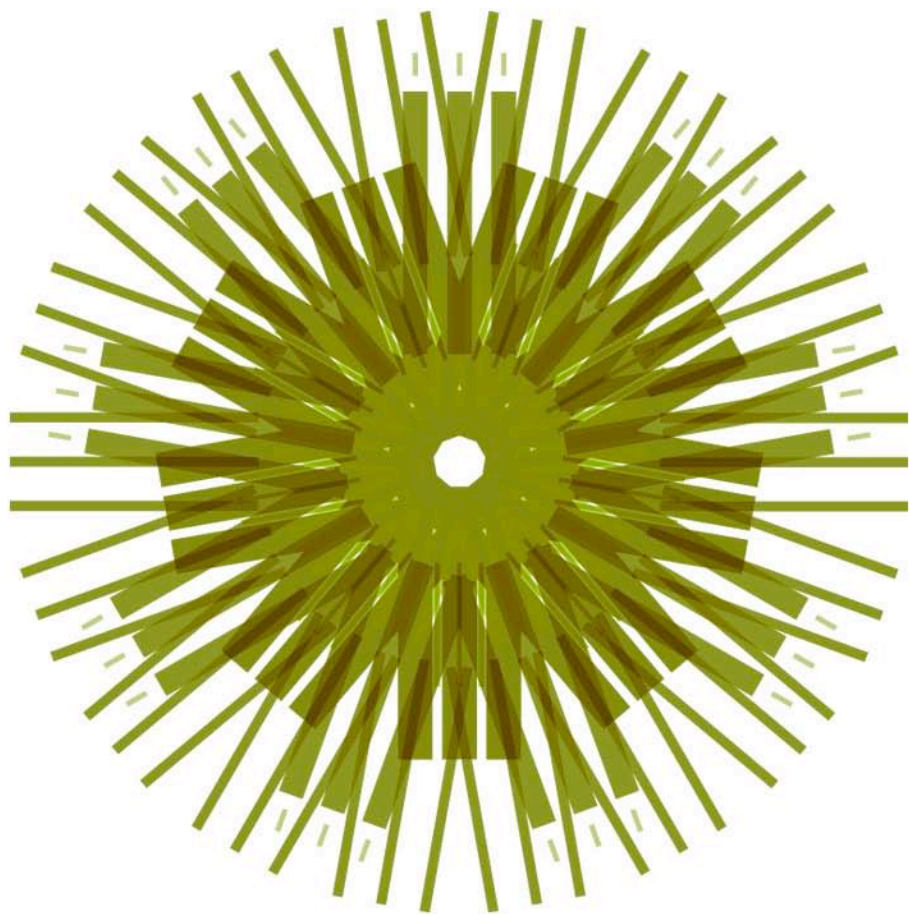


Soul Food

Reconciliation – Walking Together



July 2006

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“I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavour”.

– *Henry David Thoreau*

01. Reconciliation requires that we work together to defend our democracy and the humanity proclaimed by our constitution. It demands that we join hands,... to eradicate the poverty spawned by a system that thrived on the deprivation of the majority. Reconciliation requires that we end malnutrition, homelessness and ignorance,... It demands that we put shoulders to the wheel to end crime and corruption,...

The wounds of the period of repression and resistance are too deep to have been healed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission alone, however well it has encouraged us along that path.

Consequently, the report that today becomes the property of our nation should be a call to all of us to celebrate and to strengthen what we have done as a nation as we leave our terrible past behind us forever.

Let us celebrate our rich diversity as a people, in the knowledge that when the TRC in its wisdom apportions blame, it points at previous state structures; political organizations; at institutions and individuals, but never, and I want to repeat, never at any community.

Now the challenge is for all of us to protect our democratic gains like the apple of our eye. It is for those who have the means, to contribute to the efforts to repair the damage brought by the past. It is for those who have suffered losses of different kinds and magnitudes to be afforded reparation, proceeding from the premise that freedom and dignity are the real prize that our sacrifices were meant to attain.

Free at last, we are all masters of our destiny. A better future depends on all of us lending a hand – your hand, my hand.

– *Nelson Mandela*

02. **From the New Testament**

Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing, some people have entertained angels without knowing it.

Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

– *Hebrews 13 :1-3*

03. So intensely hath the glory of Divine Unity penetrated souls and hearts that all are now bound one to another with heavenly ties, and all are even as a single heart, a single soul. Wherefore reflections of the spirit and impressions of the Divine are now mirrored clear and sharp in the deep heart's core. I beg of God to strengthen these spiritual bonds as day followeth day, and make this mystic oneness to shine ever more brightly, until at last all shall be as troops marshalled together... within the sheltering shade of the Word of God; that they may strive with all their might until universal fellowship, close and warm, and unalloyed love, and spiritual relationships, will connect all the hearts in the world.

Then will all humankind, because of this fresh and dazzling bounty, be gathered in a single homeland. Then will conflict and dissension vanish from the face of the earth, then will mankind be cradled in love for the beauty of the All-Glorious. Discord will change to accord, dissension to unison. The roots of malevolence will be torn out, the basis of aggression destroyed. The bright rays of union will obliterate the darkness of limitations, and the splendours of heaven will make the human heart to be even as a mine veined richly with the love of God.

- *Bahá'u'lláh, from the Bahá'í Writing*

04. Dream Variations

To fling my arms wide
In some place of the sun,
To whirl and to dance
Till the white day is done.
Then rest at cool evening
Beneath a tall tree
While night comes on gently,
Dark like me –
That is my dream!
To fling my arms wide
In the face of the sun,
Dance! Whirl! Whirl!
Till the quick day is done.
Rest at pale evening...
A tall, slim tree...
Night coming tenderly
Black like me.

– *Langston Hughes from Dream Variations*

05. **Black Mother**

Black mother you are beautiful your skin black like a crow in a tree.
Black mother you've a warm gentle heart like the spirits that walked upon this
place
Created in the Dreamtime.
We know you have feelings deep inside like the woman doing body painting
ready for dance.
Black mother you're beautiful like the kangaroos who carry and feed joeys in
their pouch.
Oh! what more can I say except this –
Is there a part which I owe you
Or perhaps a sentimental path
Making us lifelong friends?

– *Rosemary Plummer, Aboriginal poem from Central Australia*

06. **True Greatness**

A man is as great as the dreams he dreams
As great as the love he bears;
As great as the values he redeems,
And the happiness he shares.
A man is as great as the thoughts he thinks,
As the fountains at which his spirit drinks,
And the insight he has gained.
A man is as great as the truth he speaks,
As great as the help he gives,
As great as the destiny he seeks,
As great as the life he lives.

– C. E. Flynn

“We should impart our courage, and not our despair.”

– Henry David Thoreau

Washington DC in 1912 was segregated. African- Americans and Caucasians did not socialize together. To do otherwise would result in at the very least social ostracism and sometimes violence.

07. **A Luncheon Party for 'Abdu'l-Bahá**

During the visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to America in the early 1900's he was invited to speak to universities, churches and synagogues, numerous conferences and societies. He was a figure of interest to the press who followed his travels and quoted from his talks regularly. When he was in Washington, D.C. the chargé d'affaires of the Persian Legation and his wife had arranged a luncheon in his honour. Their guest list included members of the social and political elite in the capital, as well as a number of Bahá'ís. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had invited Louis Gregory to visit him in the morning of the day of the luncheon. Louis Gregory was a black gentleman employed by the government. Gregory was surprised at the time scheduled for the visit, as although he had not been invited by the chargé d'affaires he knew of the luncheon plans. He arrived on time for his meeting with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Their conference seemed to go on and on—as if indeed Abdu'l-Bahá might be prolonging it deliberately.

Eventually the butler announced that luncheon was being served. 'Abdu'l-Bahá led the way, the invited guests following closely behind. Mr. Gregory was perplexed: should he leave or wait for the Master to return? The guests were seated when suddenly the honoured Guest rose, looked around and then asked

in English, “Where is My friend, Mr. Gregory?”, adding “My friend, Mr. Gregory, must lunch with Me!” Louis Gregory not being on the luncheon list had naturally remained behind. Now the *chargé d’affaires* hastened after him.

'Abdu'l-Bahá rearranged the place setting at His right, the seat of honour, of course—ignoring utterly the delicate laws of protocol—and the luncheon started only after Mr. Gregory had been seated. Then, in a most natural manner, as if nothing at all unusual had happened in the capital that day in 1912, with tact and humour, 'Abdu'l-Bahá electrified the already startled guests' by talking about the unity of mankind.

- o8. All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage.

All that we are is a result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him like a shadow that never leaves him.

“He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me,” in those who harbour such thoughts hatred will never cease.

“He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me,” in those who do not harbour such thoughts, hatred will cease.

