

BMG, Washington DC  
c/o DC BMG, 5713 16<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20011

December 1, 2005

International Black Men's Gathering  
c/o Dr. William Roberts  
1233 Central Street  
Evanston, IL 60201

Dearest Brothers,

With great joy we share with you the results of our First Annual Black Men's Gathering held at the Washington, DC Baha'i Center, November 19-20. We met under the banner of "Bending All Our Energies," a phrase used in the 2005 Ridvan Letter. We selected this theme to focus the energies of our Gathering toward fulfilling the goals of the Five Year Plan.

We had a total of 22 men from several states in attendance. Primarily, our goal was to promote this first gathering locally, however, we expanded our outreach efforts to the neighboring states. The support we received was invaluable and much appreciated. In our planning for next year's event, we hope to increase the local promotion, in order to have a greater attendance of black men from the Metropolitan DC area coming from both the Baha'i community and the community of interest.

The spirit was very high throughout the Gathering. After laughing over yogurt and bagels, we began with a beautiful devotional where the Holy Spirit could be felt energizing our prayers. Introductions immediately followed our devotions. This sharing conveyed where each of us was in this world, as well as in the spiritual world. Taking place in an atmosphere of total acceptance, this session was very emotional and liberating for all present.

After a hearty lunch filled with laughter and camaraderie we began our study. We first reviewed the Ridvan message with the entire group again emphasizing the need to bend all our efforts towards accomplishing the goals of the Five Year Plan. Then, breaking into smaller more intimate groups, we discussed passages related to the Major Plan and Minor Plan of God. We consulted on how the Major Plan of God impacts our lives, what challenges and opportunities it creates and what we can do to overcome the challenges and "exploit" the opportunities.

This led us to our final study of a letter from the Universal House of Justice addressing issues related to the plight of black men in America. This letter, written in 1996, talks about the plight of black men as it compares to the plight of the suffering of the friends in Iran.

All of this led us to our final consultation, which emphasized and detailed specific actions we can take, in order to help bring the Five Year Plan to a successful conclusion. We determined to start a study circle as quickly as possible, which would be geared to attract African Americans. In addition, we will host several social gatherings in the homes of some of the Baha'i men, as a way to expand our circle of friends and to share the Message of Baha'u'llah in a more natural fashion. Just after we ended this meeting Ken Jones, a brother from New York, declared his devotion to the Cause of Baha'u'llah. This was an amazing moment and a sign of the love and support that the BMG continues to receive from above.

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A few weeks prior to our Gathering, Washington DC advanced to A Cluster status. To inspire and guide the community a consultation was scheduled with Counselor Andrews and the Regional Baha'i Council. This meeting coincided with our Gathering and we were asked to lead the devotions to open the meeting. The devotions were powerful and opened the event in a joyful manner. It was also moving to hear Counselor Andrews and members of the RBC mention how pleased they were to see the Black Men's Gathering becoming such a strong spiritual force in the community.

The following morning our final activity was to lead a BMG style devotional for the DC Metro community at the DC Baha'i Center. We have been hosting BMG style devotions the third Sunday of each month since August which have always been quite powerful, but they truly paled in comparison to the energy raised at this particular devotional. As an added treat, we were blessed to have James Williams offer some thoughts on the spiritual significance of the Black Men's Gathering.

We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the support we received in preparation and execution of our local BMG. First off thank you Billy Roberts for your letter of support that we read and consulted on. Thank you to all the Brothers who traveled from out of town to support us. Thank you James Williams for offering such wonderful remarks about the BMG to the larger community. Thank you Harvey McMurray for providing us with many of the materials that we used for our consultations. Thank you to the DC BMG Planning Committee for your weekly efforts to put everything together. And a special thank you goes out to Tod and Allison Ewing for keeping up the center throughout the weekend and Carroll Coley who really went above and beyond to make sure this BMG went so well.

'Abdu'l-Baha says "He will come to your aid with invisible hosts, and support you with armies of inspiration from the Concourse above." The success of the DC BMG is truly a testament to the truth of this statement from The Master. What tongue?

With warm regards and hearts filled with love,

DC BMG

**Participants at the Local BMG, Washington DC**

Tai Anyankoya	Gordon Gullet
PJ Andrews	Bernard Johnson
Leroy Battle	Ken Jones
Carroll Coley	Lloyd Lawrence
William C. Davis	Kenneth Ray
Tod Ewing	Noel Sakwa
Abdul-Karim Ewing Boyd	Godfrey Sendege
Al Fox	Al Smith
James Genus	Neysan Sturdivant
Nii Odoi Glover	Alton Williams
Jay Green	James Williams