

STUDIES IN THE  
BÁBÍ AND BAHÁ'Í RELIGIONS

*Volume Eighteen*

**Alain Locke**  
**Faith and Philosophy**





# Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions

(formerly *Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*)

ANTHONY A. LEE, General Editor

*Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History*, Volume One,  
edited by Moojan Momen (1982).

*From Iran East and West*, Volume Two,  
edited by Juan R. Cole and Moojan Momen (1984).

*In Iran*, Volume Three, edited by Peter Smith (1986).

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ALAIN LOCKE

Inscribed "To James Weldon Johnson,  
in esteem and cordial regard, June 20, 1926. Alain Leroy Locke."

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*Volume Eighteen*

*Anthony A. Lee*

*General Editor*

# **Alain Locke**

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## **Faith and Philosophy**



*by*

*Christopher Buck, Ph.D.*



**Kalimat Press**  
**Los Angeles**

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Manufactured in the United States of America

First Edition

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Buck, Christopher, 1950-  
Alain Locke : faith and philosophy / by Christopher Buck.-- 1st ed.  
p. cm. -- (Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í religions ; v. 18)  
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-890688-38-X (pbk.)

1. Locke, Alain LeRoy, 1886-1954--Religion.
2. Locke, Alain LeRoy, 1886-1954--Philosophy. 3. Bahai Faith--United States. 4. African American intellectuals--Biography.
5. African American philosophers--Biography. I. Title. II. Series.

E185.97.L79B83 2005  
191--dc22

2004029582

Kalimát Press  
1600 Sawtelle Blvd., Suite 310  
Los Angeles, California 90025

[www.kalimat.com](http://www.kalimat.com)  
[orders@kalimat.com](mailto:orders@kalimat.com)  
[kalimatp@aol.com](mailto:kalimatp@aol.com)

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## Acknowledgements

Archival sources cited in this book were obtained primarily from the Alain Locke Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center (MSRC), Howard University, provided courtesy of Joellen ElBashir (Curator of Manuscripts), Dr. Ida Jones (Manuscript Librarian) whose assistance is gratefully acknowledged; from the National Bahá'í Archives (NBA), U.S. Bahá'í National Center, provided courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, archivist, whose assistance is also gratefully acknowledged; from the Bahá'í Archives of Washington, D.C., access provided courtesy of Ms. Anita Chapman, on behalf of the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of that city, whose kind assistance is deeply appreciated; and from the International Bahá'í Archives at the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa, Israel, provided courtesy of the Research Department on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, which has given invaluable assistance not only for this project, but for the research in my previous books, *Symbol and Secret* (1995) and *Paradise and Paradigm* (1999), as well as for some of my other publications.

Funding for my research visit to Howard University in August 2001 was provided in large part by Anthony A. Lee on behalf of Kalimát Press, which has also underwritten most of the research costs incurred in requesting various documents from other archival collections. The Michigan State University Library interlibrary-loan staff have enabled me to access some relatively rare publications. I am also indebted to Gayle Morrison, editor-in-chief of the Bahá'í Encyclopedia Project, for her careful reading and critical comments on a previous version of this manuscript, as well as to Dr. Robert Stockman, Research Director at the Bahá'í National Center, for the detailed feedback that he has provided.



Any and all errors remain my own.

I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Dr. Seena Fazel, former co-editor of the *Bahá'í Studies Review* (the premier academic Bahá'í studies journal), for inviting me to contribute an original article on Alain Locke for publication (2002). This was the genesis of my research on Locke. Dr. Fazel later reprinted a slightly abridged revision of that article in the multi-author volume that he and John Danesh co-edited, *Search for Values* (2004). I also wish to thank Jay Parini, editor of the *American Writers* series, for soliciting my biographical and literary essay, "Alain Locke" (2004) which presented, for the first time in scholarship, a coherent view of Locke's philosophy of democracy and of his vision of America. Noteworthy for his interest as well, Dr. Richard W. Thomas, professor of history at Michigan State University, will anthologize the earlier Locke article in a volume on illustrious African American Bahá'ís (forthcoming). All this professional interest in Locke and the resulting publications have given this book project an immense impetus in crystallizing my thinking on Locke and sharpening my thesis.

Dr. Michael Rochester, former member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada and Professor Emeritus of Mathematical Physics at Memorial University of Newfoundland, sent me invaluable, hitherto-unknown information on Locke's Bahá'í "fireside" in Toronto in 1952—new data that attested Locke's Bahá'í commitment in the twilight of his life. And I owe a further debt of gratitude to Dr. Leonard Harris, professor of philosophy at Purdue University, and the leading authority on Alain Locke, for contributing the Foreword to this book.

For all her support and encouragement, I am deeply grateful to my loyal wife, Nahzy Abadi Buck who, among many other things, is currently my study partner in law school, in the adventure of our earning "Juris Doctor" degrees together. (I hope to teach constitutional law and to publish in the area of law and religion in the near future.) I thank my two excellent sons, Takur and Taraz, for their taking pride in my work and for reminding me that it is, in some ways, significant, even to today's youth. As my weight lifting partner, Takur has reinforced the moral strength I have needed in completing this project—whenever it was at its ebb and not moving forward—in addition to helping me finally bench press 225 lbs. Taraz, from time to time, has helped trou-

bleshoot the stressful, technical difficulties I have encountered while computing, and he continues to radiate much of the goodwill that keeps me going in moments of discouragement.

Among the many other individuals who provided moral support, I would like to recognize Mr. Kiser Barnes (member of the Universal House of Justice), who referred to Alain Locke as “my personal hero” at a private luncheon during my family’s Bahá’í pilgrimage to Israel in January 2003; and to Dr. Robert Henderson, Secretary-General of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, for his encouragement. Thanks also to my friend and colleague, Dr. Vibert White, Director of Public History, University of Central Florida; to my brother, Carter Buck, who is always there for me; and to all those in cyberspace and elsewhere who have provided virtual, moral support for this project at a close distance. I also thank Anthony A. Lee of Kalimát Press for editing this book. I might add that scholars have universally acclaimed *Studies in the Bábí and Bahá’í Religions*—of which *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy* is the eighteenth volume—as the premier monograph series in academic Bahá’í studies. This is an enduring legacy of Kalimát Press.

And to all my readers—especially those who see Alain Locke as one of our greatest Americans—I want to personally thank each and every one of you for reading this book, as each of us takes the moral opportunity to help bridge the racial divide that continues to abridge the quality of our American democracy. This book is dedicated to all those who agree with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s delight at the racial harmony he observed at a Bahá’í gathering in the home of Andrew J. Dyer in Washington, D.C. on 24 April 1912, when he exclaimed: “At the sight of such genuine love and attraction between the white and the black friends, I was so moved that I spoke with great love and likened this union of different colored races to a string of gleaming pearls and rubies.”

CHRISTOPHER BUCK  
December 2004  
Lansing, Michigan



## Foreword

Secular philosophies are often compared and contrasted with sacred doctrines. The comparison and contrast is especially revealing when the author of a philosophy has a personal history within the culture of the religion compatible with his philosophy. The psychology of a philosopher is then easily described as the result of influences from his religious background. The philosopher's arguments and beliefs, consequently, may be considered an epiphenomenon of his religious heritage, whether the philosopher was a member of the religion as a youth, later disaffected, or joined in adulthood. However, when a secular philosophy is developed in a completely different culture from the sacred doctrines with which the philosophy finds its closest association, then assessing the philosopher's psychology purely as an epiphenomenon of his religious heritage is not revealing, or at least not so clearly revealing, of cultural influences.

We are warranted to pause and consider the arguments the author offers for his philosophy that make it compatible with a sacred tradition rather than assume that it is an epiphenomenon of his religious heritage. This is so especially when the philosopher has a personal history significantly alien to the country, culture, and language community with which his philosophical treatises are so deeply associated. What is revealed, at the very least, when we compare and contrast such a philosopher's secular views and associated sacred doctrines, is an independence of mind. An independent mind is a prerequisite for developing a philosophy in ways antithetical to an author's personal history and religious heritage. Herein we find Alain Locke.

The same independence of mind that was required for Locke to develop a philosophy deeply comparable with a sacred tradition antithetical to his personal history and religious heritage is the same sort of independence of mind that makes it possible for any individual to join the Bahá'í Faith. It is at least an independence of mind that is needed to stand against racial and ethnic hatreds, vehement nationalisms masking meta-narratives of racial purity and historical exceptionalism. Locke evinces a cosmopolitanism.

Christopher Buck's masterful uncovering of Locke's affiliation with the Bahá'í religion is arguably far more intriguing since he had not been raised from birth as a member of the Bahá'í faith. It is intriguing because Locke maintains a relationship within the Bahá'í community in the face of interminable odds, failing to follow standard sacred protocols, while simultaneously developing his own philosophy. This required, at the very least, a fierce independence of mind and a strong determination to retain his Bahá'í affiliation.

Locke surmounts the cultural limitations of Christianity, African American suspicions of foreign doctrines, America's strict classifications of peoples into racial kinds, North American ethnocentricity against any ideas originating in the Middle East, language phobias and the elitism that places Arabic and Persian in a lower category of worthiness than English and Latin. Locke surmounts these barriers as the very first steps needed to even enter into a dialogue with Bahá'í principles. He does so although he is a child of privilege: one who benefits from the high-church status accorded Episcopalians, especially black Episcopalians, his national status as an American, language privilege as a native English speaker, his being a Harvard graduate, the first black Rhodes scholar, and a doctor of philosophy of philosophies—master of the “queen of all sciences.” Locke's views on democracy offer a unique way of thinking about cultural and religious diversity and its import for democracy, a link that is not often seen because we often fail to note that it takes an independence of mind to appreciate that there are radically different ways—in a democracy—of seeing. Locke walks away from these stifling influences under his own power. He walks along with the Bahá'ís.

Buck's *Faith and Philosophy* consequently is a reading about a marriage at a deeper level than the mere words “faith” and “philosophy.” Any single word is burdened with the limitation that it can point to, refer to, and symbolize only a narrow range of meanings. The con-

junction of two words such as “faith” and “philosophy” can suggest only a narrow range of relationships between the sacred and the secular. Even thinking that one sphere of thought may fertilize the other sphere (and vice versa) can only suggest so many possible cross-fertilizations. But the uncovering of Locke’s sojourn within the worlds of “faith” and “philosophy,” especially because it is the world of the Bahá’í faith and the world of a pragmatist philosophy, opens an unbounded set of meanings and relationships which independent minds can explore.

LEONARD HARRIS, PH.D.  
Professor, Department of Philosophy  
Purdue University



Photo by Addison N. Scurlock. Courtesy of the Moorland-Spangam Research Center, Howard University. Also available in Scurlock Studio Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

ALAIN LOCKE IN ACADEMIC REGALIA, ca. 1918  
Harvard University doctoral cap and gown with Oxford University  
hood. Locke received his Ph.D. in philosophy from Harvard in  
1918, the same year he embraced the Bahá'í Faith.

## Chapter One

# Introduction

Alain Locke democratized American culture and paved the way for the Civil Rights movement. During the Jim Crow era of American history, when civil rights were white rights, Locke was the genius behind the Harlem Renaissance, which David Levering Lewis aptly characterized as “Civil Rights by Copyright.”<sup>1</sup> Locke edited the monumental anthology, *The New Negro* (1925), hailed as the first national book of African America.<sup>2</sup> In so doing, Locke ingeniously used culture as a strategy for ameliorating racism and for winning the respect of powerful white elites as potential agents for social and political transformation. Awakening the black masses to their noble African heritage and instilling pride in unique black contributions to American life, Locke may well be regarded as “the Martin Luther King of African American culture.”<sup>3</sup>

Without Locke, there may not have been a Martin Luther King. The New Negro movement, for which Locke was the chief architect and spokesman, was singularly responsible for inculcating and cultivating the requisite group consciousness and solidarity necessary for the mobilization of African Americans during the Civil Rights era. As Martin Luther King was a man of faith, Alain Locke was also. Based on newly discovered documentation of his conversion in 1918, we can now say with certainty that Locke was member of the Bahá'í Faith for over three decades.



As the youngest independent world religion, the Bahá'í Faith was clearly a leader in advocating racial harmony and full integration during the Jim Crow era. Through his service on several national Bahá'í committees, Locke was instrumental in organizing a number of “race amity” events. At various times, Locke lent his prestige to the Bahá'í Faith: he publicly identified himself as a Bahá'í in a 1952 issue of *Ebony* magazine, for example. By virtue of his being both a race leader and a cultural pluralist, Locke is certainly the most important Western Bahá'í to date in terms of his impact on American history and thought. This book documents and demonstrates the synergy between Locke's profession as a philosopher and his confession as a Bahá'í, which confirmed his commitment to racial harmony as a necessary prerequisite to world peace.

In his foreword, Leonard Harris, who is the leading authority on Locke today, provides an orientation to both the historical importance of Alain Locke and his significance for America. The title of this book, *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy*, addresses the synergy between Locke's Bahá'í-inspired universal value system and his philosophy of democracy, expressive of his role as a cultural pluralist. Synergy may be defined as a reciprocal intensification of intellectual or spiritual energies, where the combined effect is greater than the sum of the two forces working separately. My thesis of a synergy of consciousness between the secular (philosophical) and sacred (spiritual) dimensions of Locke's genius posits a dynamic relationship between Locke's religious values as a Bahá'í and his secular (and perhaps no less sacred) philosophical commitment as a pragmatist. Harris has underscored the importance of “uncovering” Alain Locke's “sojourn within the worlds of ‘faith’ and ‘philosophy,’ especially because it is the world of the Bahá'í faith and the world of a pragmatist philosophy.” Cultural pluralism and Bahá'í principles are two primary energies that combined in Locke to produce an intensification of his thought.

Harvard, Harlem, Haifa—philosophy, art, and religion—these are keys to unlocking the paradoxes of the life and thought of Alain LeRoy Locke. Harvard prepared Locke for distinction as the first black Rhodes Scholar in 1907, and in 1918, awarded Locke his Ph.D. in Philosophy, thereby insuring his position as chair of the Department of Philosophy at Howard University from 1927 until his retirement in 1953. Harlem became the Mecca for the Harlem Renaissance (1919-1934),<sup>4</sup> or the “New Negro Movement,” of which Locke was orchestrator and

ideological genius, and which established him as an elder statesman of African American art in later life.<sup>5</sup> Haifa is the world center of the Bahá'í Faith, the religion to which Locke converted in 1918, the same year he received his doctorate from Harvard. Colleagues and students thought him saintly, but not particularly religious. Outside of his professional life, however, Locke was actively involved in Bahá'í efforts to promote ideal race relations, which Bahá'ís termed “race amity.” Whereas Harlem immortalized Locke as a “race man” through the diplomacy of art, and whereas Harvard shaped Locke as a race leader through the philosophy of cultural pluralism, Haifa—the Bahá'í Faith—deeply influenced Locke as a champion of race unity. These three dimensions—race interests, race relations, and race unity—for which Harvard, Harlem, and Haifa are symbols, are facets of Locke's mind. Of these three approaches to understanding and appreciating Locke, the least understood is Locke's Bahá'í experience. This is the last major piece of the puzzle needed to complete our picture of him.

A popular publication, *The Black 100*, ranks Alain Locke as the 36th most influential African American ever.<sup>6</sup> “Arguably Locke was the first black American,” writes Winston Napier, “seeking to challenge European cultural imperialism through the formal articulation of a black aesthetics.”<sup>7</sup> Eric King Watts declares: “Only a few claims regarding the Harlem Renaissance are uncontested: that *The New Negro* stands as the ‘keystone,’ the ‘revolutionary’ advertisement, and the ‘first national book’ of African America is one of them.”<sup>8</sup> The publication of *The New Negro* is Locke's greatest claim to fame, although Locke's contribution as a cultural pluralist has not yet been fully appreciated. A special issue of *The Survey Graphic*<sup>9</sup> on race (March 1925), for which Locke served as guest editor, was entitled *Harlem, Mecca of the New Negro*, which Locke subsequently recast as an anthology, *The New Negro: An Interpretation of Negro Life*.<sup>10</sup> A landmark in black literature, it was an instant success. Locke contributed five essays: “Foreword,” “The New Negro,” “Negro Youth Speaks,” “The Negro Spirituals,” and “The Legacy of Ancestral Arts.”

In his new preface to the reissue of *The New Negro* anthology in 1968, Robert Hayden (a well known Bahá'í and America's first black poet-laureate<sup>11</sup>) echoes Locke's vision of the Harlem Renaissance as rooted in the transracial experience of America: “The Negro Renaissance was clearly an expression of the *Zeitgeist*, and its writers and artists were open to the same influences that their white counter-

parts were. What differentiated the New Negroes from other American intellectuals was their race consciousness, their group awareness, their sense of sharing a common purpose.”<sup>12</sup>

Locke was a self-acknowledged “race man.” These were African American leaders “who came of age during the era of scientific racism, embraced nineteenth-century middle-class values, and maintained a deep faith in the curative powers of liberalism.”<sup>13</sup> At one level, this may be a good description of Locke, but it is not an adequate one. For beyond his work in promoting “cultural racialism,” Locke was an important voice of America in race relations.