For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time: hatred ceases by love, this is an old rule.

– *Dhammapada, chapter 1 verses 1-5*

09. **From the Old Testament**

O Lord, You have searched me and You know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise;
You perceive my thought from afar.
You discern my goings out and my lying down;
You are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue You know it completely,
O my Lord.

– *Psalm 139: 1-4*

10. Do you wish to free yourself of mental and emotional knots and become one with the Tao?

If so, there are two paths available to you.

The first is the path of acceptance.

Affirm everyone and everything.

Freely extend your goodwill and virtue in every direction, regardless of circumstances.

Embrace all things as part of the Harmonious Oneness, and then you will begin to perceive it.

The second path is that of denial.

Recognize that everything you see and think is a falsehood, an illusion, a veil over the truth.

Peel all the veils away, and you will arrive at the Oneness.

Though these paths are entirely different, they will deliver you to the same place: spontaneous awareness of the Great Oneness.

Once you arrive there, remember: it isn't necessary to struggle to maintain unity with it.

All you have to do is participate in it.

– *Lao Tzu, from Hua Hu Ching*

11. **Living Zen**

One day, in front of a large crowd on Vulture Peak Mountain in Northern India, the Buddha, instead of giving a discourse, simply held up a lotus flower without saying a word. All the onlookers stared at Him with incomprehension except one disciple, Kashyapa, who broke into a smile. For he alone had understood the Buddha's action: that it was a transmission of the truth, or dharma—a teaching without words, from mind to mind, from heart to heart. Transmission of truth 'beyond words' was passed down through the centuries from master to disciple and is still recognized as one of the fundamental methods of Zen teaching. However, in Zen, the word translated into English as 'transmission' literally means 'being as one' – that is, being in spiritual harmony with one another. Consequently, the term implies more of a shared experience between teacher and student than the transference of the truth. For the Buddha stressed that the truth cannot simply be handed down from person to person. Instead, we must all find the truth for ourselves, inside our hearts.

– *Michael Paul*

12. Oh, God, make me a hollow reed, from which the pith of self hath been blown so that I may become as a clear channel through which Thy Love may flow to others. I have left behind my impatience and discontent. I will chafe no more at my lot. I commit myself wholly into thy hands, for thou art my Guide in the desert, the Teacher of my ignorance, the Physician of my sickness. I am a soldier in my King's army. I have given up my will to Him and my life to dispose of as He may please. I know not what fate Thou deignest for me, nor will I inquire or seek to know. The task of the day suffices for me, and all the future is Thine. Thou changest weakness to strength, doubt to faith, perplexity to understanding.

When I am fit to bear the burden,
Thou wilt lay it on my shoulders.
When I am prepared to take the field,
Thou wilt assign me a place in the Army of Light.
Now I have no other duty than to equip myself for Thy Service.
With eagerness and patience, with hope and gratitude,
I bend to the task of the hour, lest when thy call comes
I be found unready.

– *Bahá'í Prayer*

“What a different aspect will courage put upon the face of things.”

– *Henry David Thoreau*

“The sun arrives...and with her—the day. As a Tapestry is woven.”

– *Peter Kelso (12 year old)*

13. It is not enough to say we must not wage war. It is necessary to love peace and sacrifice for it. We must concentrate not merely on the negative expulsion of war, but on the positive affirmation of peace. In short, we must shift the arms race into the peace race. Some years ago a novelist died, among his papers was found a list of suggested plots for further stories, the most prominently underscored being this one:

A widely separated family inherits a house in which they have to live together. This is a great new problem of mankind. We have inherited a big house, a great world house in which we have to live together, black men and white men, easterners and westerners, gentiles and Jews, Catholics and Protestants, Muslims and Hindus. A family unduly separated in ideas, culture, and interest, who, because we can never again live without each other, must learn somehow, in this one big world house, to live with each other.

And this is our great challenge. This means that more and more, our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. We must now give an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in our individual societies. This call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighbourly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing, an unconditional love for all men. I'm not speaking of some sentimental and weak response which is little more than emotional bosh. I'm speaking of that force which all of the great religions have seen as a supreme unifying principle of life.

– *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

14. Seek for mankind that of which you are desirous for yourself, that you may be a believer; Treat well as a neighbour the one who lives near you, that you may be a Muslim. That which you want for yourself seek for mankind. The most righteous of men is the one who is glad that men should have what is pleasing to himself, and who dislikes for them what is for him disagreeable. Whatever you abhor for yourself, abhor it also for others, and whatever you desire for yourself desire also for others.

