

# Pocahontas Pope Monologue

## Gravesite Memorial Marker Gathering

Washington, D.C.

May 19, 2018

First presented at the commemoration of Abdu'l-Bahá's 1912 visit to Howard University, Washington DC, April 22 2018 <sup>1</sup>

*[Enters stage with Bible in hand]*

*[Announcing herself to the audience:]*

Pocahontas Pope.

*[Pause before commencing narrative]*

It was the simplest gesture, you see, but dear Ms. Pauline Hannen (bless her soul), made up her mind to extend her hand to us black folk. She saw that young black woman trudging through the snow with that bundle of parcels in her arms and her shoelaces untied. And at that very moment the Lord's Command came to Pauline's heart:

*"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 brave white woman (bless her) put aside her prejudice against black folk and knelt at that poor creature's feet to tie her shoelaces. *[With a hint of laughter at the situation...]* Oh Lord, they all musta' thought she was crazy. *[Dismissive chuckle]*

I worked in the household of Pauline's sister – Ms. Alma Knobloch. They were always very kind to me – Miss Alma, her sisters Miss Fanny and Ms. Pauline, they showed me a warmth I had never experienced in all my years. *[Almost*

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<sup>1</sup> See [bahai-library.com/various\\_monologues\\_bicentenary\\_howard](http://bahai-library.com/various_monologues_bicentenary_howard)

*incredulously]* And for this true, Christ-like love to come from white folk, of all people – I couldn't understand it at first. The Lord gave Pauline the courage to share with me the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh; and I recognized my Lord Jesus' call in the Writings she shared with me.

My husband, John W. Pope, and I moved to Washington from Rich Square, North Carolina, to escape growing restrictions on black folk in the South. We were members of Washington's Second Baptist Church over on 3<sup>rd</sup> St NW and we served our fellow citizens and neighbors at the Baptist Lyceum. In our time here, I had taken every opportunity to further the progress and achievements of our negro race. In the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh I had at last found guidance for a clear path forward.

I wrote to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the Master confirmed my convictions of the nobility of our race. He said *[read slowly and measuredly]*:

*“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.”*

Miss Alma and her mother Mrs. Knobloch started visiting my home on N St to share the Bahá'í message with our friends. Little by little I invited our associates and other members of our Baptist community to hear this message of peace and hope. Praise the Lord that our beautiful Meetings often embraced some twenty to forty of our highly-accomplished negro brothers and sisters – many of whom accepted this new Faith for themselves.

'Abdu'l-Bahá blessed me with precious words to honor my steps of service to God and my efforts to raise the conditions of our race. He said:

*“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.”*

*[Raise up Bible in hand and indicate toward it]*

Our Lord Jesus said: *“I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”*

I pray that we all work to spread this light. Let us pray [*arms raised at side*]:  
[*Close eyes, bow head, then slowly raise head midway through prayer until countenance, eyes-closed, faces the heavens at conclusion of prayer*]:

*“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 Glory....”*

## Tablet to Pocahontas Pope

by Abdu'l-Bahá

*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 Abbá 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 Abbá...."*