

# The Baha'i 'Race Amity' Movement and the Black Intelligentsia in Jim Crow America: Alain Locke and Robert S. Abbott

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I attended every session, day and night ... Many times throughout the meetings did with much effort restrain my tears. My heart leaped and throbbed and many times almost burst within my breast. I am a colored man ... My race as a whole, I believe, is quite ready to welcome the glad day when all will be brothers. ... The trouble is nearly unilateral. God give us the day.

– M. F. Harris, audience member at the 'Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races Based on Heavenly Teachings' (19–21 May 1921)<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

*This study demonstrates how the Baha'i 'Race Amity' efforts effectively reached the black intelligentsia during the Jim Crow era, attracting the interest and involvement of two influential giants of the period – Alain Leroy Locke, PhD (1885–1954) and Robert S. Abbott, LLB (1870–1940). Locke affiliated with the Baha'i Faith in 1918,<sup>2</sup> and Abbott formally joined the Baha'i religion in 1934. Another towering figure in the black intelligentsia, W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) – whose first wife, Nina Du Bois (d. 1950), was a member of the New York Baha'i community – had sustained, for a period of time, considerable interest in the Baha'i movement, as documented in a forthcoming special issue of the Journal of Religious History, guest edited by Todd Lawson.<sup>3</sup> These illustrious figures – W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain L. Locke and Robert S. Abbott – are ranked as the 4th, 36th and 41st most influential African Americans in American history.<sup>4</sup> It is not so much the intrinsic message of the Baha'i religion that attracted the interest of the black intelligentsia, but rather the Baha'i emphasis on 'race amity' – representing what, by Jim Crow standards, may be regarded as a socially audacious – even radical – application of the Baha'i ethic of world unity, from family relations to international relations, to the prevailing American social crisis.*

## Keywords

Alain Locke  
Robert S. Abbott  
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In 19–21 May 1921, the Baha'i 'Race Amity' movement was launched in the nation's capital, Washington DC, as 'a practical effort to influence public discourse on race in the United States'.<sup>5</sup> This came at a time when the 'color line' between black and white was drenched red with lynchings and race riots that infected Jim Crow America with fear and dread. One of the African American participants was a certain 'M. F. Harris' whose voice rings out as the black Everyman of his day. The epigraph above,

from Mr Harris's unpublished letter, reflects, first-hand, a genuine, even profound, response to the Baha'i principle of the oneness of humankind, that sought to promote interracial harmony in race-stricken America during the so-called 'Jim Crow era' (approximately 1883 to 1964).

The Jim Crow period has euphemistically been called America's apartheid. Although America had no counterparts to South African passbooks, tribal homelands and an overwhelming black majority, Jim Crow America was nevertheless commensurable with South Africa's former apartheid system for its social effect, as one historian expressed it: 'Exceeding even South Africa's notorious apartheid in the humiliation, degradation, and suffering it brought, Jim Crow left scars on the American psyche that are still felt today.'<sup>6</sup> By 1914, every southern state had established two separate societies – one white, one 'colored'. Segregation was enforced by the creation of separate facilities in virtually every sector of civil society – in schools, streetcars, restaurants, healthcare institutions and cemeteries.

The American regime of legalized racial segregation was sanctioned by the notorious US Supreme Court decision, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896).<sup>7</sup> Named after a pre-Civil War minstrel-show character, Jim Crow laws were late 19th-century statutes enacted by southern states that codified and institutionalized an American form of apartheid, which, while distinct from that of South Africa, was comparably separationist and systemic in nature. In 1883, although slavery had been abolished in 1863, the Supreme Court declared the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional, reflecting the widespread white supremacist attitudes of the day and effectively demolishing the foundations of post-Civil War Reconstruction Era. In 1896, the high court promulgated the 'separate but equal doctrine' in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, thereby sanctioning a profusion of unabashedly discriminatory Jim Crow laws.

In 1954, this racial caste system was successfully challenged in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, which declared segregation in the public schools unconstitutional. *Brown* was not the first challenge to the 'separate but equal' regime, but was the culmination of earlier challenges, particularly during the 1930s and 1940s. While *Brown* was a landmark decision in the history of the civil rights movement, that movement was ongoing, such that *Brown* was a splendid moment in a complex and extended historical trajectory. The Jim Crow system was finally dismantled by civil rights legislation in 1964–68.

In stark contrast to the Jim Crow social nightmare, the Baha'i 'Race Amity' movement infused in the American dream a vision of interracial harmony, in which social capital was arguably seen as a more precious resource than mere economic prosperity. The Baha'is sought to counter racial discrimination (and the racial terrorism of lynchings, such as the 'Red Summer' or the 'race war' of 1919, which represented the worst racial violence against blacks in the early 20th century) by interracial friendship, which went far beyond the mere tolerance advocated by even the most liberal of whites at that time. The idea was to convert racial enmity into racial 'amity', and to do so both in private life and on a public scale.

One notable example of the racial harmony that the Baha'is endeavoured to promote was the conference for interracial amity, held on 2, 8 and 9 November 1930 and co-sponsored by the National (Baha'i) Teaching

Committee, the Urban League and the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of New York, with two sessions at the Baha'i Center and one at the New York Urban League Auditorium, 201 West 136th Street.<sup>8</sup> Significantly, the white participants were invited as guests of the black participants in their homes in Harlem, thus crossing the Jim Crow 'color line': 'White members of the movement were guests of Harlem members in their homes.'<sup>9</sup> A photograph of participants in this event was published in *The Chicago Defender*, which, in its heyday, was the leading African American newspaper in the United States,<sup>10</sup> whose founder became a notable Baha'i.

Robert S. Abbott, LLB (1870–1940), in his role as founder and editor of *The Chicago Defender*, gave widespread publicity to Baha'i race relations ideals and efforts to counter America's racial crisis by addressing its root causes, welling up from the deep-seated racial animosities and disparities that persisted in the aftermath of American slavery and institutionalized by Jim Crow laws. Alain Leroy Locke, PhD (1885–1954) promoted ideal race relations, both nationally and internationally, and was directly involved in the Baha'i 'Race Amity' movement. Ironically, despite their common cause and the fact that both were adherents of the Baha'i religion, Locke and Abbott moved in different professional circles and social worlds, and had little contact with each other.

Notwithstanding the absence of a definitive history of African American Baha'is, important work has been done on the 'Race Amity' movement, which is surely the most significant aspect of African American Baha'i history during the Jim Crow era (leading, in later decades, to 'mass teaching' of the Faith to blacks in the American South and the emergence of the first interracial local Baha'i communities there). 'Race amity' simply means interracial unity. The Baha'i 'race amity' era lasted from 1921–36, followed by the 'race unity' period of 1939–47, with a whole range of race relations initiatives (such as 'Race Unity Day') experimented with down to the present. More than progressive, Baha'i 'race amity' initiatives were quite radical by the standards of the day. Such efforts were by no means exclusive, as the Commission on Interracial Cooperation<sup>11</sup> (1919–44) comes to mind. The Quakers (Society of Friends), for instance, held a Conference on Inter-racial Justice on 24 October 1924, one day after the Fourth Race Amity Convention (organized by the Amity Convention Committee of which Alain Locke was a member) was held in Philadelphia.<sup>12</sup> The Baha'i race amity movement was distinct in that it did not focus so much on 'racial justice' as it did eradicating the root causes of racial injustice.

How best to assess the contributions of the Baha'i race amity movement? It was timely, yet ahead of its time. Can it be said that Baha'is were arguably in the forefront of race relations endeavours during the Jim Crow era? Did this Baha'i activism qualitatively have a 'leavening' effect? Or were the Baha'is too few, too marginal and too unimportant to leave their mark on history, even though the race amity initiatives sought to make history by remaking society vis-à-vis race relations? The full impact of the race amity effort is impossible to determine, and is further complicated by the fact that historians virtually ignored what the Baha'is were doing. Indeed, no reference whatsoever to the Baha'i race amity movement is to be found in the standard American histories; in fact, American history textbooks do not

even mention the Baha'i efforts, whether parenthetically or in footnotes. These early race relations initiatives were part of a social evolution (some might say revolution) that historians will perhaps come to recognize as a minor but significant milestone in American social history.

This article will begin with the origins of the Baha'i race amity movement, which traces back to Sir Abbas Effendi, better known as 'Abdu'l-Baha (1844–1921).

## **I. The power of a personality: 'Abdu'l-Baha and the abolition of prejudice**

The Baha'i race amity movement traces back to 'Abdu'l-Baha, eldest son and successor to the prophet-founder of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'u'llah (1817–1892). It was in 1912 that 'Abdu'l-Baha came to America. He spent 239 days in the United States and Canada, from his arrival on 11 April 1912 to his departure on 5 December 1912. During his historic visit, practically his every word and deed was recorded for posterity, and there was extensive press coverage. His anecdotal legacy was nearly as important as his numerous discourses and speeches. The following incident illustrates 'Abdu'l-Baha's attitude towards African Americans. One of 'Abdu'l-Baha's entourage, in a letter dated 28 September 1913, observed:

I can never forget the day in Washington, when our Beloved Abdu'l-Baha called on the Ambassador of Turkey. He was sitting near the window, watching the number of men and women passing by. At the time[,] a young negro as black as coal passed by. 'Did you see that young black negro?' He asked. 'Yes,' I answered. 'I declare by Baha'O'llah [sic] that I wish him to become as radiant as the shining sun which is flooding the world with its glorious lights,' He said earnestly.<sup>13</sup>

After spending his first days in New York, on his tenth day in America – Saturday 20 April – 'Abdu'l-Baha arrived in Washington DC and stayed until Sunday 28 April. Toward the end of his visit, *The Washington Bee*, one of the country's most important black newspapers, with a substantial readership in the South, published a story that read, in part:

Its [the Baha'i Faith's] white devotees, even in this prejudice-ridden community, refuse to draw the color line. The informal meetings, held frequently in the fashionable mansions of the cultured society in Sheridan Circle, Dupont Circle, Connecticut and Massachusetts avenues, have been open to Negroes on terms of absolute equality.<sup>14</sup>

This expression, the 'color line', is particularly poignant in light of W. E. B. Du Bois's famous statement in 1903: 'The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line, – the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea.'<sup>15</sup> Crossing 'the color line', as Du Bois famously termed the racial divide in America, through such a deliberate rejection of Jim Crow social norms was quite revolutionary, but in a reconstructive way. Here, by 'revolutionary' is not meant the overthrow of a government, but the reconstitution of society according to principles of confraternity based on

unity, not on subordination of one race to another on the pretext of 'separate but equal'.

On Tuesday morning, 23 April, 'Abdu'l-Baha spoke in Rankin Chapel at Howard University. Well over a thousand faculty, administrators, students and guests<sup>16</sup> crowded the relatively small space of this modest chapel to hear him speak. This is how he opened his talk:

Today I am most happy, for I see here a gathering of the servants of God. I see white and black sitting together. There are no whites and blacks before God. All colors are one, and that is the color of servitude to God. Scent and color are not important. The heart is important. If the heart is pure, white or black or any color makes no difference. God does not look at colors; He looks at the hearts.<sup>17</sup>

While making the point that, in the natural world, colour has no intrinsic value except to enrich human diversity, in the human world colour had taken on huge and determinative proportions. All too cognizant of this fact, 'Abdu'l-Baha continued to stress character over characteristics.

## **II. The power of metaphors: the pupil of the eye, precious jewels**

'Abdu'l-Baha expressed his genuine delight that the meeting itself was interracial – an attitude articulated in poetic eloquence the very next night. On 24 April 1912, 'Abdu'l-Baha spoke at the home of Mr and Mrs Andrew J. Dyer. As one of 'Abdu'l-Baha's translators, Dr Zia Mabsut Bagdadi (who would later serve with Alain Locke on inter-racial amity committees),<sup>18</sup> wrote in his diary: 'In the evening, 'Abdu'l-Baha addressed the white and colored believers and their friends at the home of Mrs Dyer, a member of the colored race.'<sup>19</sup> To the degree that it was out of the ordinary, and contrary to the prevailing Jim Crow social norms, the mixed racial audience was extraordinary. Imagine the impact of the following statement on the racially mixed audience, especially on those African Americans who were present:

This evening is very good. This evening is in reality very good. When a man looks at a meeting like this, he is reminded of the gathering together of pearls and rubies, diamonds and sapphires put together. How beautiful! How delightful! It is most beautiful. It is a source of joy. Whatsoever is conducive to the unity of the world of men is most acceptable and most praiseworthy. And whatsoever is the cause of discord in the world of humanity is saddening.<sup>20</sup>

This text is based on the extemporaneous translation by Dr Ameen U. Fareed and taken stenographically by Joseph H. Hannen. One of 'Abdu'l-Baha's entourage, Mīrzā Maḥmūd Zarqānī, in his diary entry for 24 April 1912, *Badā-yi al-Āthār*, states:

The Master [Abdu'l-Baha] remarked: 'Before I arrived, I felt too tired to speak at this meeting. But at the sight of such genuine love and attraction between the white and the black friends (*ulfat va injizāb aḥibbā-yi sīyāh va sifid*), I was so moved that I spoke with great love and likened (*tashbīḥ namūdām*) this union of different colored races (*ittiḥād-i alvān-i mukhtalifah*) to a string of gleaming pearls and rubies (*la'ālī va yaqūt*).<sup>21</sup>

In comparing his audience to pearls and rubies, sapphires and diamonds, 'Abdu'l-Baha's imagery was quite striking. On that night in Washington DC, 'Abdu'l-Baha concluded his address in saying:

When the racial elements of the American nation unite in actual fellowship and accord, the lights of the oneness of humanity will shine, the day of eternal glory and bliss will dawn, the spirit of God encompass and the divine favors descend. ... This is the sign of the 'Most Great Peace'.<sup>22</sup>

Social transformation can be effected through the reorienting of racial attitudes, and rhetoric can be a potent tool, as the immortal speeches of Dr Martin Luther King, Jr, demonstrate. 'Abdu'l-Baha's most influential rhetorical strategy in promoting racial uplift and ideal race relations was his likening of people of African descent to the 'pupil of the eye'. The choice of this ennobling and empowering metaphor was deliberate. Its provenance is all the more significant in that 'Abdu'l-Baha ascribes this very metaphor to Baha'u'llah: 'Bahā'u'llāh once compared the colored people to the black pupil of the eye surrounded by the white. In this black pupil is seen the reflection of that which is before it, and through it the light of the spirit shineth forth.'<sup>23</sup> In so saying, 'Abdu'l-Baha makes it clear that the 'pupil of the eye' metaphor for people of African descent harks back to the very origins of the Baha'i religion.

In a letter sent through Phoebe Hearst (the mother of newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst, widow of mining magnate and US senator, George Hearst, and an erstwhile Baha'i at this time), to her servant, Robert Turner, the first African American Baha'i, 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote:

O thou who art pure in heart, sanctified in spirit, peerless in character, beautiful in face! Thy photograph hath been received revealing thy physical frame in the utmost grace and the best appearance. Thou art dark in countenance and bright in character. Thou art like unto the pupil of the eye (insān al-'ayn) which is dark in colour, yet it is the fount of light and the revealer of the contingent world.

I have not forgotten nor will I forget thee. I beseech God that He may graciously make thee the sign of His bounty amidst mankind, illumine thy face with the light of such blessings as are vouchsafed by the merciful Lord, single thee out for His love in this age which is distinguished among all the past ages and centuries.<sup>24</sup>

In Arabic, the 'pupil of the eye' is insān al-'ayn. Literally, the Arabic means 'eye-person'. The Persian counterpart for the Arabic term insān is mardumak, and for 'pupil of the eye, 'mardumak-i chashm'.<sup>25</sup> Both terms also refer to a 'man' or 'human being'. There appears to be a wordplay in 'Abdu'l-Baha's employment of 'pupil of the eye' as a metaphor for people of African descent in which, collectively, they ideally serve as the 'eye-person' illumining social conscience. There is a parallel etymology in the English word, 'pupil', as it relates to the eye. The *Oxford English Dictionary* explains that 'its etymon [is] classical Latin pūpilla in same sense, transferred use of pūpilla, female child, also doll ..., so called on account of the small reflected image seen when looking into someone's pupil'. Thus, these linguistically parallel Persian and English wordplays trace back to their respective etymologies.

