the doorway and the Master rose to greet him, bidding him be seated, and said, "*Robert, your Lord loves you. God gave you a black skin, but a heart white as snow.*"[66]

This reception must have deeply moved Mr. Turner, and stirred his heart to its very depths. Selena M. Crosson explains:

> 'Abdu'l Bahá, whose self-chosen title meant "servant of Glory," insisted on serving the pilgrims Himself, including Robert, in spite of the remonstrances

> of those who insisted the butler should serve. On one occasion, in deference to them, He allowed Robert to *assist* him. The lesson was clear to May Maxwell and the rest of the pilgrims. When Phoebe Hearst returned to America, she sponsored a reception for prominent African-American educators in Washington, D.C., a city deeply divided by race.[67]

An archival translation of a tablet to Robert Turner evinces the deep and abiding regard that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had for Mr. Turner:

> O thou servant of God!
>
> Thank thou God that from the day of the meeting until now 'Abdu'l-Bahá has not forgotten thee. He remembers thee always. I ask of the Lord of the Kingdom that he make thee dear in this world and the world to come; crown thee with the love of God and make thee an ignited and enkindled candle among the colored race.[68]

Nahzy Abadi Buck comments:

- In the original Persian, the phrase translated as "colored race" is *jins-i siyāh*, or, literally, "black race."
- Consistent with the previous tablet to Robert Turner, 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes light: "make thee an ignited and enkindled candle among the colored race."
- So, not only is Robert Turner "like unto the pupil of the eye which is dark in color, yet it is the fount of light and the revealer of the contingent world," he is a source of illumination for African Americans as well.[69]

Turner did not live to see this tablet, as the date of this translation, August 17, 1909, postdates his death. He remained steadfast as a Bahá'í until his death, even after Phoebe Hearst later became estranged from the Bahá'í movement.[70]

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S TABLET TO ALI-KULI KHAN (1909)

Marzieh Gail (1908–1993), a well-known Persian-American Bahá'í author, essayist, and translator, was the second daughter of the first Persian-American marriage in the United States Bahá'í community. Gail's father was Ali-Kuli Khan, the Persian (Iranian) consul in Washington, DC, and her mother was Florence Breed of Boston.[71] In her memoir, *Arches of the Years* (1991), Gail recounts finding, in her father's papers, an account of Robert Turner.

In the spring of 1909, Ali-Kuli Khan was a guest of Phoebe Hearst in her Pleasanton, California, hacienda. She told him that Robert Turner had taken

ill, and encouraged Khan to call on him, which he did. Quite ill in bed, Turner recounted, "with great joy," his visit to Haifa and Akka in 1898–1899. Turner asked Khan to write to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, to send his love and ask for prayers. Faithful to his promise, Khan did so.[72] Back in Washington, DC, Khan received a tablet, in which 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote four lines regarding Robert Turner, which Khan translated as follows:

> Convey wondrous Abha greetings to Mr Robert [Turner], the servant of that honorable lady, and say to him: "Be not grieved at your illness, for thou hast attained eternal life and hast found thy way to the World of the Kingdom. God willing, we shall meet one another with joy and fragrance in that Divine World, and I beg of God that you may also find rest in this material world."[73]

These words portend the inevitable, impending death of Turner, but with tender regard, evident fondness, and words of comfort, promising yet another joyful meeting in the afterlife. Turner died, whereupon Khan wrote a letter, dated June 22, 1909, to convey the sad news to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Later that summer, while Khan was spending time with his family in Carmel, California, he received another tablet addressed to him. On the second page of this tablet, 'Abdu'l-Bahá conveyed the following eulogy of Robert Turner:

> As to Mr Robert (Turner), the news of his ascension saddened the hearts. He was in reality in the utmost sincerity. Glory be to God! What a shining candle was aflame in that black-colored lamp. Praise be to God that that lighted candle ascended from the earthly lamp to the Kingdom of Eternity and gleamed and became aflame in the Heavenly Assemblage. Praise be to God that you adorned his blessed finger with the ring bearing the inscription: "Verily I originated from God and returned unto Him" . . . This too is a proof of his sincerity and that in his last breath, he breathed the Alláh-u-Abhá,[74] whereby the hearts of those present were impressed.
>
> O Thou Creator! O Thou Forgiver! Glorify the precious Robert in Thy Kingdom and in the garden of the Paradise of Abha. Bring him in(to) intimate association with the birds of the celestial meadow. O Thou Knowing God! Although that sinless one was black in color, like unto the black pupil of the eye, he was a source of shining light. O Thou forgiving Lord! Cause that longing one to attain Thy meeting and cause that thirsty one to drink the water of life in abundance. Thou art the Forgiver, the Pardoner, the Compassionate . . ." (Signed) 'Ayn-'Ayn ('Abdu'l-Bahá)[75]

Here, Turner is described as "sinless", which is remarkable. Comparing him to "the black pupil of the eye," 'Abdu'l-Bahá acclaimed him as "a source of shining light." Redounding to his further honor and distinction, Robert Turner was named by Shoghi Effendi as one of the nineteen "Disciples of 'Abdu'l-Bahá."[76]

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S TABLET TO LOUISE WASHINGTON (1910)

Louise Washington was a member of the New York Bahá'í community. Little is known of her. She was African American, and an early American Bahá'í. As noted by Richard Hollinger, in 1910, Louise Washington lived in New York. She married in 1938 at age forty-four.[77] In 1912, she served on a committee for the "Clio Information Club" to organize a public meeting for 'Abdu'l-Bahá at that venue.[78] These are sketchy details, to be sure. According to the records kept at the U.S. National Bahá'í Archives, Louise Washington was on the Bahá'í membership lists for New York City. The important fact to be gleaned from this information is that Washington was an active Bahá'í, and she must have written to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who, in reply, answered:

> HE IS GOD! O, thou beloved maid-servant of God! In thy letter thou hast intimated that thou art colored.[79]
>
> In the Kingdom of God no distinction is made as to the color of the skin, whether it be black or white; nay, rather the heart and soul are considered. If the spirit is pure, the face is illumined, although it be black. If the heart is stained, the face is dull and despondent, although it may be of the utmost beauty. The color of the pupils of the eye is black, yet they are the fountains of light.
>
> Although white is conspicuous, yet seven colors are hidden and concealed therein. Therefore whiteness and blackness have no importance; nay, rather true judgment is based upon the soul and heart.[80]

Four archival copies of an early translation of this tablet were consulted.[81] The pupil of the eye metaphor is offered in the plural: "The color of the pupils of the eye is black, yet they are the fountains of light."[82] Instantly, a racial correlation is implied, even though virtually all of humanity shares the same optical feature. Notwithstanding, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's use of this metaphor is consistent and recurrent. In this tablet, the metaphor contributes to the already edifying and uplifting discourse, in which race is both acknowledged, yet deconstructed in the larger scheme of race relations.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S TABLET TO GEORGE A. ANDERSON (1914)

On October 31, 1910, the following tablet was addressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá collectively to the Bahá'ís of Washington, DC, exhorting them, one and all, to overcome racial differences and to strive for social harmony:

> O, ye Dear Ones of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! In the world of existence the meeting is blessed when the white and colored meet together with infinite love and

> Heavenly Harmony. When such meetings are established and the participants associate with each other with perfect united love and kindness, the Angels of the Kingdom of Abha praise them and the Beauty of Bahá'u'lláh addresses them: Blessed are you and again,
>
> Blessed are you![83]

Further, 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes, "If it be possible, gather together these two races, black and white, into one Assembly and put such love into their hearts that they shall not only unite but even intermarry. . . ."[84] 'Abdu'l-Bahá's message to the Bahá'ís of Washington, DC, and to the individual believer encouraging interracial marriage provides further evidence for the importance that he placed on promoting ideal race relations. Later, additional evidence is provided by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablet to George A. Anderson (1914).

Three archival versions (not identical) of the original translation for the tablet to George A. Anderson were consulted by the present writer.[85] In the original manuscript translation of this pupil of the eye tablet, the recipient is said to be a certain "George A. Anderson." It is possible that the actual recipient was "Alan A. Anderson." They were father and son. Alan Anderson was a declared Bahá'í, whereas no record has yet been uncovered that George Anderson was an avowed Bahá'í, notwithstanding the fact that this tablet is said to have been intended for him. Since the identity of the recipient is not yet certain as to which person received the tablet, both individuals will be discussed.

