

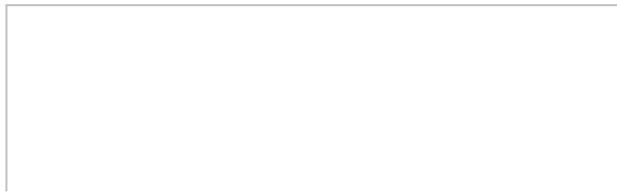
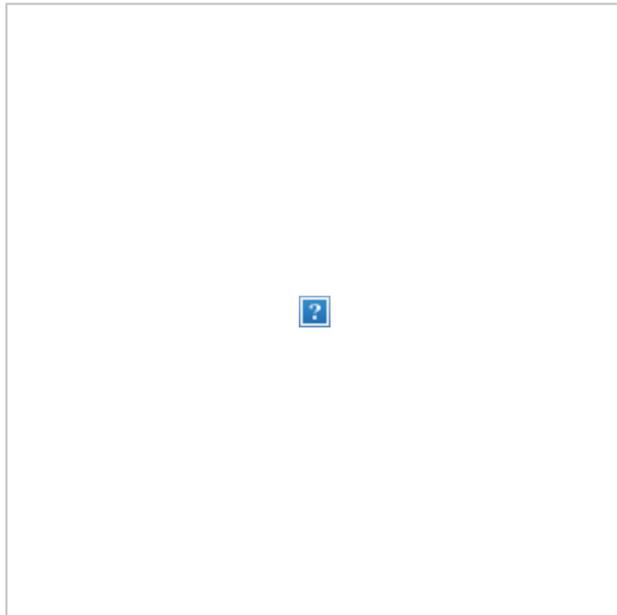
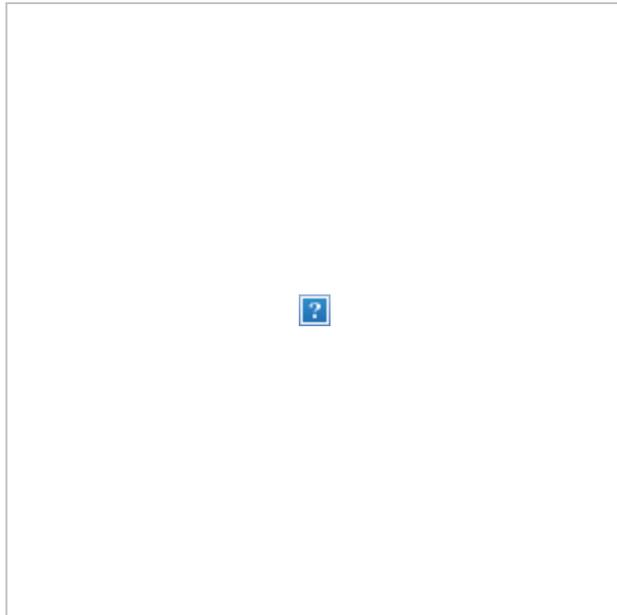
'The Moment of Consciousness'

“The Moment of Consciousness”, England’s first youth and junior youth congress, was held in London from August 23 to 26 this year. This congress not only set out to be a great landmark event in the lives of its participants, but also to be a continuing part of the process, and progress, of the Five Year Plan in England, consolidating the central themes of the Plan in the minds of the youth and offering, through a programme of highly focused presentations and workshops, a spring-board for further and renewed activity.

The congress opened with a dramatic multimedia presentation using music, pictures and the Bahá'í Writings to take the audience on an inspiring journey through time, seeing the Faith grow from the Báb's declaration in 1844, through its trials and successes to where it is today, thus setting in clear terms that this was not just calling upon its 240 participants to do something new and original, but to take their place in the amazing and unstoppable expansion of the Cause.

