

**17<sup>th</sup> Annual Baha'i Black Men's Gathering**  
**Green Acre Baha'i School**  
**Eliot, Maine**

8/9/03

Dearly beloved Counselors,

We, the participants of the Seventeenth Annual Bahá'í Black Men's Gathering, bring you our heartfelt greetings from the newly erected Harriet and Curtis Kelsey Center at the Green Acre Bahá'í School in Eliot, Maine, the spot signally blessed by the footsteps of our Beloved Master. We would now like to share with you highlights of the week's events.

The 108 participants of the Gathering immersed themselves in an atmosphere of unconditional love, transported themselves to the realms of the spirit through the purity of fervent prayer and song, and became melded into a single soul through radiant fellowship. We began each day's devotions with the ancient vibrations of African drums and percussion instruments. These warriors of Bahá'u'lláh reconsecrated their souls to the mission of the Five Year Plan and to blazoning the name of Bahá'u'lláh.

Launching the events of the Gathering, a most significant gift was offered to the brothers in the form of an intensive facilitator / tutor training in Ruhi Book 1 and the Fundamental Verities sequence of courses, immediately bringing over eighty men of African decent into the fold of tutors / facilitators, a sorely needed fuel for the development of the training institute process, the "engine" of the Five Year Plan. We are grateful to The National Teacher Training Center at the Louhelen Bahá'í School and the Magdalene Carney Regional Training Institute for their tireless efforts in preparing the materials needed and also for training six of our participants to facilitate these courses. The brothers were exhilarated with enthusiasm and joy for being offered these bounties!

The following evening, Dr. Roberts our leader, acknowledged the commitment and efforts of the brothers in the area of promoting and stimulating devotional activity throughout the United States. Particularly noteworthy were the efforts of the brothers in Florida, New York, New Jersey and Illinois as they traveled in and also outside their regions to hold devotionals at a variety of venues, ranging from Cluster Reflection Meetings to the Annual Conference of the Association for Bahá'í Studies in Toronto, Canada.

On the fourth day of the Gathering, we consulted on the great challenge of raising children and youth by connecting their hearts to Bahá'u'lláh. We concluded that this can be best

accomplished through community support, garnered from universal love, where every child is seen as our own and every adult as a sister, brother, aunt, uncle or grandparent.

Six dynamic workshops were conducted allowing for engaging discussions and deepening on Blazoning the Name of Baha'u'llah, the Law of Huquq'u'llah, the January 17th, 2003 letter from the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, and the three letters mentioned by the Supreme Body in its Ridvan 2003 message from the World Order of Baha'u'llah. Due emphasis was placed on the recent messages from the World Centre.

The Gathering was energized with the presence of Counselor Eugene Andrews and Dr. Robert C. Henderson, Secretary-General of our National Spiritual Assembly for a day. Counselor Andrews emphasized the need for us to claim our communities spiritually, while Dr. Henderson gave an awe-inspiring conveyance of Bahá'u'lláh's suffering and His mission to redeem humanity from its present condition. We also had the participation of three Auxiliary Board members and two members of Regional Bahá'í Councils throughout the week.

Our closing celebration, open to everyone from across the northeast, was enchanting! The entire assemblage of friends formed a one-mile procession to the gravesites of Hand of the Cause of God, Louis G. Gregory and his wife Louisa for a sacred devotional remembrance.

We thank you for your wisdom, encouragement and boundless love and hold you in our thoughts and prayers.

The Participants of the Seventeenth Annual Bahá'í Black Men's Gathering

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cc The Universal House of Justice