Little is known about George A. Anderson, to whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed the tablet. A story published in the *Washington Post* reveals the following biographical details regarding George Anderson: He served as a coachman during the administration of U.S. President Chester A. Arthur. Prior to that, Anderson "had been President James Garfield's doorman and bodyguard." While he was serving as a coachman, he and his wife, Jennie, lived in the "White House stables" on 17th Street (between "E" and "F" Streets). On June 18, 1883, their child was born. "President Arthur was so excited when he heard about the babe in the White House manger (a k a the White House stables . . .)," the article goes on to say, "that he wanted the child to be his namesake." "George and Jennie obliged by making the baby's middle name Arthur."[86]

The present writer had previously identified Alan A. Anderson as the recipient, as that was the information available at that time.[87] Alan Arthur Anderson had definitely become a Bahá'í in 1910. Details regarding his life have been published elsewhere.[88] On August 16, 1959, Anderson passed away in Spotsylvania, Virginia.[89] The problem of whether this tablet was written for Alan Anderson, or for his father, George (since archival documents clearly bear the name of "George A. Anderson"), cannot be resolved here. One

solution may be that this tablet was sent through the father to the son, if the latter was the intended recipient. The tablet reads as follows:

> O thou (*ay ṣāḥib*) who hast an illumined heart (*qalb-i rushan*)! Thou art even as the pupil of the eye (*mardumak-i chashm*), the very wellspring of the light (*ma'dan-i nūr*), for God's love hath cast its rays upon thine inmost being and thou hast turned thy face toward the Kingdom of thy Lord.
>
> Intense is the hatred (*nafrat*), in America, between black and white (*sīyāh va sifīd*), but my hope is that the power of the Kingdom will bind these two in friendship, and serve them as a healing balm.
>
> Let them look not upon a man's colour (*rang*) but upon his heart (*qalb*). If the heart be filled with light, that man is nigh unto the threshold of his Lord (*agar qalb-i nūrānī ān muqarrab*); but if not, that man is careless of his Lord (*ghāfil az khudā*), be he white or be he black.[90]

The Persian original has been studied as well.[91] In reading the original Persian text, Nahzy Abadi Buck comments:

- In Persian, "pupil of the eye," مردمک چشم (*mardumak-i chashm*), literally means "small person of the eye" or "people-like [part] of the eye."
- When read as a whole, physical "color" (رنگ, *rang*) is not important, but the "heart" (قلب, *qalb*) matters—"If the heart be filled with light, that man is nigh unto the threshold of his Lord" (اگر قلب نورانی آن مقرّب).[92]

In contrast to prevailing social habits in Jim Crow America, 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes character over characteristics. That is, one should not focus on another's extrinsic racial characteristics (color), but, rather, on that person's intrinsic character (heart) as a determinant of moral worth.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S REMARKS TO LOUIS G. GREGORY (1911)

A graduate of the School of Law at Howard University (1902), Louis G. Gregory (1874–1951) practiced law for fifteen years. He first learned about the Bahá'í Faith in the latter part of 1907, when he was a federal employee in the Department of the Treasury. Through a colleague, Gregory attended a Bahá'í meeting. When he entered the room, Pauline Hannen warmly greeted him, and "told me that I would hear something very wonderful, though difficult," which "would afford me an opportunity similar to that which would have been mine had I lived on Earth as a contemporary of Jesus Christ." She gave him a copy of Bahá'u'lláh's *The Hidden Words*, and two other pieces

of Bahá'í literature. The presenter for the evening then arrived, a "Mrs. Lua M. Getsinger, referred to as 'our teacher.'" "A little later," Gregory adds, "came two colored ladies, Miss Millie York and Miss Nelly Gray." Shortly after that first meeting, Pauline Hannen and her husband, Joseph H. Hannen, became "my sole connection with the Faith" for a period of time, with Joseph as Gregory's primary Bahá'í teacher. Then, when the Hannens "went on their pilgrimage to the Holy Land," Gregory learned (a "long time afterwards") that the Hannens "had kindly mentioned me to the Master ['Abdu'l-Bahá] who had instructed them to continue teaching me, assuring them that I would become a believer and an advocate of the teachings."[93]

'Abdu'l-Bahá's prediction came true. Gregory became a Bahá'í in June 1909. At the express wish of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (as indicated above), Gregory dedicated the rest of his life to promoting ideal race relations (referred to as "race amity" at that time) primarily through lecturing, in venues far and wide, on the Bahá'í principles of unity.[94] In 1909, in reply to Gregory's first letter to him, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote the following: "I hope that thou mayest become . . . the means whereby the white and colored people shall close their eyes to racial differences and behold the reality of humanity."[95] This empirically demonstrates 'Abdu'l-Bahá's awareness of the endemic racial problem in America at that time, and as early as 1902, as seen in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablet to Sarah Farmer. 'Abdu'l-Bahá explicitly states that Louis Gregory should strive to "become a herald of the Kingdom and a means whereby the white and colored people shall close their eyes to racial differences and behold the reality of humanity, which is the universal unity."[96] Further historical evidence indicates that 'Abdu'l-Bahá told Gregory, "Work for unity and harmony between the races."[97] Gregory championed this mission to inspire Americans of all persuasions to do their part, and their best, to eliminate racial prejudice, the bane and blight of American society. As such, a few words about this remarkable individual are in order. Of course, as discussed above, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words to Louis Gregory, in particular, reflect the same mandate for American Bahá'ís in general. In the 1919 tablet quoted above, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave, and still gives, American Bahá'ís a clear mission, a moral imperative, in fact, to do their part in ameliorating America's racial crisis, what Shoghi Effendi later characterized as America's "most challenging issue":

> As to racial prejudice, the corrosion of which, for well nigh a century, has bitten into the fiber, and attacked the whole social structure of American society, it should be regarded as constituting *the most vital and challenging issue confronting the Bahá'í community at the present stage of its evolution*. The ceaseless exertions which this issue of paramount importance calls for, the sacrifices it must impose, the care and vigilance it demands, the moral courage and fortitude it requires, the tact and sympathy it necessitates, invest this problem, which the

> American believers are still far from having satisfactorily resolved, with an urgency and importance that cannot be overestimated.[98]

In early 1911, 'Abdu'l-Bahá invited Gregory to visit the Holy Land for a pilgrimage to the Bahá'í holy places in Haifa and 'Akka, in Ottoman Palestine. Gregory first traveled to Egypt, where 'Abdu'l-Bahá was residing at the time. Later that same year, Gregory recounted his experience:

> "How many are the colored believers?" asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá. As accurately as possible, an estimate was made of the number of those who had heard and accepted the Glad Tidings. He responded: "The Cause will advance among them. There are many good souls among them, and such people are my friends. You must continue to teach." "Do you remember My Tablet to you?" Gladly I announced that it was committed to memory. "I liken you to the pupil of the eye. You are black and it is black, yet it becomes the focus of light.[99]

How Gregory answered the question as to the number of African American Bahá'ís is not known. Today we know that at least forty African Americans embraced the Bahá'í Faith as their chosen religion during the years of Abdu'l-Baha's ministry (1892–1921):