Again, this is only part of the picture. Locke’s distinguished career as head of the Philosophy Department at Howard University (1921-1953) is matched by his prominent role in furthering adult education for African Americans. Locke was the first African American president of the American Association for Adult Education (AAAE), a predominantly white, professional society.<sup>14</sup> He helped found the prestigious Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion, which he chaired in 1945. Locke served on the editorial board of the *American Scholar* and was a regular contributor to national journals and magazines.<sup>15</sup>

There is yet another dimension that deserves mention. Locke was both a quintessential American idealist and an erstwhile world citizen. His legacy as a cultural pluralist, even as an acknowledged “father of multiculturalism,” renews his relevance for us today. A revalorization of his perspective on race relations and democracy, on both a national and a world scale, may allow Locke to speak to far more receptive audiences today than in his own time. Happily, much of this work has already been done. Recent scholarship on Locke has brought his work “back to influential life.”<sup>16</sup>

Yet his identity and contributions as a Bahá’í remain relatively obscure. The present study bridges a gap in scholarship on Locke by examining the Bahá’í orbit of his life. In an effort not to overemphasize the importance of this dimension of Locke’s life, an honest and even critical assessment of Locke’s relationship to Bahá’í principles and to the Bahá’í community will serve to constrain any grandiose claims on Locke as a Bahá’í. Indeed, as a public intellectual, Locke was not openly a Bahá’í except at Bahá’í-sponsored events. And even there, Locke’s Bahá’í identity was not always made clear. Moreover, as Lawrence Durrell once said in another context, one could say that Locke was one of the “devout, saddled with doubt.”

But he is no less valuable for that: for Locke is the most profound and important western Bahá'í philosopher to date. Gayle Morrison rightly calls him “the outstanding black intellectual”<sup>17</sup> among the early Bahá'ís. He knew his audiences were not ready to consider the teachings of what would strike them as a non-Christian religion. Locke himself might have explained his guarded approach as a “transvaluation” of Bahá'í principles and their promotion in what Bahá'ís commonly refer to as “indirect teaching” (what some faith-communities today call “leavening”).

There is no formal discipline of Bahá'í philosophy as such. Nonetheless, a close comparison of Locke's Bahá'í essays with his philosophical essays discloses some striking resonances, from shared vocabulary to parallel concepts. This study will serve as a reflection on race relations in America and on the Bahá'í notion of America's “destiny” in promoting “world democracy.” First examining his self-portrait (or “psychograph”), then the circumstances of his conversion to the Bahá'í Faith in 1918, and his two subsequent pilgrimages to Haifa in the Holy Land, this book will go on to chronicle Locke's “race amity” activities, review his Bahá'í essays and speeches, try to understand and make sense of his estrangement from and rededication to the Bahá'í community, and provide a typology of Locke's philosophy of democracy, particularly as it applies to America and its world role.

Since religion was for him a private matter, the rediscovery of Locke's embrace of the Bahá'í Faith in 1918 solves some riddles, yet it also poses questions. While lecturing on race relations at Howard (1915-1916) and immersed in theories of value as a graduate student at Harvard as an Austin Teaching Fellow (1916-1917), Locke was attracted to the Bahá'í value system and its promotion of “race amity”—resulting in his conversion. Locke's faith as a Bahá'í and his philosophy of value ultimately combined to produce, in Locke, his role as a statesman of intergroup relations and diplomat among races, as demonstrated in his multi-faceted, dimensional view of democracy. For Locke, the function of religion in terms of values, and therefore the function of the Bahá'í Faith, was “that of integrating the recognized values of life and reinforcing them in the direction of a conservation or stabilization of values.”<sup>18</sup> Religion, furthermore, was “Ethical . . . and Moral valuation cosmically enlarged through ideal presuppositions, and reflectively conditioned attitude.”<sup>19</sup>



The current academic literature on Locke gives only passing mention to his worldview as a Bahá'í or ignores it altogether. Within the Bahá'í context as well, with one exception,<sup>20</sup> there is no literature on Locke. By further developing Mason's initial work on Locke's Bahá'í identity and its presumed interaction with his thinking as a philosopher,<sup>21</sup> this study hopes to supply this missing dimension of Locke that has been glossed over in the literature. Certainly, Locke himself would have acknowledged the impact of his Bahá'í experience on his life in general and probably on his philosophy in particular. As will be shown, the converse holds true as well, in that much of Locke's formal philosophical thinking informed his Bahá'í perspective.

This book will complement prior scholarship by taking a closer look at the Bahá'í dimension of Locke's life and thought. It will also explore how the synergy between Locke's Bahá'í essays and philosophical essays permit one to speak of an inchoate "Bahá'í philosophy" in his work. This study also argues that Locke had a fluid hierarchy of values—loyalty, tolerance, reciprocity, cultural relativism, and pluralism—and that this hierarchy represents a progression and application of quintessential Bahá'í ideals. Locke's distinction as a "Bahá'í philosopher" may therefore be justified on ideological as well as historical grounds. To use his own words, Locke translated Bahá'í ideals "into more secular terms" so that "a greater practical range will be opened up for the application and final vindication of the Bahá'í principles" in order to achieve "a positive multiplication of spiritual power."<sup>22</sup>

## Notes

1. David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin, 1998) p. xxviii.

2. "Perhaps our first national book." Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), cited (but with no page ref.) by Mark Helbling, *The Harlem Renaissance: The One and the Many* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999) p. 46.

3. Christopher Buck, "Alain Locke," in *American Writers: A Collection of Literary Biographies*, Supplement XIV, edited by Jay Parini. (Farmington Hills, MI: Scribner's Reference/The Gale Group, 2004) pp. 195-219. See also Buck, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism" in *Search for Values: Ethics in Baha'i Thought. Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, Vol. 16, edited by Seena Fazel and John Danesh (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 2004) pp. 94-158; and Buck, "Alain Locke: Bahá'í Philosopher," *Baha'i Studies Review*, Vol. 10 (2001/2002) pp. 7-49.

4. Although dates for the Harlem Renaissance rarely agree, Lewis writes: "From its authentic beginnings in 1919, with soldiers returning from the Great War, to its sputtering end in 1934, with the Great Depression deaths of two principals, the racial goals of the Harlem Renaissance remained constant." (Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, p. xxviii.) The 1935 Harlem race riots marked the definitive end of the Harlem Renaissance by exposing its failure to effect any real social and economic change.

5. From youth, Locke was enamored of classical and European culture. Although he wrote poetry which he privately circulated, and he once attempted a novel, Locke remained a frustrated artist, but a brilliant promoter of African American (and African) art. See Jeffrey Conrad Stewart, "A Biography of Alain Locke: Philosopher of the Harlem Renaissance, 1886-1930," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1979) p. 59.

6. 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]) p. 137.

7. Winston Napier, "Affirming Critical Conceptualism: Harlem Renaissance Aesthetics and the Formation of Alain Locke's Social Philosophy," *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 39, no.1 (Spring 1998) p. 94.

8. Eric King Watts, "African American Ethos and Hermeneutical Rhetoric: An Exploration of Alain Locke's *The New Negro*." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, Vol. 88, no.1 (February 2002) pp. 19-32, citing Houston Baker, Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) p. 85.

9. Alain Locke, "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro." *Survey Graphic*. Vol. 6, no. 6 (March 1925). Online at <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/harlem/contents.html>.

10. Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro* (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, Inc., 1925). Reprinted, with a new preface by Robert Hayden (New York: Atheneum, 1969).

11. See Christopher Buck, "Robert Hayden" in *Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*, edited by Jay Parini (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) Vol. 2, pp. 177-81.

12. Hayden, "Preface" for *The New Negro*.

13. Jonathan Scott Holloway, *Confronting the Veil: Abram Harris, Jr., E. Franklin Frazier, and Ralph Bunche, 1919-1941* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002) p. 9.

14. Leonard Harris, "Alain Leroy Locke" in *American National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) Vol. 13, pp. 796-98; Rudolph A. Cain, "Alain Leroy Locke: Crusader and Advocate for the Education of African American Adults," *Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 64, no. 1 (1995) p. 87; Michael R. Winston, "Locke, Alain LeRoy," in Rayford W. Logan and Michael R. Winston, eds., *Dictionary of American Negro Biography* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1982) p. 403. See also Tommy Lee Lott, "Alain LeRoy Locke" in Michael P. Kelly, ed., *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* (Oxford University Press, 1998) pp. 160-65; and Sandra L. Quinn-Musgrove, "Lost in Blackness: Alain LeRoy Locke," *Ethnic Forum*, Vol. 12, no. 2 (1992) pp. 48-68. See also Jeffrey Stewart, "A Biography of Alain Locke," abstracted in *Dissertation Abstracts International*, Vol. 42, no. 4 (1981) pp. 1696-97-A.

15. Winston, "Locke, Alain LeRoy," p. 403.



16. Judith Green, "Cosmopolitan Unity Amidst Valued Diversity: Alain Locke's Vision of Deeply Democratic Transformation," in *Deep Democracy: Community, Diversity, and Transformation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999) p. 132.
17. Gayle Morrison, *To Move the World: Louis G. Gregory and the Advancement of Racial Unity in America* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982) p. 4, note.
18. Alain Locke, *The Problem of Classification in the Theory of Values* (Ph.D. dissertation: Harvard University, 1917) p. 233.
19. *Ibid.*, p. "233 a" (evidently a later insert, being a chart entitled, "Religious Values.")
20. Mason, "Alain Locke's Social Philosophy," *World Order*, Vol. 13, no. 2 (1979) pp. 25-34.
21. Ernest Mason, "Alain Locke's Social Philosophy." See also Mason, "Alain Locke on Race and Race Relations," *Phylon* Vol. 40, no. 4 (1979) pp. 342-50. Cf. Yvonne Ochillo, "The Race-Consciousness of Alain Locke," *Phylon*, Vol. 47, no. 3 (1986) pp. 173-81.
22. 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) pp. 372-74. Reprint (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980). Reprinted again in Locke, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, ed. by Leonard Harris (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989) pp. 133-38 [above quote from p. 137]. Harris' reference on p. 133 n. should be emended to read, "Volume IV, 1930-1932" (not "V, 1932-1934").





ALAIN LOCKE

## Chapter Two

# Self-Portrait

In 1935, at the age of fifty, Locke wrote in his autobiographical “psychograph”<sup>1</sup>: “I should like to claim as life-motto the good Greek principle,— ‘Nothing in excess,’ but I have probably worn instead as the badge of circumstance,—‘*All things with a reservation.*’”<sup>2</sup>

While a Bahá’í for most of his adult life, Locke had some reservations about ways in which the Bahá’í Faith was understood and applied by some of his fellow Bahá’ís. His reservations may contribute to a richer understanding of Bahá’í principles as he interpreted them through his unique perspective as a race leader as well as a “cultural cosmopolitan” steeped in the “philosophy of value,” allied with “cultural pluralism and value relativism.”<sup>3</sup> Cultural pluralism is a commitment that “accords basic respect and recognition to culturally diverse groups.”<sup>4</sup> It differs from cultural diversity, which is simply a social fact. This study will thus situate Locke within the context of those intellectual formations—value theory, pragmatism, Boasian anthropology, cultural pluralism, and Bahá’í principles—that deeply influenced him.

*Early life:* An African American (Negro) child of Northern Reconstruction with an enlightened upbringing, Locke was the only son of Pliny Ishmael Locke (1850-1892) and Mary (Hawkins) Locke, who had been engaged for sixteen years before they married.<sup>5</sup> Alain LeRoy Locke was born on 13 September 1885 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, not in



1886, as commonly thought.<sup>6</sup> For reasons that have eluded historians, Locke always represented his year of birth as 1886.<sup>7</sup> At birth, though his name was recorded as “Arthur,” his parents may have named him “Alan.” In the Alain Locke Papers, there is a note in Locke’s handwriting that reads:

Alain Leroy Locke—Alan registered as Arthur (white) Phila Vital Statistics owing prejudice of Quaker physician Isaac Smedley to answering question of race. [B]orn 13 So. 19th Street, Philadelphia, Pa. Sunday between 10 and 11 A.M. September 13, 1885. Called Roy as a child[,] Alain from 16 on. [illegible] First born son. 2nd brother born 1889—lived 2 months[,] named Arthur first selected for me.<sup>8</sup>

A city hall note by the chief clerk of the Philadelphia Department of Public Health and Charities (1909?) confirms 1885 as the year of his birth.<sup>9</sup> Thus young Roy became “Alan” from the age of sixteen, but with the French spelling, “Alain” (close to the American pronunciation of “Allen”), and “Roy” was transposed as the middle name “LeRoy.” Although, in later years, he typically signed his middle name as “Leroy,” on his Howard University letterhead “LeRoy” was preferred, at least in the earlier years.<sup>10</sup> He also signed his middle name “LeRoy” when he first taught at Howard.<sup>11</sup> As to why he represented his year of birth as 1886 rather than 1885, Locke may have wanted to avoid the embarrassment of having future biographers discover that he was registered as white on his birth certificate.

In his psychograph, Locke reflects on his childhood: “Philadelphia, with her birthright of provincialism flavoured by urbanity and her petty bourgeois psyche with the Tory slant, at the start set the key of paradox; circumstance compounded it by decreeing me as a Negro a dubious and doubting sort of American and by reason of racial inheritance making me more of a pagan than a Puritan, more of a humanist than a pragmatist.”<sup>12</sup> While Locke himself did not explain what he meant by the “key of paradox,” it appears to be a reference to twists of fate and to tensions between his cultural nationalism and integrationist universalism—perhaps never fully resolved. In Philadelphia, Locke led a privileged (relative to the lives of the vast majority of other black Americans at the turn of the twentieth century) and somewhat sheltered life.<sup>13</sup> A biographer notes that Locke was a “child of privilege in a black household whose ancestors on both sides had been free before 1865.”<sup>14</sup>

Locke’s family background shows how nature and nurture com-

bined to provide him with rare educational advantages. Locke's paternal grandfather, Ishmael Locke (1820-1852), attended Cambridge University with support from the Society of Friends. Ishmael was employed as a teacher in Salem, New Jersey, and over four years established schools in Liberia. There he met and married Alain Locke's paternal grandmother Sarah Shorter Hawkins, who was from Kentucky. Ishmael Locke later served as principal of the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia, following his tenure as headmaster of a school in Providence, Rhode Island.<sup>15</sup>

Locke's father, Pliny Ishmael Locke, married Locke's mother on 20 August 1879. His mother Mathilda Saunders, born in Liberia, had a German father. Pliny (called "Dick") graduated from the Institute in 1867, and taught mathematics there for two years, after which he taught freedmen in North Carolina during the early years of Reconstruction. He also held a position as an accountant in the Freedman's Bureau and the Freedman's Bank and was private secretary to General O. O. Howard. He was accepted to the Howard University Law Department (later called the School of Law), and graduated in 1874, one of only seven graduates at the time.<sup>16</sup> That year, Pliny returned to Philadelphia as a clerk in the United States Post Office. He died in 1892,<sup>17</sup> of "consumption and aftermath of African fear [fever?]."<sup>18</sup>

Locke's mother, Mary Jane Hawkins, was from a family of free blacks, among whom were soldiers (who had fought with valor during the Civil War) and missionaries to Africa under the Society of Friends. Mary Hawkins was a descendant of Charles Shorter, a free Negro who had fought in the War of 1812.<sup>19</sup> She was educated at the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia. Mary Locke supported herself and her family as a teacher in Camden and Camden County. She was a disciple of the humanist and rabbi Felix Adler (d. 1933), who believed that all religions had a common ethical basis. She joined the Society for Ethical Culture, which Adler founded in 1876. It was liberal on racial matters. Adler proposed the First Universal Races Congress held in 1911, to the American section of which he and W. E. B. Du Bois were elected co-secretaries.<sup>20</sup> Adler invited Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois to lecture at the Society, and encouraged black students to enroll in his own school.<sup>21</sup> His mother's role as both a teacher and a humanist likely left its imprint on Locke, who described himself as "more of a humanist than a pragmatist."<sup>22</sup> Locke had an Episcopal upbringing, and during his youth he was enamored of Greek philosophy.<sup>23</sup> Later



he found, as Leonard Harris puts it, a “spiritual home” in the Bahá’í Faith.<sup>24</sup>

Stricken at 3:10 p.m. with “Apoplexy,” Mary Locke died at 8:15 p.m. on 23 April 1922,<sup>25</sup> “at 71, when I was thirty-six.”<sup>26</sup> Locke would always remember her death as “the Sunday after Easter,” and faithfully spoke of it for years after.<sup>27</sup> Locke described his mother as “Mulatto” and 1/8 English, with “medium brown” skin and “Medium hair soft,” her nose “slightly aquiline.”<sup>28</sup>

In a letter dated 28 June 1922 to Agnes Parsons, Locke disclosed that his mother had been favorably disposed to the Bahá’í Faith: “Mother’s feeling toward the Cause [the Bahá’í Faith], and the friends [Bahá’ís] who exemplify it, was unusually receptive and cordial for one who had reached conservative years,—it was her wish that I identify myself more closely with it.” At the end of the letter, Locke speaks of the Bahá’í Faith as “this movement for human brotherhood.”<sup>29</sup> To the best of his ability—given the extraordinary demands placed upon him as an academic, lecturer, cultural critic, and educator—Locke lived up to his mother’s wish over the next three decades.

*University Education:* Locke had a black middle-class upbringing, but with an unusual education. In his infancy, Locke was stricken with rheumatic fever, which permanently damaged his heart (an inhibitive factor in Locke’s later activities). After this episode, Locke dealt with his “rheumatic heart” by seeking “compensatory satisfactions” in books, piano, and violin.<sup>30</sup> Only six years old when his father died, Locke’s mother sent him to one of the Ethical Culture schools, which was a pioneering, experimental program of Froebelian pedagogy (after Friedrich Froebel [d. 1852], who opened the first kindergarten). By the time he enrolled in Central High School of Philadelphia (1898-1902), Locke was already an accomplished pianist and violinist. From 1902 to 1904, Locke attended the Philadelphia School of Pedagogy.<sup>31</sup> Locke graduated second in his class in 1904. That year, Locke entered Harvard as an honor student. He was one of only a few African American undergraduates.

