

20<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Bahá'í Black Men's Gathering  
Green Acre Bahá'í School  
Eliot, Maine

July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2006

Dearly Beloved Supreme Body,

We, the 92 men assembled at Green Acre Bahá'í School for the 20<sup>th</sup> annual Black Men's Gathering, greet you with humility, gratitude and love in these early months of the second Five Year Plan in the fifth Epoch of the Formative Age of our Faith.

In the exciting week now drawing to its close, your Ridván 2006 Message has been our first concern. The force with which it called to mind the “two great processes” of destruction and integration gripping our world during this portentous moment in history has given our consultations both focus and fire. Its implications joined us together with the rest of the world-wide Bahá'í community as we took stock of the hard-earned victories of the previous plan, and also resolved ourselves to meet the challenge of the “five-year enterprise that lies ahead.”

The guidance of the message, implicitly calling upon us to review past accomplishments for the sake of future planning, informed every moment of our deliberations which this year took on an evolved character. In past months, the model of the “national” Black Men's Gathering—which has proven so inspirational and capacitating—was replicated in 25 communities which held independent, local Gatherings. Thus, for the first time in its history, the Green Acre Black Men's Gathering became a venue primarily intended to systematically assess and plan for activities taking place in localities all across the United States and in several far-flung communities throughout the world.

Needless to say, the standard by which we measured our recent efforts and planned for the future was provided by your message of 27 December 2005 to the Counsellors gathered in the Holy Land. A thorough study of this document aroused and clarified our thinking; its guidance ensured that, as we laid plans for the upcoming year, our focus was trained upon those two complementary, reinforcing movements through which we will advance the process of entry by troops. Indeed, all our discussions have been girded by an understanding of the importance of the steady flow of individuals through the sequence of institute courses and the movement of clusters from one stage development to the next.

Although we have been, and continue to be, intimately concerned with all the core activities that sustain those processes, we have taken note of the emphasis now being placed upon the effort to develop and widely multiply junior youth groups. With the

unique needs and capabilities of black boys in the forefront of our consciousness, we made commitments to sustain and enhance some of the very successful junior youth groups that have already emerged in association with the Gathering, and to emulate those models in cities and neighborhoods that have yet to establish their own “programmes aimed at the spiritual empowerment of junior youth.”

While much of our reflection and planning has taken place in discussions expertly structured and lead by our beloved facilitator Dr. William Roberts, this year’s Gathering has also been characterized by an unprecedented level of dynamic, spontaneous and informal consultations. The Green Acre campus has been alive with a kinetic enthusiasm—it seems that at every free moment, in every corner, there is some group of brothers, sometimes small, at other times large; discussing the challenges they have faced in the field of service, recounting their successes, pledging to aid one another to win goals they have set for themselves. All seem acutely aware of the urgency of the hour, ready to sacrificially arise in promotion of the Divine Plan that has unfailingly emerged from our World Center since the time of the Beloved Master.

Our brother and member of the Continental Board of Counselors for the Americas, Dr. Eugene Andrews who joined us for an evening, reminded us of the close relationship between our current efforts and those early exhortations that Abdul’-Baha directed to the Bahá’is of the West in the Tablets of the Divine Plan. Dr. Andrews reassured us that our new decentralized concentration on local initiatives is bringing the empowering spirit of the Gathering to ever-increasing numbers, and powerfully responds to the Guardian’s admonition that people of African descent love and serve the faith as their own. He reminded us that as those striving to become “Apostles of Baha’u’llah” we must remain firm in the covenant, manifest love, fellowship and unity in all our endeavors and teach His Cause.

Our souls were tenderly touched and drawn close to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’is of the United States, who in their loving message to the Gathering praised our fortitude, courage and obedience during the last twenty-years and encouraged us to remain vigorous in the field paying particular attention to the spiritual education of junior youth.

At its heart, the Gathering has always been a space of safe-haven, a place where the love of Bahá’u’lláh, animates song, prayer and common commitment in order to provide a shield of protection for men who have endured much in a sin-sick world. Secure within this fortification, we know that the Blessed Beauty loves us even as the “Pupil of the Eye,” and we have for two decades raised our voices toward the Kingdom of Abha in profound gratitude and supplication. At this year’s Gathering the sweet-sounding, soulful cry of “Here Am I! Here Am I!” has repeatedly ascended from our ranks toward the Concourse on High. With that refrain we have called down the confirmations of our Lord so that He will, again, heal our hearts and give us the strength necessary to carry out the work of His Cause. Now, we feel ourselves to be among those “lions that couch in thickets,” anticipating the moment of our return to the field, confident in the knowledge

that the Blessed Perfection guides our every step and that His Universal House of Justice will unerringly identify the path for us to follow.

In addition we join other believers in the world wide Bahá'í Community by contributing in excess of \$35,000 toward the building of the Bahá'í House of Worship in Chile.

We have, at this time of peril in the Holy Land, especially prayed for the protection of the Holy Places and for those serving at the World Centre; and we will, as always, remember you at the resting place of our beloved Hand of the Cause of God, Louise Gregory and his wife, Louisa.

With utmost love and reverence,

The Participants of the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Black Men's Gathering

c/o William Roberts  
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