> (1) Robert Turner (1898, Pleasanton, California); (2) Olive Jackson (1899, New York); (3) Pocahontas Pope (1906, Washington, DC); (4) Louis G. Gregory (1909, Washington, DC); (5) Mrs. Andrew J. Dyer (c. 1909, Washington, DC); (6) Alan A. Anderson, Sr. (1910, Washington, DC); (7) Louise Washington (1910, Washington, DC); (8) Harriet Gibbs-Marshall (c. 1910, Washington, DC); (9) Coralie Franklin Cook (c. 1910, Washington, DC)[100] (10) Millie York (c. 1910, Washington, DC); (11) Nellie Gray (c. 1910, Washington, DC); (12) Rhoda Turner (c. 1910, Washington, DC); (13) Edward J. Braithwaite (c. 1910, Washington, DC); (14) Alonzo Edgar Twine (1910, Charleston, South Carolina; (15) Susan C. Stewart (c. 1910, Richmond, Virginia); (16) Leila Y. Payne (1912, Pittsburgh, visiting Washington, DC); (17) Hallie Elvira Queen (c. 1913, Washington, DC); (18) Alexander H. Martin, Sr. (1913, Cleveland, Ohio); (19) Mary Brown Martin (1913, Cleveland); (20) Sarah Elizabeth Martin (1919, Cleveland, minor daughter (mentioned in a Tablet by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1919) later known as Dr. Sarah Elizabeth Martin Pereira); (21) Lydia Jayne Martin (1919, Cleveland, minor daughter also mentioned in the above Tablet); (22) Alice Ashton [Green] (1913, Washington, DC); (23) Elizabeth Ashton (Alice's mother, 1913, Washington, DC); (24) John R. Ashton (Alice's father, 1913, Washington, DC); (25) Mabry C. Oglesby (1914, Boston); (26) Sadie Oglesby (1914, Boston); (27) Beatrice Cannady-Franklin (Portland, OR, 1914); (28) William E. Gibson (Washington, DC, 1914); (29) Rosa L. Shaw (1915, San Francisco); (30) George W. Henderson (c. 1915, Nashville, Tennessee); (31) Zylpha Gray Mapp (1916, Boston); (32) Annie K. Lewis (New York, 1917); (33) Alain Locke, PhD (1918,

> Washington, DC); (34) Georgia M. DeBaptiste Faulkner (1918, Chicago); (35) Roy Williams (1918, New York); (36) Amy Williams (1918, New York); (37) Felice LeRoy Sadgwar (c. 1918, Wilmington, North Carolina); (38) Dorothy Champ (1919, New York); (39) John Shaw (1919, San Francisco); (40) Caroline W. Harris (c. 1920, Harper's Ferry, West Virginia).[101]

Doubtless there were more. But these names are what have so far been uncovered.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR THE TABLETS IN THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH: BAHÁ'U'LLÁH ON EMANCIPATION AND ABOLITION

The pupil of the eye racial metaphor should be seen within the wider historical context of Bahá'í teachings on ideal race relations. Thus, it is important to analyze Bahá'u'lláh's position on slavery. In the nineteenth century, slavery was widespread in the world. Ideal race relations must begin with eradicating the most egregious form of racism and oppression: slavery. Metaphor was previously discussed in this chapter. Symmetry and synergy between word and deed were part and parcel of Bahá'u'lláh's vision for race relations. Metaphor, if used well, adds rhetorical force to persuasive discourse. Bahá'u'lláh's pupil of the eye racial metaphor may be further appreciated in light of his position on slavery. He decisively forbade slavery in 1873:

> It is forbidden you to trade in slaves, be they men or women. It is not for him who is himself a servant to buy another of God's servants, and this hath been prohibited in His Holy Tablet. Thus, by His mercy, hath the commandment been recorded by the Pen of justice. Let no man exalt himself above another; all are but bondslaves before the Lord, and all exemplify the truth that there is none other God but Him. He, verily, is the All-Wise, Whose wisdom encompasseth all things.[102]

Bahá'u'lláh clearly forbade trading in slaves. Much like many northern states in America stopped people from selling slaves but allowed them to continue owning them for a particular period of time, it may be that Bahá'u'lláh favored a gradual emancipation plan where the trade in slaves would stop immediately but the institution itself be gradually eliminated over the course of a generation. However, Shoghi Effendi, for Bahá'ís an authoritative interpreter of Bahá'u'lláh's writings, categorically states that Bahá'u'lláh "prohibits slavery,"[103] which would be in its totality and not simply in terms of trade. Bahá'u'lláh's abrogation of slavery, as a moral imperative in the form

of a religious decree, is perfectly consistent with the positive pupil of the eye metaphor that 'Abdu'l-Baha ascribed to his father.

Some historical context regarding slavery will add to our understanding. Slavery in nineteenth-century Persia (Iran) was of a much different character than the kind that African Americans experienced in the New World. These two systems of labor management and property relations were quite distinct from one another, as Behnaz A. Mirzai notes, integrating Terence Walz and Kenneth Cuno's analysis:

> [U]ntil recently slavery was not a major area of study for historians of the modern Middle East for various reasons. One reason was the absence of anything resembling the traumatic American experience of slavery: indeed, that more than one tenth of the US population descends from enslaved Africans helps explain how slavery divided the nation and led to civil war. Postemancipation racial oppression and segregation has further driven scholarly research on the subject. By comparison, . . . although slavery was integral to Middle Eastern societies, its history and notions of race were constructed differently. Moreover, minority and marginal populations have largely been ignored because of absent or inaccessible historical materials and archives.[104]

Long before 1873, Bahá'u'lláh demonstrated his moral opposition to slavery in actions that he personally undertook. Upon the death of his father, Mírzá 'Abbás-i Núrí (better known as Mírzá Buzurg, the Vizier), Bahá'u'lláh freed his father's household slaves. The former Vizier died sometime between March 17 and May 29, 1839 (1255 AH).[105] This is 'Abdu'l-Baha's account of this significant episode:

> My grandfather [Bahá'u'lláh's father] had many colored maids and servants. When the Blessed Perfection [Bahá'u'lláh] became the head of the family he liberated all of them, and gave them permission to leave or stay, but if they desired to remain it would, of course, be in a different manner. However, all of them, reveling in their newfound freedom preferred to leave, except Esfandayar [Isfandiyar], who remained in the household and continued to serve us with proverbial faithfulness and chastity.[106]

This narrative offers historical evidence of Bahá'u'lláh's perspective on slavery as a twenty-one-year-old young man. Although an anecdotal report, it adds important context to the pupil of the eye account given above and is consistent with the 1873 decree abrogating slavery as a matter of religious principle, thereby "sacralizing," as it were, contemporary secular and Christian abolitionist anti-slavery positions that were taking place across the Atlantic in the United States (as well as in Britain, and elsewhere). This is significant

because a number of Protestant churches, in fact, split into separate factions over slavery and its moral and theological implications, as it related to their very own congregations; and radical (violent) antislavery activists, from Nat Turner to John Brown, were driven by deep Christian convictions. In historical perspective then, the Bahá'í Faith is part of a continuation of antislavery religious thought and not its inventor. That said, Bahá'u'lláh's express abolition of slavery, as a religious as well as a moral and social imperative, is historically significant in its own context.

As further historical warrant of Bahá'u'lláh's long-standing antislavery stance, the following prayer, possibly written on the occasion of the manumission of one of those slaves, reveals a certain dignified humility on the part of Bahá'u'lláh toward an unnamed, former slave, when setting that slave free:

> Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! Behold how one slave hath stood at the door of another, seeking from him his freedom, and this despite the fact that his owner is himself but Thy thrall and Thy servant, and is evanescent before the revelations of Thy supreme Lordship. I testify at this moment, as I stand before Thee, to that which Thou didst testify to Thyself by Thyself, that verily Thou art God and there is none other God but Thee. From everlasting Thou hast inhabited the loftiest heights of power, might and majesty, and wilt, to everlasting, continue to abide in the sublimity of Thy glory, awe and beauty.
>
> All kings are as vassals before the gate of Thy grace, the rich are but destitute at the shore of Thy sacred dominion, and all great ones are but feeble creatures within the court of Thy glorious bounty. How, then, can this thrall claim for himself ownership of any other human being? Nay, his very existence before the court of Thy might is a sin with which no other sin in Thy kingdom can compare. Glorified, immeasurably glorified, art Thou beyond every description and praise.
>
> O my God! Since he hath asked this servant for his freedom, I call Thee to witness at this moment, that I verily have set him free in Thy path, liberated him in Thy name, and lifted from his neck the shackles of servitude, that he may serve Thee in the daytime and in the night-season, whilst I pray that Thou mayest never free mine own neck from the chain of Thy servitude. This verily is my highest hope and supreme aspiration, and to this Thou Thyself art a mighty witness.[107]