Whether in Arabic or in Persian, ‘Abdu’l-Baha was consistent in his use of this metaphor for people of African descent. In a letter (referred to by Baha’is as a ‘tablet’) to Alan A. Anderson (the second African American convert to the Faith in Washington DC), ‘Abdu’l-Baha wrote:

O thou who hast an illumined heart! Thou art even as the pupil of the eye (*mardumak-i chasm*), the very wellspring of the light, for God’s love hath cast its rays upon thine inmost being and thou hast turned thy face toward the Kingdom of thy Lord.

Intense is the hatred, in America, between black and white, but my hope is that the power of the Kingdom will bind these two in friendship, and serve them as a healing balm.

Let them look not upon a man’s colour but upon his heart. If the heart be filled with light, that man is nigh unto the threshold of his Lord; but if not, that man is careless of his Lord, be he white or be he black.<sup>26</sup>

In contrast to prevailing social habits, ‘Abdu’l-Baha emphasizes character over characteristics. That is, one should not focus on another’s extrinsic racial characteristics (‘colour’), but rather on that person’s intrinsic character (‘heart’) as a determinant of moral worth.

The following tablet from ‘the Master’ (as ‘Abdu’l-Baha was called by Baha’u’llah himself), was ‘revealed’ (written) to one Mrs Pocohontas Pope, in Washington. The recipient of the tablet, according to Fāḍil Māzandarānī, was, according to US census records, either mulatto or black.<sup>27</sup> As mentioned earlier, it was through Pauline Hannen that Mrs Pope learned of the Baha’i Faith. This is what ‘Abdu’l-Baha wrote to Pocohontas Pope:

Although the pupil of the eye is black, it is the source of light. Thou shalt likewise be. The disposition should be bright, not the appearance. Therefore, with supreme confidence and certitude, say: ‘O God! Make me a radiant light, a shining lamp, and a brilliant star, so that I may illumine the hearts with an effulgent ray from Thy Kingdom of ‘Abha.’<sup>28</sup>

The reader is struck by the profusion of light imagery in this densely ornate passage. The tablet concludes with a prayer both to receive enlightenment and for the power to enlighten others as well. The individual conduit for this spiritual and social illumination is, obviously, Pocohontas Pope herself. Yet there is also a collective application to all people of African descent.

As said, the ‘pupil of the eye’ was a potent, transformative metaphor. As Richard Thomas observes, ‘Abdu’l-Baha ‘transformed the traditional racist color symbolism and imagery into the symbolism and imagery of racial unity’. By so doing, ‘Abdu’l-Baha enabled them to counter and transcend the racist cultural tendencies so ingrained in the American national character’.<sup>29</sup> In *Lights of the Spirit*, Thomas notes:

There is a direct connection between the Bahá’í teachings on the spiritual qualities of Black people and the cultivation of African American racial identity. Many African American Bahá’ís of the present generation have internalized the imagery of the ‘pupil of the eye, through which the light of the spirit

shineth forth' as a fundamental component of their racial identity within the larger Bahá'í community.<sup>30</sup>

'Abdu'l-Baha, in fact, employed this image in a number of tablets. As previously stated, the origin of this metaphor is ascribed by 'Abdu'l-Baha to Baha'u'llah himself, although there has been no independent attestation of this. The idea, which is more or less self-evident, is that it is the pupil itself that admits light into the eye. In comparing blacks to the pupil of the eye, 'Abdu'l-Baha appears to be saying that African Americans and people of African descent can, in a sense, illuminate the rest of the human race, by serving as the aperture of light whereby the 'eye' or consciousness of the rest of humanity can 'see'. This is no doubt because of the experience of slavery and subsequent oppression that the race was made to suffer in the course of what is sometimes characterized as America's original sin.

### III. 'Abdu'l-Baha: 'Man of the Month'

A little-known aspect of W. E. B. Du Bois's life was his interest in the Baha'i religion. For instance, on 27 February 1932, Du Bois spoke at the interracial banquet that the Baha'is hosted in honour of the NAACP and the National Urban League.<sup>31</sup> A couple of anecdotes further illustrate this: 'In 1935', as Guy Mount points out, 'Du Bois himself was "accused" of being a Baha'i by fellow black communist George Streater, largely because of Du Bois's stance against violence.'<sup>32</sup> In his letter of 29 April 1935, Streater complains: 'In writing about violence, you write like an apostle of Abdul Bahia [sic].'<sup>33</sup> In 1953, and after the death of his first wife, Nina, W. E. B. Du Bois was denied a passport by the US government, as he was petitioning to attend a World Peace Council meeting in Budapest and the Inter-Continental Conference of the Baha'i Faith in New Delhi.<sup>34</sup>

Du Bois had significant Baha'i contacts, some of whom were quite supportive of his work. In 1932, for instance, the chairperson of the Baha'i race amity committee, Louie A. Mathews, was noted as the 'donor of the DuBois literary prize'.<sup>35</sup> Another notable example was Cora Calhoun Horne, an African America Baha'i civil leader who was an erstwhile member of the Urban League, the National Association of Colored Women and the International Council of Women of Darker Races, whose obituary Du Bois published in *The Crisis*; she was described as a woman 'of unusual public spirit and intelligence' and who 'was widely known' and 'a member of the Baha'i movement'.<sup>36</sup> There were other significant Baha'i contacts as well.<sup>37</sup> Relations were cordial, and Du Bois's interest in the 'Baha'i movement' sustained, until an unfortunate misunderstanding developed regarding Baha'i meetings that took place in Nashville in January 1937.<sup>38</sup>

As editor of *The Crisis*, Du Bois ran a series called 'Men of the Month'. This column regularly featured African American men (and women) of interest. In an unusual and remarkable departure from this practice, Du Bois devoted the first part of the May 1912 column to the Baha'i leader, 'Abdu'l-Baha. Here are some highlights from that tribute:

On April 12 Abdul Baha, the head of the religious movement known as Bahaism, arrived in America to visit his rapidly increasing band of followers. His coming is of particular interest to those of us who believe in the

brotherhood of man, for that is the doctrine the Baha'is emphasize above all other things. ...

Naturally, he is interested in the question of race prejudice in this country, where he has so many disciples. Recently he sent this message to one of them, Mrs M. L. Botay, who has sent it to *The Crisis*:

'Give Mrs Botay my greetings and love and tell her she must greatly endeavor ... to cast light among the colored people, so that they may become as our brothers, no blacks, no whites, both as one. ... By this means you shall free America from all prejudice. ... God looks upon hearts, not upon colors. He looks upon qualities, not upon bodies.'<sup>39</sup>

Doubtless Du Bois saw in the Baha'i movement an ally, as it were, in the crusade for minority rights and racial equality. Guy Mount has drawn attention to the remarkable attention that Du Bois lavished on 'Abdu'l-Baha in the May 1912 issue of *The Crisis*:

In the month after the Fourth Annual NAACP conference, but a month before the formal write up of the event cited by most scholars, Du Bois devoted almost the entire body of his 'Men of the Month' column to Abdu'l Baha. Adorned with a full page picture followed by a full page write up, the article is less remarkable for what it says and more fascinating for what it is. In a column reserved exclusively for African American accomplishments (which often included black women) Abdu'l Baha's inclusion seemed to be an obvious anomaly. The space devoted to him relative to the other men of that month as well as those recognized throughout that year is also striking. No other figure that Du Bois honored that year warranted a full page article much less a full page photo. For most months, each biographical sketch was given roughly equal space with a lucky few earning a small inset photo. Abdu'l Baha however dominated that month's section and literally pushed the other honorees into a tiny space at the bottom of the page. This new find is perhaps the most extensive article on the Baha'i Faith attributed to Du Bois and given the space he devoted to it in his paper, his meeting with Abdu'l Baha must have had a significant impact on him.<sup>40</sup>

In the very next issue (June 1912) of *The Crisis*, Du Bois published the text of 'Abdu'l-Baha's speech presented at the Fourth Annual Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).<sup>41</sup> After 'Abdu'l-Baha's death on 28 November 1921, Du Bois wrote: 'Two men sit high before the world today – Eugene Debs and Abdul Baha. One is free of chains which should never have bound him – the other ['Abdu'l-Baha] of Life which he tried to free of race and national prejudice.'<sup>42</sup> Here, Du Bois's profound respect for 'Abdu'l-Baha is still in evidence. But Du Bois's opinion of the Baha'i religion would later change.<sup>43</sup>

#### **IV. A brief history of the Baha'i 'Race Amity' event, with timetable**

Following the historic visit of 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1912, the Baha'i religion, as a minority faith, perhaps made its most dramatic debut as a historical 'actor' in the 'Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races Based on Heavenly Teachings' on 19–21 May 1921 at the Congregational

Church on 10th and G Street NW in Washington DC,<sup>44</sup> and 'was the first large interracial gathering since violence had torn the city apart less than two years before'.<sup>45</sup> This flagship event launched a series of further 'Race Amity' conferences. There was some involvement by individuals at Howard University, most notably by professors Coralie Cooke<sup>46</sup> and Alain Locke.

The Baha'i 'race amity' era lasted from 1921–36, followed by the 'race unity' period of 1939–47, with a whole range of race relations initiatives (such as 'Race Unity Day') experimented with down to the present. The historical origins of the Baha'i race amity movement, therefore, can be traced not only to 'Abdu'l-Baha's vision of ideal race relations, but to 'Abdu'l-Baha's own personal involvement. It was 'Abdu'l-Baha who conceived of the race amity movement, and undertook to inaugurate it.

The first 'Race Amity' conference was organized by Agnes S. Parsons (a white woman prominent in Washington high society) at the instruction of 'Abdu'l-Baha who, during her second pilgrimage to Haifa (1920), said to her: 'I want you to arrange in Washington a convention for unity between the white and colored people.'<sup>47</sup> This came as quite a shock to Mrs Parsons, who had no prior experience in race relations. 'Abdu'l-Baha advised Agnes Parsons not to undertake this alone. Accordingly, Parsons consulted with the Washington Baha'i assembly for advice and called upon several of her friends to form an ad hoc race amity convention committee. This task force included Agnes Parsons herself, Mariam Haney, Louise Boyle, Gabrielle Pelham and Martha Root.<sup>48</sup>

A Baha'i journalist from Pittsburgh, Martha Root travelled the world to teach the Baha'i Faith abroad. Her most outstanding achievement was her audience with Queen Marie of Romania, who was won over to the Faith, thus becoming the first monarch to become a Baha'i. While doing so, she kept in contact with the Baha'is of the United States. During one of her world travels, for instance, Martha Root sent Alain Locke a photograph of 'Abdu'l-Baha, with this note written on the back: 'A souvenir from Martha Root. Finland.'<sup>49</sup>

Since Mariam Haney appears to have been Locke's primary contact with the Baha'i community in the early years, there is every reason to believe that, once the organizing committee decided to enlist Locke's support, advice and participation, Mariam Haney would be the one to solicit his help. The strategy of the committee was to appoint a Baha'i chairperson to preside over each session,<sup>50</sup> which featured more non-Baha'i speakers than Baha'i speakers. According to Agnes Parsons, 'At each session of the convention there was a Bahai chairman and the chairman invariably gave the keynote for the whole evening.'<sup>51</sup> Based on this single fact, one could deduce that, as early as 1921, Locke was already considered a professing Baha'i. All of the thoughtful planning paid off, as the convention was a resounding success.

The historic 'Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races Based on Heavenly Teachings' took place on 19–21 May 1921 at the Congregational Church on 10th and G Street NW in Washington DC. Locke served as session chair on Friday evening, 21 May.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps the best way to begin to describe the programme as performed is to examine the programme as printed, which contained the essence of what the convention was designed to convey. A facsimile of this programme has been

published.<sup>53</sup> The work of the convention, in terms of its desired influence and to the extent that the audience had read it beforehand, began to take effect in advance of the event itself. The official programme for the Convention for Amity Between the White and Colored Races Based on Heavenly Teachings begins with this message:

Half a century ago in America slavery was abolished.

Now there has arisen need [*sic*] for another great effort in order that prejudice may be overcome.

Correction of the present wrong requires no army, for the field of action is the hearts of our citizens. The instrument to be used is kindness, the ammunition – understanding. The actors in this engagement for right are all the inhabitants of these United States.

The great work we have to do and for which this convention is called is the establishment of amity between the white and the colored people of our land.

When we have put our own house in order, then we may be trusted to carry the message of universal peace to all mankind.<sup>54</sup>

Written by Agnes Parsons herself (with some feedback from her friends), this is something of a manifesto. The primary metaphor is military. The enemy is prejudice. The battleground is the hearts of Americans. The weapon of choice for the protagonists is kindness backed by understanding. To not only the victors go the spoils of victory, but to the world, in which universal peace is made a coefficient of overcoming the social perniciousness of racial hatred. This social agenda is not only representative of the African American dimension in American Baha'i history, but is emblematic of the priorities of the American Baha'i community as a whole. The printed programme<sup>55</sup> featured short aphorisms by Jesus Christ, Baha'o'llah [*sic*], Terence, Lao-tze, Epictetus, Zoroaster and Moses. The classical references may well have been due to Locke's influence in his role as consultant.

As to the actual sessions themselves, there exists an unpublished report, 'A Compilation on the Story of the Convention for Amity', dated 31 May 1921, that provides many valuable details as to the behind-the-scenes planning and execution of the programme. It contains Louis Gregory's report, which was published.<sup>56</sup> Of Locke's role as a session chair and its keynote, Louis Gregory simply states: 'Friday evening[,] Dr Alain L. Locke, professor at Howard University, presided. He expressed the great spirit of the convention as the unity of the heart and mind in human uplift.'<sup>57</sup> The local press covered all five sessions in three published reports, one for each day of the conference. In its story of the evening session that took place on Friday 20 May, a reporter for *The Haleigh* wrote: 'At the evening session Dr A. L. Locke of Howard University was the chairman. A refined, cultured, discriminating gentleman of knowledge, presiding with the utmost grace.'<sup>58</sup>

The two lectures that were presented during Locke's session were: (1) 'Duties and Responsibilities of Citizenship' by Hon. Martin B. Madden; and (2) 'The New Internationalism and Its Spiritual Factors' by Alfred Martin, president of the Ethical Culture Society. Madden said that anti-lynching legislation was slated for the next session of Congress, that Congress definitely would enact it and that the president would sign it into law. Martin

struck linkages between the brotherhood of man and world democracy.<sup>59</sup> Although the reporter is not named, this valuable press coverage was due to the efforts of Martha Root. She was assisted in this capacity by Louis Gregory and Neval Thomas.<sup>60</sup>

The conference was a spectacular success. It featured a rich artistic programme, both musical and literary. Among the musical performers was solo violinist Joseph Douglass, grandson of the great abolitionist, Frederick Douglass. The Howard University chorus performed as well. The convention attracted crowds of fifteen hundred or more.<sup>61</sup> 'An interesting after effect of the first amity convention', Louis Gregory observed, 'was the stimulus it gave to orthodox people [established churches and other religious groups], who started the organization of interracial committees very soon thereafter.'<sup>62</sup> Apart from this, the convention had no measurable historic impact, since its goal was to foster goodwill rather than achieve a distinct objective, such as the passage of anti-lynching legislation, although part of the programme did address this very issue.<sup>63</sup> Within the Baha'i community, however, the first amity convention was truly the 'mother' of all future Baha'i-sponsored race relations initiatives. Retrospectively, in its 1929–30 annual report, the nine-member Interracial Amity Committee, of which Locke was an active participant, reaffirmed the significance of the first amity convention and concluded: 'There can be found in America today no more effective teaching, no stronger magnet to attract souls.'<sup>64</sup>

'Abdu'l-Baha considered this meeting to have had paramount symbolic and social importance. In a message conveyed by Mountfort Mills (an American Baha'i recently returned from a visit to Palestine), 'Abdu'l-Baha was reported to have said:

Say to this convention that never since the beginning of time has a convention of more importance been held. This convention stands for the oneness of humanity. It will become the cause of the removal of hostilities between the races. It will become the cause of the enlightenment of America. It will, if wisely managed and continued, check the deadly struggle between these races, which otherwise will inevitably break out.<sup>65</sup>

Since the convention was open to the public at large, it was to this audience that 'Abdu'l-Baha's message was addressed. Race riots in decades to come gave poignancy to this warning, a dire prophecy fulfilled, but with a means for averting racial violence.

