

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

July 17, 2003

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States  
536 Sheridan Road  
Wilmette, Illinois 60091

Dearly Beloved National Spiritual Assembly,

We want to convey our joyous and loving greetings from the 108 brothers at the 17<sup>th</sup> annual Black Men's Baha'i Gathering from the beautiful, new Harriet-Curtis Kelsey Center. We would like to express our deep-felt thanks for your encouragement and to share with you our joyous reunion during which we fervently prayed and supplicated Baha'u'llah to prepare ourselves to serve the needs of the 5 Year Plan. Brothers attending the Gathering which was led by Dr. William Roberts, came from every region in the United States and from Canada. Also, we were blessed by the presence of Counselor Eugene Andrews and Secretary-General Robert Henderson. Also in attendance were three members of the Auxiliary Board and two members of Regional Baha'i Councils.

After intensive prayer we turned our attention to improving our ability to assist with the institute process. We enthusiastically embraced your recent guidance that both Ruhi and Fundamental Verities are important study-circle curricula by participating in an intensive tutor/facilitator training program with the result that 46 Ruhi Book 1 tutors and 39 Fundamental Verities facilitators were trained. Galvanized by the acquisition of skills, the new tutors and facilitators are committed to starting study-circles in their respective communities. These efforts could not have been accomplished without the tireless efforts of the National Teacher Training Center and the Magalene Carney Baha'i Institute.

We studied recent guidance from the Universal House of Justice and the National Spiritual Assembly. We reviewed and consulted on the latest Ridvan message. Our understanding of this message was further enhanced by a series of 6 workshops about emblazing the name of Baha'u'llah, the January 17<sup>th</sup> message, the three letters of the Guardian mentioned in the recent Ridvan statement, and the law of Huququ'llah. Counselor Andrews raised our understanding of the 5 Year Plan and encouraged us to take ownership by championing the Baha'i Faith in our communities. Dr. Henderson passionately and eloquently emblazoned the name of Baha'u'llah on our hearts and exhorted us to blazon the name of Baha'u'llah throughout the world.

We celebrated recent paths of service undertaken by brothers over the last year. Prominent among these are the sharing of our devotional experience with the larger Baha'i community and the travelling of 14 young brothers to Bahia, Brazil to share love, fellowship, and undertake acts of service.

The Gathering culminated with friends from across the Northeast Region joining us in our annual procession to the gravesite of the Hand of the Cause of God Louis Gregory and his wife Louisa.

We are moved by the confidence, prayers and support that you have bestowed upon us. We wish to express our love for you and heart-felt gratitude in aiding us to serve the Blessed Beauty. We leave this Gathering energized, dedicated, and with skills to continue advancing the process of entry by troops. In the words of that old Negro spiritual: "Done made my vow to the Lord...I will go, I shall go, to see what the end will be."

With sincere admiration,

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