Liberation from slavery (manumission) was only the beginning of racial emancipation. In the United States, the badges of bondage and the stigmas of racial prejudice, the pernicious legacy and historical aftermath of slavery, persisted long after emancipation and, indeed, persists in its subtle, and sometimes gross forms, to this day. 'Abdu'l-Bahá continued advancing Bahá'u'lláh's radical stance.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON RACE

This survey of the seven pupil of the eye tablets should also be seen within the wider historical context of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's public discourse on race. He was most vocal on the race issue during his 1912 speaking tour in America and Canada. On May 11, 1912, in New York, one month after his arriving in the United States, the following observation documents how "horrified" 'Abdu'l-Bahá was on witnessing racism in America firsthand:

> He had been horrified in Washington by the prejudice against the Negroes. "What does it matter," He asked, "if the skin of a man is black, white, yellow, pink, or green? In this respect the animals show more intelligence than man. Black sheep and white sheep, white doves and blue do not quarrel because of difference of colour."[108]

Prior to that, however, it appears that 'Abdu'l-Bahá's first public statement on race relations was on the occasion of the historic First Universal Races Congress held in July 26–29, 1911, at the University of London. This Congress represented a cosmopolitan turning point in discussions on race among intellectual elites, as well as representatives from across the world. Although it attracted scant notice in the white press, this event was a brief, global moment in the history of race relations. That Major Wellesley Tudor Pole, a prominent British Bahá'í at the time, read parts (in rough translation) of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's address to the Congress must have lent some Western credibility, as it were, to the "Bahá'í Movement," as it was known then.

The original Persian of this Tablet, which 'Abdu'l-Bahá had sent to the Congress, and was read during the Third Session, was later published in its proceedings that same year. It has been provisionally translated by the scholar, Sen McGlinn,[109] who relied on the published Persian text.[110] 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote, in part:

> The Light of the Word is now shining on all horizons. Races and nations, with their different creeds, are coming under the influence of the Word of Unity in love and in peace.[111]
>
> The Blessed One, Baha'u'llah, likens the existing world to a tree, and the people to its fruits, blossoms and leaves. All should be fresh and vigorous, the attainment of their beauty and proportion depending on the love and unity with which they sustain each other and seek the Life eternal.[112]
>
> The friends of God should become the manifestors in this world of this mercy and love. They should not dwell on the shortcomings of others. Ceaselessly should they be thinking how they may benefit others and show service

and co-operation. Thus should they regard every stranger, putting aside such prejudices and superstitions as might prevent friendly relations.[113]

To-day the noblest person is he who bestows upon his enemy the pearl of generosity, and is a beacon-light to the misguided and the oppressed. This is the command of Baha'u'llah.[114]

O dear friends! The world is in a warlike condition, and its races are hostile one to the other. The darkness of difference surrounds them, and the light of kindness grows dim. The foundations of society are destroyed and the banners of life and joy are overthrown. The leaders of the people seem to glory in the shedding of blood—Friendship, straightness, and truthfulness are despised . . . .[115]

The call to arbitration, to peace, to love, and to loyalty is the call of Baha'u'llah. His standard floats since fifty years, summoning all of whatever race and creed.[116]

As this speech relates to race, what the audience heard, and readers later read, is that the teachings of Baha'u'llah had the power to transform race hatred into interracial harmony. The problem of racial strife was thereby placed within the wider context of social ferment and war across the world. In this respect, the speech represented 'Abdu'l-Bahá's internationalization of the race problem, using the same basic analysis to characterize both problems and solutions.[117] Significantly, leaders of the Black intelligentsia, such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Alain Locke, were in attendance, and they may have first become acquainted with the "Bahá'í Movement" (as it was then known), at this Congress.[118]

Nearly a year later, on April 23, 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke in Rankin Chapel on the campus of Howard University. Before a standing room only audience, black and white, 'Abdu'l-Bahá recounted the Civil War experience where predominantly white Northerners sacrificed their time, treasure, and even lives on the battlefields to free African Americans from the shackles of slavery. For this massive undertaking to free the American nation of slavery once and for all, 'Abdu'l-Bahá told the African Americans in the audience that they should be grateful. Of course, the Civil War involved other issues as well, but the rhetorical point was accepted and well received. In a message to the whites in the audience, 'Abdu'l-Bahá urged them to dedicate their efforts to the amelioration and advancement of their fellow American citizens, the African Americans. The overall message was that the races should embrace each other in fraternity and common humanity. A close analysis of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Howard University speech, was published in 2013. Although the pupil of the eye metaphor was not used in this particular speech, similar metaphors were employed, with much the same rhetorical purpose and effect.[119]

CONCLUSION

> Strive (*bi-kūshīd*) with heart and soul (lit. "soul and heart," *jān va dil*) in order to bring about union and harmony (*'ulfat*) among the white and the black (*sīyāh va sifīd*) and prove thereby the unity (*vaḥdat*) of the Bahá'í world wherein distinction of colour findeth no place, but where hearts only are considered. Praise be to God, the hearts (*qulūb*) of the friends are united and linked together, whether they be from the east or the west, . . . and whether they pertain to the white, the black, the red, the yellow or the brown race. Variations of colour, of land and of race are of no importance in the Bahá'í Faith. . . .[120]

This tablet was translated in 1919 by Oxford-educated "Shoghi Rabbani," that is, Shoghi Effendi, presumably shortly after it was written and addressed: "To his honor, Mr. Louis Gregory" in Washington, DC.[121] Although addressed to Louis Gregory individually, the message was meant for the American Bahá'ís collectively.[122]

'Abdu'l-Baha was as clear as he was emphatic on the issues of race: "And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that religious, racial, political, economic and patriotic prejudices destroy the edifice of humanity."[123] "Therefore," 'Abdu'l-Baha concludes, " . . . the world of humanity cannot be saved from the darkness of nature and cannot attain illumination except through the abandonment of prejudices. . . ."[124] He was optimistic about the future of race relations:

> Hence the unity of all mankind can in this day be achieved. Verily this is none other but one of the wonders of this wondrous age, this glorious century. Of this past ages have been deprived, for this century—the century of light—hath been endowed with unique and unprecedented glory, power and illumination. Hence the miraculous unfolding of a fresh marvel every day. Eventually it will be seen how bright its candles will burn in the assemblage of man.
>
> Behold how its light is now dawning upon the world's darkened horizon. The first candle is unity in the political realm, the early glimmerings of which can now be discerned. The second candle is unity of thought in world undertakings, the consummation of which will erelong be witnessed. The third candle is unity in freedom which will surely come to pass. The fourth candle is unity in religion which is the corner-stone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be revealed in all its splendour. The fifth candle is the unity of nations—a unity which in this century will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland. *The sixth candle is unity of races, making of all that dwell on earth peoples and kindreds of one race.* The seventh candle is unity of language, i.e., the choice of a universal tongue in which all peoples will be instructed and converse. Each and every one of these will inevitably come to pass, inasmuch as the power of the Kingdom of God will aid and assist in their realization.[125]

This passage has been quoted more fully in order to place the Bahá'í principle of ideal race relations within the broader, or at least coextensive, context of productive international relations, along with the abandoning of religious prejudice, which is a continuing source of sectarian conflict (including civil war and terrorism). Prejudice, whether racial, religious, or otherwise, has great sway in the present day and vast, ghastly destructive power. The Bahá'í social discourse of interracial harmony, including the ennobling and socially uplifting pupil of the eye racial metaphor, makes sacred, and therefore religiously important and more intersubjectively available by way of public discourse, what philosophy can only promote by persuasion among the intellectual elite. Efforts by early American Bahá'ís to promote "race amity" was a social phenomenon notable in that it ran directly counter to the prevailing currents of Jim Crow America.[126]

In public discourse (i.e., speech acts), metaphors can serve important roles in human language and thought, including the influencing of social attitudes, such as toward race relations, as in Jim Crow America, which had its own universe of discourse. Positive racial rhetoric was one effective strategy by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to counter the prevailing negative stereotypes of Jim Crow America. The pupil of the eye metaphor, although physical in description, was essentially a spiritual image. It was a way to spiritualize, and therefore humanize, through harmony, the issue of race. Today, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's pupil of the eye metaphor is still part and parcel of Bahá'í public discourse on ideal race relations, and even in terms of Bahá'í self-identity itself, in a continuing effort to promote racial healing and ideal race relations and thereby help bridge the racial divide.