When the convention ended, Agnes Parsons cabled 'Abdu'l-Baha: 'Convention successful. Meetings crowded. Hearts comforted.' To which 'Abdu'l-Baha cabled back: 'The white colored Convention produced happiness. Hoping will establish same in all America.'<sup>66</sup> In a letter dated 4 October 1921, Mariam Haney refers to these communications from 'Abdu'l-Baha regarding the convention:

We were pleased to have a word from you and look forward to a visit, when I hope to have the joy of telling you of the very interesting happenings of the summer, and the prospects for the future. Most important of all, the very wonderful Tablets which have come to Mrs Parsons and myself about the Amity Convention.<sup>67</sup>

Louis Gregory reports:

It is reliably stated that the President of the United States, the late Mr [Warren] Harding, upon reading the press reports which were so friendly and wide-spread, said, 'Thank God for that convention!'<sup>68</sup>

*The Washington Bee* published a two-part story on 28 May 1921 and 4 June 1921, headlined, 'Great Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White: Brilliant Meeting – Record Attendance – Powerful Enthusiasm – Inspiring Music – Lofty Purposes Set Forth'. Locke's chairing of Friday night's session is nicely described: 'On Friday evening, Dr Alain L. Locke, presiding, expressed the great effort of the convention to the unity of heart and mind in human succor, exemplifying the power of a new spirit in a new age.'<sup>69</sup> The first instalment recounted this surprising occurrence:

Master Lenore Cook, accompanied by his uncle, as a vocal solo, sang one of the latter's selections, 'Mammy'. Repeating this request on the closing night, a white lady who was touched by his theme and voice, presented the boy with a beautiful diamond, set in platinum.<sup>70</sup>

The story finished up on this note: 'So ended this historical convention, different in scope and power from anything of the kind held before ...'<sup>71</sup>

The 'Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races Based on Heavenly Teachings' was a landmark event in American Baha'i history. It proved to be a milestone in Baha'i social history because it was the progenitor of all future race amity conferences. Despite positive coverage by the black press at the time, the convention did not make it into standard American histories. (See Appendix 1: Timeline of Baha'i Race Amity Conferences.) Doubtless there were other race amity conferences as well, as they were encouraged on the part of all American Baha'i communities, resources permitting.

## **V. The Baha'i race amity movement and the black intelligentsia**

In the American context, the 'Bahá'í Faith', as the religion is now known, is obviously a 'minority faith'. Minority faiths, of course, stand in relation to the 'majority faith' of 'Protestantism' – the collective rubric of a medley of denominations that have fissiparously multiplied in the course of American religious history. In a major multi-author work on the role of minority religions in American thought and history, *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream*, Jonathan Sarna notes that minority faiths 'appear all too often as victims of history, acted upon by the majority', yet have emerged 'as historical actors in their own right, operating within a comparative – and competitive – religious setting'.<sup>72</sup>

The Baha'i Faith makes no appearance whatsoever in *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream*, whether as an 'actor' or even as an 'extra' in the ongoing historical drama of interfaith relations. Notwithstanding Sarna's omission, one of the ways in which the Baha'i religion, as a minority faith, emerged as a significant 'actor' was in the arena of race relations, which was a controversial issue, to say the least, during the Jim Crow era. As the Baha'is themselves represented their interracial

unity efforts to reverse Jim Crow racialism across America, '[t]he actors in this engagement for right are all the inhabitants of these United States'.<sup>73</sup> Compared to the social reality, the rhetoric here was hyperbolic. The impact of the Baha'i race amity movement is difficult to assess. It may well be that Baha'i estimates of the contemporary and historical significance their initiative were overly optimistic, given the relatively modest numbers of people they were actually able to reach.

While minority faiths may be said to be 'historical actors in their own right', certain individual adherents stand out as significant actors within the religion. When such adherents also have a place in American history outside the context of their faith community, such adherents accrue an added historical significance. In this study, Alain Leroy Locke and Robert S. Abbott will be profiled in order to show how a minority faith made significant inroads among African American 'race men'. Such an approach articulates, through the public 'voices' of black notables, some of the key issues and aspirations that emerged as ideological and social earmarks of the Baha'i religion in the historical context of American thought and culture.<sup>74</sup> While this article prescinds from positing a Baha'i social impact, it is worth noting that, according to Gayle Morrison, 'the Bahá'í Faith was not only the first religion to initiate racial amity activities in America but the first to elicit interfaith support'.<sup>75</sup>

The use of 'historical portraits' for such a purpose has been undertaken in previous scholarship on this topic,<sup>76</sup> especially in view of the fact that a coherent history of African Americans in the Baha'i Faith has yet to be written. Historian Richard Thomas provides a brief biographical history and motif analysis of the entry of African Americans into the American Baha'i community.<sup>77</sup> Besides *Lights of the Spirit: Historical Portraits of Black Baha'is in North America, 1898–2000* (2006), the other major work in this area is by the aforementioned historian, Gayle Morrison, whose book, *To Move the World: Louis Gregory and the Advancement of Racial Unity in America* (1982),<sup>78</sup> is foundational to any serious study of the Baha'i 'Race Amity' movement. Morrison's work is an account of Baha'i efforts to build an interracial religious community and to promote interracial harmony more broadly during the first half of the twentieth century.

The Baha'i initiatives to foster interracial harmony enjoyed the participation, besides that of Locke, of other intellectuals of the period. In a 2010 conference paper – 'Locke, Shock, and Abbott: Baha'i Theology and the Acceleration of the African American Civil Rights Movement' – Guy Mount addresses the question of whether or not the Baha'i religion 'influenced' the black intelligentsia:

Beyond the more obvious and well documented work done on Alain Locke and Robert Abbott, a study of this connection between W. E. B. Du Bois and Baha'i theology is long overdue and may open the door to some of the most important impacts that Abdu'l Baha may have had on the direction of African American history. Yet to precisely trace Baha'i theology through the infinitely complex thoughts that circulated Du Bois's mind, and other African Americans generally, may prove to be an impossible task. However, as R. Laurence Moore, Christopher Buck, and other scholars of American religious history have demonstrated, it is not unheard of for small, upstart, religious outsiders

to circumvent conventional religious lines and shift the collective direction [of] American religion while remaking its parameters in their own image.<sup>79</sup>

The purpose of this article is not to argue ‘influence’ in terms of effecting social change in a historically documented or sociologically determined way, but ‘influence’ in the more literal, etymological sense of what the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as the ‘action or fact of flowing in; inflowing, inflow, influx: said of the action of water and other fluids, and of immaterial things conceived of as flowing in’. It is the influx of the Baha’i message of interracial harmony and world unity (the former being a precondition of the latter) among the black intelligentsia that this article will illuminate, thereby lending further substance to the claim by historian Gayle Morrison made in 1982:

In the North, conferences and other activities sponsored or cosponsored by the Bahá’ís resulted in a significant public role for the religion in the fields of race relations and civil rights. These events provided a platform for the exchange of views by outstanding leaders, white and black. Among them were W. E. B. Du Bois, A. Philip Randolph, William Stanley Braithwaite, Franz Boas, James Weldon Johnson, Jane Addams, and Roy Wilkins, to name a few who were not Bahá’ís.<sup>80</sup>

Morrison further states that ‘the Bahá’í message of unity reached beyond the NAACP to virtually all of the leaders concerned with the struggle for racial equality in America’ and names, in addition to the foregoing: Walter F. White, Arthur B. Spingarn, John Hope, Mary White Ovington, Stephen S. Wise, ‘to name a few’.<sup>81</sup> By any measure, this is an impressive list, and merits further inquiry as to the ‘significant public role for the religion in the fields of race relations and civil rights’ that Morrison has postulated.

During the Jim Crow era, the Baha’i religion in America promoted the principle and practice of ‘race amity’ – that is, of ideal race relations, particularly between black and white. As will be documented below, Alain Locke played a key role in organizing and promoting the Baha’i race amity initiatives, whereas Robert S. Abbott, before and after he became a Baha’i, published a number of articles on the Baha’i Faith (highlighting its message of race amity) in *The Chicago Defender*. Apart from some minor correspondence archived in the Alain Locke Papers, Locke and Abbott moved in different social circles and operated in independent contexts. Thus, Locke helped ‘make the news’, while Abbott reported it.

Whether or not the more familiar sense of ‘influence’ (what the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as ‘ascendancy, sway, control, or authority, not formally or overtly expressed’) was a result of such influx is indeterminable here. It is the currency of ‘influence’ (i.e. influx of ideas put into practice) as historical fact that is stressed here, not the result of such ‘influence’.

## **VI. The Baha’i race amity movement and Robert S. Abbott**

In his heyday, Robert S. Abbott was similarly prominent as a black leader, but arguably more influential in terms of his impact on American society.<sup>82</sup> It was historian Mark Perry who effectively rediscovered Robert S. Abbott’s Baha’i story.<sup>83</sup> Since the visit of ‘Abdu’l-Baha in 1912, the black press giant

had been a long-time friend of the Baha'i Faith, and finally joined it in 1934. Abbott was not part of the race amity movement, but reported, from time to time, on it, and, through a number of articles published in *The Chicago Defender*, gave widespread, even national publicity to the Baha'i principles of ideal race relations.

Robert Sengstacke Abbott, the son of former slaves, was born on 28 (or 29) November 1868 in Frederica, on St Simon's Island, Georgia. In 1897, he moved to Chicago, where eight years later he established *The Chicago Defender*, one of the nation's most influential newspapers. 'Through the voice of *The Defender*,' writes Baha'i historian, Mark Perry, 'Abbott played a major role in the promotion of racial equality in America.'<sup>84</sup> Throughout much of the South, *The Defender* was banned by law. An African American person possessing or distributing the newspaper stood in danger of mob violence.<sup>85</sup> On 15 May 1917, Abbott launched his historic 'Great Northern Drive', calling for African Americans in the South migrate to the North. This mass movement became known as 'The Great Migration'. By 1918, over 110,000 African Americans had migrated to Chicago, nearly tripling the city's black population.<sup>86</sup> As the first black newspaper to have a circulation over 100,000, *The Defender* obviously wielded great influence among its black readership. Indeed, Gunnar Myrdal, analyst of the American race crisis and 1974 Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics, described the 'Negro press' that Abbott was so instrumental in developing as 'the greatest single power in the Negro race'.<sup>87</sup> Yet it is also a little-known fact that, like Alain Locke, Robert S. Abbott became a Baha'i.

In 1912 – the year *The Defender's* first newsstand sales began – Abbott attended 'Abdu'l-Baha's first of three visits to Chicago, in a meeting held at Jane Addams's Hull House. As Abbott recalled years later, 'Abdu'l-Baha placed his hand on Abbott's head and said that 'he would get from me some day a service for the benefit of humanity'. Abbott's relationship to the Baha'i community was somewhat fluid. Perry notes that, as early as 1924, Abbott and his wife, Helen, appeared in the Chicago Baha'i community membership list.<sup>88</sup> Abbott read and studied a number of Baha'i books prior to his conversion during the 1934 National Baha'i Convention, held in Foundation Hall at the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette.

A news story published in *The Chicago Defender* in March 1924 reports that Robert S. Abbott presented a lecture, 'Friendly Race Relations', to students and faculty at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, under the auspices of the Race Friendship League. In describing the gist of the lecture, the reporter states: 'By way of introduction attention was directed to the great Bahai movement that is attempting, through religious forces of the present day, to bring about the hoped-for fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man.'<sup>89</sup>

Little is known about Abbott's relationship with the Baha'i community in the intervening years prior to his conversion in 1934. Dr Zia Bagdadi, perhaps the most active promoter of the Baha'i Faith among Chicago's African Americans, had served as one of 'Abdu'l-Baha's attendants in 1912. Perry notes that 'it is quite likely that Dr Bagdadi first met Abbott at the Hull House talk and was present when 'Abdu'l-Baha spoke to the fledgling publisher'. After Abbott's conversion, Shoghi Effendi ('Abdu'l-Baha's grandson and appointed successor) wrote to Dr Bagdadi, stating that

Abbott 'may truly be regarded as your spiritual son'. This is evidence that friendship with Dr Bagdadi was Abbott's primary connection with the Baha'i community before his conversion.<sup>90</sup>

The story of Abbott's declaration of his adherence to the Baha'i religion is as follows. On Sunday 3 June 1934, being the final day of that convention, Dr Bagdadi and the convention delegates witnessed a 'touching and impressive incident', which he recounted a few days later in a letter to Shoghi Effendi:

Just before the closing of this Convention, speaking on the subject of publicity, I happened to think of Doctor Abbot [*sic*], Negro publisher of a newspaper in Chicago. I mentioned how I succeeded in publishing Bahá'í articles on the first page of his paper. As I finished this statement, someone in the audience shouted, 'Dr Abbot is now here with us.' The Delegates expressed their desires to hear a word from him, and he responded by declaring his faith in the Bahá'í Cause! This was one of the happiest moments in the Convention. The publisher is to appear before the Chicago Assembly next Tuesday to answer the formal questions required from any one who wishes to join the Bahá'í Faith.<sup>91</sup>

As reported by Louis Gregory, this is what Abbott said:

Dear friends: Sorry I am hoarse and do not want to find it necessary to speak all over again. Happy am I to see people whom I have been praying to God all my life to see, those who recognize me as a man. Everywhere I have travelled I have been received as a man save in my own country. Here my people have been cruelly treated and even burned at the stake! ... Abdu'l-Baha when in America put His hand on my head and told me that He would get from me some day a service for the benefit of Humanity. I am identifying myself with this Cause and I go up with you or down with you. Anything for this Cause! Let it go out and remove the darkness everywhere. Save my people! Save America from herself!<sup>92</sup>

On 9 June 1934, *The Chicago Defender* reported the convention, stating, in part:

Robert S. Abbott, editor and publisher of *The Chicago Defender*, addressed the delegates and visitors to the convention Sunday afternoon. His talk was one of the highlights of the program. The editor is intensely interested in the Baha'i movement, and is thoroughly in accord with its broad principles as was evidenced by his excellent remarks during the convention.<sup>93</sup>

Abbott's interest in the Baha'i religion was no mere incidental matter; rather, Abbott published a number of articles on the Baha'i movement in *The Chicago Defender*, which reached a remarkably wide readership within the black community. Abbott's relationship with the Baha'i community has not been investigated in depth, but there is evidence that Baha'is were advising Abbott of the Baha'i principle on non-involvement in politics, since political partisanship is divisive, whether locally or nationally. Divisiveness, after all, is the very antithesis of the social unity that the Baha'i religion endeavoured to promote.

Abbott 'vigorously promoted the Baha'i Faith' in *The Defender*, from 1934 to 1937.<sup>94</sup> The coverage tended to be even-keeled, but with occasional feature stories. Shortly after the convention, for instance, the Schoenys, a white family from Phoenix, Arizona, appeared in a photograph published in *The Chicago Defender*, the caption of which read, in part:

This picture was made in *The Chicago Defender* office where the Schoenys were guests of Editor Robert S. Abbott on a tour of the plant of the World's Greatest Weekly. They were also Mr Abbott's guests at luncheon Monday. The Schoenys, who motored here from their western home to attend the conference of their faith, attest to the fact that here is at least one religion in which the color line is unknown.<sup>95</sup>

After his public declaration of belief on Sunday 3 June 1934, Robert S. Abbott personally wrote and published, in the '*Chicago Defender* Features' section, this article: 'Baha'ism Called the Religion that will Rescue Humanity: Christianity Has Proved Faithless To Its Trust, Says Robert S. Abbott; Praises Mohammedanism', which was 'Installment XLIV' of a series of editorials that Abbott published, with his photograph featured as well as his by-line.<sup>96</sup> This was a somewhat daring editorial, given its critique of Christianity, which is not typical of Baha'i self-representation, in which other religions are treated more diplomatically in an effort to promote transconfessional affinity and interfaith accord. Another noteworthy article was 'Leaders of Baha'i Faith Pay Visit to Publisher: Spreading the Baha'i Movement' (13 May 1939, 23), which read, in part: 'Mesdames Ethel Gross and Vernita Mason, delegates from Boston, Mass, to the thirty-first convention at Bahai Temple in Wilmette, took time out to visit their friend, Robert S. Abbott, at his home on South Parkway, Tuesday afternoon, May 2.' What is significant about this article is that the publisher of *The Chicago Defender* was so publicly associated with this new religion.