As a philosophy major, Locke studied under George Herbert Palmer, Josiah Royce, Hugo Münsterberg, and Ralph Barton Perry.<sup>32</sup> Remarkably, Locke completed his four-year program in only three years. During this time, he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. In 1907, Locke won the Bowdoin Prize—Harvard’s most prestigious academic

award—for his essay, “The Literary Heritage of Tennyson.”<sup>33</sup> Locke also passed qualifying examinations in Latin, Greek, and mathematics for the Rhodes Scholarship (the oldest international fellowships), which had just been established in 1902.<sup>34</sup> In his Rhodes Scholarship interview, Locke stated what one of his objectives for studying abroad was: “Besides the further education, I want to see the race problem from the outside. I don’t want to run away from it, but I do want to see it in perspective.”<sup>35</sup> At last, Locke made history and headlines in May 1907 as America’s first—and last, until 1960—African American Rhodes Scholar. He graduated *magna cum laude* (“with great honor”) with his bachelor’s degree in philosophy that same year.<sup>36</sup> Rejected by five Oxford colleges, Locke was finally admitted to Hertford College. On his scholarship, Locke studied at Oxford from 1907 to 1910.<sup>37</sup>

As a Harvard senior in 1905, Locke met Horace Kallen, a German-born Jew who was a graduate teaching assistant in a course on Greek philosophy—taught by George Santayana—in which Locke had enrolled.<sup>38</sup> This was the beginning of an association that lasted for many years. Kallen recorded some personal observations about Locke as a young man. Locke was “very sensitive, very easily hurt.” Recalling a conversation at Harvard, Kallen writes that Locke would strenuously insist that: “I am a human being,” that, “We are all alike Americans,” and that his “color ought not to make any difference.”<sup>39</sup> This is corroborated by a letter Locke wrote to his mother, Mary Locke, shortly after having been awarded his Rhodes Scholarship, in which he insists: “I am not a race problem. I am Alain LeRoy Locke.”<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, in that era color made all the difference. The prevailing social reality was that Locke’s self-image was really a wish-image. Two years later, on a Sheldon traveling fellowship, Kallen ended up at Oxford at the same time as Locke.

At Oxford, recommencing their earlier conversation, Locke asked Kallen, “[W]hat difference does the difference [of race] make?” “In arguing out those questions,” Kallen recounts, “the phrase ‘cultural pluralism’ was born.”<sup>41</sup> While the term itself was thus coined by Kallen in this historic conversation with Locke,<sup>42</sup> it was really Locke who developed the concept into a full-blown philosophical framework for the melioration of African Americans. Although distancing himself from Kallen’s purist and separatist conception of it, Locke was part of the cultural pluralist movement that flourished between the 1920s and the 1940s.

Kallen describes a racial incident concerning a Thanksgiving Day dinner hosted at the American Club at Oxford. Locke was not invited, because of the “gentlemen from Dixie who could not possibly associate with Negroes.”<sup>43</sup> Elsewhere, Kallen is more blunt: “[W]e had a race problem because the Rhodes Scholars from the South were bastards. So they had a Thanksgiving dinner which I refused to attend because they refused to have Locke.”<sup>44</sup> In fact, even before they left for Oxford, these Southern Rhodes Scholars had “formally appealed to the Rhodes trustees to overturn Locke’s award”<sup>45</sup>—but to no avail. “What got Kallen particularly upset, however,” according to Louis Menand, “was the insult to Harvard.”<sup>46</sup>

In support of this, Menand cites a letter to Harvard English professor Barrett Wendell (1855-1921), in which Kallen speaks of overcoming his admitted aversion to blacks through his loyalty to Harvard and by virtue of his personal respect for Locke as well. After having invited Locke to tea, as his guest, in lieu of the Thanksgiving dinner, Kallen writes that, “it is personally repugnant to me to eat with him . . . but then, Locke is a Harvard man and as such he has a definite claim on me.”<sup>47</sup> The irony is that Kallen harbored the very same prejudices as the Southern Rhodes Scholars did, but not to the same degree. “As you know, I have neither respect nor liking for his race,” Kallen writes, “—but individually they have to be taken, each on his own merits and value, and if ever a Negro was worthy, this boy is.”<sup>48</sup> Locke was deeply wounded by the Thanksgiving snub: “Now, the impact of that kind of experience left scars,” remarks Kallen.<sup>49</sup> And it wasn’t just the prejudice of his fellow American peers that so disaffected Locke, for he was almost as critical of British condescension as he was of American racism. In 1909, Locke published a critique of Oxford (“Oxford Contrasts”<sup>50</sup>), that was particularly critical of its aristocratic pretensions.<sup>51</sup>

He found social acceptance elsewhere. Locke personally founded the “Oxford Cosmopolitan Club,” which attracted a number of international students (British “colonials”). According to Posnock, “This group soon became Locke’s intimate circle.”<sup>52</sup> For years to come, Locke nurtured these contacts through extensive correspondence. While “socially Anglophile,” as he says in his psychograph, Locke found himself increasingly drawn to his sense of “race loyalty.”<sup>53</sup> As evidence of this, Locke helped establish the African Union Society and served as its secretary. Its constitution stated the society’s purpose



Courtesy of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University

**ALAIN LOCKE WITH THE OXFORD COSMOPOLITAN CLUB**

comprised mainly of Oxford University students from Norway, Russia, Scotland, South Africa, and India.

was to cultivate “thought and social intercourse between its members as prospective leaders of the African Race.”<sup>54</sup> Indeed, it was at Oxford that a crucial transformation took place: At entrance, Locke saw himself as a cosmopolitan. On exit, Locke resolved to be a race leader.<sup>55</sup> Hence, in his psychograph, Locke describes himself as “a cultural cosmopolitan, but perforce an advocate of cultural racialism as a defensive countermove for the American Negro.”<sup>56</sup> In a letter to his mother written while he was at Oxford, Locke reflected: “Oxford is a training-school for the governing classes, and has taught your son its lesson.”<sup>57</sup> The Oxford experience steeled Locke’s sense of destiny as a non-chauvinistic “advocate of cultural racialism.”<sup>58</sup>

So acutely did the Thanksgiving Day dinner incident traumatize Locke that he left Oxford without taking a degree. He spent the next academic year studying Kant at the University of Berlin and touring Eastern Europe. Locke mentions in his psychograph that, while at Oxford, he was “but dimly aware of the new realism of the Austrian philosophy of value.” During his study at the University of Berlin in 1910-1911, Locke became conversant with the “Austrian school” of anthropology, also known as philosophical anthropology, under the tutelage of Franz Brentano, Alexius von Meinong, Christian Freiherr von Ehrenfels, Paul Natorp, and others.

In an undated letter to Booker T. Washington, Locke announced his intention of “fulfilling some of the preliminary qualifications for a German doctorate should time and money permit.”<sup>59</sup> In his reply of 11 January 1911, Washington ended by saying, “I shall follow your work with a great deal of interest, and hope for you the greatest success.”<sup>60</sup> To have received such interest from America’s foremost “race man” of the day must have been a source of great encouragement to Locke. They ended up seeing each other a year later in Locke’s home town, Philadelphia, and traveling together two months later in Florida.<sup>61</sup> Evidently, they had first met at the Hotel Manhattan in New York on 18 April 1910.<sup>62</sup> In a “Biographical Memo,” Locke states: “Returning home in 1911, I spent six months traveling in the South,—my first close-range view of the race problem, and there acquired my life-long avocational interest in encouraging and interpreting the artistic and cultural expression of Negro life, for I became deeply convinced of its efficacy as an internal instrument of group integration and morale and as an external weapon of recognition and prestige.”<sup>63</sup>

Locke preferred Europe to America. In Paris, he studied under

Bergson and others. There were moments when he resolved never to return to the United States. Reluctantly, he did so in 1911. In 1912, with the help of Booker T. Washington, Locke was hired onto the faculty of Howard University as an assistant professor of English.<sup>64</sup> If this had not happened, Washington had also extended an invitation to Locke to teach at Tuskegee Institute.<sup>65</sup>

*The Emergence of Locke the Philosopher:* From his academic education, Locke emerged as a philosopher in his own right. In the 1916-1917 academic year, Locke took a sabbatical from Howard University to take a position as an Austin Teaching Fellow at Harvard. Evidently, Locke wrote his doctoral dissertation during that academic year, although the basis for his dissertation can be traced to Locke's work at Oxford. Even prior to this, probably during his undergraduate years at Harvard, it was Harvard professor of philosophy Josiah Royce who originally inspired Locke's interest in the philosophy of value.<sup>66</sup>

During his graduate experience at Harvard, Locke explored the ideas of such great thinkers as Hugo Münsterberg and von Ehrenfels, as well as Kant and Hegel.<sup>67</sup> In his psychograph, Locke writes: "Verily paradox has followed me the rest of my days: at Harvard [as an undergraduate], clinging to the genteel tradition of Palmer, Royce and Münsterberg, yet attracted by the disillusion of Santayana and the radical protest of James: again I returned [as a graduate student] to work under Royce but was destined to take my doctorate in value theory under Perry."<sup>68</sup> Here, Locke discloses important links in his intellectual pedigree, which included the value theorists of Europe and the pragmatists of America.<sup>69</sup> Ralph Barton Perry was Locke's Ph.D. supervisor.

The essence of Locke's philosophy is captured in the first sentence of his 1935 essay, "Values and Imperatives," which states: "All philosophies, it seems to me, are in ultimate derivation philosophies of life and not of abstract, disembodied 'objective' reality; products of time, place and situation, and thus systems of timed history rather than timeless eternity."<sup>70</sup> Anchoring philosophy in life, Locke studied the determinative role of values in the human experience. Locke's ideal-types were what he called "value-types." Locke's "psychology of value-types" is based on his 263-page Harvard dissertation, *The Problem of Classification in the Theory of Values*.<sup>71</sup> This was an extension of an earlier essay he had written at Oxford.



Indeed, the underlying basis for Locke's philosophy was value theory. Value theory constituted the "pivot of Locke's thinking," which was "his belief that human values are central in determining the course of social life."<sup>72</sup> Briefly, Locke's philosophy consists of values referenced to feelings at the individual level, then projected as cultural norms at the societal level. Both among and within societies, conflicts arise. These culture wars within a society and value-conflicts between societies can be understood if they are systematically compared, and their differences can be negotiated if they are conceptually "translated." Some of these differences can be resolved once they are appreciated as functional equivalents. While the form of norms may differ, their function may be similar. In combining form and function, Locke provided a conceptual paradigm for cultural interpretation. This is the epistemological foundation for Locke's cultural pluralism.

To oversimplify, Locke's philosophical project is to ground philosophy in values, to anchor values in human experience ("feelings"), and to classify or correlate values with the complementary dimensions of human life. In "The Criteria of Value-Types," Locke justifies his systematization on the grounds that "value definition and value classification should be worked out upon the basis of some principle and method of analysis to commensurable terms."<sup>73</sup> Values are not "products of logical arrangement or definition."<sup>74</sup> Rather, "values cohere in natural groups and psychological kinds, which must be regarded as the underlying basis for any system of classification to which values can legitimately be subjected."<sup>75</sup>

In his dissertation, Locke states: "We have therefore taken values classed, rather roughly and tentatively, as Hedonic, Economic, Aesthetic, Ethical and Moral, Religious, and Logical, aiming to discover in terms of the generic distinctions of a value-psychology their type-unity, character, and specific differentiae with respect to other types."<sup>76</sup> In "Values and Imperatives," however, Locke reduces his taxonomy to four types of values, which I will represent with the acronym, REAL: (1) Religious; (2) Ethical/Moral; (3) Aesthetic/Artistic; (4) Logical/Scientific. Associated with these "value-types" are "Value-Feelings and Value-Presuppositions," which evidently correspond with "Modal Quality" and "Value-Predicates" in the chart opposite:

To simplify Locke's system, religion and ethics, science and art, represent the four primary "value provinces." These are both the battlefields of cultural conflicts and the potential common ground of mutual

## Locke's Typology of Values

Modal Quality	Value Type	Value-Predicates	Value Polarity	Value Polarity
<b>Exaltation—(Awe-Worship)</b>				
(1) Inner Ecstasy	<b>Religious</b>	Holy—Unholy	Holiness	Sin
(2) Religious Zeal		Good—Evil	Salvation	Damnation
<b>Tension—(Conflict-Choice)</b>				
(1) Conscience	<b>Ethical</b>	Good—Bad	Conscience	Temptation
(2) Dduty	<b>Moral</b>	Right—Wrong	Right	Crime
<b>Acceptance or Agreement—(Curiosity—Intellectual Satisfaction)</b>				
(1) Thought	<b>Logical</b>	Correct—Incorrect	Consistency	Contradiction
(2) Experience	<b>Scientific</b>	True—False	Certainty	Error
<b>Repose or Equilibrium</b>				
(1) Contemplation	<b>Aesthetic</b>	Beautiful—Ugly	Satisfaction	Disgust
(2) Creativity	<b>Artistic</b>	Fine—Unsatisfactory	Joy	Distress

(Harris, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 43)

respect through value transposition. The beauty and utility of Locke's paradigm is that it provides a key for decoding and drawing functional equivalences among the diversity of value systems that are part and parcel of cultures throughout history. To accomplish this, Locke favored a "historical-comparative approach" as "the only proper . . . way of understanding values, including particularly those of one's own culture and way of life."<sup>78</sup>

In 1918, Locke was awarded his Ph.D. in philosophy from Harvard. That same year, Locke became a Bahá'í. Locke was "perhaps the most deeply and exquisitely educated African American of his generation."<sup>79</sup> This assessment is brought into even sharper relief in the sobering knowledge that, as late as 1935—a full generation after Locke's own generation—three-fourths of all blacks had not gone beyond a fourth-grade education.<sup>80</sup> His "exquisite" education had prepared Locke for his greatest historical role, which was—to cite his psychograph—to become "a philosophical mid-wife to a generation of younger Negro poets, writers, artists."<sup>81</sup>

*Harvard, Locke as Philosopher:* Locke was deeply influenced by pragmatism, a contemporary philosophical movement that countered both idealism and realism. The word "pragmatism" actually dates back to Kant, who opposed it to egoism. But the American usage of it originated with Charles S. Peirce. Pragmatism correlates truth and experience, self and world. "Pragmatism is an account of the way people think," according to Menand, "the way they come up with ideas, form beliefs, and reach decisions."<sup>82</sup> Experience is real. It is no mere mental phenomenon. It is a dynamic interaction between self and world. Knowledge derives from experience. Truth is transformed by experience.

Pragmatism is process. It advocates a method. Ideas are relative to time and place. The truth of a proposition depends on its practical value, not on any intrinsic meaning. As with the scientific method, knowledge can be tested. Ideas must be tested by experience. This has profound cultural implications. Truth is judged by its consequences. It cannot be divorced from the practical and moral. America, it follows, is accountable to itself.

The originators of pragmatism include Charles Sanders Peirce (d. 1914), who claimed to have "invented" pragmatism and expounded its theory of meaning; William James (d. 1910) who developed pragma-

tism's theory of truth; and John Dewey (d. 1952), who contributed his notion of "instrumentalism" to the movement.<sup>83</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois had been a student of James.<sup>84</sup> Locke had a passion for James,<sup>85</sup> although he rejected his radical empiricism. Both Du Bois and Locke read James's Oxford lectures, *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909), as a philosophical allegory for making a "vital connection between pluralism and democracy."<sup>86</sup>

Pragmatists put a premium on experience. They sought to test the truth of ideas in actual experience as a "pragmatic" indicator. They also felt that their philosophical ideas had ethical and political consequences.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, Dewey felt that pragmatism provided a philosophical basis for democracy, which he viewed as an ethical principle that extended beyond politics to economics and social interactions as well.<sup>88</sup> Despite his influences, Locke pursued an independent course by deforming the master code of symbols that dominated the world of American philosophy and reforming them by means of what Houston Baker, Jr., called a *radical marronage*<sup>89</sup> or racial reorientation, in order that philosophy might have something meaningful to say about race relations.

Pragmatism gave birth to cultural pluralism, which Locke helped originate, develop, and promulgate with almost religious zeal. During the 1920s, the question as to what constitutes American identity was "a national preoccupation."<sup>90</sup> Posnock states that "pragmatism's answer" was "cultural pluralism," as opposed to the coercions of assimilation—the pressure to conform—in the American paradigm of the "melting pot."<sup>91</sup> Cultural pluralism (known now as multiculturalism) was Locke's philosophical faith—"a new Americanism" as he called it.<sup>92</sup> Compensating for liberalism's fixation on freedom, cultural pluralism provides a philosophical foundation for unity in diversity by extending the idea of democracy beyond individuals and individual rights to the equal recognition of cultural, racial, and other group rights.

Locke's philosophy is really a fusion of pluralism and relativism, as seen in the synonyms he uses for it. Cultural pluralism is variously referred to in Locke's writings as "cultural relativism," "critical relativism," and "value relativism."<sup>93</sup> In a speech entitled, "Cultural Relativism" (1930),<sup>94</sup> Locke developed his own notion of what cultural relativism means and the purpose behind it. He begins his speech by making a vital connection between philosophy and human values:

I feel it quite an opportunity to read before you this paper on cultural relativism. As a topic it is far off the traditional middle of the philosophers' road . . .

In my humble judgment the new highway of philosophy will proceed in the direction of the philosophy of society in general, and a philosophy of culture in particular. Social values,—today treated either so formalistically or else so unphilosophically, are the crux of this issue. . . . In some respects the greatest intellectual service remaining to be done is to establish from some source a criterion of culture—a world scale of social values. And whatever question [?] furnishes that will be the true orient of the contemporary mind. One of the chief factors in the making of a new world must be the remaking of our minds, not in the sense of new content, but in the sense of new attitudes, new and practical criteria of basic human values.<sup>95</sup> . . .

