



Program — Reconciliation

May 2002

Let you understand our ancientness;
Let you understand, the simple justice of being
Here as the thousands of years move past
Mudrooroo *The Ultimate Demonstration* 1988

Reconciliation

Colour Me Human

Scratch beneath the skin
of every struggle
and feel at the heart of it all
a love of life
of humanity
the roots
of the tree of progress
A poem by Heather Robertson

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Thence did arise, to fill this world,
the races of mankind...
Yea! knowing Me the source of all,
by Me all creatures wrought...
And, all for the love of them, within their
darkened souls I dwell,
And, with bright rays of wisdom's lamp,
their ignorance dispel.
From *The Bhagavad-Gita*, Chapter X

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Learn
From the past.
Learn from the sadnesses,
The disappointments,
The tears,
The successes,
The joys.
And release them all.
Do not carry them
In your mind
And in your heart
Instead
See anew.
Feel anew.
Create wonders.
Words by *Clear Water*

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Let no one deceive another,
Let no one despise another in any situation,
Let no one, from antipathy or hatred, wish evil to anyone,
Just as a mother, with her own life, protects her only son from hurt,
So within yourself foster a limitless concern for every living creature.
Display a heart of boundless love for all the world
In all its height and depth and broad extent,
Love unrestrained, without hate or enmity.
Then as you stand or walk, sit or lie, until overcome by drowsiness,
Devote your mind entirely to this; it is known as living here life divine.

Buddhist Enlightenment

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Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

From the Bible – Book of Romans

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We have flown the air like birds and swum the sea like fishes, but have yet to learn the simple act of walking the earth as brothers.

Dr Martin Luther King (1967)

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To deny any person their human rights is to challenge their very humanity.

We fought injustice to preserve our own humanity.

Some thoughts from *Nelson Mandela* referring to his years of imprisonment on Robben Island

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Look up, my people,
The dawn is breaking,
The world is waking
To a new bright day
Where none defame us,
No restriction tame us,
No colour shame us,
No sneer dismay.

A Song of Hope by Oodgeroo
of the tribe Noonuccal (formerly Kath Walker)

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Difference of race and colour is like the variegated beauty of flowers in a garden...
Baha'u'llah hath said that the various races of humankind lend a composite harmony and beauty of colour to the whole. Let all associate, therefore, in this great human garden, even as flowers grow and blend together side by side without discord or disagreement between them.

>From the Baha'i Writings

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Black & White by Maurice Nicholson

Two sisters married two white men
Brother married a white lady
One sister married a Yugoslavian man
One cousin married a Greek man
Another cousin married an Italian man
Because the World is changing people are coming together.

My name is Maurice and I am an Aboriginal person.

Our society used to be divided.
In my lifetime I have seen lots of changes like
black and white people socialising more in public, mixed marriages.

Aboriginal people are struggling to get their families back together since they
were split up by government policies.

Having had our culture pulled apart, we were lost and sad.

We are trying to look for identity and to realise our culture again.

We all need to work together
against racism
to stop hatred and cruelty.

Black or white, we all share a sense of humour and we all share the same
sadness in losing a loved one.
We all share the colours of LOVE.

White society still has a black history.

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The story of Louis Gregory

Baha'is of African descent have been members of the Baha'i Faith since its earliest days in the West and, perhaps, one of the most outstanding was Louis Gregory, a young black man and lawyer who became a Baha'i in 1909.

Louis Gregory devoted the rest of his life to working for racial unity and teaching the Baha'i Faith. He was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and established many of the present Baha'i communities in the southern United States. Moreover, he cultivated friendships and shared the Baha'i ideals with many of the leading black intellectuals of the day, including Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver.

In Washington DC in 1912, fraternisation between Blacks and Whites was not condoned. However, 'Abdu'l-Baha, the son of the Prophet-Founder of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'u'llah, defied the segregation custom at a reception that was given in his honour. Explorer Admiral Peary, inventor Alexander Graham Bell and the Turkish ambassador were among the guests, along with a number of prominent politicians and socialites. An hour before the luncheon, 'Abdu'l-Baha met with Louis Gregory.

When luncheon was announced, Mr Gregory slipped away because it wasn't acceptable for Blacks to dine with Whites, especially in such distinguished company. Concerned, 'Abdu'l-Baha asked his host to find the young lawyer. A few minutes later, Mr Gregory, the son of a slave, was escorted into the elegant dining room by the host. Harlan Ober, a luncheon guest, recalled the rest:

'Abdu'l-Baha had by this time re-arranged the place setting and made room for Mr Gregory, giving him the seat of honour at his right. He stated that he was very pleased to have Mr Gregory there, and then, in the most natural way as if nothing unusual had happened, proceeded to give a talk on the oneness of mankind.