Over the next several years, many other articles on the Baha'i religion followed. From 3 June 1934 to the date of Abbott's death on 29 February 1940, *The Defender* published 28 articles with the word 'Baha'i' in the headline.<sup>97</sup> Another 10 articles have the word 'Bahai' without the apostrophe, for a total of 38 headlined articles on the Baha'i Faith during the last years of Robert S. Abbott's life.<sup>98</sup> Including these 38 stories, there are 53 articles that mention 'Baha'i' during this time period, such as these two stories: 'Promote Race Amity' (25 January 1936, 12 (in 'The Voice of the Church' section)); and 'Baha'is Hold Race Amity Assemblies' (8 February 1936, 4). Abbott authored two articles during this period. The first has already been mentioned. The second: 'New Book Sets Forth Growth of Baha'i In 40 Countries' (*The Chicago Defender*, 15 February 1936, 5). These, as well as articles published in *The Defender* prior to Abbott's conversion on 3 June 1934, resulted in unprecedented publicity for the Baha'i Faith ever since 'Abdu'l-Baha's highly publicized lecture tour in 1912.

In his article prominently featuring his photograph and published shortly after his conversion, Robert S. Abbott publicly testified to his faith in the purpose and precepts of the Baha'i movement:

If, during the twenty-eight years of my journalistic career I have been relentless in my campaign against race prejudice and discrimination, it is because I know the disastrous effects upon the human souls. Race prejudice would not have marred our civilization if the churches had fought it and met the issues in true Christian spirit. ... Against this background Bahaism stands as the supreme expression of all those modern religious tendencies animated by social ideals which do not repudiate the reality of spiritual experience but seek to transform it into a dynamic striving for unity. Bahaism, when clearly understood, gives the world the most potent agency for applying mystical vision or idealistic aspiration to the service of humanity. It makes visible and concrete those deeper meanings and wider possibilities of religion which could not be realized until the advent of Abdul Baha [sic].<sup>99</sup>

In the 44th instalment of what evidently was a series of articles, Abbott added this personal endorsement of the Baha'i religion:

A Sound Gospel: My experience with the followers of this cult has convinced me of the true and sincere humanitarian gospel which animates their souls. They fear not to break bread with the members of the darker races for the cardinal theme of their spiritual postulate is the oneness of mankind. ... For thousands of years the human race has been at war. Enmity and hatred have ruled. Now comes a new prophet bearing a new warrant of love, amity and peace. Baha'iism [sic] seeks to advance religion to its ultimate cultural sphere in which all consciousness of racial differences and religious traditions shall be flooded out by the spiritual light of greater understanding and love. The frontiers of civilization will not, appreciably, be advanced and the souls of nations will not be retrieved from the abomination into which they have sunk, unless the fundamental principles embodied in the teachings of Abdul-Baha are faithfully and fervently embraced. No religion can bring peace which sanctions prejudice and discrimination at its very door.<sup>100</sup>

As a result of Abbott's 22-year interest in the Baha'i movement (dating from his meeting with 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1912 through to his conversion in 1934), and during his affiliation as a Baha'i during the last six years of his life, the Baha'i religion received what probably was its most widespread exposure among African Americans due to the numerous articles published in *The Chicago Defender*, a paper of truly national significance, especially given its widespread distribution in the South by sleeping-car porters. The publicity for the Faith was thus not just in the Chicago area, but in black communities around the country.

One of these articles stands out in particular. On page 10 of the 17 June 1933 edition of *The Chicago Defender*, an article was headlined, 'Baha'i Movement Seen as Hope of Religion. New Philosophy Wipes Out All Prejudices Based on Race, Color and Creed'. This article states, in part: 'Baha'is are made up of all races, nationalities and religions.'<sup>101</sup> A few brief excerpts from this article will suffice to show how the Baha'i Faith was presented in 1933. Author Louis Gregory, a former Washington DC attorney and graduate of Howard University's School of Law, writes:

The Baha'i religion ... demolishes all superstitions, all prejudices. Here racial boundaries disappear as men gaze upon the souls and characters of their

fellows ... Here men and women have the same rights and neither tries to enslave the other. Here each person must investigate and see the truth for himself. Here religion and science in their common origin support each other. Here is encouragement ... to speak one language. It [the Bahá'í Faith] has the power to unify mankind.<sup>102</sup>

Abbott died on 29 February 1940. A little over twelve years later, Abbott was presented to the African American community as one of the two most well-known African American Baha'is. In the October 1952 issue of *Ebony* magazine, a feature article appeared: 'Baha'i Faith, Only Church in World That Does Not Discriminate'. Opposite a photograph of Alain Locke, displayed prominently on page 39, was a photograph of Robert S. Abbott.<sup>103</sup>

## VII. The Baha'i race amity movement and Alain Locke

Alain Locke is acclaimed in his 2008 biography as 'the most influential African American intellectual born between W. E. B. Du Bois and Martin Luther King, Jr'<sup>104</sup> and has been called 'the father of multiculturalism'.<sup>105</sup> The Reverend Dr Martin Luther King, Jr, exclaimed, in his speech at the Poor People's Campaign Rally in Clarksdale, Mississippi on 19 March 1968: 'We're going to let our children know that the only philosophers that lived were not Plato and Aristotle, but W. E. B. Du Bois and Alain Locke came through the universe.'<sup>106</sup> It is a little-known fact that these iconic 'race men' were initially attracted to the Baha'i religion, with Du Bois eventually becoming critical of the Baha'i movement as of 1937, while Locke actually joined the Baha'i religion in 1918, and remained a Baha'i until his death in 1954.

Locke's prestige and national renown as a national spokesman for African Americans may be illustrated by Locke's association with Eleanor Roosevelt, the illustrious wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, during her tenure as America's first lady (1933–45). In his day, Locke was one of a select few African American leaders to be invited to the White House, such as when the first lady, on 26 December 1940, invited Locke, along with five other members of an advisory board, 'incident to the Library of Congress book exhibit, music and art festival commemorating the proclamation of the thirteenth amendment to the constitution',<sup>107</sup> the day after 'President Roosevelt received the members of the festival committee at the White House, Wednesday morning',<sup>108</sup> which was Christmas Day in 1940. Locke had first met the first lady in 1937 when he spoke at the Willard Hotel in Washington DC at the launching of a peace campaign by the Women's International League.<sup>109</sup> On 7 May 1941, Locke introduced First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt at a dedication of the Southside Community Art Center, a predominantly African American centre in Chicago, built as part of the Illinois Federal Art Project, an event that was nationally broadcast on radio.<sup>110</sup> In another historic photo, Locke appears together with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Judge James S. Watson, Clarence Holt, Nnamdi Azikiwe, and K. O. Mbadwie.<sup>111</sup> On 28 June 1947, *The Chicago Defender* published a photograph of Locke and the first lady, along with other 'Harlem members of the African Academy of Arts'.<sup>112</sup>

In their University of Chicago Press monograph published in December 2008, authors Leonard Harris and Charles Molesworth have contributed

what is now the definitive biography of Alain Locke – almost. For the authors note, only in passing, the fact that Locke was a Baha’i:

On May 28, 1942, for a radio program titled America’s Meetings of the Air, Locke discussed spirituality and democracy, a talk that was eventually published under the title ‘Is There a Spiritual Basis for World Unity’ in the *Bahá’í World*. The Bahá’í [sic] were a marginalized sect in America, especially because of their promotion of racial amity and their approval of interracial marriage. Locke did not wear his affiliation openly nor practice as a doctrinaire Bahá’í, but he did serve on the group’s National Committee on Racial Amity. Encouraging cross-racial dialogues, Locke reportedly said, prior to attending a fireside with a group of educators in New York: ‘How surprised they will be to know me as a Bahá’í.’ ... An issue of the group’s publication, *Bahá’í World*, was dedicated to Locke in 2006.<sup>113</sup>

This statement, unfortunately, contains factual and bibliographic errors. The words ascribed to Locke – ‘How surprised they will be to know me as a Bahá’í?’ – was definitely not ‘reportedly said, prior to attending a fireside with a group of educators in New York’, as Harris and Molesworth have asserted. The source of that statement is historically and anecdotally retraced as follows:

On 15 June 1925, Locke was fired from Howard University for his support of equal pay between black and white faculty. Shortly after *The New Negro: An Interpretation* was published in December 1925, between 6 February and March 1926, Locke travelled with Louis Gregory on a Baha’i lecture tour, which took him to the following lecture venues: Cleveland and Cincinnati; Dunbar Forum at Oberlin College; Wilberforce University (all in Ohio; Daytona Normal & Industrial Institute for Negro Girls; and Robert Hungerford Normal and Industrial School (Orlando). In a letter in late 1925 in advance of this tour, a fellow Baha’i wrote: ‘In regard to Dr Locke – he is at present in NY but has written me saying he “will keep his promise (to go South) in spite of many things.” ... When he looked over the list of educators supplied by Mrs Kehler, saying he knew about one third of them personally, he remarked smilingly[,] “How surprised they will be to know me as a Baha’i”.’<sup>114</sup>

Harris and Molesworth are partly correct, and partly incorrect, in saying that ‘Locke did not wear his affiliation openly nor practice as a doctrinaire Bahá’í, but he did serve on the group’s National Committee on Racial Amity’.<sup>115</sup> It is certainly true that Locke served on national Baha’i ‘race amity’ committees. He did so over a period that spanned 12 years, from 1924 through to 1932 (see ‘Baha’i Organizer of “Race Amity”’, *infra*). Considering that Locke was also instrumental in organizing and participating in the first Baha’i ‘Race Amity’ event in 1921, his involvement, to varying degrees, was sustained over a period spanning some 15 years, which is not insignificant.

Harris and Molesworth also write: ‘On 28 May 1942, for a radio program titled America’s Meetings of the Air, Locke discussed spirituality and democracy, a talk that was eventually published under the title ‘Is There a Spiritual Basis for World Unity’ in the *Bahá’í World*’.<sup>116</sup> This is also historically and bibliographically erroneous, but affords an opportunity to gain an insight into Locke’s outlook and wit. On 28 May 1942, on a show called ‘Town Meeting’, Locke, in with panel of other speakers (Mordecai W. Johnson, Doxey Alphonso Wilkerson, Leon A. Ransom) spoke on the topic, ‘Is There A Spiritual Basis

for World Unity?’<sup>117</sup> This is precisely the kind of question that would interest a Baha’i, not to mention the more progressive members of the listening audience. A transcript of the show was printed shortly after, in the June issue of *Town Meeting: Bulletin of America’s Town Meeting on the Air*.<sup>118</sup> All four guest speakers – Locke, Mordecai Johnson, Doxey Wilkerson and Leon Ransom – were professors at Howard University, with the exception of Johnson, who was president of Howard. The moderator was George V. Denny, Jr, and the show was broadcast from the campus in Washington DC.

In his introduction, Denny said that each of the presenters ‘hold diametrically opposed views on the question we’ve posed: “Is There a Basis for Spiritual Unity in the World Today?”’ With regard to Locke and Johnson, there seems to have not only been a divergence in viewpoint, but personal friction as well, as they may have locked antlers on university-related issues. Johnson, who was the first to speak, began by saying, ‘Man is an animal.’ He hastened to add: ‘But man is a religious animal.’<sup>119</sup> After Johnson had idealized Christianity and the civilizing role it should play, Locke opened his remarks by responding: ‘One of the troubles of today’s world tragedy is the fact that this same religion, of which Dr Johnson has spoken with his grand idealisms, has, when institutionalized, been linked with politics and the flag and empire, with the official church and sectarianism.’ Speaking of the ‘brotherhood of man’ as an ancient, venerable principle, Locke remarks: ‘We must consider very carefully why such notions have for so long wandered disembodied in the world – witness the dismembered League of Nations and Geneva’s sad, deserted nest.’<sup>120</sup> With characteristic, extemporaneous eloquence, Locke added, trenchantly:

The fact is, the idealistic exponents of world unity and human brotherhood have throughout the ages and even today expected their figs to grow from thistles. We cannot expect to get international bread from sociological stone whether it be the granite of national self-sufficiency, the flint of racial antagonisms, or the adamant of religious partisanship. ... The question pivots, therefore, not on the desirability of world unity, but upon the more realistic issue of its practicability.<sup>121</sup>

True to his philosophical bent, Locke delivered more on problems than solutions, conveying to the immediate audience the misimpression that he, in fact, saw no spiritual basis for world unity at all. During the question–answer period that followed, a lady asked: ‘Dr Locke. As a teacher of philosophy, what do you offer your students as a substitute for the spiritual ideas that you claim do not exist?’ (Applause.) To which Locke replied:

Well, that’s a poser, and I can’t give any of my lectures, some of them dealing with some of the greatest advocates of spiritual ideals that the world has known. One of the tragic things which show our present limited horizons is that there are very few institutions where, let us say, the great philosophies of the East are studied; and when they are and as they are, we will be a little nearer to that spiritual unity, I think, that you think I don’t believe in.<sup>122</sup>

Here, it is possible that Locke was being not only witty, but wise, alluding to the Faith but not proclaiming it outright. The moderator would not let

Locke answer a subsequent question from a man in the audience, who asked: 'Dr Locke. If you consider spiritual unity desirable, what do you offer in lieu of the major religions of the world?'<sup>123</sup> Was the moderator studiously avoiding giving Locke a chance to mention the Faith because he may have known of Locke's unorthodox views? How might Locke have answered the pointed question if he had had the chance? It's true that Locke studiously avoided publicly identifying himself with the Baha'i Faith in his contacts with the media, as this might have posed a threat to Locke's career and and complicated his role as a 'race man'. But Locke did not oppose being identified (by others) as a Baha'i.

Indeed, Locke authored several publications (most notably in *The Bahá'í World* volumes) that clearly indicated that he was a Baha'i. Locke wrote four essays published in six volumes of *The Bahá'í World*: (1) 'Impressions of Haifa' in vols. 1, 2 and 3 (1926, 1929, 1930), first published in *Star of the West* (1924);<sup>124</sup> 'Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle' in vol. 4 (1933);<sup>125</sup> (3) 'The Orientation of Hope' in vol. 5 (1936),<sup>126</sup> and (4) 'Lessons in World Crisis' in vol. 9 (1945).<sup>127</sup> Recently, in a 2010 multi-author work that Leonard Harris co-edited, *Philosophic Values and World Citizenship: Locke to Obama and Beyond*, Locke's essay, 'Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle', has been reprinted, which is a welcome event but, oddly, without citation to the original publication.<sup>128</sup> A cursory look throughout the book (not indexed) reveals scarce mention of Locke's Baha'i affiliation and, in the bibliography, no citations to recent scholarship on Locke as a Baha'i. Although he studiously avoided references to the Faith in his professional life, Locke's *Bahá'í World* essays served as his public testimony of faith as a Baha'i.<sup>129</sup> Mention should also be made of Locke's public association with the *World Unity* magazine (1927–35), a publication of the World Unity Foundation, which was Baha'i-sponsored. Locke's endorsement of the magazine was prominently displayed for promotional purposes: 'The distinctive achievement of World Unity seems to me to be the promotion of universal ideas in a spirit commensurate with their basic ideals. Alain Locke, Howard University.'<sup>130</sup>

Contrary to Harris and Molesworth's assertion, however, the transcript of this debate was never published in any of *The Bahá'í World* volumes. But Locke did publish in several of *The Bahá'í World* volumes, and elsewhere. To a limited degree, Locke was also a public speaker at Baha'i-sponsored events. His Baha'i-themed essays and speeches, along with his work on Baha'i race amity committees, suggest that the Baha'i dimension of Locke's life – heretofore little known but now well documented – should have occupied more than a scant couple of pages in the 432-page Harris and Molesworth biography of Locke.

Locke's activities as a Baha'i are such that a whole book can be written about them – and, indeed, has.<sup>131</sup> There is now a considerable volume of published archival information relating to Locke's Baha'i contributions. In 1933, *The Pittsburgh Courier* published this story, which, by its context, clearly and publicly presents Alain Locke as a Baha'i :

#### **Alain Locke Addresses Bahais**

CHICAGO, June 15 – Alain Locke, professor of philosophy at Howard University, lecturer and author of 'The New Negro', was guest speaker at the

Bahai Temple in Wilmette, Sunday, during the convention of the movement celebrating the 25th anniversary.

Dr Locke spoke to 3,000 people who crowded into the Temple. He came to Chicago for the express purpose of addressing the religious assemblage. ...

The Bahai movement is international with a membership of approximately 12,000,000. A \$3,000,000 temple of worship, which is not completed, is a masterpiece of beauty and an asset to the communities surrounding Wilmette.