Occasionally a glimpse of objective relativity in the flash wisdom of an aphorism—Man is one, civilizations are many—the scientist has a country, but science has no country . . .<sup>96</sup>

Later in the speech, Locke states that progressive “thinkers of constructive purpose” are all “willing to judge social values by the standard of equivalence” and are also “willing to judge social ideals and customs on a functional basis.”

Locke then proceeds to his own definition of cultural relativism:

I am anxious at this point to define this cultural relativism more closely; lest it be confused on the one hand with vague sentimental cosmopolitanism or on the other with exotic neutrality. It is not cultural neutrality, though it does involve the interpretation of culture and all cultural values on the basis of functional constants and relatively equivalent variants. Such an attitude should bring us in view of basic common denominators which would scientifically correlate our values for truer comparison and scaling. It is a relativism that should be possible without losing belief in or loyalty to the common symbols and mind-sets of a particular culture. For, I take it, the scientific view, far from minimizing—actually reinforces the vital functional importance of these loyalties and their social patterns serving to unify and focus our group life. But such loyalties and attachments are compatible if founded on the more objective view that my patriotism and your patriotism, my sectarianisms and yours, though differing and often opposing one another, are functionally equivalent—and objectively identical.<sup>97</sup>

Locke's use of technical terms is not, however, always consistent. As Winston Napier points out, Locke's “semantic inconsistency clouds his argument.”<sup>98</sup> Strictly speaking, pluralism is a distinctive concept, while relativism is a normative one.<sup>99</sup> As Mason observes: “It is precisely the separation between pluralism and relativism that explains much of America's intolerance. For a plurality of ethnic groups simply

cannot exist within a society that refuses to recognize the relative and functional nature of values and institutions.”<sup>100</sup>

Locke’s critique of democracy centers around democracy’s need to develop a relativistic perspective to fit its pluralistic society.”<sup>101</sup> Cultural pluralism has since evolved into what is now known as “multiculturalism.”<sup>102</sup> Locke has recently been acknowledged as “the father of multiculturalism.”<sup>103</sup>

Locke embraced the Bahá’í Faith in 1918, the same year that he received his Ph.D. from Harvard. Rather than interpreting this as a coincidence, it makes more sense to see this as a convergence. Although the details remain sketchy, it is necessary therefore to reflect on the circumstances of his conversion. One might ask: Did Locke’s investigation of the Bahá’í Faith, which evidently occurred between the years 1915 and 1918, have any impact on his graduate work? To what extent is Bahá’í influence in evidence throughout Locke’s career, as reflected in his published as well as unpublished work? Was there reciprocal influence as well—a synergy between the two? These questions are essential to a proper study of Locke’s public legacy.

## Notes

1. This chapter is based, in part, on the autobiographical note that prefaced Locke’s first formal philosophical essay, “Values and Imperatives,” published when he was fifty years old (1935). Locke refers to this self-narrative as his “psychograph.” (Alain Locke, “Values and Imperatives,” in *American Philosophy, Today and Tomorrow*, ed. by Sidney Hook and Horace M. Kallen (New York: Lee Furman, 1935) pp. 313-33. Reprint: Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1968. Locke’s psychograph, “Alain Locke,” appears on p. 312. (This is the first of Locke’s essays in Leonard Harris, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, pp. 34-50.) In it, Locke does not directly mention the fact that he was a Bahá’í. But he does allude to it, calling himself a “universalist in religion.” Periodic references to Locke’s psychograph will be made throughout the chapter.

2. Cited by Horace M. Kallen, “Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism,” *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 54, no. 5 (28 February 1957) p. 121.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

4. Monique Deveaux, *Cultural Pluralism and Dilemmas of Justice* (London: Cornell University Press, 2000) p. 6.

5. Winston, “Locke, Alain LeRoy,” p. 398.

6. For verification of Locke’s birth date, I obtained a document issued by the “Department of Public Health and Charities, Bureau of Health” (City Hall, Philadelphia), Alain Locke Papers, Box 164-1, Folder 1, Manuscript Division, MSRC, Howard University. See note by Leonard Harris, “Rendering the Text,” in *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*.

7. This was the case when Locke filled out his “Bahá’í Historical Record” card. Under “Birthdate,” Locke had entered “September 13, 1886.” Bahá’í Historical Record Cards Collection, and Biographical Information Collection, National Bahá’í Archives, Wilmette, Ill (hereafter NBA).

8. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 2 (Autobiographical statements). Although his middle name was formally spelled “LeRoy,” in full signature he would write “Leroy,” as evident on his “Bahá’í Historical Record” card signature. Bahá’í Historical Record Cards Collection, and Biographical Information Collection, NBA.

9. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 2 (Autobiographical statements). Although his middle name was formally spelled “LeRoy,” in full signature he would write “Leroy,” as evident on his “Bahá’í Historical Record” card signature. Bahá’í Historical Record Cards Collection, and Biographical Information Collection, NBA.

10. See, for instance, Locke to Parsons, 21 October 1922, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist, enclosure sent 20 February 2001.

11. Locke to Cook, 10 Jan. 1913, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-21, Folder 46 (Cook, George William).

12. Kallen, “Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism,” p. 122.

13. Late in life, Locke reminisced about some of his childhood experiences. See Douglas K. Stafford, “Alain Locke: The Child, the Man, and the People,” *Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 30, no. 1 (Winter 1961) pp. 25-34.

14. M. Anthony Fitchue, “Locke and Du Bois: Two Major Black Voices Muzzled by Philanthropic Organizations,” *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, Issue 14 (Winter 1996-1997) p. 111. Online. JSTOR. Accessed 5 March 2001.

15. Winston, “Locke, Alain LeRoy,” p. 398.

16. Rayford W. Logan, *Howard University: The First Hundred Years 1867-1967* (New York: New York University Press, 1969) p. 50.

17. Winston, “Locke, Alain LeRoy,” p. 398, mistakenly reads “1891.”

18. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 2 (Autobiographical statements).

19. Winston, “Locke, Alain LeRoy,” p. 398.

20. Hutchison, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*, 40.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

22. Kallen, “Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism,” 122.

23. Harris, *Philosophy of Alain Locke*, 5.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-5.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 4 and 293.

26. “Biographical Memo: Alain (LeRoy) Locke,” Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 2 (Autobiographical statements). This memo was later published in *Twentieth Century Authors*, ed. Stanley Kunitz and Howard Haycroft (New York: 1942) p. 837, with a photograph of Locke bearing the erroneous caption, “J. L. Allen.” (Photocopy archived in the same folder.)

27. Locke to Charlotte Osgood Mason, 12 April 1934, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-71 (1934?).

28. [Untitled], Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 2 (Autobiographical statements).

29. Locke to Parsons, 28 June 1922, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA.

30. Winston, "Locke, Alain LeRoy," p. 398.
31. Mason, *Locke's Social Philosophy*, p. 25.
32. Harris, *Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 4.
33. Stewart, *A Biography of Alain Locke*, p. 53.
34. Winston, "Locke, Alain LeRoy," p. 398.
35. Qtd. in Stewart, *A Biography of Alain Locke*, p. 107.
36. Nancy Fraser, "Another Pragmatism: Alain Locke, Critical 'Race' Theory, and the Politics of Culture" in *The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke: A Reader on Value Theory, Aesthetics, Community, Culture, Race, and Education*, ed. by Leonard Harris (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999) p. 6.
37. Jeffrey C. Stewart, "A Black Aesthete at Oxford," *Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 34, no. 3 (1993) pp. 411-28.
38. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," p. 119.
39. Hutchison, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*, p. 85. See also Ross Posnock, *Color and Culture: Black Writers and the Making of the Modern Intellectual* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998) p. 191.
40. Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, p. 391.
41. Posnock, *Color and Culture*, p. 192.
42. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," p. 119.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
44. Hutchison, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*, p. 85.
45. Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001) p. 390.
46. Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, p. 390.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 391.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 391.
49. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," p. 122.
50. Alain Locke, "Oxford Contrasts," *Independent*, Vol. 67 (July 1909) pp. 139-42. See also Locke, "The American Temperament," *North American Review*, Vol. 194 (August 1911) pp. 262-70.
51. Harris, *Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 294.
52. Posnock, *Color and Culture*, p. 194.
53. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," p. 122.
54. Winston, "Locke, Alain LeRoy," p. 399.
55. Stewart, "A Black Aesthete at Oxford."
56. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," p. 122. Menand, *Metaphysical Club*, p. 390.
57. M. G. Brock and M. C. Curthoys, eds., *The History of the University of Oxford*, Vol. VII: *Nineteenth-Century Oxford*, Part 2 (Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 804, citing Jeffrey Green, *Black Edwardians* (1998) p. 154.
58. Cited by Horace M. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism." *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 54, no. 5 (28 February 1957) p. 121.
59. Locke to Washington, undated (probably January 1911), Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-91, Folder 55 (Washington, Booker T.).
60. Washington to Locke, 11 January 1911, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-91, Folder 55 (Washington, Booker T.).
61. Washington to Locke, 8 January 1912, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-

91. Folder 55 (Washington, Booker T.). Locke to Washington, 8 January 1912, cited by Jeffrey Stewart, *A Biography of Alain Locke*, p. 171.
92. "Can see you at Hotel Manhattan six o'clock this evening." Washington to Locke, 18 April 1910 (cablegram), Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-91, Folder 55 (Washington, Booker T.).
93. "Biographical Memo: Alain (LeRoy) Locke," Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 2 (Autobiographical statements).
94. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," p. 122. Menand, *Metaphysical Club*, p. 390.
95. Washington to Locke, 12 September 1912, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-91, Folder 55 (Washington, Booker T.).
96. Charles Molesworth, "Alain Locke and Walt Whitman: Manifestos and National Identity," in *The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke: A Reader on Value Theory, Aesthetics, Community, Culture, Race, and Education*, ed. by Leonard Harris (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999) p. 176.
97. William B. Harvey, "The Philosophical Anthropology of Alain Locke," in Russell J. Linnemann, ed., *Alain Locke: Reflections on a Modern Renaissance Man* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University, 1982) p. 18.
98. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," p. 122. For an analysis of Locke's dissertation on value theory, see Ernest Mason, "Alain Locke's Philosophy of Value," in Russell J. Linnemann, ed., *Alain Locke: Reflections*, pp. 1-16. Locke had originally intended to study with Royce as his Ph.D. supervisor, but Royce had died by the time Locke returned to Harvard.
99. Harris, *Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 10.
100. Alain Locke, "Values and Imperatives," in *American Philosophy, Today and Tomorrow*, ed. Sidney Hook and Horace M. Kallen (New York: Lee Furman, 1935) pp. 313-33. Reprint: Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1968. Leonard Harris selected this essay to be the first in his magnificent anthology, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, pp. 34-50.
101. Alain Locke, *The Problem of Classification in the Theory of Values*, p. 124.
102. Mason, "Alain Locke's Social Philosophy," 28.
103. Alain Locke, *The Problem of Classification in the Theory of Values*, p. 122.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid., p. 169.
107. Harris, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 43.
108. Ibid., p. 272
109. Molesworth, "Alain Locke and Walt Whitman," p. 175.
110. Fitchue, "Locke and Du Bois," p. 113.
111. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," p. 122.
112. Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, p. 351.
113. James T. Kloppenberg, "Pragmatism: An Old Name for Some New Ways of Thinking?" *Journal of American History*, Vol. 83, no. 1 (June 1996) p. 102, n. 3.
114. Posnock, *Color and Culture*, p. 184.
115. Harris, *Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 4.
116. Alain Locke, "Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy," in *Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion, Second Symposium* (New York: Conference on

Science, Philosophy and Religion, 1942). Reprinted in Harris, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 53.

87. Kloppenber, "Pragmatism: An Old Name for Some New Ways of Thinking?" p. 101.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

89. Houston Baker, Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) p. 75, quoted by Harris, *Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 12. See Ernest Mason, "Deconstruction in the Philosophy of Alain Locke," *Transactions of the Charles S. Pierce Society*, Vol. 24 (Winter 1988) pp. 85-106.

90. Posnock, *Color and Culture*, p. 187.

91. *Ibid.*

92. . Lecture 8, November 1950, Howard University.

93. Judith Green, "Alain Locke's Multicultural Philosophy of Value," *The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke: A Reader on Value Theory, Aesthetics, Community, Culture, Race, and Education*, ed. by Leonard Harris (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999) p. 87.

94. Presented to the "Gentlemen of the Harvard Philosophical Club" on 7 February 1930.

95. Locke, "Cultural Relativism," Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-112, Folder 23 ("Cultural Relativism") p. 1 (handwritten speech).

96. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

97. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

98. Napier, "Affirming Critical Conceptualism," p. 109.

99. Mason, "Social Philosophy of Alain Locke."

100. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

101. *Ibid.*

102. Posnock, *Color and Culture*, p. 192.

103. Molesworth, "Alain Locke and Walt Whitman," pp. 175-76.



WASHINGTON, D.C., BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY, c. 1930

*Back Row (l. to r.):* George D. Miller, Clarence Baker, Allen B. McDaniel, Margaret McDaniel, William E. Gibson, Florence King, Paul Haney, Mariam Haney, unknown, unknown, Carl C. King, Charles Mason Remey, James F. Fletcher, Stanwood Cobb, Tahmineh Irani Parsons, unknown, Hanna Lohse, Doris Lohse, Ardeshir Behram Irani, Sr., Frank Shuman Stewart, Ardeshir Behram Irani, Jr. *Middle Row (l. to r.):* Unknown, Caroline Stewart, unknown, Frank Phelps, unknown, Ethel M. Murray (Hunt), Alfredo Warsaw, Isabel Rives, C. Newell Atkinson, Selma Gustavson, unknown, Milly Baker, unknown, C. A. Ragg, Louise Shuman Irani, Mrs. Clyde Reagle, unknown, unknown, Ursula Shuman Moore, unknown, Elizabeth Hopper, unknown. *Next Row (l. to r.):* Mrs. Alfredo Warsaw, Carrie Fuhrman, unknown, Leone Barnitz, Louise D. Boyle, Charlotte Dixon, unknown, Mrs. George Drum, George Drum, unknown, George S. Hopper. *Front Row:* Unknown.

### Chapter Three

## The Early Washington, D.C. Bahá'í Community

*One can appreciate the deep-seated desire and the ever-recurrent but Utopian dream of the idealist that somehow a single faith, a common culture, an all-embracing institutional life and its confraternity should some day unite man by merging all his loyalties and culture values. But even with almost complete intercommunication within practical grasp, that day seems distant, especially since we have as great need for cultural pluralism in a single unit of society as in a nation as large and as composite as our own. . . . The pluralist way to unity seems by far the most practicable.*

—Alain Locke, “Pluralism and Ideological Peace” (1947).<sup>1</sup>

In his psychograph, Locke had described himself as a “universalist in religion.”<sup>2</sup> In a private communication, one leading authority on Locke recently expressed doubts as to his formal affiliation with the Bahá'í Faith. So, the question has to be asked: What direct proof, beyond circumstantial evidence, establishes Locke's actual status as a Bahá'í? While he certainly associated with Bahá'ís and participated in Bahá'í-sponsored events—over a number of years, in fact—was Locke ever formally on record as a declared Bahá'í? Moreover, did Locke's involvement in the Bahá'í Faith influence his vocation as a philosopher? To address these questions, I will discuss Locke's affiliation with and activity within the Bahá'í Faith based on archival documents as well as published materials.

In 1918, Locke was inspired by a vision of race unity and world peace. This was not a mystical vision, but a long-range and practical one. The ideas and ideals of the faith that fired his imagination gave Locke hope that “the ever-recurrent Utopian dream of the idealist” of “a single faith, a common culture, an all-embracing institutional life and its confraternity” that could one day “unite man by merging all his loyalties and culture values” might, in the distant future, come true. This was the Bahá’í vision, which captured Locke’s imagination and won his allegiance.

Against the backdrop of black Washington, and the pervasive segregation that racialized the city, Bahá’í initiatives that aimed at improving race relations were a light shining in darkness.

*A Professor’s Life in Black Washington:* Black life in Washington was segregated from the Reconstruction period through World War II. This roughly encompasses Locke’s lifetime (1885-1954). Segregation was an unpleasant fact, but in the District of Columbia it did not become government policy until the Wilson Administration. During Wilson’s presidency, black and white employees ate in separate spaces in the Bureau of Engraving cafeteria, while separate washrooms had been installed in the Treasury Department. It goes without saying that housing segregation was already in place. Both at work and at home, Wilson’s policies reinforced the wall of segregation, bifurcating Washington into an interior black enclave, surrounded by the white urban area that engulfed it.<sup>3</sup>

Whites ignored blacks as best they could. According to Constance Green: “Whatever the reason, whites chose to build an invisible wall about all colored Washington and then strove to forget about what a contributor to *Crisis* called the Secret City.”<sup>4</sup> As a world traveler, and although his horizons were infinitely broader, the Secret City was Locke’s immediate world.

The Secret City combined extremes of wealth and poverty. Race and class went hand-in-hand. Yet a thriving culture developed in Black Washington of which White Washington, to its detriment, was largely oblivious. Thus, Black Washington’s rich culture was also “secret.” Locke felt strongly that culture, like language, captured the soul and genius of a people. And, since cultures are composite—always assimilating as well as innovating—America ought not only to appreciate the fact that black culture has its peculiar genius and that this had intrinsic

value, but that black culture had influenced the dominant American culture as well.

