

... description: 1927, Sadie Oglesby, True  
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by

**Mrs. Sadie Oglesby**

while visiting Shoghi Effendi, in Haifa, Palestine,

**March, 1927**

As I first saw the beloved Guardian, it seemed somehow as though was a long way, yes miles, from him, yet gazing at him in wonder and astonishment. This lasted it seemed for some hours, but I am sure it was only a few moments and as he began to talk to us, I suddenly felt so very near to him and perfectly at home with him.

He asked first of our health and then the query was of individual friends of America, then friends in general and different groups or Assemblies. Then, suddenly, he turned to me and asked about the colored Bahá'ís of America. I told him we are not many, naming, so he desired, as near the number in each Assembly as I could, not knowing exactly. He asked for my opinion as to the reason of so few colored in the Cause? answered: "Having so long felt the force of unwelcome among the whites, the chasm is very deep and wide and is very difficult, and having acquired the habit of expecting unfriendliness from the whites, the colored people generally came among the Bahá'ís looking for shortcomings and flaws, and soon fell away. Were it possible to get them to read enough to cause them to stop looking at the creatures, and look for their guidance to the Teachings alone, they surely would become confirmed believers, but there is the trouble." Shoghi Effendi said: "The Bahá'ís should practice so much kindness, and manifest so much love that the colored people would be drawn to the Cause." He said: "We are not pleased that so few colored people are in the Cause, the Cause needs them and cannot grow without them." He said "The friends should practice all the Teachings and not just a part, and in that way the colored people would be attracted, that will draw this group into the Cause. The first Principle is to abandon all prejudice, how can they hope

to do the following if they will not do the first." I told him that for people to accept this seemed to be the hardest of all but that I believed the friends did not altogether mean to be unkind or neglectful, but acted rather from force of habit, but in their hearts they meant to be friendly. To this he said: "The friends must remove every trace of prejudice from their hearts and bring the colored in. They must remove every idea of superiority from their minds, and accept the colored in every way on an equality with themselves. In many instances the colored are far superior to the whites, and they have not yet had an opportunity to prove themselves Shoghi Effendi said: "When the believers get their hearts free from prejudice the colored people will come into the Cause, and when the colored people come in and are made -welcome, then the whites will come flocking in." He said: "The white people of America are watching to see what the Bahá'ís are going to do with the colored people; when they see the white Bahá'ís treating the colored Bahá'ís as themselves, then they will believe they are sincere." Then he said "The people of the East are watching to see what the Bahá'ís of America are going to do with the colored people, and unless the Bahá'ís remove the prejudice and establish a center where brotherhood and justice is practiced toward colored people, there will be no center to which to turn when the world is in its great turmoil, and the nations will be brought low.

March 12 1927. This morning Rúhíyyih Khanum ('Abdu'l-Bahá's daughter) called upon the Western pilgrims, and talked beautifully of the American friends and of the Cause. Her heart, too, is full of a longing to hear of a growing unity between the two races. She ever talks of this race question and reminds one always of how 'Abdu'l-Bahá manifested in actions towards Mr. Gregory how this contact should be done; how ardently anxious the Master was always during His lifetime to see this brotherhood practiced.

Afternoon: We visited with the ladies of the Holy Household (the Greatest Holy Leaf, Monover, Rooha, Zia, Rúhángise and Niehrangise). This was a glorious hour, great spiritual fragrance was enjoyed. The Holy Mother talked altogether in Arabic, while Rooha interpreted for her; she spoke much of the sacrifice to be in suffering for love, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had for the Western believers, and how He with them as much as possible during His life, of his patient suffering for the sake of the Cause...

Sunday, March 13, 1927. To the Shrine of the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The surrounding gardens were in their glory, the morning delightful. Afternoon we met at the Shrine with the Bahá'í ladies, perhaps about two dozen of them. So sweet they were just watching and looking at us with tender smiles, and we knew they were longing to talk with us, as we with them, but differences of language barred us. The Beloved chanted as usual and so sweet is his voice and marvelous in its pathos, one wishes he would chant forever. Come to supper.

