

Perspectives on Social Change



*Based on Materials from the Wilmette Institute Course
“The Bahá’i Faith and Social Change”*

Why is Social Change needed?

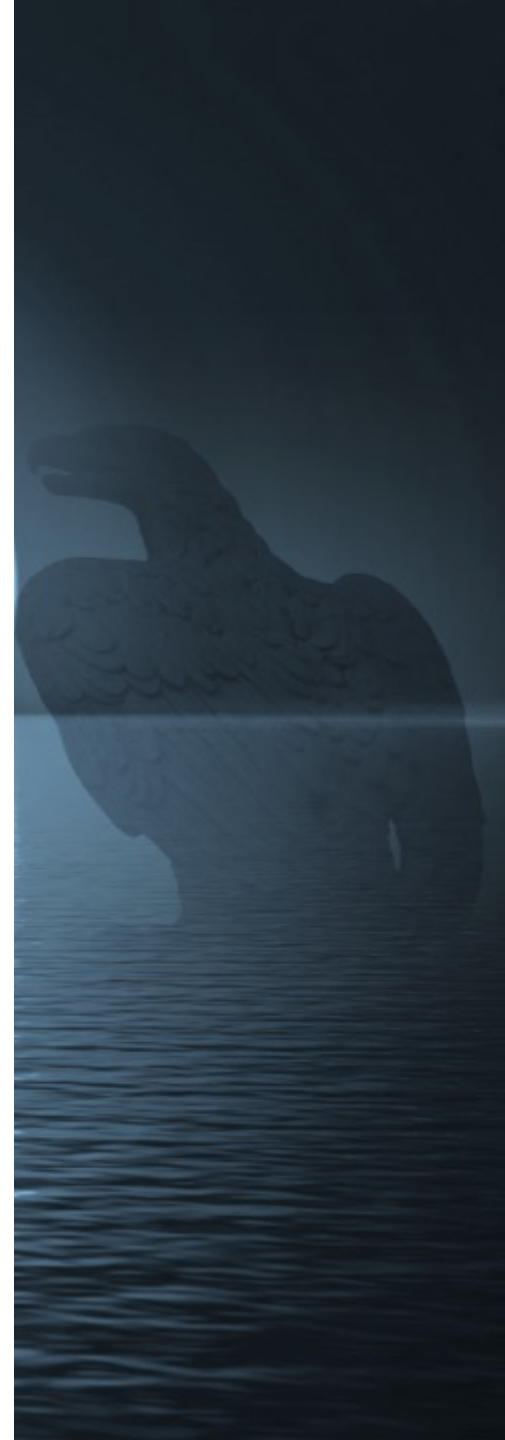
- Ongoing War/Terrorism
- Growing Extremes of Wealth and Poverty
- Mounting Ecological Crises
- Racism
- Exploitation of Women and Children
- ***“All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization.”***

Does our culture promote social change?

- We live in a culture of contest
- Political systems structured as partisan contests
- Economic systems are contests of material production and consumption
- Educational systems are contests of intellectual achievement
- Recreation activities are structured as contests of physical or mental performance
- ***“No power can exist except through unity. No welfare and no well-being can be attained except through consultation.”***

Some thoughts on Power

- “Power over” vs. “Power to”
 - Adversarial vs. Mutualistic
 - Power equality vs. Power inequality
- Power is capacity says science
- “False consciousness”
- “Cultural hegemony” vs. “geopolitical hegemony”



[Beyond the Culture of Contest:](#)
[Michael Karlberg at TEDxInnsbruck](#)



Beyond the Culture of Contest

Michael Karlberg

Key Points to Remember

- **Myth 1:** Human nature is selfish, aggressive, and competitive
- **Myth 2:** Excellence, creativity, and productivity are best promoted through self-interested competition
- **Myth 3:** Competition is the driving force of evolution



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Key Points to Remember

- Education and empowerment of young people as agents of change
- Institutions that promote cooperation and altruism
- Community life that is modeled after the principles of the oneness of humanity, unity in diversity, and justice being the central force

A Framework for Social Action

- ***“Material civilization is like the body. No matter how infinitely graceful, elegant and beautiful it may be, it is dead. Divine civilization is like the spirit, and the body gets its life from the spirit, otherwise it becomes a corpse.”***
 - ***“Let deeds, not words, be your adorning.”***
- ***“We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved. Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it. The one acts upon the other and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions.”***
- ***“Shut your eyes to estrangement, then fix your gaze upon unity.”***
- ***Consultation leads us “to the depths of each problem” and enables us “to find the right solution.”***

Epilogue



Thank you!