

Northern California Bahá'í Black Men's Gathering
c/o Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Oakland
1434 35th Street
Oakland, CA 94602

March 14, 2006

Dr. William Roberts, Ph.D.
Black Mens Gathering Central
1233 Central Street
Evanston, Illinois 60201

Re: Report of the February 2006 Northern California BMG

Dearest Brother Billy:

The Northern California BMG Planning Committee, consisting of Oluyemi Thomas, Lee Ratcliff, Jason Grammer, Renaldo Raeheim and Anthony Reid, would like to share with you our loving report on the Black Men's Gathering held at the Oakland Bahá'í Center during the weekend of February 11 and 12, 2006.

Prior to this tremendous event, we met a total of six times between July 2005 and February 2006 to plan the Gathering. As you know, our first meeting was held at Greenacre Bahá'í School during the Central Gathering in July 2005. We held two meetings by conference calls, and the other three meetings consisted of BMG styled devotionals, spirited consultation and abundant food prepared by the Brother who hosted the meeting. We feel that our BMG styled meetings created the unity necessary to plan and implement the local Gathering.

Our Gathering began on Saturday morning, February 11, 2006. All of our out-of-town guests arrived the day before. Of those travelers, we were blessed to have the following four elders: Bruce Reynolds from Powder Springs, Georgia; Gordon Gullett from Raleigh, North Carolina; James Williams from Roanoke, Virginia; and Jihmye Collins from San Diego, California. We very much appreciate each one of these Brothers for their devoted spirit and loving encouragement of our Gathering, and especially wish to honor Gordon for giving so much of himself to pave the way for Bruce and James to attend.

There were twenty-three Brothers attending the Northern California BMG, of which ten were attending a BMG for the first time. There were four youths, and four Seekers. Also of note, the Local Spiritual Assemblies of El Paso, Texas and Seattle, Washington deputized Alex McNeal III and Rick White, respectively, to attend their first Gathering. This was a momentous occasion as well because we had the pleasure of the Brothers from across California, including for the first time San Francisco: Billy Silva, JB Saunders, Robert Valverde, and Thomas Jones; Los Angeles: Leon Ferguson and Michael Casey; Anaheim: John Gullett; Oceanside: Joe Walker and

Dr. William Roberts, Ph.D.

Re: Report of the February 2006 BMG Northern California

March 14, 2006

Page 2

David Grant; Oakland: Lenny Olinga; and Campbell: Doug Thompson. We are therefore more committed to support Gatherings in these local communities having found an irreplaceable permanent connection with these Brothers.

The Gathering began in the morning with a generously prepared breakfast, followed by prayers, praise and gratitude. On behalf of the Committee, Tony greeted everyone and presented your Central BMG letter of boundless love and admiration, which so appropriately acknowledged the spirits of our West Coast Brothers Ted Jefferson, Herman Grammer and George Hill. We all meditated on and repeated some of the final words of your letter: AWhat will we see from your Gathering? What actions will you take that will distinguish you from your brother BMG's. Who will step forward and cut a new and wider path of service.@ Clearly, these words formed the foundation of our thinking throughout the Gathering, and we thank you for them.

After that welcoming introduction, we prayed, took a break, enjoyed some breakfast food, and then engaged in very deep and moving introductions from the Brothers. We ended the morning session with a spirited and cogently prepared talk by Jason Grammer on the history and significance of Mr. Robert Turner. At the end of Jason's talk, Jason presented to each one of us a finely crafted memento of Robert Turner that he created, which included Abdul-Bahá's prayer for Robert Turner. We hope that you will enjoy this memento that we have included with this letter.

After lunch, Lee led us in devotions and Oluyemi presented us with a creative arts program that consisted of poetry, the spoken word, and a musical presentation. We spent the rest of the afternoon in two groups deepening on the Universal House of Justice's letter of December 27, 2005 to the Continental Board of Counselors. It was clear that we then had the foundational prerequisite necessary to focus our efforts of distinction and service, so called for by your letter to our Gathering.

After an absolutely fabulous soul food dinner that brought to mind the feasts we could have only at Amama's house,@ we held a community gathering consisting of BMG styled devotions, a professional drummer that rocked the house and caused all of us to stand on our feet and chant for more, and a creative arts program that included an original poem by Jihmye Collins, an original rap by Lenny Olinga, and an original poetry and musical performance by Oluyemi and his wife Ijeoma Thomas, each focusing on the spirit of Robert Turner. The Oakland Bahá'í center was overflowing with Friends and eleven Seekers, and at the end of the night, we knew that the illustrious spirits of Ted Jefferson, Herman Grammer and George Hill were among us encouraging a profound spirit of love and unity.

Dr. William Roberts, Ph.D.

Re: Report of the February 2006 BMG Northern California

March 14, 2006

Page 3

The next morning, we hosted a memorial at gravesite of Robert Turner. Many of the people who attended the evening program attended the memorial. Billy, you should have witnessed this event, it was magical. Renaldo and Oluyemi decorated Mr. Turner's gravesite with flowers that circled his headstone and a framed picture of Mr. Turner. All of the participants circled Mr. Turner's grave, and a prepared program of prayers, readings and music was presented. Now, the magical part. As you know, the last words out of Mr. Turner's mouth was the Greatest Name. With keen insight, Oluyemi instructed us to circumambulate Robert Turner's grave nine times and chant the Greatest Name: Ya Bahá' u'l-Abha. While walking in that spiritual circle chanting Ya Bahá' u'l-Abha with the Friends, some quite aged, we were transformed into a place where only the Friends of the Abha Kingdom resided. Thank God for the creative arts, we were in a holy place.

In our reflection meeting, we committed to support our Brothers in San Francisco with BMGs in their area; to invite more Brothers to our local BMGs; to share the message of Baha'u'llah with people of African decent; and to creatively sustain and build upon the four core activities. We are so humbled to share with you that we love you, appreciate greatly the sacrifices you have made to create and nurture the Black Men's Gathering, and thank you for guiding us to focus our energies on studying the Universal House of Justice letter of December 27, 2005 to the Continental Board of Counselors. It is true that the power, strength and success of our endeavors comes from the timely spiritual guidance of the Head of our Faith and it's abiding representatives.

With much love and appreciation,

Anthony Reid,

For the Northern California BMG Planning Committee