In this temple worship the rich and poor, the Jew and Gentile, Catholic and Protestant, the white and colored. They welcome all creeds, doctrines, races, and nations. They believe in the unity of man.

They have done much to abolish racial prejudices and seek to bring about world harmony by evolution rather than revolution.

When one enters their Sacred Temple [*sic*] he forgets racial differences and think [*sic*] only of the human race.<sup>132</sup>

The title of Alain Locke's talk was 'The Way Out From Strife to Unity'.<sup>133</sup> That same year – indeed, that very same day – Locke was again publicly identified as a Baha'i, in *The Defender* story cited in the previous section: 'Among the prominent Colored Baha'is may be mentioned Dr Alain Locke, Rhodes Scholar and professor of philosophy at Howard University.'<sup>134</sup> To be publicly identified by both *The Pittsburgh Courier* and *The Chicago Defender* on the very same day – 17 June 1933 – was remarkable, indeed. But it was not completely by sheer coincidence because, in the previous year, Locke had also publicly identified himself as a Baha'i. On 9–10 December 1932, the National Inter-Racial Amity Committee hosted a race amity conference in New York, organized in cooperation with a local Baha'i committee and, significantly, with the New York chapter of the National Urban League.<sup>135</sup> Alain Locke spoke at the second session, which 'covered many phases of racial amity'. Here, Locke was once again on the same platform with Louis Gregory.<sup>136</sup> In his 1933 report on behalf of the national race amity committee, Louis Gregory was delighted with Locke's public declaration of his Baha'i identity and his open endorsement of its principles:

For a number of years, in fact since the first amity convention in Washington, Dr Alain Locke has during the years been a contributor to the work of the Cause, without formally identifying himself with it. Perhaps the most significant feature of this conference was his strong, eloquent and beautiful address, in which he took a decided and definite stand within the ranks of the Cause. This attitude we believe will increasingly with the years influence people of capacity to investigate the mines of spiritual wealth to be found in the Revelation of Baha'u'llah. It will also make what has long been a grandly useful life more glorious, serviceable and influential than ever before. It is to be hoped that the friends both locally and nationally, will largely make use of the great powers of Dr Locke both in the teaching and administrative fields of the Cause. He has made the pilgrimage to Haifa. The Master in a Tablet praised him highly and it is known that the Guardian shares his love for our able brother.<sup>137</sup>

Locke again was publicly showcased as a Baha'i in the October 1952 issue of *Ebony* magazine.<sup>138</sup> The following is the inside story of how Locke's

photograph was first solicited by the editor for years prior. In a letter dated 19 May 1948, the associate editor, Era Bell Thompson, was planning to publish an article in *Ebony* profiling prominent African Americans and featuring photographs of each, as they appeared 'now and way back when'.<sup>139</sup> The concept behind this novel approach was not only to give *Ebony* readers a current picture of their best and brightest, but also a glimpse of these black leaders in their youth. Given his national prominence, naturally Thompson wrote to Alain Locke to request photographs for this issue. For *Ebony* had no original photos of Locke on file. In her postscript, Thompson writes: 'P.S. Please send a recent picture, [sic] also, as we have none in our files that we could use.'<sup>140</sup>

Locke promptly sent these, as requested. In a follow-up letter dated 1 June 1948, Thompson expressed her appreciation on *Ebony's* behalf: 'Dear Mr [sic] Locke: Thank you for your prompt response to our appeal for pictures of you now and way back when. We will take good care of them and return the earlier one as soon as we had made a print.'<sup>141</sup> This suggests that Locke had sent an original photograph of himself in younger years, and therefore requested its return after *Ebony* had a chance to make a print of it. It is quite likely, therefore, that one of the photos that Locke had sent was the one that later appeared on page 39 in the 12 October 1952 issue of *Ebony* magazine that drew public attention to the fact that Alain Locke was a member of the Baha'i Faith.

A photograph of Alain Locke features prominently in an article, 'Baha'i Faith: Only Church in the World That Does Not Discriminate'.<sup>142</sup> Locke's image appears on the lower, right-hand corner of the first page of the article. The picture bears the caption: 'Alain Locke, Howard professor, joined movement in 1915, wrote for the *Bahá'í Magazine*'.<sup>143</sup> (As mentioned earlier, Locke formally enrolled in the Baha'i community in 1918.) This exact photograph was almost certainly one of the photos that Locke had provided *Ebony* editor, Era Bell Thompson, in 1948.

However fleeting this publicity was, there is no question that Locke was publicly – and quite prominently – identified as a Baha'i in a major publication that literally reached thousands of African American subscribers and purchasers of *Ebony* magazine. This public persona is not insignificant. The inside story of the photographs that an editor of *Ebony* magazine had requested, albeit for different story, is evidence that Locke probably had advance notice of the October 1952 feature article on the Baha'i Faith, and that his photograph and identity as a Baha'i would be part of that story. There is, of course, no validation of this assumption, but, considering the fact that Locke occasionally wrote letters to editors expressing his disagreement over this or that newspaper article, an argument from silence can be made to suggest that Locke had no objection to his photograph being so prominently displayed in this way.

Locke's contributions as a Baha'i are too many to be recapitulated here, so only his race amity activities will be highlighted. According to archivist Roger Dahl, 'Locke was a member of the National Race Amity Committee for at least five years between 1925 and 1932.'<sup>144</sup> This statement can be adjusted to begin on 19 May 1924. A more precise encapsulation would be 1924–32, with the exception of the 1932–33 Baha'i year. Locke was officially appointed to a number of race amity committees (see Appendix 2. Race Amity Committees).

These are seven (six national) committees to which Locke was consistently reappointed, and on which he served for eight out of nine consecutive years (1924–32). It appears that Locke was not selected for the 1932–33 committee.<sup>145</sup> (The National Inter-Racial Amity Committee itself was dissolved by the National Spiritual Assembly in 1936.<sup>146</sup>) While the reason for his absence during 1932–36, the final period of the race amity cycle (1924–36), is not clear, what is certain is that Locke's appointment to seven race amity committees was based on both his willingness and ability to serve in this special capacity, contributing his time and exceptional talents in the process.

Although Locke's involvement in the Baha'i race amity endeavours is more fully documented in *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy*,<sup>147</sup> new information continues to be made available. For instance, the official letterhead of the 'National Bahai Committee for Race Amity' lists 'Dr Alain Locke' among the committee members.<sup>148</sup> That Locke's name appeared on the official letterhead is yet further evidence of his formal involvement in the Baha'i race amity initiatives. Other scholars are beginning to take note of Locke's identity as a Baha'i and as instrumental in the Baha'i race amity movement.<sup>149</sup> His obituary, briefly mentioning his Baha'i affiliation and activities, was published in *The Bahá'í World* in 1954, the year of Locke's death.<sup>150</sup>

Locke was committed to race amity practically throughout his whole adult life. 'On the one hand there is the possibility', Locke wrote to the *New York Times* in 1931, 'of a fine collaboration spiritually between these two groups [black and white] with their complementary traits and qualities. They have great spiritual need, the one of the other, if they will so see it.'<sup>151</sup> Locke stated quite the same in *The Negro in America* (1933):

If they will but see it, because of their complementary qualities, the two racial groups have great spiritual need, one of the other. It would truly be significant in the history of human culture, if two races so diverse should so happily collaborate, and the one return for the gift of a great civilization the reciprocal gift of the spiritual cross-fertilization of a great and distinctive national culture.<sup>152</sup>

This latter statement is quoted in a Baha'i compilation on race.<sup>153</sup>

Locke has left a rich legacy, and has several claims to fame. One of these is his foundational role in the birth of multiculturalism, as Locke's biographers note: 'Locke more recently has become best known as one of the founders of what we today know as multiculturalism, though his phrase for it was cultural pluralism.'<sup>154</sup> Locke is also widely credited with having internationalized the issue of race. During World War II, Locke forged a vital link between race relations and world peace. Locke's most successful anthology after *The New Negro* (1925) was *Color: Unfinished Business of Democracy* (1942, cover by Reinold Weiss), for which Locke and *The Survey Graphic* each won a prestigious race relations award in 1943. Locke writes, in part: 'Certainly here, both nationally and internationally, color becomes the acid test of our fundamental honesty in putting into practice the democracy we preach. ... The parity of peoples is the main moral issue of this global conflict.'<sup>155</sup>

The following statement, reported by the press in 1930, eloquently crystallizes Locke's outlook as a philosopher and as a Baha'i: 'No more

progressive step can be made in our present civilization than the breaking down of the barriers which separate races, sexes and nations.<sup>156</sup> Locke articulated an expansive philosophy of democracy, in nine dimensions, that enlarged on this very social imperative.<sup>157</sup> It is clear that, in Locke's words, which echo and amplify the Baha'i perspective, 'race amity' and world peace are inextricably linked, for peace cannot exist internationally without domestic peace being firmly established nationally. On Locke's significance, historian Derik Smith recently wrote:

Perhaps more than any other twentieth century notable, Locke was an advocate of what I'd call 'Black Americanism'. That makes him a vital figure in the Age of Obama. Among African Americans, Locke was the most lucid and rigorous champion of American egalitarian democracy to come before Obama. Locke's belief in the salutary potential of America emerges from his internationalism, his cosmopolitanism, his philosophical commitment to 'unity in diversity' – a principle that he found in the Bahá'í Faith which he served during a significant portion of his life. ... Obama, although apparently uninfluenced by Locke, is the most effective bearer of Locke's legacy of Black Americanism. In fact, Obama's rise may represent the final (?) triumph of Black Americanism over Black Nationalism. For a contemporary articulation of the efficacy of Black Americanism we need only look toward Obama, but to witness its most eloquent philosophical defense we have to go back to Locke.<sup>158</sup>

A tablet, revealed in 1921, was recently rediscovered in which 'Abdu'l-Baha spoke highly of Locke: 'Dr Locke, this distinguished personage, deserveth every praise. I implore the Kingdom of God to grant him a special confirmation' (ḥaḍrat-i Dr Locke īn shakhṣ-i jalīl fī al-ḥaqīqih sazāvār-i har sitāyish ast. taḍarru 'bi-malakūt-i ilāhī mīnamāyam kih ta'yīdī makhṣūṣ bi-ū farmāyad).<sup>159</sup> This, in fact, may be the very tablet that Louis Gregory referred to in writing: 'The Master in a tablet praised him [Locke] highly'.<sup>160</sup> Years later, Shoghi Effendi said of Locke: 'Shoghi Effendi ... cherishes in his loving heart great hope for your spiritual success. People as you [Locke], Mr. Gregory, Dr. Esslemont and some other dear souls are as rare as diamond. ... The world, more than ever, is in need of spiritual nourishment. You are the chosen ones to render this service to the lifeless world in this present stage'.<sup>161</sup> And further, in gratitude for Locke's 'most helpful' suggestions 'incorporated' in Shoghi Effendi's English translation of Baha'u'llah's Kitāb-i Īqān (The Book of Certitude) 'for publication,' Shoghi Effendi, in the postscript penned in his own hand, writes: 'I have always greatly admired your exceptional abilities & capacity to render distinguished services to the Faith ... Your true brother, Shoghi'.<sup>162</sup>

## VIII. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated how the Baha'i 'Race Amity' efforts – conceived by 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1920 and inaugurated in 1921 – effectively impressed key leaders in the black intelligentsia during the Jim Crow era, attracting the interest of two of the giants of the period – Alain Locke and Robert S. Abbott. As previously stated, apart from a slender folder of correspondence between the two in the Alain Locke Papers at Howard University, Locke and Abbott had little interaction, much less an

opportunity to collaborate and thus synergize their respective efforts to promote improved race relations. After all, Abbott, the older contemporary of Locke, lived in a professional world at some remove from Locke's. Abbott's affiliation with the Baha'i religion, moreover, lasted only six years (1934–40), while Locke's affiliation spanned three-and-a-half decades (1918–54). Independently of each other, both Locke and Abbott not only embraced the Baha'i ideals of interracial harmony, but effectively championed those ideals. Because of the press coverage previously noted, it would be safe to assume that a wide sector of the black reading public of the early twentieth century had at least some knowledge of the Baha'i Faith, and its association with ideal race relations.

Other black intellectuals of the period were also aware of the primacy that the 'Baha'i movement' – as it was widely known – had placed on ideal race relations. Black and white, the roster of intellectuals included such stellar figures as Jane Addams, Franz Boas, William Stanley Braithwaite, W. E. B. Du Bois, John Hope, James Weldon Johnson, Mary White Ovington, A. Philip Randolph, Arthur B. Spingarn, Walter F. White, Roy Wilkins<sup>63</sup> and Stephen S. Wise, which fact invites further study. It is the remarkable reach of the Baha'i message of interracial harmony among the black (and white) intelligentsia during the Jim Crow era that constitutes the Baha'i 'influence' as previously defined.

The Baha'i 'Race Amity' initiative was an audacious, yet pragmatic attempt at social transformation. The Baha'i movement represented 'a potentially potent theological and social force – defying at once the orthodoxies of race, religion, class, and gender that lay at the heart of white supremacist ideology'.<sup>64</sup> As Venters further observes: 'Through the Race Amity Conferences and similar local initiatives, the Baha'is had created public spaces to speak out against prejudice and segregation in concert with other organizations.'<sup>65</sup> However, the emphasis was not so much to rail against racialism, but to positively foster interracialism.

How did the Baha'i Race Amity movement compare to other interracial initiatives in the same period? Of these, the most prominent was the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC). A predominantly Christian endeavour, the CIC was founded in December 1918 and was led by Will W. Alexander. Based in Atlanta and funded by grants from the Carnegie Corporation, the CIC sought to bring together leading white and black citizens in communities across the South to form local interracial committees to consult on problems of common concern. The CIC represented a Christian mission, promoting goodwill between the races while maintaining the racial status quo insofar as segregation was concerned, and thus kept the segregation of white and black churches intact. Indeed, the CIC refused to confront segregation and disenfranchisement. 'Despite its name, the Interracial Commission was essentially composed of white liberals,' writes John B. Kirby, continuing: '...by 1934, there was only one paid black in the CIC and none in the organization's national office in Atlanta.'<sup>66</sup> The CIC was disbanded in 1943.

As much as the CIC fostered interracial goodwill, it did not go as far as the Baha'i Race Amity movement in advocating interracial unity. In their 'simultaneous transgression of regional racial, gender, and religious orthodoxies', historian Louis Venters notes that '[t]he Baha'is were certainly not the only such transgressors in the early twentieth century South, but among religious

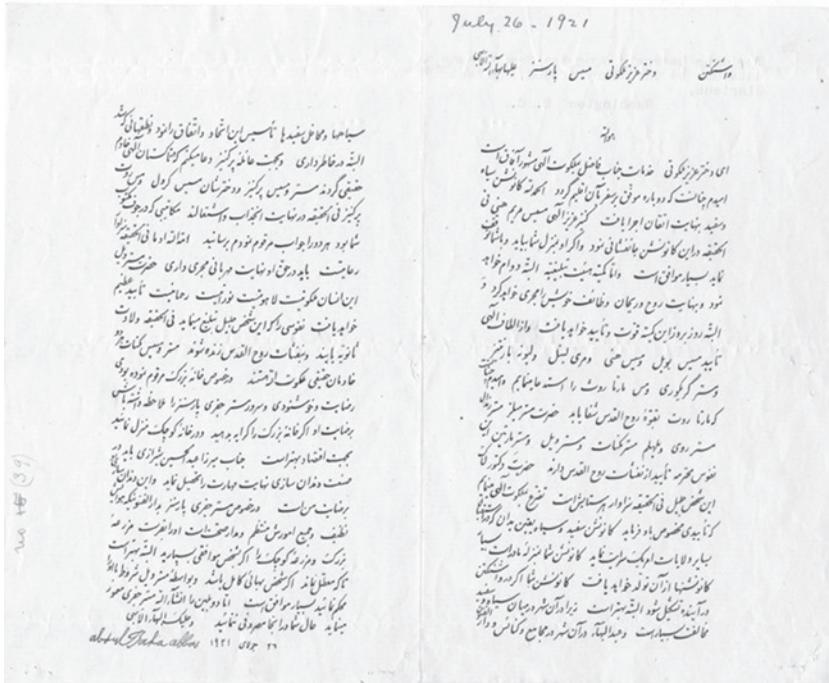


Figure 1: Facsimile of Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha to Mrs Agnes Parsons, July 26, 1921 in which he writes concerning Locke, "His honor, Dr Locke – his distinguished person deserves every consideration for him from the Divine Kingdom."

groups they were probably among the most consistently interracial in character while being among the farthest from the Protestant mainstream'.<sup>167</sup>

'I attended every session, day and night ... Many times throughout the meetings did with much effort restrain my tears. My heart leaped and throbbed and many times almost burst within my breast.'<sup>168</sup> Will ever a Baha'i race relations event again strike such a chord as this? Today, some 90 years later, Harris's hope remains much the same: 'I am a colored man ... My race as a whole, I believe, is quite ready to welcome the glad day when all will be brothers. ... The trouble is nearly unilateral. God give us the day.'<sup>169</sup> What role may the Baha'i principles of ideal race relations yet play, and what impact could they foreseeably have on the black intelligentsia today, are open questions – and open invitations for repeat performances, where a largely unwritten history might repeat itself indelibly.