Considering Locke's central role in it, the term "Harlem Renaissance" is actually a misnomer, because there was a profusion of black art, literature, and music centered in Washington as well. Evidence of this can be seen in the literary productions that launched the movement. After the phenomenal success of his special issue of *The Survey Graphic* (1925), Locke expanded that issue into a book, *The New Negro*, which became the manifesto of the movement. Of the thirty-five contributors in this collection of poetry and essays, nearly half the writers and artists were either born in Washington, lived or worked there, or had attended Howard.<sup>5</sup>

Within the Secret City is Howard University. Hailed as the "capstone of Negro education,"<sup>6</sup> Howard University is the oldest and most prestigious historically black university in America.<sup>7</sup> Founded in 1867 by an act of Congress and opened as a "normal" or teachers college in 1869, Howard University is located on 150 acres overlooking Georgia Avenue. The more outstanding professors at Howard served as race leaders within their respective disciplines. According to Holloway, Locke deserves "special mention" for the way in which his work "represented the politically radical edge" in that he, like other Howard notables, developed "strategies that would prop up black America while simultaneously uniting the nation's races." Moreover, "Locke endeavored to bridge the racial gap by demonstrating the cultural worth of blacks to white America." Thus, *The New Negro*, succeeded in "capturing the new and urgent tone of black America."<sup>8</sup> In the midst of this activity, Locke encountered the "Bahá'í Cause," as the Bahá'í Faith was then known. This new religion was making concerted efforts to cross the color line. In effect, it sacralized cultural pluralism. The new faith embodied some of the principles Locke personally held as sacred, in his own secular way.

Many African Americans in Washington enjoyed civil service employment in the federal government. Throughout the early twentieth century, however, educators "formed the core of black Washington's stable middle class."<sup>9</sup> Thus, during the decade of 1910, the so-called "government official set" was counterbalanced by an influx of the "educational set."<sup>10</sup> Howard professors comprised a major segment of these professionals. While they worked in the university, professors at Howard, like everyone else in the community, lived and recreated in the

Secret City. For black Washingtonians, the U Street district, situated in the northwest sector, was the leading business center by day and the premier cultural and sporting center by night. U Street itself came to be known as Washington's "Black Broadway."<sup>11</sup> Locke had favorite haunts in the U district where educators could often be seen.

From Seventh and T Streets to Fourteenth and U, the shopping district ran roughly seven blocks east to west. Professors would patronize Harrison's Café on 455 Florida Avenue N.W.<sup>12</sup> Or they might stop in at Thurston's for a bite to eat, or Tim's Hot Dog Stand on-the-go, or the Twelfth Street YMCA to enjoy an evening meal. They would typically walk into Greg's Barber Shop for a haircut, and go to the shoeshine around the corner. Locke had portraits taken at Scurlock Photographic Studio at 9th and U, the most prominent African-American photography studio in Washington, D.C. and the official photographer for Howard University.

As new films would debut each Monday, patrons would flock to either the Lincoln or the Republic Theater. In 1927, ticket prices for the best seats sold for forty cents, with admission to a matinee being only ten cents. For the black middle and upper class, life was comfortable. They enjoyed the benefits of a rich social environment. But the harsh realities of racism were never far away.<sup>13</sup> Howard professor Sterling Brown described the U Street district of Locke's day eloquently:

When the outsider stands upon U Street in the early hours of the evening and watches the crowds go by, togged out in finery, with jests upon their lips—this one rushing to the poolroom, this one seeking escape with Hoot Gibson, another to lose herself in Hollywood glamour, another in one of the many dance halls—he is likely to be unaware, as these people momentarily are, of aspects of life in Washington of graver import to the darker one-fourth. . . . Around the corner there may be a squalid slum with people jobless and desperate; the alert youngster, capable and well trained, may find on the morrow all employment closed to him. The Negro of Washington has no voice in government, is economically proscribed, and segregated nearly as rigidly as in the southern cities he contemns. He may blind himself with pleasure seeking, with a specious self-sufficiency, he may point with pride to the record of achievement over grave odds. But just as the past was not without its honor, so the present is not without bitterness.<sup>14</sup>

This was Locke's immediate world. But there was more to it than that. There was the Bahá'í community that, in its own nonpolitical way, led a quiet revolution against the Jim Crow mind-set. A brief descrip-

tion of the Washington, D.C. Bahá'í community will help provide an immediate context for Locke's conversion. Unfortunately, the details of that conversion are sketchy. But the racial tensions that led up to the Washington race riots of 1919 must have reinforced Locke's resolve to dedicate his life to improving race relations.

*The Washington, D.C. Bahá'í Community:* In 1944, Gunnar Myrdal, in his celebrated book, *American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, stated in a footnote that the Bahá'í Faith was “the only white-dominated” religious community “in which there may be said to be absolutely no segregation.”<sup>15</sup> Historically, there were exceptions to this rule. In fact, what made Myrdal's observation true in 1944 is that the American Bahá'í community had only reached that point after having to struggle directly with the issue of racial prejudice in the early period of its development in America, particularly in Washington, D.C.

Remarkably, the Bahá'í Faith had its origins in nineteenth-century Iran. It marks its origins in the millenarian movement initiated by a young, Muslim merchant of Shiraz, Sayyid ‘Alí-Muhammad, who took the title of the Báb (Gate). In 1844, he claimed a divine mission and began to gather followers around himself. The Báb eventually announced that he was a prophet of God equal in station to Muhammad and that his religion would supplant and supercede Islam. Of course, such a movement encountered fierce opposition from the Shí'í clergy and eventually from the state. Thousands of Bábis were attacked, tortured, and martyred for their faith. The Báb himself was arrested, imprisoned, and eventually executed on July 9, 1850.<sup>16</sup>

The movement soon found a new leader in one of the Báb's prominent and wealthy followers, Mírzá Husayn-‘Alí Núrí, who assumed the title Bahá'u'lláh. He reinterpreted the Báb's message and became the founder of the new Bahá'í Faith (1863). Bahá'u'lláh claimed to be the messianic figure the Báb had foretold and a prophet of God in his own right—equal to, and perhaps greater than, the Báb himself. He also laid claim to be the messianic figure of other religious traditions, claiming to be the Return of Christ for example.<sup>17</sup> Because of his religious teachings, he was arrested in Tehran, and banished from Iran for the rest of his life. He was sent first to Baghdad in Iraq, but later to Istanbul and Edirne, in Turkey, and then to ‘Akká in Palestine. From his exiles in Ottoman realms (1853-1892), he reshaped the Bábí teachings into

a new quietist and liberal religion with universal claims. Bahá'u'lláh taught that all of the great religions of the world have come from God, each tailored to the particular requirements of its time. Therefore, divine revelation is relative and progressive; the prophets of God appear every thousand years or so to renew the spirit of religion and update its social laws. All but a small minority of Bábís had become Bahá'ís by the time of the second prophet's death (1892).<sup>18</sup>

In his will and testament, Bahá'u'lláh transferred leadership of his religion to his son, 'Abbas Effendi, known as 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The son had shared his father's exile and imprisonment. He was not released from confinement in 'Akká until 1908. After Bahá'u'lláh's passing, the Bahá'í teachings began to attract followers in Europe and America. The earliest Bahá'í communities in the United States were established in and near Chicago in 1894. From there, the Bahá'í Faith spread to other major cities through the vigorous missionary efforts of the American Bahá'ís who remained in close contact with 'Abdu'l-Bahá through correspondence.

By 1912, there were enough Bahá'ís in America (probably around 2,000) to attract a visit from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who toured the country from April to December of that year—visiting New York, Washington D.C., Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, among other cities. In his meetings with the Bahá'ís, but especially in his public lectures, 'Abdu'l-Bahá advocated universal brotherhood and world peace. He offered the Bahá'í teachings as a means of liberal social change. He urged his followers to exert themselves in service to remove the barriers between races and religions so that all of humanity might become one family. He was especially offended by racial prejudice as he encountered it in America, and he spoke against it publicly, most notably at Howard University.<sup>19</sup>

After 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit, Bahá'ís during this period summarized their beliefs in ten or twelve social principles gleaned from his public talks. These principles very much shaped their own identity as Bahá'ís and provided a liberal agenda to present to the public. These principles were usually formulated as:

- (1) The oneness of mankind;
- (2) Independent investigation of truth;
- (3) The common foundation of all religions;
- (4) The essential harmony of science and religion;

- (5) Equality of men and women;
- (6) Elimination of prejudice of all kinds;
- (7) Universal compulsory education;
- (8) A spiritual solution of the economic problem;
- (9) A universal auxiliary language;
- (10) Universal peace upheld by a world government.<sup>20</sup>

It is to these principles that Locke would soon commit himself by becoming a Bahá'í in Washington, D.C.

Robert Stockman has written on the history of the early Washington D.C. Bahá'í community through 1912.<sup>21</sup> “Perhaps Washington’s most important contribution to the North American Bahá'í community, ultimately,” writes Stockman, “was its effort to teach the Bahá'í Faith to black Americans.”<sup>22</sup> Much of the credit for this must go to Joseph and Pauline Hannen.<sup>23</sup> But Pauline had to overcome her own fear of blacks, which she had always had since her childhood in Wilmington, North Carolina. At a time before ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had begun to address racial issues in his messages to American believers, and well before Bahá'u'lláh’s specific teachings on this subject were known, one of Bahá'u'lláh’s admonitions found in *The Hidden Words* was destined to transform Pauline’s prejudice into a desire for racial unity:

O CHILDREN OF MEN!

Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. Such is My counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory.<sup>24</sup>

One snowy day, during the Thanksgiving season, Pauline came across a black woman trudging through the snow. Pauline noticed that the woman’s shoelaces were untied. Arms full from the bundles she was carrying, the woman was unable to do anything about it. Inspired by this passage from *The Hidden Words*, Pauline knelt down in the snow to tie this woman’s shoes for her. “She was astonished,” Pauline recalled, “and those who saw it appeared to think I was crazy.” That event marked a turning point for Pauline: she resolved to bring the

Bahá'í message of unity to black people.

At first, Pauline and Joseph Hannen held Bahá'í meetings in the homes of Pocahontas Pope and Carrie York, so that their black friends could hear about the Bahá'í Faith. The Hannens then began to invite blacks to meetings in their own home, which Stockman observes “was a daring thing to do.” By July 1908, fifteen African Americans had embraced the faith in Washington, D.C.<sup>25</sup> In a letter dated May 1909, Pauline Hannen wrote:

The work among the colored people was really started by my sainted Mother and Sister Alma [Knobloch,] though I was the one who first gave the Message to Mrs. [Pocahontas] Pope and Mrs. Turner. My Mother and Sister went to their home in this way[,] meeting others[,] giving the Message to quite a number and started Meetings. Then my sister left for Germany where she now teaches, I then took up the work. During the Winter of 1907 it became my great pleasure with the help of Rhoda Turner colored who opened her home for me, 424 [?] S. St. N.W. to arrange a number of very large and beautiful Meetings. Mrs. Lua Getsinger spoke to them here several times at Mrs. Pope's as Mirza Ali Kuli Khan, Mr. [Howard] McNutt and Mr. Hooper Harris spoke in Mrs. Turner's home. Mr. [Hooper] Harris spoke at Mrs. Pope[']s [at] 12 N St. N.W. for my sister before his leaving on his trip to Acca and India. Mr. Hannen also spoke several times. My working to being to run around and arrange the meeting. At these Meetings we had from twenty to forty [sic] colored people of the intellectual class.

Through Mr. [Louis] Gregory, an influential man among the colored race especially among the schools, arrangements were made for Mr. Hannen to address twice the Literary Club of Howard University, this opened a new field and from this time on Jan. 1908 to the present time Mr. Hannen and I work for the colored people at the [their?] request.<sup>26</sup> This opened a new field to work in. Now the home [hope?] of Abdul Baha, who told us in Acca He hoped we would be the means of bringing about peace between the Blacks and the Whites.<sup>27</sup>

The Hannens would eventually play a key role in Locke's conversion to the Bahá'í Faith.

*Outreach to African Americans:* In March 1910, Washington Bahá'ís began to hold integrated meetings. These meetings were hosted in the homes of Joseph and Pauline Hannen and Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Dyer. This was proudly announced in the first issue of the new national journal, *Bahai News*:

On the evening of March 6th, an important gathering assembled at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hannen, representing the joining in one meeting of the white

and the colored Bahá'ís and friends of this city. Considerable work is being done among the latter, and a regular weekly meeting is held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Dyer, 1937 13th Street, N.W., on Wednesdays. In February of last year, Abdul-Baha commanded that to prove the validity of our Teachings and as a means of removing existing prejudices between the races, a Spiritual Assembly or meeting be held, preferably at the home of one of the white Bahai's, in which both races should join. This is the first meeting of that character, and is to be repeated monthly. There were present about 35 persons, one-third of whom were colored, and nearly all believers. It is also planned that every fourth Unity Feast,<sup>28</sup> beginning April 9, should be held in such manner that both races can join. This is a radical step in this section of the country, and is in reality making history.<sup>29</sup>

Washington, D.C. was a thoroughly segregated city. Some churches may have held racially mixed meetings. But “very few if any,” as Robert Stockman points out, “were committed to creating a single religious community out of blacks and whites.”<sup>30</sup> (At the same time, it should be added that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá eventually prohibited the restriction to every fourth Feast, sending clear instructions that every Feast should be open to all Bahá'ís.<sup>31</sup>) The Bahá'ís of Washington, D.C. were the first racially integrated Bahá'í community, a fact that had far-reaching consequences for the future development of the North American Bahá'ís, as Stockman also observes:

The fact that the first Bahá'í community in the United States to reach out to black Americans did not establish a separate community for black Bahá'ís was an act of enormous significance for the future course of racial integration in the Bahá'í Faith. It presaged efforts which by the end of the twentieth century had so increased the religion's black American membership that perhaps thirty percent of the American Bahá'í community was of African descent.<sup>32</sup>

Prior to March 1910, the Washington Bahá'í community had held racially separate meetings. Once people of color entered the Bahá'í community, white Bahá'ís—particularly the conservative ones—may have given their intellectual assent to Bahá'í egalitarian principles, but were simply unwilling to mix with blacks during the Jim Crow era. To some, such integration was moving too fast, too soon. These individuals favored a gradual implementation of Bahá'í teachings on interracial unity. Some early Bahá'ís, particularly within the Washington, D.C. community, wanted to maintain racially separate meetings. Because of the enormous social pressures the Bahá'ís were under, it took considerable time and effort to completely extirpate this problem. It should be

said that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá strenuously objected to segregated practices. As early as February 1909, he had directed the Bahá’ís to hold interracial meetings.<sup>33</sup>

Louis Gregory, who had become a Bahá’í in June 1909, and had written to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that same year, was the first to directly raise this problem. While enjoying complete acceptance in the home of the Hannens, Gregory encountered the practice of holding racially separate Bahá’í meetings in the Bahá’í community at large. An attorney by profession, Gregory brought this problem to the attention of the local executive body, known as the “Working Committee.”<sup>34</sup> As the first highly educated black Bahá’í, Gregory became an agent of change within the Bahá’í community. What made this social transformation possible were the Bahá’í principles themselves, which were energized and exemplified by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. By expressing those principles in poetic language, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá inspired the fledgling American Bahá’í community to take a leadership role in race relations. For the most part, the Bahá’ís successfully overcame the prevailing social norms and emerged united. A close look at ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s imagery will show how he used ennobling language to augment the sense of self-worth in every African American who would take these words to heart.

*Blacks as the “Pupil of the Eye”:* While there are several passages in the writings of Bahá’u’lláh that speak to issues of race unity, it was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá who drew out the implications of these teachings and prioritized America’s racial crisis as the most urgent task at hand. This can be seen in his talks and “tablets” (i.e., letters) to various Bahá’ís within Washington, D.C. and across America. At the level of principle, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá propounded the simple yet profound message of interracial unity. Within his discourse itself, however, he encoded these principles as paradisiac imagery. The following tablet from “the Master” (as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was called) was addressed to Mrs. Pocohontas Pope in Washington. The recipient of the tablet was a black woman.<sup>35</sup> As mentioned earlier, it was through Pauline Hannen that Mrs. Pope learned of the Bahá’í Faith.

Render thanks to the Lord that among that race thou art the first believer, that thou hast engaged in spreading sweet-scented breezes, and hast arisen to guide others. It is my hope that through the bounties and favors of the ‘Abhá Beauty [Bahá’u’lláh] thy countenance may be illumined, thy disposition pleasing, and thy fragrance diffused, that thine eyes may be seeing, thine ears

attentive, thy tongue eloquent, thy heart filled with supreme glad-tidings, and thy soul refreshed by divine fragrances, so that thou mayest arise among that race and occupy thyself with the edification of the people, and become filled with light. 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 'Abhá.<sup>36</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. 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.

The "pupil of the eye" became a potent, transformative metaphor. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in fact, employed this image in a number of his tablets. The idea, which is more or less self-evident, is that it is the pupil that admits light into the eye. In comparing blacks to the pupil of the eye, 'Abdu'l-Bahá 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."

A couple of more examples should suffice to show how this metaphor gained currency within the early Bahá'í community. In a letter to Alan A. Anderson (the second African American convert to the Faith in Washington, D.C.) 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote:

O thou who hast an illumined heart! Thou art even as the pupil of the eye (*mardúmak-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 color 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>37</sup>

In contrast to prevailing social habits, 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes character over characteristics here. That is, one should not focus on another's extrinsic racial characteristics ("color"), but rather on that

person's intrinsic character ("heart") as a determinant of moral worth. Another example of this rhetoric of stressing character over characteristics may be cited here. In a letter sent through Phoebe Hearst (mother of newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst) to her servant, Robert Turner, the first black Bahá'í in America, 'Abdu'l-Bahá 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 (*insán al-'ayn*) which is dark in color, 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>38</sup>

On first sight, this might appear to be a racial characterization of African Americans. Again, the pattern of stressing character over characteristics is evident here. In this instance, the "character" of all people of African descent as the "pupil of the eye" is corporate or collective. The Persian counterpart for the Arabic term *insán* is *mardúmak*. Both words also refer to a man or human being. Therefore, there appears to be a word-play here, which may have governed the choice of this ennobling and empowering metaphor, which 'Abdu'l-Bahá ascribes to Bahá'u'lláh himself: "Bahá'u'lláh 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>39</sup>

As Richard Thomas observes, 'Abdu'l-Bahá "transformed the traditional racist color symbolism and imagery into the symbolism and imagery of racial unity." By so doing, "'Abdu'l-Bahá enabled them [Bahá'ís] to counter and transcend the racist cultural tendencies so ingrained in the American national character."<sup>40</sup> This same rhetorical strategy of racial upliftment was employed by Alain Locke in the essays he personally wrote for his anthology, *The New Negro*.