NOTES

1. *Encyclopedia of African American History*, s.v. "Plessy v. Ferguson," http://christopherbuck.com/pdf/Buck_2010_Plessy_Ferguson.pdf.

2. For instance, on November 23, 1912, in New York, the Great Northern Hotel turned away black Bahá'ís who arrived to attend a banquet. The very next night, "'Abdu'l-Bahá held a separate banquet for them at the Kinney residence, where the whites served them." Robert Stockman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in America* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing, 2012), 341. The fact that whites served blacks was highly symbolic of the importance that 'Abdu'l-Bahá placed on fostering ideal race relations in the United States and abroad.

3. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1938; repr., Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), 37. Here, Bahá'u'lláh's comparison is explicit, thereby rendering the "pupil of the eye" image technically a simile (i.e., a literal comparison), by way of a direct analogy. Yet, when compressed so as to exclude the typical "like" and "as" prepositions that so clearly

mark similes, a metaphor is what remains. (This clarification addresses a long-standing controversy as to whether a simile is literal or metaphorical in nature.)

4. Christopher Buck, "The Bahá'í 'Race Amity' Movement and the Black Intelligentsia in Jim Crow America: Alain Locke and Robert S. Abbott," *Bahá'í Studies Review* 17 (2011): 3–46, https://bahai-library.com/pdf/b/buck_race_amity_movement.pdf.; and Christopher Buck, "The Interracial 'Bahá'í Movement' and the Black Intelligentsia: The Case of W. E. B. Du Bois," in "Bahá'í History," ed. Todd Lawson, special issue, *Journal of Religious History* 36, no. 4 (December 2012): 542–62, https://bahai-library.com/pdf/b/buck_interracial_bahai_du-bois.pdf.

5. Richard W. Thomas, "The 'Pupil of the Eye': African-Americans and the Making of the American Bahá'í Community," in *Lights of the Spirit: Historical Portraits of Black Bahá'ís in North America, 1898–2000*, eds. Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis and Richard W. Thomas (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing, 2006), 19–48, Kindle.

6. Richard W. Thomas, "The 'Pupil of the Eye': African-Americans and the Making of the American Bahá'í Community, 1898–2003," in *The Black Urban Community: From Dusk Till Dawn*, eds. Gayle Tate and Lewis Randolph (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 167–92.

7. Thomas, "The 'Pupil of the Eye': African-Americans and the Making of the American Bahá'í Community," in *Lights of the Spirit*, 46, Kindle.

8. There may be more such tablets, of course. The seven included in the present study are based on an intensive archival search (over a period of forty-nine weeks) by Lewis V. Walker, Assistant Archivist, National Bahá'í Archives, United States. Personal communication, October 7, 2016. It is possible that other documents exist in local archives. A "tablet" is what Bahá'ís call a letter written by Bahá'u'lláh or 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

9. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, 37.

10. Christina Alm-Arvius, *Figures of Speech* (Lund, Sweden: Studentlitteratur, 2003), 21 (emphasis in original).

11. Alm-Arvius, *Figures of Speech*, 20–21.

12. Alm-Arvius, *Figures of Speech*, 22 (emphasis in original).

13. Alm-Arvius, *Figures of Speech*, 22 (emphasis in original).

14. Alm-Arvius, *Figures of Speech*, 23.

15. Alm-Arvius, *Figures of Speech*, 23.

16. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Notes of a conversation with 'Abdu'l-Bahá," *'Abdu'l-Bahá in London* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), 68.

17. Shoghi Effendi, "African Intercontinental Conference (Kampala, Uganda, February 12–18, 1953)," in *Messages to the Bahá'í World: 1950–1957* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971), 136.

18. Abdu'l-Bahá, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in London*, 68.

19. Ibid.

20. The Green Acre Bahá'í School is a retreat and conference center currently overseen by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States. It played an integral role in the American Bahá'í experience during the period being studied.

21. *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record* 4, 1930–1932 (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1933; repr., Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing

Trust, 1980), 118–19. Sarah Farmer was an abolitionist and Transcendentalist. Her family home was a stop for the Underground Railroad. She founded Green Acre after attending the Parliament of Religions at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. She met 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1900 in Palestine, where he was a prisoner of the Ottoman Empire, and converted to the Bahá'í Faith.

22. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Sarah Farmer (1902). Full text published in Kathryn Jewett Hogenson, *Lighting the Western Sky: The Hearst Pilgrimage and the Establishment of the Bahá'í Faith in the West* (Oxford: George Ronald, 2010), 271–72. The author thanks Bijan Masumian for the reference, personal communication, December 9, 2016.

23. 'Abdu'l-Baha, tablet to Sarah Farmer, published in *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas* (Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1909) 2, 292. This tablet was translated by Ali-Kuli Khan on September 13, 1902, according to notes Albert Windust made in his set of books. Windust was the editor and typesetter for the three volumes of *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*. The author thanks Robert Stockman, personal communication, December 5, 2016, for this information.

24. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Sarah Farmer (1902). The pupil of the eye section of this tablet was previously published in *The Power of Unity: Beyond Prejudice and Racism*, 69 (no. 31). It was republished in *The Pupil of the Eye: African Americans in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 2nd ed., compiled by Bonnie J. Taylor (Rivera Beach, FL: Palabra Publications, 1998), 189 (no. 1).

25. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Sarah Farmer (translated by Ali-Kuli Khan, September 13, 1902). Translations of Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Collection, National Bahá'í Archives, United States (tablet to Sarah Farmer, extract). See also Hannen-Knobloch Family Papers, Box 28. Courtesy of Lewis V. Walker, Assistant Archivist, National Bahá'í Archives.

26. Albert Vail, "National Teaching Committee: News of the Cause," *Bahá'í News Letter* no. 9 (December 1925–January 1926): 8.

27. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Alma Knobloch (translated by Rouhi M. Afnan, Haifa, Palestine, August 3, 1921). Translations of Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Collection, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, IL. See also Albert Windust Papers, Box 18, National Bahá'í Archives, United States (same tablet, but without a date). Courtesy of Lewis V. Walker, Assistant Archivist, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, IL. Omid Ghaemmaghami (Binghamton University, SUNY) identified the pupil of the eye tablet in question after seeing digital scans of the documents sent to him, making it possible to study the terminology used in the original text.

28. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, 310; tablet to Marie L. Botay, translated on June 10, 1902 by Anton Haddad. Reference courtesy of Richard Hollinger, personal communication, September 4, 2017.

29. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Sarah Farmer, published in *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas* (Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1909), 2, 303. This tablet was translated by Ahmad Sohrab in February 1906, according to notes Albert Windust made in his set of books.

30. Moojan Momen, "Esslemont's Survey of the Bahá'í World, 1919–1920," in *Bahá'ís in the West*, ed. Peter Smith, *Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 14 (Los Angeles: Kalimát, 2004), 88.

31. Ibid.

32. Digital scans of four archival documents with the original translation were consulted: (1) 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Alma S. Knobloch (translated in Akko, Palestine, December 12, 1906). Source: Translations of tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Collection, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, IL; (2) Hannen-Knobloch Family Papers, Box 15; (3) Louis G. Gregory Papers, Box 4; (4) Ahmad Sohrab Papers, Box 14. Courtesy of Lewis V. Walker, Assistant Archivist, National Bahá'í Archives.

33. Paul Bidwell, compiler, "Pocahontis Pope" (sic), https://www.pinterest.com/paulabidwell/pocahontis-pope.

34. See Newspapers.com, https://www.newspapers.com/papers. Search for "Pocahontas Pope" (thirty-six matching results).

35. Elizabeth W. Wilborn, Boyd Cathey, and Jerry L. Cross, *The Roanoke Valley: A Report for the Historic Halifax State Historic Site*, https://ia600500.us.archive.org/7/items/roanokevalleyrep00wilb/roanokevalleyrep00wilb.pdf.

36. *FamilySearch*, https://www.familysearch.org/search/record/results?count=20&query=%2Bgivenname%3APocahontas~%20%2Bsurname%3APope~.

