

18th Annual Black Men's Gathering
Green Acre Bahá'í School
Eliot, Maine USA

Universal House of Justice
Baha'í World Center
P.O. Box 155
31 001 Haifa, Israel.

July 17, 2004

Dearly Beloved Supreme Body,

With profound humility and prayerful hearts we, the 117 men of the 18th Annual Black Men's Gathering, began our consultation this year by turning thankfully to the guidance of your Ridván 2004 Message. Its accounting of the increasing worldwide momentum of the Five Year Plan concentrated our thoughts for the duration of our time together here at Green Acre Bahá'í School.

We were blessed to have with us for a day and a half Continental Counsellor and brother Dr. Eugene Andrews. He focused our attention on the need for continued effort in furthering the core activities of the Plan and instilled in us a spirit of enthusiasm and confidence.

Our hearts were quickened by this encouragement and by the reports of brothers who had rendered important service to the Cause during the time that has elapsed since our last gathering. As our consultation unfolded it became clear that, over the course of the year, the great majority of the brothers had thrown themselves into the field of service by participating in study circles, holding countless devotional gatherings, and leading numerous children's classes. More than 100 of the brothers reported completing Ruhi Book One; 31 facilitated study circles; 31 facilitated children's classes; and 8 had completed the full sequence of Ruhi courses.

While celebrating these victories on the home-front, we were especially pleased to hear of the Gathering's continuing tradition of international service as well and joyfully welcomed the report of brothers who recently returned from a trip supporting the work of the Cause in Trinidad and Tobago. Such was the bond forged with that community that a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Trinidad and Tobago joined us, bringing thanks and communicating to us the significant impact of that visit.

In spite of these successes our consultation, led by beloved brother and member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States Dr. William Roberts, was continually guided by the awareness that our future efforts must be marked by an even greater degree of devotion. The brothers unanimously agreed to adopt an outward looking orientation aimed at involving Seekers--particularly African-Americans--in the core activities of the Five Year Plan. Toward this end we strengthened our understanding of the dynamic functioning of our Administrative Order by deepening on World Order Letter of Shoghi Effendi, America and the Most Great Peace and the compilations pertaining to the Institutions of the National Spiritual Assembly and the Counsellors.

Amid a building sense of resolve, we received a message from the National Spiritual

Assembly of The United States, informing us of the recent destruction of the House of Mírzá Burzurg in Tíhrán. While this deeply saddened us, we noted that our beloved National Assembly specifically called upon the members of the Black Men's Gathering to respond to this reprehensible deed with action worthy of those designated the "pupil of the eye." Thus challenged, the brothers solemnly vowed to redouble their efforts in sharing with a thirsting humanity the healing message of the Lord of the Age.

As always, we keep you in our hearts and prayers as we close the Gathering with a memorial procession and service at the resting place of our beloved Hand of the Cause Louis G. Gregory and his wife, Louisa. Some two hundred believers from across the Northeastern region joined us for this commemorative act and luncheon. The touching embrace of the brothers with their fellow believers of all backgrounds on this day was signal in reinforcing our overarching mission as believers committed to the promotion of the oneness of humanity.

We trust in your continued guidance and humbly ask that we be remembered in your prayers at the Sacred Threshold.

With utmost love and reverence,

The Participants of the 18th Annual Black Men's Gathering

Enc:1

c/o William Roberts

wroberts@usbnc.org