In this same year, in response to 'Abdu'l-Baha's loving guidance, Louis Gregory took another step toward establishing racial harmony. He married Louisa Matthew, a devoted and accomplished Baha'i from England. They had met in Egypt in 1911 while visiting 'Abdu'l-Baha. Although they were greatly attracted to each other, they had no thoughts of marriage

until ‘Abdu’l-Baha encouraged them. Interracial marriage was actually a criminal offence in some states. It was such a challenge to popular belief and social convention that it was considered unthinkable. Only later, when ‘Abdu’l-Baha made it known that it would bring Him great pleasure if Louis and Louisa would marry, did they consider it. Inter-marriage would, ‘Abdu’l-Baha said, “abolish differences and disputes between black and white”.

While the Gregorys understood the significance of their union and brought each other joy and comfort, many hardships came their way. Most Americans were strongly against interracial marriage and a majority of the states either prohibited or did not recognise interracial marriages. With their choices limited, the Gregorys decided to live in Maine, a state that would accept the legality of their marriage. However, they were not free to travel together unless they went abroad. Because much of Mr Gregory’s work for racial unity required travelling in the South, he and Mrs Gregory were often forced apart. However, the love they had for each other and for the Baha’i Faith made these difficulties bearable. More than anything, Louis and Louisa Gregory wanted to make racial unity a reality.

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Reconciliation Is About ...Peace from Within and Without

Excerpt from The Peace Message

Those who care for the future of the human race may well ponder this advice. ‘If long-cherished ideals and time honoured institutions, if certain social assumptions and religious formulae have ceased to promote the welfare of the generality of mankind, if they no longer minister to the needs of a continually evolving humanity, let them be swept away and relegated to the limbo of obsolescent and forgotten doctrines. Why should these, in a world subject to the immutable law of change and decay, be exempt from the deterioration that must needs overtake every human institution? For legal standards, political and economic theories are solely designed to safeguard the interests of humanity as a whole, and not humanity to be crucified for the preservation of the integrity of any particular law or doctrine.’

Despite the obvious shortcomings of the United Nations, the more than two score declarations and conventions adopted by that organisation, even where governments have not been enthusiastic in their commitment, have given ordinary people a sense of a new lease of life. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and the similar measures concerned with eliminating all forms of discrimination based on race, sex or religious belief; upholding the rights of the child; protecting all persons against being subjected to torture; eradicating hunger and malnutrition; using scientific and technological progress in the interest of peace and the benefit of mankind – all such measures, if courageously enforced and expanded, will advance the day when the spectre of war will have lost its power to dominate international relations. There is no need to stress the significance of the issues addressed by these declarations and conventions. However, a few such issues, because of their immediate relevance to establishing world peace, deserve additional comment.

Racism, one of the most baneful and persistent evils, is a major barrier to peace. Its practice perpetrates too outrageous a violation of the dignity of human beings to be countenanced under any pretext. Racism retards the unfoldment of the boundless potentialities of its victims, corrupts its perpetrators, and blights human progress. Recognition of the oneness of mankind, implemented by appropriate legal measures, must be universally upheld if this problem is to be overcome.

There are spiritual principles, or what some call human values, by which solutions can be found for every social problem. Any well-intentioned group can in a general sense devise practical solutions to its problems, but good intentions and practical knowledge are usually not enough. The essential merit of spiritual principle is that it not only presents a perspective which harmonises with that which is imminent in human nature, it also induces an attitude, a

dynamic, a will, an aspiration which facilitate the discovery and implementation of practical measures.

We join with all who are the victims of aggression, all who yearn for an end to conflict and contention, all whose devotion to principles of peace and world order promotes the ennobling purposes for which humanity was called into being by an all-loving Creator.

Let men and women, youth and children everywhere recognise the eternal merit of this imperative action for all peoples and lift up their voices in willing assent. Indeed, let it be this generation that inaugurates this glorious stage in the evolution of social life on the planet.

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O Oppressors on Earth

Withdraw your hands from tyranny, for I have pledged Myself not to forgive any man's injustice. This is My covenant which I have irrevocably decreed in the preserved tablet and sealed it with My seal of glory.

A Light Shinneth in Darkness

Wherefore must the loved ones of God, laboriously, with the waters of their striving, tend and nourish and foster this tree of hope. In whatsoever land they dwell, let them with a whole heart befriend and be companions to those who are either close to them, or far removed. Let them, with qualities like unto those of heaven, promote the institutions and the religion of God. Let them never lose heart, never be despondent, never feel afflicted. The more antagonism they meet, the more let them show their own good faith; the more torments and calamities they have to face, the more generously let them pass round the bounteous cup. Such is the spirit which will become the life of the world, such is the spreading light at its heart...

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The diversity in the human family should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord. If you meet those of different race and colour from yourself, do not mistrust them and withdraw yourself into your shell of conventionality but, rather, be glad and show them kindness. Think of them as different coloured roses growing in the beautiful garden of humanity and rejoice to be among them...

There are no whites and blacks before God. All colours are one, and that is the colour of servitude to God. Scent and colour are not important. The heart is important. If the heart is pure, white or black or any colour makes no difference. God does not look at colours; He looks at the hearts. He whose heart is pure is better. He whose character is better is more pleasing. He who turns more to the Abha Kingdom is more advanced.

In the realm of existence colours are of no importance.

Baha'i Writings