*The Universal Races Congress (1911)*: The year 1911 was a watershed year in the history of race relations at the international level because of the First Universal Races Congress held on 26-29 July 1911 at the

University of London. Locke participated in the event. The Universal Races Congress provided an opportunity for Locke to hear about the Bahá'í Faith through a message that 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent to the congress, which was read and later published in its proceedings.

The two primary organizers of the conference were Dr. Felix Adler (d. 1933), founder of the Ethical Culture Society, and Gustav Spiller, who established the London Ethical Culture Movement. Locke's mother, Mary Locke was a disciple of Adler. The purpose of this congress was to promote greater understanding between East and West. While British Bahá'ís participated in the event, of far greater moment was the invitation the organizers sent to 'Abdu'l-Bahá to speak before the congress. Declining to do so because of the unmitigated circumstances of his imprisonment, the Bahá'í leader did send a message to be read to the conference participants. It said, in part:

When traveling around the world we observe an air of prosperity in any country, we find it due to the existence of love and friendship among the people. If, on the contrary, all seems depressed and poverty-stricken, we may feel assured that this is the effect of animosity, and of the absence of union among the inhabitants. . . .

Rivalry between the different races of mankind was first caused by the struggle for existence among the wild animals. This struggle is no longer necessary; nay, rather! Interdependence and co-operation are seen to produce the highest welfare in nations. The struggle that now continues is caused by prejudice and bigotry.<sup>41</sup>

'Abdu'l-Bahá's admonition that racism must be actively transmuted into racial harmony is abundantly clear. He concludes his tablet to the Universal Races Congress:

This Congress is one of the greatest of events. It will be forever to the glory of England that it was established at her capital. . . . Let Brotherhood be felt and seen among you; and carry ye its quickening power throughout the world. It is my prayer that the work of the Congress will bear great fruit.<sup>42</sup>

The published tablet was preceded by a short introduction to the Bahá'í Faith written by Major Wellesley Tudor-Pole.<sup>43</sup>

Locke was inspired to carry on the work of the Congress at Howard University. "Ladies and Gentlemen: Ever since the possibility of a comparative study of races dawned upon me at the Races Congress in London in 1911," Locke began the first of five historic lectures on race

relations he delivered at Howard University in 1916, “I have had the courage of a very optimistic and steadfast belief that in the scientific approach to the race question, there was the possibility of a redemption for those false attitudes of mind which have, unfortunately, so complicated the idea and conception of race that there are a great many people who fancy that the best thing that can possibly be done, if possible at all, is to throw race out of the categories of human thinking.”<sup>44</sup>

No firm conclusions can yet be drawn as to whether or not Locke first heard of the Bahá’í Faith during the Universal Races Congress. Had he been vigilant in attending every session, he surely would have. While the event itself had an immediate impact on the course of his research, his first impression of the Bahá’í message—if he had heard it there—must have been favorable.

*‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Washington, D.C. (1912)*: Having returned from Europe in 1911, Locke began his academic career at Howard University on 13 September 1912, as Assistant Professor of the Teaching of English and Instructor in Philosophy and Education under Lewis B. Moore. Locke taught English, literature, and education in the Teachers College at Howard University. On Moore’s retirement in 1912, Locke’s teaching duties expanded to include ethics and logic.<sup>45</sup>

Earlier, in the spring, Locke had personally traveled with Booker T. Washington through Florida, from March 1 to March 8. The opportunity arose when a certain Dr. S. G. Elbert cancelled.<sup>46</sup> There is a curious Western Union telegram from sheriff John B. Winston, sent to the “Conductor, Seaboard Air Line Train, between River Junction and Tallahassee,” which demands: “Is negro from Pennsylvania, answering to name of Locke or Lacke on train. Supposed to be traveling with B. T. Washington. Answer my expense and if found hold for this place.”<sup>47</sup> Beyond this, the extent of Locke’s travels is unclear, but his trip probably lasted through the summer, as Jeffrey Stewart seems to indicate.

In securing his position at Howard, Locke was indebted to Washington. In a letter dated 10 August 1912, Washington instructed Locke: “In connection with the Howard University matter I would state that I had a conference with Professor Kelly Miller concerning you a few days ago, and I advise that you see him whenever it is convenient for you to do so.”<sup>48</sup> Locke, in an undated letter, expressed his deepest appreciation to Washington. That letter begins with the news: “My dear Dr Washington I was just on the point of writing you when I received

your kindly letter of the 12th last, Saturday the 14th I was elected an asst Professor at Howard, in English + Philosophy.”<sup>49</sup> What appears to have been Locke’s actual letter of appointment was signed by George Williams Cook, Secretary and Business Manager, who later became professor and the first dean of the College of Commerce and Finance, and whose wife, Coralie Franklin Cook, was a well-known Bahá’í.<sup>50</sup> However, it was not Washington’s ideology (with which Locke, in part, disagreed) but ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s egalitarian principles that would, six years later, provide Locke with his philosophical framework in which both race loyalty and integration (as distinct from the one-directional emphasis of assimilation) had a place. In one of many commitments he kept throughout his career, Locke served as an assistant organizer of the Emancipation Proclamation Commission (based in Trenton, New Jersey), which seemed to have some connection with Washington.<sup>51</sup>

‘Abdu’l-Bahá came to America in 1912. He spent 239 days in the United States and Canada, from his arrival on 11 April to his departure on 5 December. During his historic visit, practically his every word and deed was recorded for posterity, and there was extensive press coverage. His anecdotal legacy within the Bahá’í community was nearly as important as his message. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in promoting the Bahá’í gospel of racial unity, established his *ethos* by example. His very presence, in both what he said and did, had an enormous impact on the early North American Bahá’ís. Locke would soon hear about this remarkable man and the message to America that he brought. One of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’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>52</sup>

After spending his first days in New York, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came to Washington, D.C. Evidently, at that time, Locke did not have the opportunity to see him. From the publicity that his visit generated, it would be hard to imagine missing some report of it. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá arrived in Washington on April 20, and stayed until Sunday, April 28. Toward the end of his visit, the *Washington Bee*, one of the city newspapers, published a story that read, in part: “Its [the Bahá’í 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>53</sup>

On Tuesday morning, April 23, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke in Rankin Chapel at Howard University. Well over a thousand faculty, administrators, students, and guests<sup>54</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. He whose heart is pure is better. He whose character is better is more pleasing. He who turns more to the Abhá Kingdom [i.e., the kingdom of heaven] is more advanced.

In the realm of existence colors are of no importance. Observe in the mineral kingdom colors are not the cause of discord. In the vegetable kingdom the colors of multicolored flowers are not the cause of discord. Rather, colors are the cause of the adornment of the garden because a single color has no appeal; but when you observe many-colored flowers, there is charm and display.

The world of humanity, too, is like a garden, and humankind are like the many-colored flowers. Therefore, different colors constitute an adornment. In the same way, there are many colors in the realm of animals. Doves are of many colors; nevertheless, they live in utmost harmony. They never look at color; instead, they look at the species. How often white doves fly with black ones. In the same way, other birds and varicolored animals never look at color; they look at the species.

Now ponder this: Animals, despite the fact that they lack reason and understanding, do not make colors the cause of conflict. Why should man, who has reason, create conflict? This is wholly unworthy of him. Especially white and black are the descendants of the same Adam; they belong to one household. In origin they were one; they were the same color. Adam was of one color. Eve had one color. All humanity is descended from them. Therefore, in origin they are one. These colors developed later due to climates and regions; they have no significance whatsoever. Therefore, today I am very happy that white and black have gathered together in this meeting. I hope this coming together and harmony reaches such a degree that no distinctions shall remain between them, and they shall be together in the utmost harmony and love.<sup>55</sup>

This part of the speech was homiletic. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá makes the point that while in the natural world color has no intrinsic value except to

enrich its diversity, in the human world color had taken on huge and determinative proportions.

The next segment of his speech is significant in that, while well received at the time, it may be judged harshly by contemporary standards. However, time spent in contextualizing ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s remarks will repay the effort. He went on to say:

But I wish to say one thing in order that the blacks may become grateful to the whites and the whites become loving toward the blacks. If you go to Africa and see the blacks of Africa, you will realize how much progress you have made. Praise be to God! You are like the whites; there are no great distinctions left. But the blacks of Africa are treated as servants. The first proclamation of emancipation for the blacks was made by the whites of America. How they fought and sacrificed until they freed the blacks! Then it spread to other places. The blacks of Africa were in complete bondage, but your emancipation led to their freedom also—that is, the European states emulated the Americans, and the emancipation proclamation became universal. It was for your sake that the whites of America made such an effort. Were it not for this effort, universal emancipation would not have been proclaimed.

Therefore, you must be very grateful to the whites of America, and the whites must become very loving toward you so that you may progress in all human grades. Strive jointly to make extraordinary progress and mix together completely. In short, you must be very thankful to the whites who were the cause of your freedom in America. Had you not been freed, other blacks would not have been freed either. Now—praise be to God!—everyone is free and lives in tranquility. I pray that you attain to such a degree of good character and behavior that the names of black and white shall vanish. All shall be called human, just as the name for a flight of doves is dove. They are not called black and white. Likewise with other birds.<sup>56</sup>

A brief look at history discloses that, while slavery caused the Civil War, initially the war was not fought to end it. Northern Democrats, in fact, had vigorously opposed emancipation. Prior to his decision to issue the Proclamation, Lincoln, as an emigrationist, favored “compensated emancipation” (where slave owners would be paid for their slaves), followed by the colonization of blacks in Central America. Frederick Douglass accused the president of hypocrisy, saying: “This is our country as much as it is yours, and we will not leave it.”<sup>57</sup> While his unwavering purpose for the Civil War was to preserve the Union, mounting pressure from Congress and from people around the country made Lincoln more sympathetic to abolition.

Abraham Lincoln promulgated the Emancipation Proclamation on 1 January 1863, technically freeing slaves in those states still in

rebellion. Prior to this, Lincoln had issued a Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on 22 September 1862, which freed no slaves whatsoever. With this advance notice, Lincoln had given the Confederate states one hundred days in which to rejoin the Union. Had they done so, Lincoln's objective of preserving the Union would have been achieved and slavery, which he was prepared to tolerate, preserved.

Although the Emancipation Proclamation was a sweeping proclamation, it was narrow in its scope. It neither applied to slaves in Border States fighting on the Union side, nor did it affect slaves in Southern areas already under Union control. Few slaves were, therefore, actually freed by the proclamation, and the proclamation itself did not end slavery. This would be achieved by passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution on 18 December 1865. Once he had issued the Emancipation Proclamation, however, Lincoln made it clear to America and the world that the Civil War was now being fought to end slavery. While the Proclamation had its limits, it was welcomed in principle by Frederick Douglass and by all of the estimated four million African Americans in the country. For them, New Year's Day had become Emancipation Day. The Proclamation gave moral authority to the Union cause.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's observations had their basis in these later developments in the Civil War. To have dwelt on the issue of whites having instituted slavery in the first place would have frustrated 'Abdu'l-Bahá's purpose, which was interracial reconciliation. His admonition that blacks ought to be grateful to whites for their role in emancipation and liberation had the force of rhetoric. It was calculated to reorient entrenched racialized attitudes. 'Abdu'l-Bahá focused on the consequences of the Emancipation Proclamation and the Civil War, which partly set in motion a chain of events whereby other countries eventually abolished slavery. While statements on Africa would not be politically correct by today's standards, his rhetorical purpose would. To the extent that context interprets text, one can appreciate why the audience gave 'Abdu'l-Bahá so resounding an ovation.<sup>58</sup> Continuing on, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

I hope that you attain to such a high degree—and this is impossible except through love. You must try to create love between yourselves; and this love does not come about unless you are grateful to the whites, and the whites are loving toward you, and endeavor to promote your advancement and enhance your honor. This will be the cause of love. Differences between black and white will be completely obliterated; indeed, ethnic and national differences

will all disappear.

I am very happy to see you and thank God that this meeting is composed of people of both races and that both are gathered in perfect love and harmony. I hope this becomes the example of universal harmony and love until no title remains except that of humanity. Such a title demonstrates the perfection of the human world and is the cause of eternal glory and human happiness. I pray that you be with one another in utmost harmony and love and strive to enable each other to live in comfort.<sup>59</sup>

The very next night, on 24 April 1912, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew J. Dyer. As one of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá translators Dr. Zia Mabsut Bagdadi (who would later serve with Locke on Bahá’í Inter-racial Amity Committees) wrote in his diary: “In the evening, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed the white and colored believers and their friends at the home of Mrs. Dyer, a member of the colored race.”<sup>60</sup> Imagine the impact of the following statement on the racially mixed audience, especially on the 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>61</sup>

According to Dr. Khazeh Fananapazir, the original Persian text of this discourse cannot be found. However, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s secretary Mahmúd Zarqání, in his diary entry for 24 April 1912, states:

‘Abdu’l-Bahá 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 injizáb ahibbá-yi siyáh va sífid*), I was so moved that I spoke with great love and likened (*tashbíh namúdam*) this union of different colored races (*ittihád-i alvân-i mukhtalifah*) to a string of gleaming pearls and rubies (*la’álí va yaqút*).<sup>62</sup>

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used striking imagery in comparing his audience to pearls and rubies, sapphires and diamonds. As Bahá’í authors have quoted him over the decades since that memorable night, these words echo down to this day. On that night in Washington D.C., ‘Abdu’l-Bahá 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>63</sup>

In the Dean’s office of Rankin Chapel, Howard University (which I personally visited in August 2001), a “Prayer for Washington” is elegantly famed and presented on the wall. This prayer reads as follows:

O God! Grant Washington happiness and peace. Illuminate that land with the light of the faces of the friends. Make it a paradise of glory. Let it become an envy of the green gardens of the earth. Help the friends. Increase their numbers. Make their hearts sources of inspiration, and their souls dawnings of light. Thus may that city become a beautiful paradise, and fragrant with the fragrance of musk.<sup>64</sup>

The prayer was revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The circumstances of its revelation have not yet been established. All these events provided the immediate background to Locke’s attraction to the Bahá’í Faith.

*Divided over Integration (1914)*: While the visit of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was a watershed event in American Bahá’í history, its long-term effects were probably more profound than its short-term effects. The history of the Washington, D.C. Bahá’í community in the aftermath of “the Master’s” sojourn there is instructive. Around two years after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s departure, the situation began to revert to the pre-1910 state of affairs. Increasingly divided on the issue of race, the Bahá’ís of Washington had begun to split into several groups. “By 1914,” Gayle Morrison observes, “even the pretense of unity had broken down.”<sup>65</sup> The Bahá’í community had broken into fractious camps.

For some years, the Bahá’í community had maintained a rented Bahá’í at Studio Hall (1219 Connecticut Avenue). The crisis was precipitated when the community decided to give up this center, where public lectures and smaller, informal Bahá’í “firesides” had been open to both races. Evidently, this decision resulted from disagreements over the propriety of interracial meetings. The controversy split the community into three distinct groups: (1) those who felt that mixed meetings posed a serious obstacle to the growth of the Faith; (2) those who supported interracial events at the Bahá’í Center in the true spirit of egalitarianism; and (3) those who believed that: “Neither the centre nor the color question retards our activity and the growth of the Cause.”<sup>66</sup> The Bahá’í message of unity was vitiated in practice, as the Washington community plunged itself into profound disunity.

On the issue of racial unity, the community had forfeited its moral authority through compromising its core principles. The first group held whites-only meetings in a public hall, a prestigious place that would accommodate the conventional values of whites who supported the *status quo*. The second group, which included Louis Gregory, opposed this policy as, in the words of Edna Belmont, this was entirely “against Abdul-Baha’s wishes & commands.”<sup>67</sup> The third group, as represented by Louise Boyle (a white Bahá’í) at that time, believed that giving up the Bahá’í Center actually freed individual Bahá’ís to live according to their consciences: “Nothing ever happened so happily for Washington as the freeing of individuals through the abandonment of the Center.”<sup>68</sup>

On Sundays, the Pythian Temple was the site of white Bahá’í meetings. On Wednesdays, the “colored” meetings were held at the Washington Conservatory of Music. And on Fridays, mixed meetings took place in the home of a white Bahá’í. As if this was not bad enough, a fourth group of Bahá’ís followed the openly racist views of at least one vocal member, who became estranged from the Faith for some time.<sup>69</sup> In response to this grave situation, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote a letter, in Arabic, received on 1 May 1914. It read, in part, as follows:

I know about everything that is happening in Washington. The sad, sombre news is the difference between the white and the colored people. I have written to Mr. Hannen requesting him, if possible, to arrange a special place of meeting for the white people only, and also a special place of meeting for the colored people, and also one for both the white and the colored, so that all may be free. Those who prefer to do so can go to the white meeting. And those who prefer can go to the colored meeting, and those who do not wish to bind themselves either way, they are free, let them go to the meetings of the white and the colored people in one place. I can see no better solution to this question.<sup>70</sup>

Apart from the obvious principle of freedom of religious conscience, the wisdom of this decision was the conservation of the community itself. Although it had fragmented into different parties, it had not irretrievably shattered into competing sects. The Master’s decision effectively suspended Bahá’í principles of racial unity in order to maintain the unity of the Bahá’í community in its struggle to adjust to racial integration. Compromised to the agonizing dismay of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the situation would have to resolve itself in time. But interracial unity was really the only Bahá’í option in the long run. Racial division would

be abandoned once the Bahá'ís themselves matured and returned to a policy of integration, as they had done before. How could a religion whose core principles were offended and vitiated by the recrudescence of the very social ills it intended to eradicate survive otherwise? The integrity of all that the fledgling Faith stood for was put to the test.