– *Attributed to Muhammad, Sukhanan-i-Muhammad*

15. **O Children of Men!**

Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be manifest. Such is my counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory.

– *Bahá'u'lláh, from the Bahá'í Writings*

“As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise”

– *Luke 6:3*

16. **Walking Together**

I see an image of Central Australia and the great Rainbow Serpent... This Serpent spirals up and up, reaching towards the Heavens... And there spiralling downwards is the Feathered Serpent, Qetzacoatl—Lord of the Dawn... They merge in an oscillating ball of Light in the Heart... I hear

“This is not transformation but transmutation”... I ask “What is needed for healing of separation ?

“... I hear “Reconciliation and, surprisingly enough, fun”... I See Antarctica as white, pure and innocent.

– *Jenny Regan*

17. **Kurna People**

Kurna people
this was your land now concrete roads and cars
Kurna people
this was your land now drifting dunes where once the mallee grew
Kurna people
these were your living hills where now the streams are still or rage in flood
Kurna people
these were your open spaces where now the fence confines
Kurna people
these were your swamps and waterways where now our garbage lies
Kurna people
best your spirits dream than see all this and die again as this your land has done.

– *Brian J Brock*

These days are very precious; grasp the present opportunity
and ignite a candle that shall never be extinguished, and
which shall pour out its light eternally illuminating the world
of mankind!

– *Bahá'í Writings*

18. Let there be no mistake. The principle of the Oneness of Mankind... Is no mere outburst of ignorant emotionalism or an expression of vague and pious hope. Its appeal is not to be merely identified with a reawakening of the spirit of brotherhood and good-will among men, nor does it aim solely at the fostering of harmonious cooperation among individual peoples and nations. Its implications are deeper, its claims greater... Its message is applicable not only to the individual, but concerns itself primarily with the nature of those essential relationships that must bind all the states and nations as members of one human family. It does not constitute merely the enunciation of an ideal, but stands inseparably associated with an institution adequate to embody its truth, demonstrate its validity, and perpetuate its influence. It implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced. It constitutes a challenge, at once bold and universal, to outworn shibboleths of national creeds—creeds that have had their day and which must, in the ordinary course of events as shaped and controlled by Providence, give way... It calls for no less than the reconstruction... Of the whole civilized world—a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life... Yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units...

The principle of the Oneness of Mankind... Carries with it no more and no less than a solemn assertion that attainment of this final stage in this stupendous evolution is not only necessary but inevitable, that its realization is fast approaching, and that nothing short of a power that is born of God can succeed in establishing it.

– *Shoghi Effendi, from the Bahá'í Writings*

Please join us for refreshments



All Soul Food programs are available for free download from
www.soulfood.com.au

About Soul Food

Soul Food is a monthly event held at the State Library of Victoria, providing an opportunity to relax in a tranquil environment and reflect on inspiring themes. It features music, audio-visual pieces and readings from various Faiths; indigenous, ancient and modern, from all over the world. Soul Food is a free community event open to all.

Venue

State Library of Victoria
Village Roadshow Theatre
Corner Swanston St & La Trobe St (Entry 3, La Trobe Street)

Time

10.30am – 11.30am

Dates

First Sunday of every month:

Sunday, August 6th
Sunday, September 3rd
Sunday, October 1st
Sunday, November 5th
Sunday, December 3rd

Further Information

For further information about Soul Food events in Victoria, South Australia or Western Australia please call 0402 245 752 or visit www.soulfood.com.au.

Study Circles

In response to interest from Soul Food guests, the Bahá'í community is now offering a series of regular 'Study Circles' – as an opportunity to further explore subjects related to spiritual development. Study Circles are small, informal groups, and provide an environment in which to discuss meaningful topics with like-minded people.

The first Study Circle is titled "Reflections on the Life of the Spirit", from the Ruhi Study Circle series. It is a three unit study on; Understanding the Bahá'í Writings, Prayer & Meditation, and Life & Death.

If you enjoy Soul Food then a Study Circle may also appeal to you. For more information please contact 0402 245 752 or email soulfood@netspace.net.au

The Bahá'í Community of Victoria

Soul Food is an initiative of the Bahá'í Community of Victoria. For further information about the Bahá'í Faith please visit www.bahai.org. For books on the Bahá'í Faith and related subjects such as spiritual development, world religion, education and more please visit:

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