The main themes that were studied during the congress were Training Institutes, Devotional Meetings, Children's Classes and The 19-Day Feast. The entire duration of the event was blessed with the presence of Counsellor Shahriar Razavi and National Spiritual Assembly members Dr Shirin Tahzib and Robert Weinberg. Counsellor Razavi opened the way for the study of the main themes by elaborating on the vision reflected in the

Ridván Message of 2001, in which the Universal House of Justice state that we have arrived at a “moment of consciousness”, and described the organic nature of growth that we have been asked to cultivate. This growth



was later demonstrated in a unique presentation by Robert Weinberg who, with the help of a video camera projecting onto a large screen, showed how one single toy figure of an old man holding an axe could arrive on a table devoid of Bahá'ís and, through an organic process that utilised study circles, devotional meetings and children's classes, bring increasing numbers of well-known Disney toys, small cuddly creatures, animals, aliens, football stars and cowboys into the Faith.



Each of the core activities of the Five Year Plan that constituted the congress's main themes were explored through both a key presentation and a workshop. The workshop materials had been prepared in advance and sent to multiple facilitators so that some 10 simultaneous workshops could run at the same time with the same content and structure. The workshops lasted one to two hours in length, most following on from a fairly long talk, yet even the youngest of the junior youth present seemed happy and able to participate in the intense programme.



The English Bahá'í community can feel proud of the generation of youth and junior youth present at this event. This is a radiant generation of youth who find the Bahá'í community offers them an opportunity to feel and act themselves among their peers, a welcoming generation who naturally create an environment in which the "congress rule" to "laugh a lot and make new friends" was easily achieved, and an active generation who already have a profound understanding of the organic processes of growth and are actively involved in study circles both as participants and tutors.

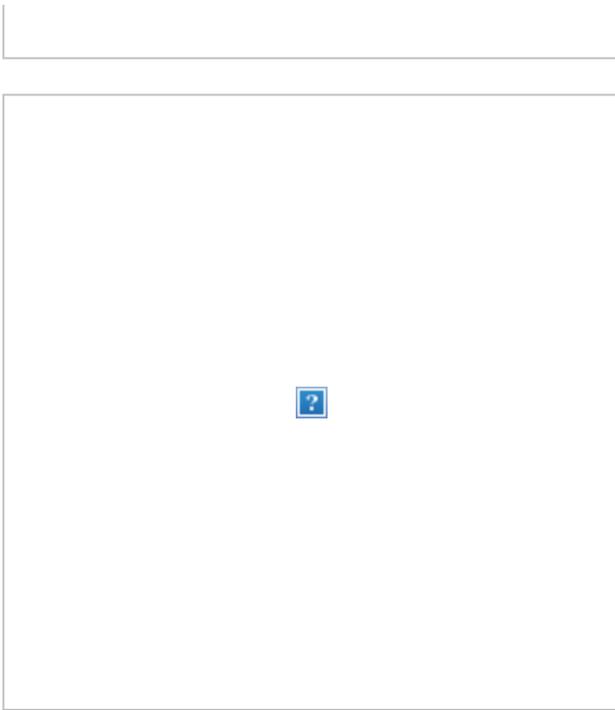
A wide range of artistic presentations included break-dancing, classical santur music, dancing, comedy, poetry recital and singing. Payam Beint, Anthony Harmer and Lisa Nicholls each gave good performances of their individual musical talents and few will quickly forget the special renditions of Elvis Presley songs in their "original Persian form" offered by Master of Ceremonies Steven Powles. A particular treat was provided by Bahíyyih Nakhjavani reading excerpts from her book "The



Saunderbag, Mrs. Nakhjavani also stayed overnight to give a memorable talk on the topic "Fear of Failure" the following morning.

The task that the Youth Committee's appointed team of dedicated organisers (affectionately called The O-Team) took on board in conceiving and organising the congress was to encourage an enthusiastic generation of young Bahá'ís to make their mark on the development of the Cause in England in the same way that they made their mark, through their spirit, their views, and their artistic performances, on the event itself. With the knowledge and tools offered by this congress, and with some loving encouragement from the wider Bahá'í community, this generation of Bahá'í youth should now be prepared not only to participate in the core activities of the Five Year Plan in England, but to shape the very nature that these activities will adopt in the months and years ahead.





(To see more pix and comments go to:
<http://www.bahai.org.uk/phoenix/>)

James Herbert