At this point, Joseph Hannen, who had previously led the teaching outreach to African Americans, was asked by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to arrange a new meeting for whites. Hannen chose Lewis Hall as the site for those meetings. The moment the Wednesday-night meetings at the Conservatory of Music were labeled "colored" meetings, the blacks stopped attending. A meeting on T Street was organized instead. But the mixed, Friday meetings fared no better. At last, on 14 October 1914, representatives from each of the four meetings met to try to resolve their differences. Although progress was made, including a renouncing of racist views by the Pythian Temple group on October 25, the fractured state of affairs persisted well into the next year. At last, in May 1916, the Pythian Temple meetings were dissolved for the sake of preserving unity. The situation was exacerbated through the utter lack of communication with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, precipitated by Turkey's entry into World War I. Not until September 1918, when British forces entered Haifa, was a free and steady flow of communication restored.<sup>71</sup>

Clearly, by both personal preference and professional preparation, Locke was predisposed to accept the Bahá'í principles of race unity, if only the Bahá'ís themselves did not pose a barrier through their compromise of their own principles. In the midst of this turmoil, and, remarkably, in spite of it, evidence points to Locke having been introduced to the Bahá'í Faith at around this time. It is a testament to those Bahá'ís who were alive to the deeper social implications of the Bahá'í principles that Locke was shielded from these internecine battles and was exposed to Bahá'í values in a positive and relatively unadulterated light.

## Notes

1. Alain Locke, "Pluralism and Ideological Peace," in *Freedom and Experience: Essays presented to Horace M. Kallen*, ed. by Sidney Hook and Milton R. Konvitz (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1947) p. 67.

2. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," p. 121.

3. Jonathan Scott Holloway, *Confronting the Veil*, Chapter One, “Secret Sites: Black Washington, D.C., and Howard University,” pp. 35-83, citing Constance Green, *The Secret City: A History of Race Relations in the Nation’s Capital* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967) p. 202.
4. Green, *The Secret City*, p. 202, citing *Crisis*, pp. xxxix, p. 195.
5. Fitzpatrick and Goodwin, *The Guide to Black Washington*, p. 158.
6. Holloway, *Confronting the Veil*, p. 45.
7. Fitzpatrick and Goodwin, *The Guide to Black Washington*, p. 101.
8. Holloway, *Confronting the Veil*, 49.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
10. David Krasner, *A Beautiful Pageant: African American Theatre, Drama, and Performance in the Harlem Renaissance, 1910-1927*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) pp. 133-34.
11. Sandra Fitzpatrick and Maria R. Goodwin, *The Guide to Black Washington: Places and Events of Historical and Cultural Significance in the Nation’s Capital*. Revised Illustrated Edition (New York: Hippocrene Books, 2001) p. 161.
12. Fitzpatrick and Goodwin, *The Guide to Black Washington*, p. 81.
13. Holloway, *Confronting the Veil*, pp. 37-45.
14. Qtd. in Holloway, *Confronting the Veil*, p. 44, citing Sterling Brown, *Washington, City and Capital*, Federal Writers’ Project, Works Progress Administration (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1937) p. 89.
15. Qtd. in an unsigned editorial (probably by Firuz Kazemzadeh), “Interchange,” *World Order*, Vol. 14, no. 1 (Fall 1979) p. 4, citing Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, Reprint (Harper and Row, 1962 [1944]) page number not specified in citation.
16. The best recent academic treatments of the Bábi movement are to be found in Abbas Amanat, *Ressurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844-1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989) and in Denis MacEoin, “From Shaykhism to Babism: A Study in Charismatic Renewal in Shí’i Islam,” Ph.D. dissertaion, Cambridge University, 1979 (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, forthcoming). The classic Bahá’í chronicle of the period is Nabil-i A’zam’s *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil’s Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá’i Revelation*, trans. and ed. by Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá’i Publishing Trust, 1932). See also, H. M. Balyuzi, *The Báb: The Herald of the Day of Days* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1973) and Peter Smith’s sociological study, *The Babi and Bahá’i Religions: From messianic Shi’ism to a world religion* (Cambridge University Press, 1987). The early volumes of the *Studies in the Bábi and Bahá’i Religions* series (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press) are also useful.
17. See Christopher Buck, “A Unique Eschatological Interface: Bahá’u’lláh and Cross-Cultural Messianism” in Peter Smith, ed., *In Iran, Studies in Bábi and Bahá’i History*, Vol. 3 (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1986) pp. 157-78.
18. For a recent academic treatment of the ministry of Bahá’u’lláh, see Juan R. I. Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium: The Genesis of the Baha’i Faith in the Nineteenth-century Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), distributed by Kalimát Press as Volume Nine of the series *Studies in the Bábi and Bahá’i Religions*. See also the now classic Bahá’í biography by Hasan M. Balyuzi, *Bahá’u’lláh: The King of Glory* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1980).

19. Recorded 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*, Second Edition (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1982 [1912]).
20. As listed in the popular Bahá’í pamphlet *One Universal Faith* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, n.d. [1960?]). Sometimes, the last principle listed here would be divided in two and presented as separate items: world peace and world government. Occasionally, another principle: “Religion must be the cause of unity and harmony,” would be added to the list. There was no hard and absolute list of these principles, though all Bahá’ís would have recognized that there was such a list and could have recited at least four or five principles by heart.
21. Stockman, *The Bahá’í Faith in America: Early Expansion*, Chapter 16, “New England and Washington DC,” pp. 217-31.
22. Robert Stockman, *The Bahá’í Faith in America: Early Expansion 1900-1912* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1995) p. 224.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., p. 225, quoting Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic no. 68.
25. Ibid., pp. 225-26.
26. Pauline Hannen to Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, (handwritten), May 1909, Ahmad Sohrab Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, Archivist, National Bahá’í Archives, Bahá’í National Center, Wilmette, Ill, enclosure sent 2 July 2002.
27. Ibid.
28. The Nineteen-Day Feast is part of the Bahá’í worship cycle, based on a spiritual calendar consisting of 19 months of 19 days each, with each day (and each weekday), month, year, and cycle of years named after attributes of God (such as honor, grandeur, knowledge, etc.) that function as human perfections which Bahá’ís seek to embody. Bahá’í communities thus hold a Nineteen-Day Feast once every Bahá’í month. The Nineteen-Day Feast consists of three parts: devotional, consultative, and social.
29. Jos. H. Hannen, “Washington, D. C.,” *Bahai News*, Vol. 1, no.1 (21 March 1910) pp. 18-19, quoted in Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 33.
30. Stockman, *The Bahá’í Faith in America: Early Expansion*, p. 34.
31. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 73.
32. Stockman, *The Bahá’í Faith in America: Early Expansion*, p. 344.
33. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 31.
34. Ibid., pp. 5-6.
35. Fádíl Mázandarání, *Tarikh-i Zuhur al-Haqq*, Vol. 8, part 2 (Tehran: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 132 B.E.) p. 1209.
36. From a tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, translated from the Persian, in *Women* (Bahá’í compilation) p. 4.
37. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 113 (sec. 76); ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Míuntakhabátí az Makátib-i Hadrat-i ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, Vol. 1, sec. 76. Gloss on original Arabic text provided by Vahid Brown, personal communication, 3 January 2004.
38. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 114 (sec. 78); ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Míuntakhabátí az Makátib-i Hadrat-i ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, Vol. 1, sec. 78. Gloss on original Persian text provided by Vahid Brown, personal communication, 3 January 2004.

39. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, trans. by Shoghi Effendi in *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1969 [1939]) p. 31.
40. Richard Thomas, *Understanding Interracial Unity: A Study of U.S. Race Relations*, Sage Series on Race and Ethnic Relations, Vol. 16 (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996) p. 47.
41. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Letter From 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the First Universal Races Congress," *Star of the West*, Vol. 2, no. 9 (20 August 1911) p. 5. Reprinted from *Record of the Proceedings of the First Universal Races Congress* (Orchard House, Westminster: P. S. King and Son, 1911) advance prepublication copy. See also *Papers on Interracial Problems Communicated to the First Universal Races Congress Held at the University of London, July 26-29, 1911*, ed. by Gustav Spiller (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1912). Reprint: Universal Races Congress, *Inter-racial Problems: Papers*, ed. by G. Spiller. With a new introduction by Herbert Aptheker (New York: Citadel Press, 1970).
42. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Letter [...] to the First Universal Races Congress," p. 6.
43. Wellesley Tudor-Pole, "The Bahai Movement," *Star of the West*, Vol. 2, no. 9 (20 August 1911) pp. 4-5. This is preceded by Tudor-Pole, "The First Universal Races Congress," *Star of the West*, Vol. 2, no. 9 (20 August 1911) pp. 3-4. Reprinted from the *Christian Commonwealth*, 2 August 1911. See also Paul Rich, "The Baptism of a New Era': The 1911 Universal Races Congress and the Liberal Ideology of Race" *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol.7, no. 4 (1984) pp. 534-50; and Robert John Holton, "Cosmopolitanism or Cosmopolitanisms: the Universal Races Congress of 1911," *Global Networks*, forthcoming.
44. Alain Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations*, ed. by Jeffery C. Stewart (Washington: Howard University Press, 1992) p. 1.
45. Harris, "Chronology," *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 294.
46. Washington to Locke, undated letter, in which he writes: "My dear Doctor Washington, I am in receipt this evening of your kind permission to take Doctor Elbert's place in your party through Florida March 1st to 8th." See also Washington to Elbert, 26 February 1912 (cablegram), Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-91, Folder 55 (Washington, Booker T.); Stewart, "Introduction," in Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations*, p. xxxix.
47. Winston to Conductor (cablegram), 2 March 1912, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-91, Folder 55 (Washington, Booker T.).
48. Washington to Locke, 10 August 1912, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-91, Folder 55 (Washington, Booker T.).
49. Locke to Washington, undated letter [July 1912?], Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-91, Folder 55 (Washington, Booker T.).
50. Cook to Locke, 17 July 1912, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-21, Folder 46 (Cook, George William). That this letter of appointment was actually intended for Locke is complicated by the fact that the letter ostensibly appears to be addressed to a "Mr. E. C. Williams, Principal, M Street High School, Bowen Cottage, Arundel-on-the-Bay, Md." The letter begins, "Dear Sir:-". Could it be that this was Locke's place of employment prior to taking his position at Howard?
51. Locke to Washington, undated letter [1912], Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-91, Folder 55 (Washington, Booker T.).
52. Qtd. in an untitled compilation of Bahá'í writings on race unity. Typescript in

Locke's possession. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-176, Folder 13 (Bahá'í Faith).

53. Qtd. in Allan L. Ward, *239 Days: 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey in America* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979) p. 37.

54. Ward, *239 Days*, p. 40.

55. "23 April 1912. Talk at Howard University. Washington, D. C. Translated by Amin Banani," in 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 43.

56. Ibid.

57. Qtd. in Darlene Clark Hine, William C. Hine, and Stanley Harrold, eds., *The African-American Odyssey* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2000) p. 234.

58. Ward, *239 Days*, p. 40.

59. *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 43.

60. Zia Bagdadi, "'Abdu'l-Bahá in America,'" *Star of the West*, Vol. 19, no. 3 (June 1928) p. 89. Qtd. in Ward, *239 Days*, p. 43.

61. '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 in *Star of the West* Vol. 3, no. 3 (28 April 1912) p. 21. Reference courtesy of Sen McGlinn.

62. *Mahmúd's Diary*. Translated by M. Sobhani (Oxford: George Ronald, 1998), p. 57 (under the diary page for Wednesday, 24 April 1912). Transliteration based on notes by Dr. Khazeh Fananapazir, posting on the Tarjuman translation list, 10 May 2002, based on Mirzá Mahmúd Zarfání, *Badá-yi al-Áthár*, vol. 1, pp. 48-49, Reprint of the Bombay 1914 edition (Langenhain: Bahá'í Verlag, 1982).

63. Ward, *239 Days*, p. 43, quoting *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 54.

64. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Prayer for Washington," n.p., n.d. Personally given to the author by the staff of Rankin Chapel on 9 August 2001.

65. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 73.

66. Boyle to Parsons, 18 February 1914, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Qtd. in Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 74.

67. Edna Belmont to Parsons, 2 March 1914, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Qtd. in Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 74.

68. Boyle to Parsons, 18 February 1914, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Qtd. in Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 74.

69. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 74.

70. 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Edna Belmont, received 1 May 1914, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Provsional translation, quoted in Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 75-76.

71. Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 75-80.



BAHÁ'Í HISTORICAL RECORD

1. Locke, Allan De 2. Reported through Spiritual Assembly Washington DC  
Name of individual believer

3. Address 1336 E Street, N. W. Washington D. C.  
Street City State

4. Birthplace Philadelphia Pa. U. S. A. Birthdate September 13, 1886

5. Naturalization (if foreign born) \_\_\_\_\_  
City and State Date

6. National origin American 7. Race Negro  
(Whether of English or other stock)

8. Color Negro 9. Sex Male 10. Married? Single  
Date

11. Children or dependents \_\_\_\_\_  
Wife Adult Adopted

12. Religious origin (religion before becoming a Bahá'í) Protestant-Episcopal

13. Date of acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith 1916

A. As isolated believer \_\_\_\_\_ B. As member of Bahá'í group X C. As member of Bahá'í Community \_\_\_\_\_

14. Place of acceptance of Bahá'í Faith Washington, D. C. SEE OPART

15. Date of enrollment in present Bahá'í community (No. 2) \_\_\_\_\_

A. By transfer from previous community \_\_\_\_\_ B. By enrollment as Bahá'í for first time \_\_\_\_\_

C. Subsequent transfer (leave blank) \_\_\_\_\_

16. General information you would like to have preserved in this historical record (about Bahá'í services, connection with the Cause in early days, special talents, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(Additional notes may be attached to this card)

18. Photograph

(If possible, please attach photograph to this record. Write name and date the photo was taken on back of photograph.)

17. Additional information (do not fill in)

\_\_\_\_\_

19. Signature

*Allan De Locke*

BAHÁ'Í HISTORICAL RECORD CARD, 1935

## Chapter Four

# Conversion

The starting place for a discussion of Locke's first experiences with the Bahá'í Faith—then known as the “Bahá'í Cause”—is difficult to definitely locate. But it makes the most sense to begin where the evidence suggests his first contact with the Bahá'ís occurred.

*Locke's First Encounter with the Bahá'í Faith? (1915)*: Although a philosopher by training, Locke did not have an opportunity to teach philosophy professionally until 1915. There were “practical” demands on him at Howard University. It was at this time that Locke had his first serious problem with Howard's all-white senior administrators. In the spring of 1915, Locke proposed a course on “inter-racial relations,” with the goal of bringing the scientific study of race to bear on racial pseudo-science and the racial prejudice it buttressed, as well as demonstrating the potential impact that American anthropology could have on positive race relations. His rationale for the proposed course was that “a study of race contacts is the only scientific basis for the comprehension of race relations.”<sup>1</sup> Locke sent a copy of his proposal to Booker T. Washington.<sup>2</sup>

The proposal was roundly rejected by Howard University's Board of Trustees on 1 June 1915. The all-white ministers felt that such “controversial” subjects as race had no place at a school whose mission was to educate black professionals. Moreover, Howard was supposed to be, in some sense, a “nonracial” institution.<sup>3</sup> Locke eventually succeeded in delivering his lectures as public lectures, since the classroom

was closed to him on this topic. Sponsored by the Howard Chapter of the NAACP and the Social Science Club, Locke taught an extension course, first in 1915 and then in 1916. The 1915 lectures were newsworthy. In a letter dated 18 May 1915, W. E. B. Du Bois wrote Locke to say: “We are mentioning the lectures in the *CRISIS* this month.”<sup>4</sup> Since the 1916 lectures are better documented, a description of them will be undertaken below.

The Bahá’í Faith was widely known among the black intelligentsia during this period, and Locke could have been introduced to it by any number of people.<sup>5</sup> It is quite possible that Locke came into contact with the Faith through W. E. B. Du Bois, who had personally met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and had lectured at Green Acre (a Bahá’í school in southern Maine) as well. It is just as likely that Locke encountered the Faith through Louis Gregory, or through one of the other Bahá’ís or friends of the Faith from among the circle of educated African Americans in Washington, D.C. Or perhaps it was through Mariam Haney.

There is evidence to suggest that Alain Locke attended his first Bahá’í fireside in 1915. This may be deduced from a letter written by Mariam Haney to “My dear Mr. Locke,” in which she urges Locke to attend a meeting at which he would meet Harlan and Grace Ober. Mariam Haney prevails upon Locke to consider attending, not only for his sake, but for hers and for the benefit of other Bahá’ís as well, as Locke would grace them with his presence:

1791 Lanier Pl. N.W.  
Washington, D.C.

My dear Mr. Locke:—

My friends write me that you have never been to see them. I really was quite surprised, for my first thought about it all was that you would be rendering them a service. If you ever go once, I know you will want to go again, even if this first time I should ask you to go just to please me!

I have your interests at heart and theirs as well, so you can gather why I should be anxious for a meeting between you. Through Mr. and Mrs. Ober, you would meet—(if you cared to) some very lovely people, and I should feel proud to have them know you.

I do hope your health is good, and that you are not over-working on the subjects pertaining to the here and now.