37. Wilborn, Cathey, and Cross, *The Roanoke Valley*.

38. Wilborn, Cathey, and Cross, *The Roanoke Valley*.

39. Wilborn, Cathey, and Cross, *The Roanoke Valley*.

40. "John W. Pope Promoted," *The Patron and Gleaner*, September 1, 1898, 3, clipped by Paula Bidwell, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/1191995/jw_in_washington_since_spring_the.

41. "Our Schools," *The Banner-Enterprise* (Raleigh, North Carolina), September 6, 1883, 2, clipped by Paula Bidwell, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/1083771/first_mention_of_j_w_popes_work_at; "Banner–Waves," *The Banner-Enterprise* (Raleigh, North Carolina), January 26, 1884, 3, clipped by Paula Bidwell, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/1083164/bannerenterprise_raliegh_nc_26; "Our Halifax Letters. Scotland Neck and Schools—Address by Hon. James E. O'Hara—The Improved Condition of the Colored People," *The Raleigh Signal* (Raleigh, NC), August 11, 1887, 2, clipped by Steven Kolins, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/12606265/john_w_pope_scotland_neck_normal.

42. "A Grand Concert," *The Patron and Gleaner*, December 31, 1896, 2, clipped by Paula Bidwell, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/1192071/jw_pope_manager_ame_sunday_school.

43. "Halifax County," *The Raleigh Signal*, June 23, 1887, clipped by Steven Kolins, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/6348244/mrs_john_w_pocahontas_pope_later_a.

44. "The Colored People," *The Patron and Gleaner*, August 12, 1897, 3, clipped by Steven Kolins, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/12617998/jw_pope_husband_of_later_bahai.

45. "City Paragraphs," *The Colored American* (Washington, DC), February 9, 1901, 11, clipped by Steven Kolins, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/6323527/john_w_pope_husband_of_soon_bahai.

46. "Officers and Delegates," *Evening Star*, June 9, 1902, 10, clipped by Steven Kolins, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/6326523/note_of_j_w_and_later_bahai_mrs.

47. "City Paragraphs," *The Colored American*, March 21, 1903, 16, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/1191944/the_colored_american.

48. "Widow Sole Beneficiary," *The Washington Herald*, June 6, 1918, 6, clipped by Steven Kolins, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/1095504/bahai_pocahontas_pope_inherits.

49. United States Census, 1920, https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9R63-NCG?cc=1488411.

50. United States Census, 1930, https://www.familysearch.org/search/record/results?count=20&query=%2Bgivenname%3APocahontas~%20%2Bsurname%3APope~.

51. Pocahontas Kay Pope," https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=81286 (search "Pocahontas" as "First Name).

52. Pauline Knobloch Hannen (d. 1939) was a white Southerner who grew up in Wilmington, NC. In 1902, she became a Bahá'í in Washington, DC. She and her husband, Joseph Hannen, were early American Bahá'ís who were instrumental in introducing the Bahá'í teachings of ideal race relations and world unity to African Americans in Washington, DC. See Robert Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America*, vol. 2, *Early Expansion 1900–1912* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1985).

53. Bahá'u'lláh, Arabic Hidden Word no. 68, *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1985), 20. The translation of this book that Hannen would have read is not easily available.

54. Buck, *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy*, 37–38. Based on Robert Stockman, chapter sixteen, "New England and Washington DC," in *The Bahá'í Faith in America: Early Expansion 1900–*1912, vol. 2 (Oxford: George Ronald, 1985), 225–26.

55. Pauline Hannen, quoted in Buck, *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy*, 38, citing Pauline Hannen to Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, (handwritten), May 1909, Ahmad Sohrab Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, Archivist, National Bahá'í Archives, Bahá'í National Center, Wilmette, IL, enclosure sent 2 July 2002. Lua Getsinger, Howard MacNutt, and Hooper Harris were all well-known Bahá'ís in this era.

56. "City Paragraphs," *The Colored American*, March 21, 1903, 16, 2017, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/1191944/the_colored_american.

57. "City Paragraphs," *The Colored American*, July 21, 1900, Saturday, First Edition, 16, clipped by Steven Kolins, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/6326508/later_bahai_mrs_j_w_pocahontas_pope.

58. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Pocahontas Pope (Washington, DC), in *A Compilation on Women*, 6 (no. 10), http://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/compilations/women. For an earlier translation, see 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Pocahontas Pope, Translations of Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Collection, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, IL. See also Hannen-Knobloch Family Papers, Box 27 (Pocahontas Pope). Courtesy of Lewis V. Walker, Assistant Archivist, National Bahá'í Archives.

59. Christopher Buck and Nahzy Abadi Buck, "The Black Pupil: Where the Light of the Spirit Shines," September 9, 2016, http://bahaiteachings.org/black-pupil-eye-source-light.

60. Hogenson, *Lighting the Western Sky,* 49. The author thanks Bijan Masumian for this reference, personal communication, December 9, 2016.

61. Thomas, "The 'Pupil of the Eye,'" *Lights of the Spirit*, 23–24.

62. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Robert Turner, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982), 114 (Section 78). Original Arabic text: 'Abdu'l-Bahā, *Muntakhabātī az makātīb-i Ḥaḍrat-i 'Abdu'l-Bahā*, vol. 1 (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979), 111 (Section 78).

63. Nahzy Abadi Buck, in Christopher Buck and Nahzy Abadi Buck, "Pupil of the Eye: An Ennobling Racial Metaphor," presented May 23, 2015, "Memorials of the Faithful" weekend, Desert Rose Bahá'í Institute, Eloi, AZ (May 23–24, 2015).

64. Omid Ghaemmaghami reminded the author of this, personal communication, December 8, 2016.

65. Hogenson, *Lighting the Western Sky,* 143–44.

66. May Maxwell, *An Early Pilgrimage* (1917; reprint: Oxford: George Ronald, 1953), 20–21. See also Hogenson, *Lighting the Western Sky*, 144.

67. Selena M. Crosson, *Searching for May Maxwell: Bahá'í Millennial Feminism, Transformative Identity and Globalism in the New World Order Shaping Women's Role in Early Bahá'i Culture 1898–1940* (PhD diss., University of Saskatchewan, 2013), 136–37, https://harvest.usask.ca/bitstream/handle/10388/ETD-2013-10-1145/CROSSON-DISSERTATION.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y.

68. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Robert Turner (translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, August 17, 1909, Chicago). ("Ayn Ayn" are Arabic initials; in English "A. A." stands for the writer's name, 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbás.) Source: Translations of Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Collection, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, IL. Arabic original: Original Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Collection, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, IL. Courtesy of Lewis V. Walker, Assistant Archivist, National Bahá'í Archives.

69. Christopher Buck and Nahzy Abadi Buck, "The Black Pupil: Where the Light of the Spirit Shines."

70. Hogenson, *Lighting the Western Sky*, 258.

71. Wendy Heller, "Gail, Marzieh," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gail-marzieh.

72. Marzieh Gail, *Arches of the Years* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1991), 54.

73. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Ali-Kuli Khan, translation by Ali-Kuli Khan, quoted in Gail, *Arches of the Years*, 54.

74. This is a Bahá'í invocation which means God is All-Glorious.

75. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Ali-Kuli Khan (translated by Ali-Kuli Khan, Carmel, California, summer 1909), quoted in Gail, *Arches of the Years*, 55.

76. Ibid. *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record* 4, 118–19.

77. *The New York Age* (New York, Saturday, December 24, 1938), 5. Found by Richard Hollinger, and posted online, accessed December 10, 2016, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/1484096/louise_washington_bahai_marriage_to.

78. *New York Age* (New York, Thursday, October 10, 1912), 8. Found by Steven Kolins, and posted online, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/286449/ the_new_york_age.

79. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Louise Washington (1910). Text from the following two archival, digital scans: (1) "To Louise Washington." "Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Washington, DC, October 31, 1910." Translations of Tablets of

'Abdu'l-Bahá Collection, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, IL. See also Thornton Chase Papers, Box 8. Courtesy of Lewis V. Walker, Archivist, National Bahá'í Archives; (2) "To Louise Washington." "Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Washington, D.C., October 31, 1910." "Dup" [Duplicate]. Translations of Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Collection, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, IL. Courtesy of Lewis V. Walker, Archivist, National Bahá'í Archives.

80. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in *The Power of Unity: Beyond Prejudice and Racism*, 6 (#17); republished in *The Pupil of the Eye: African Americans in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 26 (#10).

81. The four archival copies consulted are: (1) 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Louise Washington (translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Washington, DC, October 31, 1910). Source: Translations of Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Collection, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, IL; (2) Albert Windust Papers, Box 19 (Louise Washington); (3) Hannen-Knobloch Family Papers, Box 28 (Louise Washington); (4) Thornton Chase Papers, Box 8 (Louise Washington). Courtesy of Lewis V. Walker, Assistant Archivist, National Bahá'í Archives.

82. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in *The Power of Unity: Beyond Prejudice and Racism*, 6 (#17); republished in *The Pupil of the Eye: African Americans in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 26 (#10).

83. Tablet by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the Bahá'ís of Washington, DC, quoted in Louis Gregory, *A Heavenly Vista: The Pilgrimage of Louis G. Gregory*. Reprinted as *A Heavenly Vista*, 1997 ed. (Ferndale, MI: Alpha Services, 1997), http://bahai-library.com/gregory_heavenly_vista.

84. *Bahá'í World Faith: Selected Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971), 359.

85. Manuscripts' typescripts consulted: (1) 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to George A. Anderson (translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, House of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, July 16, 1914). Source: Translations of Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Collection, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, IL; (2) See also: Leone Barnitz Papers, Box 18 (George A. Anderson, 5th tablet); and (3) Hannen-Knobloch Family Papers, Box 27 (George A. Anderson). Courtesy of Lewis V. Walker, Assistant Archivist, National Bahá'í Archives.

86. Donnie Radcliffe, "Washington Ways," *Washington Post* (July 5, 1983), C4, ProQuest. (Courtesy of Lex Musta and Steven Kolins for digital scans of this story.)

87. Buck, *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy*, 41.

88. Christopher Buck and Nahzy Abadi Buck, "The Black Pupil: Where the Light of the Spirit Shines."

89. "In Memoriam," *Bahá'í News*, U.S. Supplement, no. 22 (December 1959), 2, http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/diglib/Periodicals/US_Supplement/022.pdf.

90. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to George A. Anderson, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, 113 (Section 76). Original Persian text: 'Abdu'l-Bahā, *Muntakhabātī az makātīb-i Ḥaḍrat-i 'Abdu'l-Bahā*, vol. 1, 110 (Section 76). Transliteration of key Persian terms provided by the present writer.

91. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to George A. Anderson (Persian original, July 16, 1914). Source: Original Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Collection, National Bahá'í

Archives, Wilmette, IL. See also: Hannen-Knobloch Family Papers, Box 27 (George A. Anderson). Courtesy of Lewis V. Walker, Assistant Archivist, National Bahá'í Archives.

92. Christopher Buck and Nahzy Abadi Buck, "The Black Pupil: Where the Light of the Spirit Shines."

93. Louis G. Gregory, "Some Recollections of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Faith in Washington, D.C.," handwritten manuscript, dated December 7, 1937, 16 pages, TS, Louis G. Gregory Papers, U.S. National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, IL, 1–4.

94. Christopher Buck, "Fifty Bahá'í Principles of Unity: A Paradigm of Social Salvation," *Bahá'í Studies Review* 18 (2012): 3–44 (published June 23, 2015 and presented at Princeton University (February 21, 2014), https://bahai-library.com/buck_unity_social_salvation.

95. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Louis Gregory, translated Nov. 17, 1909, Translations of Original Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Collection, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, IL, quoted by Gayle Morrison, "Gregory, Louis George (1874–1951)," *The Bahá'í Encyclopedia Project*, http://www.bahai-encyclopedia-project.org/index.php?view=article&catid=56%3Aa-selection-of-articles&id=63%3Agregory-louis-george&option=com_content&Itemid=74.

96. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Louis G. Gregory, in *The Power of Unity: Beyond Prejudice and Racism*, 66 (entry no. 25).

97. In early 1911, 'Abdu'l-Bahá invited Louis Gregory to Ramleh (in Alexandria), Egypt, where he was staying. Gregory arrived on April 10, 1911. In a section titled "The Race Question," "'Abdu'l-Bahá asked, 'What of the conflict between the white and colored races?'" Gregory commented, "This question made me smile, for I at once felt that my Inquirer, although He had never in person visited America, yet knew more of conditions than I could ever know." Louis Gregory also asked, "What is the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá concerning this unworthy servant?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, "Work for unity and harmony between the races." Gregory, *A Heavenly Vista: The Pilgrimage of Louis G. Gregory*, 10. Reprinted as *A Heavenly Vista*, 1997 ed. (Ferndale, MI: Alpha Services, 1997). Without a supporting text in the original Persian, this statement cannot be authenticated verbatim. Yet the gist of it may be considered historically reliable. At the very least, this is the impression that Louis Gregory himself was given. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's mandate, as recalled here and as understood, gave Gregory a clear sense of mission, which was to promote ideal race relations, to the extent possible, in Jim Crow America.

98. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, 33–34 (emphasis added).

99. Reported statements by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in Gregory, *A Heavenly Vista*, 17.

100. Coralie Cook was Chair of Oratory at Howard University, and her husband, George William Cook, was Secretary and Business Manager, later Finance Professor of Commercial and International Law and Dean of the School of Commerce and Finance. According to Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis, "Coralie and her husband George became Bahá'ís in 1913." See Etter-Lewis, *Lights of the Spirit*, 71 (citing archivist Roger Dahl, Correspondence, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, IL). However, there is some doubt as to whether George Cook formally identified himself as a

Bahá'í. See Buck, *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy*, 78, in which Louis Gregory and Alain Locke state otherwise.

101. This information is culled, for the most part, from a combination of the following sources: Gayle Morrison, *To Move the World: Louis G. Gregory and the Advancement of Racial Unity in America* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), passim; Etter-Lewis, *Lights of the Spirit*, passim; Louis Venters, *No Jim Crow Church: The Origins of South Carolina's Bahá'í Community* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2015), 33–40; correspondence with the National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, IL; and correspondence with Steven Kolins. At this time, there were about one to two thousand American Bahá'ís.

102. Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992), 45 (Par. 72).

103. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979), 214.

104. Behnaz A. Mirzai, *A History of Slavery and Emancipation in Iran, 1800–1929* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), 3.

105. Muhammad-Alí Malik-Khusraví Núrí, *Iqlím-i Núr* (Tehran: Mu'assisiy-i-Millíy-i-Matbú'át-i-Amrí, 1962), 115–16. See also P. P. Soucek, "'Abbas b. Reza-Qoli Khan Nuri," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, I, fasc. 1, 84, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abbas-b-reza-qoli-khan-nuri . (References courtesy of Omid Ghaemmaghami, December 14, 2016.) See also Hasan M. Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'ís in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1985), 339–41.

106. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "The Sterling Faithfulness of Esfandayar," *Star of the West* 9, no. 3 (April 28, 1918), 38–39 [38], https://bahai.works Star_of_the_West/Volume_9/Issue_3#pg38.

107. See Christopher Buck, "The Slave's Prayer of Freedom" (September 22, 2014), http://bahaiteachings.org/the-slaves-prayer-of-freedom. This translation has not been published elsewhere.

108. Juliet Thompson, *The Diary of Juliet Thompson* (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1983), 284. Reference courtesy of Anthony Lee, PhD, personal communication, September 2, 2017.

109. Sen McGlinn, "Speech for the Universal Races Congress," https://abdulbahatalks.wordpress.com/1911/07/26/speech-for-the-universal-races-congress.

110. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Majmū'ih-yi Khiṭābāt Ḥaḍrat-i 'Abdu'l-Bahā fī Ūrūpā va Āmrīkā*: al-juz' al-awwal fī safarah al-awwal ilá Urubā (Addresses Delivered during the first journey to Europe), compiled by Mahmud Zarqani (Cairo: Faraj Allāh Zakī al-Kurdi, 1921), 35 ff., in which Volume 1, which was personally reviewed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and approved by him for publication, is prefaced by this note of the compiler, Maḥmúd Zarqání: "Praised be God, the Glory of Glories! Through the grace and loving-kindness of the Center of the Covenant, this lowly servant has succeeded in collecting the talks delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during the course of His first trip to Europe in 1320AH/1912CE. All of the talks have been approved by 'Abdu'l-Bahá' and are published at His request. His lowly servant, Maḥmúd Zarqání." Translated by Omid Ghaemmaghami, personal communication, December 26, 2011.

111. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Letter from Abdu'l-Baha to the First Universal Races Congress," *Papers on Inter-Racial Problems: Communicated to the First Universal Races Congress, Held at the University of London, July 26–29, 1911*, 155–57, ed. Gustav Spiller (London: P. S. King and Son; Boston: World's Peace Foundation, 1911), https://ia902605.us.archive.org/18/items/papersoninterrac00univiala/papersoninterrac00univiala.pdf. This passage corresponds with Paragraph no. 10 in McGlinn's provisional translation of the original Persian of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's speech presented at the First Universal Races Congress.

112. Ibid. This passage corresponds with Paragraph no. 12 in McGlinn's provisional translation of the original Persian of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's speech presented at the First Universal Races Congress.

113. Ibid. This passage corresponds with Paragraph no. 13 in McGlinn's provisional translation of the original Persian of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's speech presented at the First Universal Races Congress.

114. Ibid. This passage corresponds with Paragraph no. 14 in McGlinn's provisional translation of the original Persian of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's speech presented at the First Universal Races Congress.

115. Ibid. This passage corresponds with Paragraph no. 15 in McGlinn's provisional translation of the original Persian of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's speech presented at the First Universal Races Congress.

116. Ibid. This passage corresponds with Paragraph no. 17 in McGlinn's provisional translation of the original Persian of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's speech presented at the First Universal Races Congress.

117. In the first chapter of her dissertation, Leah Victoria Khaghani has written an extended account and analysis of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's contribution to the Congress. "To 'proceed in a new direction': The 1911 First Universal Races Congress in London," in *"One World or None": Transnational Struggles against Imperialism in the American Century* (PhD diss., Yale University, 2011), 14–75, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

118. See Elliott M. Rudwick, "W. E. B. DuBois and the Universal Races Congress of 1911," *The Phylon Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1959): 372–78, JSTOR; and Buck, *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy*, 43–44.

119. Christopher Buck, "'Abdu'l-Baha's 1912 Howard University Speech: A Civil War Myth for Interracial Emancipation," in *'Abdu'l-Baha's Journey West: The Course of Human Solidarity*, ed. Negar Mottahedeh, 111–44 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), http://christopherbuck.com/pdf/Buck_2013_Howard_Speech.pdf.

120. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Louis G. Gregory (translated by Shoghi Rabbani [Shoghi Effendi]), July 24, 1919, Bahji, near Akka), *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, 112–113 (Section 75). Original Persian text, 'Abdu'l-Bahā, *Muntakhabātī az makātīb-i Ḥaḍrat-i 'Abdu'l-Bahā*, vol. 1 (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979), 109–10 (Section 75). Transliteration of key terms added by the present writer.

121. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tablet to Louis G. Gregory, translated by Shoghi Rabbani [Shoghi Effendi], Acca [Acre, Akko, Akka], Palestine [now Israel]), July 24, 1919, in *Star of the West* 11, no. 5 (June 1920), 92, https://bahai.works/Star_of_the_West/Vol

ume_11/Issue_5 (e-text) and https://bahai.works/File:SW_v11no5pg12.png (scan of publication).) Reference courtesy of Omid Ghaemmaghami, December 14, 2016. Old translations (from the years when letters were received from 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas, or those published in *Star of the West*) are not considered to be contemporary, authorized translations, except those identified as translated by Shoghi Effendi, in his capacity as Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith. The original translation is used for its historical pertinence.

122. As a general rule, tablets by 'Abdu'l-Baha were published for the benefit of all Bahá'ís collectively, as instanced in the two previous footnotes, citing the original publication of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablet to Louis G. Gregory in *Star of the West* 11, no. 5 (June 1920), 92.

123. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, 299 (Section 227).

124. Ibid.

125. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, 32 (emphasis added).

126. See Morrison, "The Era of Racial Amity," in *To Move the World: Louis G. Gregory and the Advancement of Racial Unity in America*, 129–214. See also Buck, "The Bahá'í 'Race Amity' Movement and the Black Intelligentsia in Jim Crow America: Alain Locke and Robert S. Abbott."

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About the Contributors

Loni Bramson's doctorate is in contemporary history and history of religion from the Université Catholique de Louvain. She has taught at universities in Africa, Europe, and the United States. Currently she is an associate professor at the American Public University System. She teaches courses in modern United States and European history, history of religion, women's history, African American history, and American Indian history. Her publications include chapters in books, articles, and encyclopedia entries on the Bahá'í Faith, and a human rights monograph. She is an editor for the *Journal of International Women's Studies*.

Christopher Buck, PhD (University of Toronto), JD (Cooley Law School), is an independent scholar, Pittsburgh attorney, and online faculty member at the Wilmette Institute. He previously taught at Michigan State University, Central Michigan University, Quincy University, Millikin University, and Carleton University. Dr. Buck publishes broadly in Bahá'í studies, American studies, African American studies, Native American studies, Islamic studies, religious studies, Syriac Studies, and legal studies (constitutional law). His books include *Baha'i Faith: A Quick Reference*, *God and Apple Pie: Religious Myths and Visions of America*, *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy*, *Paradise and Paradigm: Key Symbols in Persian Christianity and the Bahá'í Faith*, *Symbol and Secret: Qur'an Commentary in Bahá'u'lláh's Kitáb-i Íqán*, *Religious Celebrations* (co-author), and *Generation Y Speaks Out: A Policy Guide* (coeditor).

Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis is professor of English, black world studies, women's, gender, and sexuality studies at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. She earned her PhD in linguistics from the University of Michigan,

Ann Arbor. Dr. Etter-Lewis teaches a variety of interdisciplinary courses. Most recently she taught a course on black British writers at the Miami University John E. Dolibois European Center in Luxembourg, which included a five-day study tour in London. In 2007, she founded a college readiness program (Project REACH, now known as Dream Keepers) for underrepresented high school students in the greater Cincinnati area. The program was awarded an internal grant ($150,000) in 2015 and has become a university practicum offered each semester. Dr. Etter-Lewis' interest in women of color and education has taken her to various countries for research: Zambia, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Lesotho, Ghana, South Africa, and Kenya. She is the author of several books and articles including:

Lights of the Spirit: Historical Portraits of Black Bahá'is in North America. Coedited with Richard Thomas. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2006.

Unrelated Kin: Race and Gender in Women's Personal Narratives. Coedited with Michele Foster. New York: Routledge, 1996.

My Soul Is My Own: Oral Narratives of African American Women in the Professions. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Mike McMullen is a professor of sociology and cross cultural studies at the University of Houston-Clear Lake in Houston, Texas. He received his doctorate from Emory University. His first book is *The Bahá'í: The Religious Construction of a Global Identity*. His areas of interest include Bahá'í studies, the sociology of religion, the Middle East, organizational development and change, and conflict resolution and mediation. Recently, he lived for a year in Cairo, Egypt, as a Fulbright Scholar, teaching at the American University in Cairo. He continues to research the American Bahá'í community, and recently published a book entitled *The Bahá'ís of America: The Growth and Change of a Religious Movement*. He is currently working on a book on the history of conflict resolution in the United States.

June Manning Thomas is Berry Distinguished University Professor at the University of Michigan, teaching in the Urban and Regional Planning Program. Some of her books include *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit* (1997, 2013); *Planning Progress: Lessons from Shoghi Effendi* (1999); and the coedited *Mapping Detroit: Evolving Land Use Patterns and Connections* (2015). She currently serves on the Regional Baha'i Council of the Midwestern States. Her full biography can be accessed at http://taubmancollege.umich.edu/urbanplanning/faculty/directory/june-manning-thomas.