

## **An Extract from a Letter Written on Behalf of the Universal House of Justice**

The House of Justice feels that the American believers' pursuit of the double crusade "to regenerate the inward life of their own community" and "to assail the long-standing evils that have entrenched themselves in the life of their nation" is something carried out as the friends execute their responsibilities for the Five Year Plan and is not something pursued apart from the Plan. In the same light, there is no program or special intervention that, if undertaken by the Bahá'í community, will free it from the challenge of racial prejudice as a first step before it can attempt to carry out successful efforts for the progress of the Faith. Rather, the capabilities of the believers to address the issues of racism afflicting themselves, their families, their communities, and the wider society will be cultivated hand in hand with other capabilities needed to advance the process of entry by troops as they learn to systematically pursue their efforts of community building, social action, and involvement in the discourses of society. In *The Advent of Divine Justice*, Shoghi Effendi states:

Freedom from racial prejudice, in any of its forms, should, at such a time as this when an increasingly large section of the human race is falling a victim to its devastating ferocity, be adopted as the watchword of the entire body of the American believers, in whichever state they reside, in whatever circles they move, whatever their age, traditions, tastes, and habits. It should be consistently demonstrated in every phase of their activity and life, whether in the Bahá'í community or outside it, in public or in private, formally as well as informally, individually as well as in their official capacity as organized groups, committees and Assemblies. It should be deliberately cultivated through the various and everyday opportunities, no matter how insignificant, that present themselves, whether in their homes, their business offices, their schools and colleges, their social parties and recreation grounds, their Bahá'í meetings, conferences, conventions, summer schools and Assemblies.

Here, the Guardian is calling for the friends to address the question of race unity as a part of life in all of the social spaces in which they are engaged, and, similarly, the House of Justice is now saying that freedom from racial prejudice must be the watchword of Bahá'ís in the social spaces in which they are engaged for the activities of the Plan. In such intimate settings, people of diverse racial backgrounds encounter the Word of God, and in their efforts to translate the Teachings into practical action, are able to generate bonds of love, affection, and unity, and to learn what it means to establish a true interracial fellowship that is powerful enough to overcome the forces of racism that afflict them and their society. Currently, among the Bahá'ís of the United States, race unity is a dimension of the work of community building in scores of clusters, of social action in hundreds of efforts of various levels of complexity, and of involvement in the discourses of society by thousands of believers in various settings. The House of Justice is confident that these endeavors will become more systematic, more widespread, and more effective as the learning process already set in motion by your National Spiritual Assembly is persistently pursued by the believers in greater numbers. Parallel with this, of course, is the effort of the National Assembly to engage at the national level in the discourse concerning race. In the same way as the other activities of the Plan, every challenge the community faces in the work of race unity will be overcome as capacity is raised among an expanding group of friends in each cluster through learning and systematic action.

(From a letter dated 6 August 2018 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)