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The National Spiritual Assembly of  
The Bahá'ís of Barbados  
PO Box 354 Bridgetown

Esteemed Co-workers,

The Bahá'í Black men of Barbados are most grateful for your support and for having allowed us to host the first Barbados Black Men's Gathering at the recently renovated Haziratu'l-Quds.

Eighteen men gathered at the Bahá'í Centre on Saturday and Sunday of December 2 and 3. We were welcomed on National Assembly's behalf by Mr. Frank Farnum; a welcome that was acknowledged by Dr. Billy Roberts later as "significant" and expressive of the National Assembly's support.

We were particularly fortunate to have the founder of the Black Men's Gathering, Dr. Roberts, with us as he is an extremely busy Treasurer of the United States National Spiritual Assembly. His presence, his breadth of knowledge of the Faith and his experience with the Gatherings all contributed to an outstanding, spiritually uplifting and heart-moving experience.

Of the eighteen men in attendance 4 came to us from the United States, 1 from Jamaica, 1 from Trinidad, 2 from Tobago, 1 from Bermuda and 9 from Barbados. We commenced with drumming and devotions in the BMG style; introduction and general consultation; study of and consultation on the Ridvan message of 2006 and study of and consultation on the 5 Year Plan's foundation document, the letter of December 27<sup>th</sup> 2005 to the Counsellors.

We all came in with diverse expectations but all came away with a common sense of purpose tailored by the World Centre guidance; with a focus as Black Bahá'í men, one pupil of the eye of humanity with a mission of imparting sight; and with a heightened awareness of the power of this Faith when we pray and work together in groups. To a man, we all felt the tremendous empowerment that mysteriously appears when the masks we don as protection begin to fall away and the rays of spirit shine out!

We concluded the gathering with devotions BMG style and, for the first time, our community experienced the drums and the style of the BMG devotions. Those who had the experience are

better able to convey their personal impressions. As for me, I felt as though I was finally able to share with my community a wonderful secret I had been carrying around for years.

I do know that despite the brevity of this Gathering, each man was profoundly moved, in some way, by the power of the experience. And I feel that this movement bears within itself the potential for significant change in our community and beyond.

Dr. Roberts, at the close of devotions, acknowledged the presence of Counsellor Deborah Kirton and invited her to say a few words to those assembled. Counsellor Kirton shared her first encounter with the BMG at the World Centre and the power of their devotions for which they are widely known. She encouraged the men to continue this worthwhile venture for the progress of the Caribbean Bahá'í community.

I can say the 4 men from the US, especially Dr. Roberts, were elated with the Barbados BMG, an initiative started in 2005 at Greenacre Bahá'í School where a group from the Caribbean pledged to host a series of BMGs in different islands. Two of those pledged BMGs have now come to pass in Tobago (2005) and Barbados (2006).

The Barbados contingent at our Gathering adopted the goal of hosting a BMG-style devotion in the home of one man once in each month, in rotation, with support from the other men present at the BMG. The first one will be held at the home of Frank Farnum in Martin's Bay St. John on Saturday December 8<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m. Additionally, Billy Roberts raised the possibility of coupling a Local BMG in the U.S. with a Priority Cluster in each island to fuel enthusiasm and to provide a limited human resource infusion when the men from the U.S. visit with their sister Cluster in the Caribbean. The proviso is that the concept has a great chance of working **if** the Caribbean men attend the Maine BMG next year and make personal contact with the U.S. men with whom they will be teaming. It is therefore imperative that we make a concerted effort to send a Barbadian contingent to Maine July 14 to 21, 2007 not only to make personal contact with the men in the USA but to be oriented as leaders of the local BMG, the evolved purpose of the Maine Gathering.

A special meeting has been set for Saturday December 16 as a debrief and to plot the way forward...

We request your prayers for our Bahá'í Men's Fellowship which will be working in the trenches to pursue the goals we set for ourselves within the framework of the World Centre guidance on the 5 Year Plan.

With much love and gratitude,

Lionel.