Historian Richard Thomas's assessment that 'race amity or race unity conferences would become the hallmark of the American Baha'i community's contribution to American race relations'<sup>170</sup> is well taken. But times have changed. Today, the racial situation in America has become more complex, as the Universal House of Justice, the international governing body of the Baha'i world community, has recently observed: 'The expressions of racial prejudice have transmuted into forms that are multifaceted, less blatant and more intricate, and thus more intractable.'<sup>171</sup> 'Even if such a community were to focus the entirety of its resources on the problem of racial prejudice, even if it were able to heal itself to some extent of that cancerous affliction',

the House further observes, ‘in the face of such a monumental social challenge the impact would be inconsequential.’

However, there is still room for ‘Race Amity’ initiatives. The Universal House of Justice has stated, in its 10 April 2011 letter, that ‘at the national level, the National Assembly will guide, through its Office of External Affairs, the engagement of the Faith with other agencies and individuals in the discourse pertaining to race unity’. There is a notable instance of this. In January 2010, the National Center for Race Amity (NCRA) in Boston<sup>172</sup> was founded by William H. ‘Smitty’ Smith, EdD, executive director and special assistant to the president of Wheelock College.<sup>173</sup> The NCRA hosted a ‘National Race Amity Conference’ in Boston, 10–12 June 2011 and 18–19 May, 2012, one of the co-sponsors of which was the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of the United States.<sup>174</sup>

On February 1, 2012, Cornel West, Professor of African American Studies and Religion, Princeton University, paid tribute to the historic Baha’i efforts to foster ideal race relations in America: ‘When you talk about race and the legacy of white supremacy, there’s no doubt that when the history is written, the true history is written, the history of this country, the Baha’i Faith will be one of the leaven in the American loaf that allowed the democratic loaf to expand because of the anti-racist witness of those of Baha’i faith.’<sup>175</sup> If and when, as suggested by Cornel West, a revisionist history of the Jim Crow era is written, the contribution of the Baha’i ‘race amity’ initiatives—envisioned and mandated by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá himself—should take its rightful place in the annals of American history.

## Appendix 1.

### Timeline of Baha’i Race Amity Conferences

- 1921 ‘Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races Based on Heavenly Teachings’, 19–21 May 1921, Congregational Church on 10th and G Street NW, Washington DC. Alain Locke served as session chair on Friday evening, 21 May.<sup>176</sup>
- 1921 Race Amity Conference, Springfield, Massachusetts, 5–6 December 1921. Held in the auditorium of Central High School,<sup>177</sup> a photograph of that event shows the auditorium filled to capacity, with African Americans likely in the majority of those attending.<sup>178</sup>
- 1924 Race Amity Conference, New York, 28–30 March 1924. The organizers invited representatives from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League and the Committee on International Cooperation of the League of Women Voters. This move was of profound importance, for the core of Baha’i organizers enlisted the support of influential organizations whose humanitarian principles were consonant with Baha’i ideals. Moreover, the participation of these organizations, especially the NAACP, served as more than a tacit endorsement of the Baha’i initiative, with an implied-in-fact assent to the objectives of that initiative. Much to the organizers’ credit, some impressive speakers were lined up for the event. These included Alain Locke himself, along with James Weldon Johnson, secretary of the NAACP; Franz Boas, professor of Anthropology at

Columbia University; Jane Addams; John Herman Randall of the Community Church; Rabbi Stephen S. Wise; and Mountfort Mills, officially representing the Baha'is.<sup>179</sup> The success of the New York convention surpassed that of its two predecessors. According to Gayle Morrison, it 'put the New York Bahá'í community, which had already been actively teaching in Harlem, into the forefront of Bahá'í racial amity activities for many years to come'.<sup>180</sup>

1924 Race Amity Conference, Philadelphia, 22–23 October 1924. 'Convention for Amity Between the White and Colored Races in America[,] Auspices of the Bahá'í Movement'. Organized under Baha'i auspices, this event was held in the Witherspoon Building at Juniper and Walnut Streets in Philadelphia.<sup>181</sup> The *Pittsburgh Courier* (1 November 1924) published a story, 'Convention For Amity Meets at Big Local Hall', in which 'Alain Locke' is mentioned, followed by 'Louis G. Gregory'.<sup>182</sup> Locke spoke on 'Negro Art and Culture'.<sup>183</sup> *The Crisis* also briefly reported the event.<sup>184</sup> The printed programme stated:

This is the fourth in a series of Inter-racial Congresses arranged under the auspices of the Baha'i Movement. The first was held in 1921 at Washington DC, the second at Springfield, Mass, and the third at New York City, the purpose being to awaken the people of America to the need of a clearer understanding of inter-racial problems, and a deeper realization of their spiritual solution as set forth in the teachings of the world's greatest prophets and leaders.<sup>185</sup>

1927 'Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races', July 1927. Green Acre, Eliot, Maine. Louis Gregory states that 'Dr Alain Locke ... spoke'.<sup>186</sup> A two-sided, three-panel brochure of the event lists the members of the 'National Inter-racial Amity Committee' as: Mrs A. S. Parsons, chairman; Mrs Coralie F. Cook, vice chairman; Louis G. Gregory, executive secretary; Dr Zia M. Bagdadi; Dr Alain L. Locke; Miss Elizabeth G. Hopper; and Miss Isabel Ives.<sup>187</sup> On the programme are two lectures of note, as they both evoke Alain Locke's concept of the 'New Negro' (this term may have been coined by Booker T. Washington, *A New Negro for a New Century*, Chicago, 1900, but it was Locke who popularized it). The first is an address, 'The New White Man', presented by Mr Devere Allen, editor of *The World Tomorrow*; and 'The New Negro', by Professor Leslie Pinckney Hill. This speaks eloquently of the positive reception that Locke's celebrated anthology, *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (1925), enjoyed in the Baha'i community at that time.

1927 Dayton, Ohio.<sup>188</sup>

1927 New York, Friday 21 October 1927, Nazarene Congregational Church.<sup>189</sup>

1927 Washington DC, 10, 11 November 1927. Mount Pleasant Congregational Church and the Playhouse.<sup>190</sup>

1927 Boston, November 1927.<sup>191</sup>

1928 Chicago, 22 January 1928, Masonic Temple.<sup>192</sup>

- 1928 'Conference for Inter-Racial Amity[.] Arranged by Inter-Racial Amity Committee of the Bahá'ís of Montreal', 11–12 February 1928. Three sessions, three venues: YMCA, Channing Hall, Union Congregational Church. Louis Gregory ('International Lecturer on Race Relations') spoke in the first (11 February) and second (12 February) of three sessions. Agnes MacPhail, first Canadian woman Member of Parliament, was the first speaker at the first session.<sup>193</sup>
- 1928 'Amity Meeting for Peace and Goodwill[.] Arranged by Inter-Racial Amity Committee of the Bahá'ís of New York[.] At 119 West 57th Street[.] Baha'i Center, Sunday, April 29, 1928.' 'The effort of Inter-Racial Amity has a direct bearing upon the peace of the world.'<sup>194</sup>
- 1928 Urbana, Illinois. 26 May 1928.<sup>195</sup>
- 1929 'Conference for Inter-Racial Amity. Arranged by Inter-Racial Amity Committee of the Bahá'ís of Buffalo, NY. Sunday, March 10th, 1929.' Louis Gregory ('International Lecturer on Race Relations') spoke at each of the three sessions at 10:20 a.m. (Michigan Avenue Baptist Church); 4:00 p.m. (YMCA, Michigan Avenue Branch); 8:00 p.m. (Hotel Statler).<sup>196</sup>
- 1929 Detroit, 14 March 1929.<sup>197</sup>
- 1929 Dayton, Ohio, 12 April 1929.<sup>198</sup>
- 1929 'Conference for Inter-Racial Amity. Arranged by the National Inter-Racial [Amity] Committee of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada', 23–25 August 1929, Green Acre, Eliot, Maine. 'This conference is one of many held in various cities of the American continent, the purpose being co-operation and harmony between the white and colored races. By direction of 'Abdu'l-Baha this effort began at Washington, DC about eight years ago.'<sup>199</sup>
- 1931 Atlantic City, New Jersey, 19 April 1931.<sup>200</sup>
- 1930 New York. Conference for interracial amity on 2, 8 and 9 November 1930. Co-sponsored by the National Teaching Committee, the Urban League and the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'ís of New York. Two sessions at the Baha'i Center and one at the New York Urban League Auditorium, 201 West 136th Street.<sup>201</sup> 'White members of the movement were guests of Harlem members in their homes.'<sup>202</sup>
- 1931 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 25–27 October 1931. Three sessions: Central Young Men's Christian Association, Oakland Methodist Church, Frick Training School.<sup>203</sup>
- 1932 New York, 27 February 1932. The Baha'ís hosted an interracial banquet in honour of the NAACP and the National Urban League. W. E. B. Du Bois gave a short speech.<sup>204</sup> According to a story published in *The Chicago Defender*, Walter F. White, secretary of the NAACP, hailed 'the Baha'i movement' as 'one of the great forces of human understanding'.<sup>205</sup>
- 1932 Los Angeles 27 February 1932. At the banquet dinner, Chief Standing Bear offered a prayer and spoke of peace as a covenant among all races. An Indian tribal dance followed as part of the programme.<sup>206</sup>
- 1932 'Conference for Racial Amity. Arranged by the National Racial Amity Committee of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada',

- 26–28 August 1932. Green Acre, Eliot, Maine; Portsmouth, New Jersey; 28 August 1932 (People’s Baptist Church).<sup>207</sup>
- 1932 Racial Amity Convention, New York, 9–10 December 1932. Part of the conference was held in Harlem. The event was planned by the National Inter-Racial Amity Committee in cooperation with a local Baha’i committee and, significantly, with the New York chapter of the National Urban League.<sup>208</sup> Alain Locke spoke at the second session, which ‘covered many phases of racial amity’. Here, Locke was once again on the same platform with Louis Gregory.<sup>209</sup>
- 1933 ‘The National Bahá’í Interracial Committee[,] assisted by the New York Spiritual Assembly[,] invite you to an Entertainment given in honor of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League, New York Chapter, Saturday Evening, May 13th at eight thirty o’clock, in the Bahá’í Lecture Hall, 119 West 57th Street.’<sup>210</sup> This was the second annual reception in honour of the NAACP and the Urban League given by the National Bahá’í Inter-Racial Committee. Two hundred people attended.<sup>211</sup>
- 1934 ‘Bahá’í Race Amity Conferences’, Saturday and Sunday 4–5 August 1934, Green Acre, Eliot, Maine; Portsmouth, New Jersey.<sup>212</sup>
- 1935 ‘Inter-Racial Amity Conference’, 17 August 1935, Green Acre, Eliot, Maine.<sup>213</sup>
- 1935 ‘Race Amity Conference[.] Arranged by [t]he Cincinnati Bahá’í Assembly[.]’ April 11th, 12th, 13th [1935] at the Central YWCA[.] 9th and Walnut Streets, Cincinnati, Ohio.<sup>214</sup> Organized with the assistance of Louis Gregory and Dorothy Baker. ‘Splendid cooperation was given us by the newspapers, with 22 free articles and two paid articles.’<sup>215</sup>

## Appendix 2. Race Amity Committees

- (1) National Amity Convention Committee (1924–25): Agnes Parsons, Elizabeth Greenleaf, Mariam Haney, Alain Locke, Mabel Ives, Louise Waite, Louise Boyle, Roy Williams (a black Baha’i), Philip R. Seville and Mrs Atwater. Appointed 19 May 1924.<sup>216</sup>
- (2) Racial Amity Committee (1925–26): Previous committee reappointed (except for Philip R. Seville): Agnes Parsons (chairperson), Mariam Haney (secretary), Elizabeth Greenleaf, Alain Locke, Mabel Ives, Louise Waite, Louise Boyle, Roy Williams and Mrs Atwater.<sup>217</sup>
- (3) National Bahá’í Committee on Racial Amity (1927): Agnes Parsons (‘chairman’), Louis Gregory (executive secretary), Louise Boyle, Mariam Haney, Coralie Cook, Dr Zia M. Bagdadi, Dr Alain Locke. Appointed 14 January 1927. (Note: The National Spiritual Assembly invited a special committee on racial amity to meet in Washington DC, in January 1927, to consult and make recommendations. The special committee’s letter to the National Spiritual Assembly was dated 8 January.)<sup>218</sup>
- (4) National Inter-Racial Amity Committee (1927–28): Agnes S. Parsons (chairperson), Mrs Coralie F. Cook (vice-chairperson), Louis G. Gregory (executive secretary), Dr Zia M. Bagdadi,

Dr Alain L. Locke, Miss Elizabeth G. Hopper, Miss Isabel Rives (later spelled Rieves).<sup>219</sup> This list is confirmed in a letter by Louis Gregory himself.<sup>220</sup> In December 1927, the membership consisted of Agnes Parsons, Louis Gregory, Dr Zia M. Bagdadi, Dr Alain Locke and Mrs Pauline Hannen,<sup>221</sup> replacing Miss Rieves, who was travelling abroad. No mention is made of Miss Hopper in the 27 November issue of the *Bahá'í News Letter*. According to Gayle Morrison, 'Possibly she declined the appointment.'<sup>222</sup>

- (5) National Inter-Racial Amity Committee (1928–29): Louis Gregory (secretary), Agnes Parsons, Mariam Haney, Louise Boyle, Dr Zia Bagdadi, Dr Alain Locke and Mrs Loulie Matthews, Shelley N. Parker, Pauline Hannen.<sup>223</sup> For a period of time during this Baha'i administrative year, the National Teaching Committee and the National Inter-Racial Amity Committee were affiliated for budgetary reasons.<sup>224</sup>
- (6) National InterRacial [*sic*] Amity Committee (1929–30): Louis Gregory (chairman), Shelley N. Parker (secretary), Agnes Parsons, Mariam Haney, Louise D. Boyle, Dr Zia M. Bagdadi, Dr Alain Locke, Miss Alice Higginbotham and Loulie A. Mathews.<sup>225</sup> No independent amity committee was appointed for the 1930–31 Baha'i administrative year. Amity activities were subsumed under the National Teaching Committee, in which Louis Gregory served as NTC secretary for amity activities.<sup>226</sup>
- (7) National Racial Amity Committee (1931–32): Loulie Mathews (chairperson), Louis Gregory (secretary), Zia M. Bagdadi, Mabelle L. Davis, Frances Fales, Sara L. Witt, Alain Locke, Shelley N. Parker, Annie K. Lewis.<sup>227</sup>

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## Endnotes

1. M. F. Harris (1525 '10' St. NW, Washington, DC), Note, 22 May 1921. Agnes Parsons Papers, Box 20: Notes – Race Amity Convention DC, 1921, National Bahá'í Archives (hereinafter NBA), Bahá'í National Center (Evanston, IL), enclosure sent 24 January 2011. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, archivist, and Lewis V. Walker, archivist.
2. See facsimile of Locke's 'Bahá'í Historical Record' card in Christopher Buck, *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, vol. 18, Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 2005, 58. Now online at [http://bahai-library.com/locke\\_guardian\\_correspondence](http://bahai-library.com/locke_guardian_correspondence) (accessed 30 January 2011).
3. Christopher Buck, 'The Interracial "Bahá'í Movement" and the Black Intelligentsia: The Case of W. E. B. Du Bois.' *Journal of Religious History* 17 (2012) (special issue on Bahá'í history, guest-edited by Todd Lawson), forthcoming.
4. See Columbus Salley, *The Black 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential African Americans, Past and Present*, revised and updated, Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1999 (1993).
5. Louis E. Venters, III, "'Most Great Reconstruction": The Bahá'í Faith in Jim Crow South Carolina, 1898–1965', PhD dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2010, 126.
6. See, for example, Jerrold M. Packard, *American Nightmare: The History of Jim Crow*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002, back cover; Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998, which focuses on residential segregation and its social impact, rather than its roots in the Jim Crow era.
7. See Christopher Buck, 'Plessy v. Ferguson'. *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society*, ed. Richard T. Schaefer, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008, 1048–51.
8. Gayle Morrison, *To Move the World: Louis G. Gregory and the Advancement of Racial Unity in America*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982, 188.
9. 'Racial Barriers Fall at Conference of Bahai Groups Over Week-End Here; Whites Entertained by Harlemites During Two-Day Stay-Sincerity and Brotherly Spirit as Path to Better Relations', *The New York Amsterdam News*, 12 November 1930, 14.
10. Photo Standalone 1 – No Title, *The Chicago Defender*, 22 November 1930, 22. Caption: 'Interracial Amity Conference – The Urban League and the Bahais of New York held a conference in New York City last week. It was held under the auspices of the national teaching committee of the Bahais of the United States and Canada. Many prominent people of both races attended.'
11. On the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC), see the comments at the end of this paper.
12. Morrison, *To Move the World* 149.
13. Quoted in an untitled compilation of Baha'i writings on race unity. Typescript in Locke's possession, Alain Locke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Box 164-176, Folder 13 (Baha'i Faith). Hereinafter abbreviated ALP with box number/folder number.
14. Quoted in Allan L. Ward, *239 Days: 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey in America*. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979, 37.
15. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*, Greenwich, CT: Fawcett, 1961 (1903), 13.
16. Ward, *239 Days* 40.
17. 'April 23, 1912. Talk at Howard University. Washington, DC. Translated by Amin Banani', in 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, comp. by Howard MacNutt, rev. edn. in one vol. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1943, 43.
18. See Buck, *Faith and Philosophy* 127–57 and passim.
19. Zia Bagdadi, 'Abdu'l-Bahá in America', *Star of the West*, 19(3), June 1928, 89. Quoted in Ward, *239 Days* 43.
20. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 'Address of 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the Home of Mrs Dyer, April 24, 1912, 9 p.m.', translated by Dr Ameen U. Fareed and taken stenographically by Joseph H. Hannen, *Star of the West*, 3(3), 28 April 1912, 21.