Monday, March 14, 1927. A very pleasant visit with Tooba Khánun. She has just lost her husband and is not well. She talked of the grace and beauty of the Master His great love and devotion. She has a splendid daughter and two manly sons. In the late afternoon Shoghi Effendi arranged for us an auto drive

over Mt. Carmel such wonderful scenery from the mountain top. We entered Elijah's Cave, and school and other interests.

My personal interview with Shoghi Effendi, because of his questions, was entirely of the Race question. He said he is not pleased that so few colored people have entered the Cause, and that special effort must be made in order that they can come. Precaution should be entertained that prospectants of color be prepared and trained in the Teachings before they are invited to a meeting with the friends. They must be trained in the Teaching so that they can stand the tests as the believers are still like babies, and are not perfect. He told me to form a class of colored people alone in my home, and there train them well before allowing them to go to a meeting with the whites.

Question as to prayer meetings: Answer: Shoghi Effendi said: yes, it would be good and very effective, were the friends to gather together and engage in prayers from as many as would participate, it would no doubt be of much benefit and bring about great unity and harmony and great spiritual growth, but this should not be forced upon anyone.

Question: Should a Bahá'í die, leaving as a last will and testament a desire to be cremated and it were in the power of the Bahá'ís to reasonably deny this request, should this be done? Answer: He said undoubtedly; by all means do it according to the Teachings. It is most important, and will be a favor to the departed one.

He spoke of how difficult it is for preachers to turn to the Teachings. Also of the use of aeroplanes to unite the East and West.

March 27, 1927. This morning I was in the presence of the beloved Shoghi Effendi. He asked of my comfort... He then asked lots of questions about the colored people. If they intermarry with whites out of the Cause, if they got along well when thus married? If the presence of the colored people in the Cause would keep the whites out, etc. Then he said the Master made it clear that the great need of the friends of America is the coming together of the white and colored races, this, he says, is vital and urgent. He said; "My charge to you is, that when you go back to America you tell the friends to look within themselves and there find the reason why so few colored people are in the Cause, and remove this reason; until this done the Cause cannot grow, if you wish the Cause to grow in America, the thing that keeps the colored people out must be done away with. The life and growth of the Cause depends upon this. England, Russia, Germany, etc. has each her individual problem and vital need; but the American believers must open the doors and let colored people become a part of the Cause, otherwise we shall suffer dispersion. He asked If I had been insistent that the white believers urgently seek colored believers and try to make them feel welcome? I told him I had not tried to insist upon it, but, rather, for the sake of harmony and unity, tried to be patient. To this he answered: "Racial unity and harmony, perfect cooperation, and freedom from racial prejudice, is the first Principle. How can we hope to keep the following Principles if we do

not k(p the first Arrive at unity on the Principles, but never off or outside of them. Should we arrive at unity outside the Principles we are not practicing the Teachings' H e says that inter-marriage must take place, so that we arrive at the station of oneness. He said: "Racial prejudice on the part of the non-believers is a problem, but there should be no racial problem on the part of believers. There is race prejudice in the hearts, and it should be wiped out." Shoghi Effendi said: "There should be a colored believer on all Committees, even if one has to be elected several times, owing to few in number. Shoghi Effendi's wish is that all Committees, including the Spiritual Assembly, should be as universal ms could be made.

The last parting with Shoghi Effendi seemed like the deepest death, for a few moments, but as we realized the commission he gave us we surrenders and looked with longing hearts toward the time when we shall begin our work with the newer understanding, feeling confident we are resting in the prayers of the Beloved Guardian, supported by the knowledge of his desire, which is no other than the Will of God. Shoghi Effendi's lat words to me: "Be urgent and insistent in pressing this vital truth upon the understanding of the believers. Be forceful and do not lose courage, I will pray for you, I will pray for you, I will pray for you."