21. *Mahmúd's Diary*, trans. M. Sobhani. Oxford: George Ronald, 1998, 57 (under the diary page for Wednesday, 24 April 1912). Transliteration based on notes by Dr Khazeh Fananapazir, posting on the Tarjuman translation list Friday, 10 May 2002 based on Mírzá Mahmúd Zarfání, *Badá-yi al-Áthár*, vol. 1, pp. 48–49. Langenhain: Bahá'í Verlag, 1982. Reprint of the Bombay 1914 edition.
22. Ward, 239 *Days* 43, quoting *Promulgation of Universal Peace* 54.
23. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, trans. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990 (1939), 37.
24. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982, 114 (sec. 78); 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Múntakhabátí az Makátíb-i Hadrat-i 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, vol. 1, sec. 78.
25. Phillott Douglas Craven, *Colloquial English-Persian dictionary in the Roman character, containing all English words in common use with their meanings in modern Persian, with numerous examples*. Charleston, SC: Bibliolife, 2009 (1914), 107.
26. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 113 (sec. 76); 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Makátíb* vol. 1, sec. 76.
27. Fádíl Mázandarání, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, vol. 8, part 2, Tihran: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 132 BE, 1209.
28. From a tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, translated from the Persian, in Research Department, The Universal House of Justice, *Women: Extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi and The Universal House of Justice*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1986, 4.
29. Richard Thomas, *Understanding Interracial Unity: A Study of US Race Relations*, Sage Series on Race and Ethnic Relations, vol. 16. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996, 47.
30. Richard Thomas, 'The "Pupil of the Eye": African Americans in the making of the American Bahá'í Community', in Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis and Richard Thomas (eds), *Lights of the Spirit: Historical Portraits of Black Bahá'ís in North America 1898–2000*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2006, 19–48, 42.
31. 'Two Groups Observe Interracial Day Here With Banquet and Harlem Tour; Baha'i Committee Fetes N.A.A.C.P. and New York Urban League – Columbia Professor Leads Party Downtown', *The New York Amsterdam News*, 2 March 1932, 11. See also 'Bahai to Sponsor Interracial Dinner In New York City', *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 March 1932, 2; Morrison, *To Move the World* 192. See also 'Annual Reports of the National Committees of the National Spiritual Assemblies of the United States and Canada 1931–1932', *Bahá'í News*, 62, May 1932, 7.
32. Guy Mount, 'Locke, Shock, and Abbott: Bahá'í Theology and the Acceleration of the African American Civil Rights Movement', MESA 2010 Conference Panel 196: 'Abdu'l-Bahá in America, 21 November 2010, 17. [http://bahai-library.com/pdf/2011\\_06/mount\\_locke\\_shock\\_abbott.pdf](http://bahai-library.com/pdf/2011_06/mount_locke_shock_abbott.pdf). See now also Guy Mount, 'A Troubled Modernity: W.E.B Du Bois, 'The Black Church,' and the Problem of Causality' in Negar Mottahedei (ed.) *'Abdu'l-Baha in America: A Persian Reformer comes to the West*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming.
33. George Streater to Du Bois, 29 April 1935. *The Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois. Volume II: Selections, 1934–1944*, ed. Herbert Aptheker, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976, 95.
34. Guy Mount, Locke, Shock, and Abbott 17, citing W. E. B. Du Bois to Ruth R. Shipley, 23 March 1953; Aptheker, *Correspondence* 345. See also Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W. E. B. Dubois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944–1963*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986, 213.
35. 'Two Groups Observe Interracial Day Here With Banquet and Harlem Tour; Baha'i Committee Fetes N.A.A.C.P. and New York Urban League – Columbia Professor Leads Party Downtown', *New York Amsterdam News*, 2 March 1932, 11.
36. 'Cora Calhoun Horne', *The Crisis*, November 1932, 361; see also 'Mrs Horne, Civic Leader, Succumbs: Funeral Held for Woman Who Served in Numerous Movements in City and Nation – Rites Private Leader Dies', *New York Amsterdam News*, 14 September 1932, 2.
37. In the W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, other Baha'i contacts may be noted: Miriam Haney, 1914 (Reel 4:734); Marion Little, 1937 (Reel 47:748); Loulie A. Mathews, 1937 (Reel 47:832); Minta B. Trotman, 1937 (Reel 48:229), 1938 (Reel 49:748); Ludmila Bechtold,

1938 (Reel 48:737); Peggy True, 1942 (Reel 54:265); Louis G. Gregory, 1943 (Reel 55:347); Lawrence A. Hautz, 1951 (Reel 66), 1952 (Reel 68:365), 1954 (Reel 70). See finding aid: W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, 1803–1999 (Bulk: 1877–1963) 382 boxes (168.75 linear ft.) Collection number: MS 312'. Available online at [http://www.library.umass.edu/spcoll/ead/mums312\\_full.pdf](http://www.library.umass.edu/spcoll/ead/mums312_full.pdf) and [http://www.library.umass.edu/spcoll/ead/mums312\\_1a2.htm](http://www.library.umass.edu/spcoll/ead/mums312_1a2.htm) (accessed 2 January 2011).

38. See Buck, *Race Amity*, forthcoming.
39. W. E. B. Du Bois (editor and presumed author), 'Men of the Month', *The Crisis* 4(1), May 1912, 14–16.
40. Guy Emerson Mount, Locke, Shock, and Abbott 13–14. Guy Mount argues the probability that Du Bois was indeed the author: 'As editor it is possible that Du Bois may have had someone else within the NAACP actually write the article, however, the quality of prose, knowledge of Christian history, and overall style indicates that Du Bois himself was the most likely author. ... At the very least his decision as editor to devote the space that he did to this subject speaks volumes as to the impact that his encounter with 'Abdu'l Bahá had on the forty-six-year-old Du Bois' (*id.*, 14, n. 32).
41. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 'The Brotherhood of Man. An Address at the Chicago Conference by Abdul Baha of Persia'. *The Crisis*, 4(2), June 1912, 88.
42. W. E. B. Du Bois, 'Opinion of W. E. B. Du Bois', *The Crisis*, 23(4), February 1922, 151.
43. See Christopher Buck, *Race Amity*, forthcoming.
44. See Buck, *Faith and Philosophy* 76–80.
45. Venters, *Most Great Reconstruction* 126.
46. Coralie Franklin Cook (d. 1942), chair of the Department of Oratory at Howard University, became a Baha'i in 1913, but whether her husband, George William Cook (born a slave in 1855, died 1931), professor of Commercial and International Law and dean of the School of Commerce and Finance, also became a Baha'i is uncertain. See Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis, 'Race, Gender, and Difference: African American Women and the Struggle for Equality', in Etter-Lewis and Thomas, *Lights of the Spirit* 71; cf. Buck, *Faith and Philosophy* 78.
47. Louis Gregory, 'Inter-Racial Amity', in *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume II, 1926–1928*, comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada. New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1929; reprint, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980, 281. See Morrison, *To Move the World* 134–43.
48. Gayle Morrison, 'To Move the World: Promoting Racial Amity, 1921–1927', *World Order*, 14(2), Winter 1980, 15.
49. Root to Locke, undated note on back of photo of 'Abdu'l-Baha, ALP 164-208/16 (Abdu'l-Baha Abbas).
50. Morrison, *To Move the World* 139.
51. Morrison, *Promoting Racial Amity* 16, citing Bahai Temple Unity, Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, 1922, 310, Bahai Temple Unity records.
52. Louis G. Gregory, 'Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races'. In *Star of the West*, 12(6), 24 June 1921, 117–18. See also Gregory, *Inter-Racial Amity* 281; and *idem*, 'Racial Amity in America: An Historical Review', in *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume VII, 1936–1938*. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, 1939; reprint, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980, 652–66 (655–56); Mariam Haney (secretary, The Teaching Committee of Nineteen), 'A Compilation of the Story of the Convention for Amity', 31 May 1921, ALP 164-106/7 (re: Amity Convention).
53. Facsimile on p. 168 of National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, *The Bahá'í Centenary, 1844–1944: A Record of America's Response to Bahá'u'lláh's Call to the Realization of the Oneness of Mankind to Commemorate the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of the Bahá'í Faith*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1944. See also Horace Holley, 'Survey of Current Bahá'í Activities in the East and West', in *Bahá'í World, Volume II*, 22–23.
54. Program, Bahá'í Archives of Washington, DC. Courtesy of Ms Anita Chapman.
55. *ibid.*

56. Louis G. Gregory, 'Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races', in *Star of the West*, 12(6), 24 June 1921, 114–19, 123–24. Reprinted as vol. 7, Oxford: George Ronald, 1978.
57. Louis Gregory, in Mariam Haney, 'A Compilation on the Story of the Convention for Amity', on behalf of 'The Teaching Committee of Nineteen', 31 May 1921: 5. Bahá'í Archives of Washington, DC. Courtesy of Ms Anita Chapman. See also Gregory, Convention for Amity 118, which reads: 'Friday evening Dr Alain L. Locke, presiding, expressed the great effort of the convention to be the unity of heart and mind in human succor, exemplifying the power of a new spirit in a new day.'
58. *The Hadleigh* (Washington DC), 20 May 1921, quoted by Haney, Story of the Convention for Amity 9.
59. Haney, Story of the Convention for Amity 9.
60. *ibid* 2.
61. Morrison, Promoting Racial Amity 17.
62. Gregory, quoted by Morrison, *ibid* 17.
63. *ibid* 17–18.
64. National Committee on Inter-Racial Amity to the 'National Spiritual Assembly and the Local Spiritual Assemblies of the United States and Canada', 23 February 1927. Bahá'í Archives of Washington DC. Courtesy of Ms Anita Chapman.
65. Gregory, Convention for Amity 115.
66. Untitled report by Martha Root, in Haney, Story of the Convention for Amity 12.
67. Haney to Locke, 4 October 1921, ALP 164-33/49 (Haney, Mariam).
68. Gregory, Inter-Racial Amity 280–85 (see 282).
69. 'Great Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White: Brilliant Meeting – Record Attendance – Powerful Enthusiasm – Inspiring Music – Lofty Purposes Set Forth' (Part 2), *The Washington Bee*, 42(1), 4 June 1921, 4.
70. 'Great Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White: Brilliant Meeting – Record Attendance – Powerful Enthusiasm – Inspiring Music – Lofty Purposes Set Forth' (Part 1), *The Washington Bee*, 41(52), 28 May 1921, 1.
71. Great Convention for Amity (Part 2) 4.
72. Jonathan D. Sarna (ed.), 'Acknowledgments', *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998, ix.
73. Program, 'Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races Based on Heavenly Teachings', 19–21 May 1921, Bahá'í Archives of Washington, DC. Courtesy of Ms Anita Chapman.
74. See the chapter, 'Bahá'í Myths and Visions of America', in Christopher Buck, *Religious Myths and Visions of America: How Minority Faiths Redefined America's World Role*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009, 173–200.
75. Morrison, Promoting Racial Amity 9–31 (see 19).
76. Etter-Lewis and Thomas, *Lights of the Spirit*.
77. Richard Thomas, The 'Pupil of the Eye' 19–48.
78. Morrison, *To Move the World*. (See note 2, *supra*, for full citation.)
79. Guy Emerson Mount, Locke, Shock, and Abbott.
80. Morrison, 'Gregory, Louis George (1874–1951)', The Bahá'í Encyclopedia Project. Online at <http://www.bahai-encyclopedia-project.org> (accessed 21 December 2010).
81. Morrison, *To Move the World* 150.
82. See Roi Ottley, *The Lonely Warrior: The Life and Times of Robert S. Abbott*, Chicago: H. Regency Co., 1955.
83. Mark Perry, 'Robert S. Abbott and *The Chicago Defender*: A Door to the Masses', *World Order*, 26(4), Summer 1995, 15–24. Reprinted in *idem*, 'A Door To The Masses: Robert S.

Abbott and *The Chicago Defender*, *New Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 November 1995, 7. See also *idem*, *Michigan Chronicle*, 59(2), 4 October 1995, 1-A.

84. Perry, Door to the Masses 7.
85. *ibid* 7.
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89. 'Northwestern Students Hear about Editor Abbott', *The Chicago Defender*, 22 March 1924, 4.
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91. *ibid*.
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94. Mark Lloyd Perry, 'The Chicago Bahá'í Community, 1921-1939', PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1986, 296.
95. 'Motor to Baha'i Meet', *The Chicago Defender*, 9 June 1934, 3.
96. Robert S. Abbott, 'Baha'ism Called the Religion that will Rescue Humanity: Christianity Has Proved Faithless to its Trust, Says Robert S. Abbott; Praises Mohammedanism: Installment XLIV', *The Chicago Defender*, 15 December 1934, 11.
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99. Robert S. Abbott, 'Churches Not Playing Proper Role in War Against Prejudice: Baha'i Movement Stands Alone as Enemy of Color Bar, Says Editor'. *The Chicago Defender*, 23 June 1934, 12.
100. Abbott, Religion that will Rescue Humanity 11.
101. Louis T. [sic; read G.] Gregory, 'Baha'i Movement Seen as Hope of Religion: New Philosophy Wipes Out All Prejudices Based on Race, Color and Creed, Wilmette Temple of Light a Thing of Surpassing Beauty', *The Chicago Defender*, 17 June 1933, 10.
102. *ibid* 10.
103. Only Church in World That Does Not Discriminate 39–46. Robert S. Abbott's photograph appears on page 39.
104. Leonard Harris and Charles Molesworth, *Alain L. Locke: The Biography of a Philosopher*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008, 1.
105. Charles Molesworth, 'Alain Locke and Walt Whitman: Manifestos and National Identity', *The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke: A Reader on Value Theory, Aesthetics, Community, Culture, Race, and Education*, ed. Leonard Harris, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999, 176.
106. Rev. Dr Martin Luther King, Jr, speech at Poor People's Campaign Rally in Clarksdale, Mississippi (19 March 1968), quoted in James H. Cone, *Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968-1998*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1999, 152, n. 20.
107. 'Dorothy Maynor Meets Princess at White House', *The Afro-American*, 4 January 1941, 13.
108. Mable Alston, 'Overheard in the Capital', *The Afro-American*, 28 December 1940, 16.
109. Harris and Molesworth, *Alain L. Locke* 313.
110. See Smithsonian Archives of American Art, 'Eleanor Roosevelt with Alaine [sic] Locke and Peter Pollack, 1941', online at <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/images/detail/eleanor-roosevelt-alaine-locke-and-peter-pollack-601> (accessed 30 January 2011). See also 'South

Side Community Art Center Archives', online at <http://mts.lib.uchicago.edu/artifacts/index.php?id=sscac&page=credits> (accessed 30 January 2011). See also the photograph of Locke and Eleanor Roosevelt in Harris and Molesworth, *Alain L. Locke* 376, which appears to be from the same event, although not noted in the caption.

111. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, 'Nnamdi Azikiwe' (Image ID: 1231682), online at <http://www.inmotionaame.org/gallery/detail.cfm?id=580187&type=image> (accessed 29 January 2011).
112. Photo Standalone 4 – No Title, *The Chicago Defender*, 28 June 1947, 3.
113. Harris and Molesworth, *Alain L. Locke* 384.
114. Louise Boyle, undated letter (late 1925) to Mrs El Fleda Spaulding ('Chairman Teaching Committee'), Office of the Secretary Records, National Teaching Committee Files, NBA, courtesy Roger Dahl, archivist, and Gayle Morrison, coordinating editor, Bahá'í Encyclopedia Project. Published in Christopher Buck, 'Alain Locke: Race Leader, Social Philosopher, Bahá'í Pluralist', *World Order*, 36(3), 2005, 7–36 (see 19). Harris and Molesworth's citation is also in error: 'An issue of the group's publication, *Bahá'í World*, was dedicated to Locke in 2006.' The issue in question is the issue of *World Order* just cited: Special Issue: *Alain Locke: Dean of the Harlem Renaissance and Bahá'í Race-Amity Leader*.
115. Harris and Molesworth, *Alain L. Locke* 384.
116. *ibid*.
117. See, for example, 'America's Town Meeting of the Air Comes to Howard University', *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 June 1942, 24.
118. Alain Locke, Mordecai Johnson, Doxey Wilkerson and Leon Ransom, 'Is There a Basis for Spiritual Unity in the World Today?' *Town Meeting: Bulletin of America's Town Meeting on the Air*, 8(5), 1 June 1942, 3–12.
119. Johnson, Basis for Spiritual Unity 4.
120. Locke, Basis for Spiritual Unity 6–7.
121. *ibid* 7.
122. Locke, Basis for Spiritual Unity 7.
123. *ibid* 18.
124. Reprints: 1924: Alain Locke, 'Impressions of Haifa', *Star of the West*, 15(1), 1924, 13–14, original manuscript in ALP 164-115/29 ('Impressions of Haifa' [typescript]). 1926: Reprint: Alaine [sic] Locke, 'Impressions of Haifa', in *Bahá'í Year Book, Volume I*, April 1925–April 1926, comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1926, 81, 83. 1928: Alaine [sic] Locke, 'Impressions of Haifa', in *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume II, 1926-1928*, comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1928; reprint, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980, 125, 127. 1930: Alain Locke, 'Impressions of Haifa', in *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume III, 1928-1930*, comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1930; reprint, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980, 280, 282.
125. Alain Locke, 'Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle', in *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume IV, 1930-1932*. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1933, 372–74. Reprint. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980. Reprinted again in Locke, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, ed. Leonard Harris, 1989, 133–38. Harris's reference on p. 133n. should be amended to read, 'Volume IV, 1930–1932' (not 'V, 1932–1934').
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127. Alain Locke, 'Lessons in World Crisis', *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume IX, 1940-1944*. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1945, 745–47. Reprint: Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981.

128. Alain Locke, 'Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle', *Philosophic Values and World Citizenship: Locke to Obama and Beyond*, ed. Jacoby Adeshei Carter and Leonard Harris, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010, 2–5. See forthcoming review in *Bahá'í Studies Review* (2012).
129. Due to shortage of space, the reader is referred to the chapter, 'Bahá'í Essays', in Buck, *Faith and Philosophy* 222–39.
130. 'World Unity: A Monthly Magazine Promoting the International Mind' (c. 1931–1932). NBA, enclosure sent 24 January 2011. Courtesy of Lewis V. Walker, archivist. *World Unity* magazine has been microfilmed and is available on microfiche by ProQuest in its 'The Library of World Peace Studies' series.
131. See Buck, *Faith and Philosophy*.
132. 'Alain Locke Addresses Bahais', *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 June 1933, 6.
133. NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, archivist, email communication dated 18 November 2008.
134. Gregory, Hope of Religion 10.
135. Gregory, Inter-Racial Amity Activities 6.
136. *ibid* 6. See also Morrison, *To Move the World* 194, citing 'Committee Reports: Committee on Inter-Racial Amity', *Bahá'í News*, 74, May 1933, 13.
137. Gregory, Inter-Racial Amity Activities 6.
138. Only Church in World That Does Not Discriminate 39–46.
139. ALP 164–89/41 (Thompson, Era Bell).
140. *ibid*.
141. *ibid*.
142. Only Church in World That Does Not Discriminate 39–46. Locke's photograph appears on page 39.
143. *ibid* 39–46.
144. Dahl to Buck, 16 February 2001.
145. Morrison, *To Move the World* 195. Committee members included Loulie Mathews, Mabelle L. Davis, Dr Zia Bagdadi, Shelley N. Parker, Sara E. Witt, Coralie F. Cook and Louis Gregory.
146. Morrison, *To Move the World* 213–14, 244.
147. Buck, *Faith and Philosophy* 68–90.
148. Louis Gregory Papers, Box 2, correspondence, Race Amity Committee. NBA, Bahá'í National Center (Evanston, IL), enclosure sent 24 January 2011. Courtesy of Lewis V. Walker, archivist.
149. See, for example, Errol Henderson (Pennsylvania State University), 'Alain Locke and the Evolution of Cultural Revolution in Black America' (APSA 2010 Annual Meeting Paper, 2010), online at [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1641985](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1641985) (accessed 29 January 2011); Kara Tucina Olidge, 'Critical Cosmopolitanism and the Intellectual Work of Alain Locke', PhD thesis, State University of New York at Buffalo, 2010, 86–91.
150. Charlotte Linfoot, 'Alain LeRoy Locke, 1886–1954', in *The Bahá'í World: An International Record, Volume XIII, 1954–1963*. Haifa: Universal House of Justice (1970) 1980, 894–95.
151. Locke, quoted in 'Says Art Raises Status of Negroes: Dr Alain Locke Declares Nation is Re-evaluating Race for Its Contributions', special to the *New York Times*, *New York Times*, 8 September 1931, 17. Locke, who was in Germany at the time, sent to *New York Times* the text of his paper entitled 'The Negro in Art', which had been read in absentia on 7 September 1931, at the Conference of International Student Service, held at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts. The *New York Times* excerpted the paper in its article.
152. Alain Locke, *The Negro in America*, Chicago: American Library Association, 1933, 50.

153. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, *Race and Man: A Compilation*, comp. Maye Harvey Gift, Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Committee, 1943, 36.
154. Harris and Molesworth, *Alain L. Locke* 3.
155. Alain Locke, ‘The Unfinished Business of Democracy’, *Survey Graphic*, 31, November 1942, 455–61 (see 456).
156. Alain Locke, quoted in ‘Locke Holds Smashing of Humanity’s Barriers Civilization’s Present Need: Howard University Professor Views Elimination of Bars Between Races, Sexes and Nations as Necessity for Progress’. *The New York Amsterdam News*, 26 March 1930, 11.
157. See Buck, *Faith and Philosophy*, Chapter 10: ‘Philosophy of Democracy: America, Race and World Peace’, 241–65.
158. Derik Smith, comment posted in response to a Ross Posnock, ‘Black Is Brilliant’, *The New Republic*, 15 April 2009, online at <http://www.tnr.com/article/books/black-brilliant> (accessed 2 January 2011).
159. Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Agnes Parsons, 26 July 1921. Facsimile of Persian original from The Original Tablets from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Collection, National Bahá’í Archives, United States. Digital copy of Persian original courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, archivist, National Bahá’í Archives, United States. Translation by Omid Ghaemmaghami, PhD candidate, Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, University of Toronto. Leone Barnitz Papers, Box 17: Agnes Parsons correspondence/‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Courtesy of Lewis V. Walker, assistant archivist, National Bahá’í Archives, United States.
160. Gregory, Inter-Racial Amity Activities 6.
161. Bahadur to Locke, 27 February 1924, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164–12, Folder 2 (Bahadur, Azizullah).
162. Shoghi Effendi, postscript to letter written on his behalf by Ruhi Afnan to Locke, 5 July 1930, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164–10, Folder 2 (Afnan, Ruhi).
163. See ‘Roy Wilkins Slated as Baha’i Speaker’, *New York Amsterdam News*, 22 January 1944, 12; display ad 51 (announcing Roy Wilkins’s speech on ‘New Aspects of Human Relations’ on 18 February 1951 at the New York Bahá’í Center), *New York Amsterdam News*, 17 February 1951, 16; classified ad 4 (no title), *New York Times*, 17 February 1951, 11.
164. Venters, Most Great Reconstruction 137.
165. *ibid* 212.
166. John B. Kirby, *Black Americans in the Roosevelt Era: Liberalism and Race*. Nashville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982, 9.
167. Venters, Most Great Reconstruction 12 and 12, n. 15.
168. Harris, Notes - Race Amity Convention.
169. *ibid*.
170. Thomas, *Understanding Interracial Unity* 49.
171. The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 10 April 2011 to an individual Bahá’í.
172. See ‘“Racial amity” conference set to begin in Boston’, *The Chicago Defender*, Thursday 9 June 2011.
173. Dr Smith, a long-time, prominent Baha’i, was featured in the November 2005 *Sports Illustrated* cover story, ‘Groundbreakers’ by Alexander Wolff, which profiled high-school star athletes who broke the colour barrier in southern college football.
174. See ‘National Race Amity Conference: What it’s about’ at <http://www.bahai.us/2011/08/05/national-race-amity-conference-what-its-about>, and also the present writer’s presentation, ‘Alain Locke: Pioneer in Multiculturalism & Race Amity’, online at [http://christopherbuck.com/Buck\\_Amity\\_2011.html](http://christopherbuck.com/Buck_Amity_2011.html).
175. ‘Cornel West praises work of Baha’is in establishing Racial Unity’ (1 February 2012). Online at <http://www.bahai.us/2012/02/01/cornel-west-praises-work-of-baha-is-in-establishing-racial-unity>. Accessed 17 March 2012.
176. Gregory, Convention for Amity 117–18. See also Gregory, Racial Amity in America 655; Haney, Story of the Convention for Amity.

177. See Roy Williams, 'Convention for Amity Between the White and Colored Races, Springfield, Massachusetts, December 5 and 6, 1921', *Star of the West*, 13, 28 April 1922, 51.
178. Morrison, *To Move the World*, photograph opposite p. 137.
179. Morrison, *To Move the World* 146; Gregory, Inter-Racial Amity 283; *idem*, Racial Amity in America 657; Locke to Parsons, 21 October 1922, Agnes Parsons Papers, Wilmette, NBA.
180. Morrison, *To Move the World* 147.
181. Morrison, Promoting Racial Amity 22.
182. 'Convention For Amity Meets at Big Local Hall', *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 November 1924, 10.
183. J. H. Gray, 'Pennsylvania: Philadelphia News', *The Chicago Defender*, 1 November 1924, A6. 'Alain Leroy' is named as the speaker, rather than 'Alain Locke' or 'Alain Leroy Locke'.
184. 'The Horizon', *The Crisis*, December 1924, 77.
185. Program, Bahá'í Archives of Washington DC. Courtesy of Ms Anita Chapman.
186. Gregory, Inter-Racial Amity 283; Gregory, Racial Amity in America 657–58.
187. Chapman, Program.
188. Gregory, Racial Amity in America 658.
189. 'Inter-Racial Amity Meeting: Memorial to Abdul-Baha Is Planned by Pastor of Local Church', *The New York Amsterdam News*, 26 October 1927, 11; 'Racial Amity Urged', *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 October 1927, 3.
190. Gregory, Inter-Racial Amity 285; Gregory, Racial Amity in America 656.
191. Gregory, Racial Amity in America 661.
192. *ibid* 659. See also Perry, The Chicago Bahá'í Community 289–91.
193. NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, archivist; Gregory, Racial Amity in America 660.
194. NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, archivist.
195. Gregory, Racial Amity in America 660.
196. NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, archivist.
197. Gregory, Racial Amity in America 662.
198. *ibid* 658.
199. NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, archivist.
200. Gregory, Racial Amity in America 662.
201. Morrison, *To Move the World* 188.
202. 'Racial Barriers Fall at Conference Of Bahai Groups Over Week-End Here; Whites Entertained by Harlemites During Two-Day Stay-Sincerity and Brotherly Spirit as Path to Better Relations', *The New York Amsterdam News*, 12 November 1930, 14.
203. Gregory, Racial Amity in America 662.
204. 'Two Groups Observe Interracial Day Here With Banquet and Harlem Tour: Baha'i Committee Fetes N.A.A.C.P. and New York Urban League - Columbia Professor Leads Party Downtown', *The New York Amsterdam News*, 2 March 1932, 11. See also 'Bahai To Sponsor Interracial Dinner In New York City', *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 March 1932, 2; Morrison, *To Move the World* 192. See also 'Annual Reports of the National Committees of the National Spiritual Assemblies of the United States and Canada 1931–1932', *Bahá'í News*, 62, May 1932, 7.
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206. Gregory, Racial Amity in America 663.
207. NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, archivist. See also 'Conference On' [*sic*], *The Afro-American*, 27 August 1932, 9 (with photograph of Louis Gregory).
208. Gregory, 'Inter-Racial Amity Activities', *Bahá'í News*, 72, April 1933, 6.

209. Gregory, Inter-Racial Amity Activities 6. See also Morrison, *To Move the World* 194, citing 'Committee Reports: Committee on Inter-Racial Amity', *Bahá'í News*, 74, May 1933, 13.
210. NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, archivist.
211. Morrison, *To Move the World* 193.
212. NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, archivist.
213. *ibid.*
214. *ibid.*
215. NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, archivist; Gregory, Racial Amity in America 663–64.
216. Morrison, *To Move the World* 147.
217. Morrison, *To Move the World* 155.
218. 'National Committee on Race Amity Appointed', *Bahá'í News Letter*, 16, March 1927, 5; Morrison, *To Move the World* 166 and 344, n. 4. Morrison to author, email dated 19 June 2002.
219. 'Committees of the National Spiritual Assembly 1927-1928', *Bahá'í News Letter*, 19, August 1927, 4; Bahá'í Archives of Washington DC. Courtesy of Ms Anita Chapman.
220. Gregory to Parsons, 10 July 1927, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, archivist, NBA, Bahá'í National Center, enclosure sent 22 August 2001.
221. Morrison, *To Move the World* 182.
222. Morrison to author, email dated 19 June 2002.
223. Gregory to Parsons, 29 July 1928, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, archivist, NBA, Bahá'í National Center, enclosure sent 22 August 2001.
224. 'Committees of the National Spiritual Assembly 1929-1930', *Bahá'í News Letter*, 32, May 1929, 4. See also 'Interracial Amity Committee', *Bahá'í News Letter*, 40, April 1930, 10–12, and Morrison, *To Move the World* 186.
225. 'Committees of the National Spiritual Assembly 1929-1930', *Bahá'í News Letter*, 32, May 1929, 4. Members: Louis Gregory (chairman), Shelley Parker (secretary), Agnes Parsons, Louise Boyle, Mariam Haney, Dr Zia Bagdadi, Dr Alain Locke, Louie Mathews, Miss Alice Higginbotham.
226. Morrison to author, email dated 19 June 2002. I am indebted to Dr Morrison for the considerable research time she spent in verifying the memberships of these seven committees on which Locke served.
227. 'National Bahá'í Committees: 1931–1932', *Bahá'í News Letter*, 53, July 1931, 2; Louis G. Gregory, 'The Annual Convention', *Bahá'í News*, 52, May 1931, 3; Locke to Gregory, 6 June 1931, Louis Gregory Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, archivist, NBA, Bahá'í National Center, enclosure with letter dated 16 February 2001; Morrison, *To Move the World* 349, n. 29.