What the world needs most is the actual living of Brotherhood—and beside this or in comparison—all else pales into insignificance. Don’t you think so?

With kind greetings  
Most cordially yours —

Mariam Haney  
February XV<sup>6</sup>

One cannot fail to be struck by the graciousness of the invitation. Evidently, this was not the first, because Mariam Haney registers her surprise that Locke has not yet gone to a meeting where he could meet the Obers. (It is not known if the Obers were residing in Washington at that time or merely visiting.) Whether or not he could see through her persuasive ploy, in which she asked him to attend as a personal favor to herself and her fellow Bahá'ís, it is probable that Locke went.

Harlan Ober (1881-1962) was a graduate of Harvard University. He also earned a law degree from Northeastern University in Boston.<sup>7</sup> In 1905, at the Green Acre conference center in Eliot, Maine, Ober had declared himself a Bahá'í.<sup>8</sup> At the request of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Ober traveled to India, Burma, and the Middle East as part of an international team of Bahá'ís whose mission was to teach the Bahá'í Faith.<sup>9</sup> In 1912, Ober had taught the faith to African American William Gibson. He embraced the Faith only five minutes after hearing Ober speak. Deborah Gibson, his wife, also accepted the Faith that same night, convinced.<sup>10</sup> After the "Red Summer" of 1919 (in which race riots erupted in Chicago and Elaine, Arkansas, as well as two days of rioting in Washington, D.C.), Ober recommended in a circular letter that the Bahá'ís organize special meetings on race relations.<sup>11</sup>

As far as Locke's subsequent contacts with the Bahá'í Faith are concerned, what happened in the years between 1915 and 1918 is still a mystery. But there is some record of continued interaction between Locke and his Bahá'í friends.

*Locke's Lectures on Race Relations (1916)*: The Howard chapter of the NAACP and the Social Science Club sponsored a two-year extension course of public lectures, which Locke called, "Race Contacts and Inter-Racial Relations: A Study in the Theory and Practice of Race."<sup>12</sup> As the focus of his lectures, Locke's social conception of race represented a further development of the thought of cultural anthropologist Franz Boas. Locke viewed Boas, the acknowledged father of American anthropology,<sup>13</sup> as a "major prophet of democracy."<sup>14</sup>

Boas, who had significant contacts with Bahá'ís, effectively deconstructed the so-called “scientific racism” so prevalent at that time. He was widely regarded by intellectual historians as one who “did more to combat race prejudice than any other person in history.”<sup>15</sup> Boas convincingly exploded the myth that race had any real basis in scientific fact. Racism was biological nonsense. Cultural anthropology sought to establish culture—as opposed to pseudo-scientific fictions of race—as a “central social science paradigm.”<sup>16</sup> Locke began his lectures by asserting Boas’s distinction between racial difference and racial inequality. Racial difference is biological; racial inequality is social.<sup>17</sup>

Locke himself had a three-tiered conception of race: theoretical, practical, and social.<sup>18</sup> Like Boas, Locke held that race has no biological significance. At best, it is a social construct that can serve to enhance group identity. At worst, race can be used as a tool of oppression. Indeed, Locke foresaw the “ultimate biological destiny of the human stock” as mulatto, or mixed, “like rum in the punch.”<sup>19</sup> Sadly, Locke’s lectures had no influence on his philosophical contemporaries.<sup>20</sup>

Mariam Haney kept in touch with Locke. She must have been his primary, if not his sole contact with the Washington Bahá'ís. In a letter that must have been written in 1916, she writes: “Just now I am sending you this brief note that you may have my expression of deep regret because I have been unable, thus far, to attend your lectures.”<sup>21</sup> Towards the end of her letter, she promises Locke: “I realize that I have missed much in not being with you all on Monday evenings, for I know I should have received an added valuable knowledge. I am planning to attend the remainder of your lectures.”<sup>22</sup> The series of five lectures began on the last Monday of March, and continued to be held on every Monday night through April.<sup>23</sup> According to Jeffrey Stewart, “Locke’s lectures laid out his new sociological theory that race was not a biological but a historical phenomenon.”<sup>24</sup> While Locke was introducing this new theory, new ideas were being introduced to him.

On 14 May 1916, Mary Locke wrote to her son, evidently about his spiritual search. After telling Alain that she had recently been to a meeting of the “brethren” (Quakers), she urged him: “You had better make up your mind to become a Methodist—They are certainly loyal to you—I heard your praises sung—by several of them.”<sup>25</sup> As Locke’s mother was his confidant, by virtue of their close relationship, she must have learned about Locke’s investigation of the Bahá'í Faith at some point between 1915 and 1918. She would play a crucial role in Locke’s

future Bahá'í affiliation.

In a letter dated 17 May 1916, Du Bois wrote Locke to ask: “I understand that there are possibilities of your getting your Ph.D. this year. Is this true?”<sup>26</sup> This would indeed become true, soon enough. And, making his year at Harvard all the more possible, the Howard University Board of Trustees, in a letter dated 13 June 1916 and signed by George William Cook, stated: “I have the honor to announce that at the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees of Howard University held June 6, 1916, your request for a year’s leave of absence in order to complete the residence requirements of Harvard University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy was granted.”<sup>27</sup>

*Harvard Dissertation (1917)*: During the 1916-1917 academic year, Locke was away from Howard on sabbatical, writing his dissertation for his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Harvard. Undoubtedly, that afforded him little or no time to further investigate the Bahá'í Faith. It was on his return to Washington, D.C. that he would seriously reconsider the Bahá'í religion as an option.

*Locke’s Conversion to the Bahá'í Faith (1918)*: Previous scholarship had been at a loss to establish the precise date when Locke embraced the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'ís had assumed that this happened during the early 1920s, although documentary evidence was lacking. Non-Bahá'í scholars had reached the same conclusion. In his Yale dissertation on Locke, Jeffrey Stewart writes: “In the 1920s, Locke joined the Bahai movement and formalized his separation from orthodox Christianity.”<sup>28</sup> Stewart cites two letters from Locke to Mrs. Charlotte (R. Osgood) Mason (d. 1944), dated 12 April 1936 and 26 July 1932, the latter being on the tenth anniversary of his mother’s death.<sup>29</sup> Locke wrote:

Again this year I write you a letter on July 26th, mother’s anniversary. It is most appropriate,—for you have continued the work she began, and more and more I associate these two dearest and best creative forces in my life. Only it seems to have taken so long to bring me to anything like spiritual maturity—long after I thought it achieved, you showed me how much still was to be done. . . . Mother blesses you from beyond for what you have done for “her little boy.”<sup>30</sup>

Locke’s reference to “spiritual maturity” suggests that he may be referring to his Bahá'í affiliation. But, there is a problem with the documentation. I obtained copies of these two letters from Howard University

and found absolutely no mention of the Bahá'í Faith in them. There are other statements of interest. On page two, for instance, Locke writes: "That is why I am getting so impatient with all this fog in both the white and the black world. For brief moments I can see through it—but then there it is—all around us—and almost every last one of us groping."<sup>31</sup>

Locke's 26 July 1932 letter also makes no mention of the Bahá'í religion, and so Stewart's citation is in error. The same applies to Stewart's other citation as evidence for Locke's conversion—the letter dated 12 April 1936. In this letter, which Locke mistakenly dates "April 12, 1934," again there is absolutely no reference to the Bahá'í Faith.<sup>32</sup> My speculation at this point is that the letters in question are possibly to be dated 26 July 1922 and 12 April 1926.

Since formal enrollment procedures did not exist at that time, no contemporary Bahá'í archival record of the exact date of Locke's conversion has yet been found. The academic and religious literature on Locke could, therefore, only speculate as to the date of his conversion, which had even been the subject of some doubt (outside of Bahá'í circles). But in the course of my research and at my request, the National Bahá'í Archives discovered the evidence scholars had been looking for: a "Bahá'í Historical Record"<sup>33</sup> card which Locke had filled out in 1935, at the request of the National Spiritual Assembly, which, conducting its Bahá'í census, had mailed the forms in triplicate to all Bahá'ís in the country.<sup>34</sup>

Locke was one of seven black respondents from the Washington, D.C. Bahá'í community to complete the card.<sup>35</sup> Locke personally completed and signed the card, "Alain Leroy Locke" (in the space designated, "19. Signature"). Under item #13, "Date of acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith," Locke entered the year "1918." In "Place of acceptance of Bahá'í Faith" is entered "Washington, D.C."<sup>36</sup> This date is significant in that it predates previous estimates that had placed Locke's conversion in the early 1920s.<sup>37</sup> The discovery of Locke's Bahá'í Historical Record card confirms what was already evident from a host of other sources. (Those sources, however, failed to pinpoint the date of Locke's conversion.) As previously indicated, the card does not, shed any light on the precise circumstances of his conversion.

The discovery of the date of Locke's conversion does not throw any light on the next two years of Locke's activities as a Bahá'í. It was the usual practice at that time for new believers to write to 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land. Indeed, there is indirect evidence that Locke, follow-

ing his conversion, did so. That same evidence points to the existence of a tablet that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá revealed in reply to Locke’s letter. Such evidence rests on the testimony of Louis Gregory who, in 1933, wrote: “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 this love for our able brother.”<sup>38</sup> In the Alain Locke Papers, I did discover a tablet, dated 1919, from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but its recipient was someone other than Locke himself.<sup>39</sup> To date, the tablet to Locke has not been found.

Curiously, Locke’s name does not appear on an October 1920 list of the Washington, D.C. Bahá’ís.<sup>40</sup> But his name does appear in at least twenty subsequent lists, from March 1922 to 1951, showing a Bahá’í affiliation of at least thirty consecutive years,<sup>40</sup> or thirty-four years dating back to 1918, and probably thirty-seven years until his death in 1954. But the nature of his relationship to the Bahá’í Faith at the end of his life is also unclear. In July 1953, Locke moved to New York, and there is no record of his contact with the Bahá’í community there.

## Notes

1. Qtd. in Winston, “Locke, Alain LeRoy,” p. 399.
2. Washington to Locke, 6 May 1915, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-91, Folder 55 (Washington, Booker T.).
3. Winston, “Locke, Alain Leroy,” p. 399.
4. Du Bois to Locke, 18 May 1915, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-26, Folder 8 (Du Bois, W. E. B. 1921-1929).
5. My thanks to Gayle Morrison for suggesting these possibilities.
6. Haney to Locke, February 1915, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-33, Folder 49 (Haney, Mariam).
7. Elizabeth Kidder Ober, Matthew W. Bullock, and Beatrice Ashton, “Harlan Foster Ober 1881-1962” (In Memoriam) in *The Bahá’í World: An International Record*, Vol. 13, 1954-1963 (Haifa: The Universal House of Justice, 1970) p. 866.
8. Stockman, *The Bahá’í Faith in America: Early Expansion, 1900-1912*, pp. 218-19.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 217; pp. 266-71.
10. Richard N. Francis, “Excerpts from the lives of early believers on teaching the Bahá’í Faith. Amoz Everett Gibson, first black member of the Universal House of Justice,” [www.bci.org/reno/gibson.htm](http://www.bci.org/reno/gibson.htm). See “In Memoriam,” *The Bahá’í World*, Vol. 18, p. 666.

11. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 131.
12. Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, p. 396 and Harris, *Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 205. These lectures were later edited and published as Alain Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations*, ed. by Jeffery C. Stewart (Washington: Howard University Press, 1992).
13. Jeffrey Stewart, ed., "Introduction," in Alain Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations*, p. xxxiii.
14. See Alain Locke, "Major Prophet of Democracy." Review of *Race and Democratic Society* by Franz Boas, *Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 15, no. 2 (Spring 1946) pp. 191-92. See also Mark Helbling, "Feeling Universality and Thinking Particularistically: Alain Locke, Franz Boas, Melville Herkskovits, and the Harlem Renaissance," *Prospects*, Vol. 19 (1994) pp. 289-314.
15. Cited by Peggy Pascoe, "Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of 'Race' in Twentieth-Century America," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 83, no. 1 (June 1996) p. 53, n. 23.
16. Pascoe, "Miscegenation Law," p. 53.
17. Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, pp. 396-97.
18. Fraser, "Another Pragmatism," p. 7.
19. "The Negro's Contribution to American Culture," *Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 8 (July 1939) pp. 521-39, reprinted in Jeffrey C. Stewart, ed., *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke: A Selection of His Essays on Art and Culture* (New York: Garland, 1983) and quoted in Tommy Lee Lott, "Nationalism and Pluralism in Alain Locke's Social Philosophy," in Lawrence Foster and Patricia Herzog, eds., *Defending Diversity: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives on Pluralism and Multiculturalism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994) p. 106.
20. Fraser, "Another Pragmatism," p. 17.
21. Haney to Locke, 1916, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-33, Folder 49 (Haney, Mariam).
22. Haney to Locke, April 1916, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-33, Folder 49 (Haney, Mariam).
23. Stewart, "Introduction," in Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations*, xix.
24. *Ibid.*, p. xx.
25. Mary Locke to Alain Locke, 14 May 1916, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-65, Folder 21 (p. 5).
26. Du Bois to Locke, 17 May 1916, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-26, Folder 8 (Du Bois, W. E. B. 1921-1929).
27. Cook to Locke, 13 June 1916, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-21, Folder 46 (Cook, George William).
28. Stewart, *A Biography of Alain Locke*, p. 22.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 22, n. 30: "Locke to Mason, 4/12/36, 7/26/32, Gen. Corr., ALP, MSC, HU." These letters would now be catalogued as: (1) Locke to Mason, 12 April 1936, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-71, Folder 9 (February-May 1936); and (3) Locke to Mason, 26 July 1932, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-70, Folder 1 (July 1932).
30. Locke to Mason, 26 July 1932, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-70, Folder 1 (July 1932), qtd. by Stewart, *A Biography of Alain Locke*, p. 341.
31. Locke to Mason, 26 July 1932, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-70,

Folder 1 (July 1932) p. 2.

32. Locke to Mason, 12 April 1936, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-71, Folder 9 (February-May 1936) p. 1.

33. The date, "1918," given in the table compiled by Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 204, is almost certainly based on the personal data Locke provided.

34. On the Bahá'í Historical Record cards, see Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America: Early Expansion, 1900-1912*, p. 412; and "Bahá'í Historical Record," *Bahá'í News*, No. 94 (August 1935) p. 2. The Historical Record Cards have been available to researchers for some time, however, Locke's card has only recently been discovered, at least insofar as it relates to this historical question.

35. Gayle Morrison, *To Move the World*, "Table. Information about 99 black respondents among 1,1813 Bahá'ís surveyed, 1935-c. 1937, from Bahá'í Historical Record Cards in the National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois," p. 204.

36. Bahá'í Historical Record Cards Collection, and Biographical Information Collection, NBA. Locke received three copies of this form from Joseph F. Harley, III, secretary of the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Washington, D.C. Harley to Locke, 27 August 1935, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-176, Folder 13 (Bahá'í Faith).

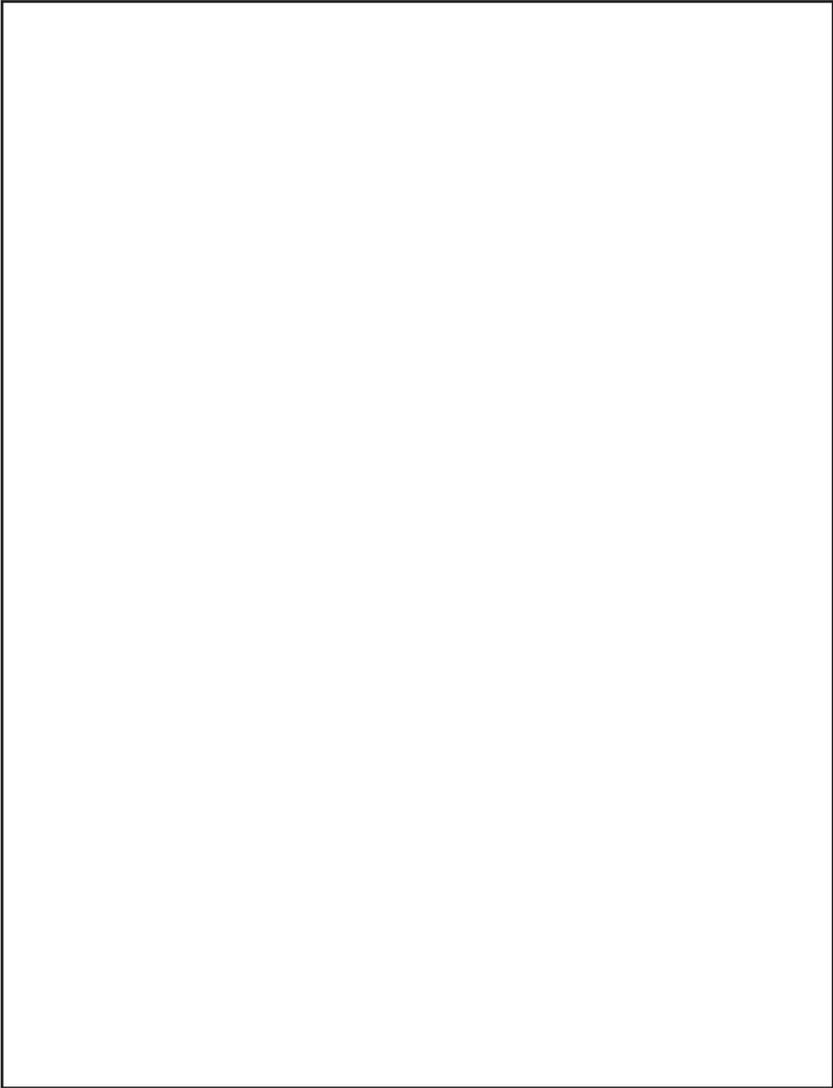
37. See Charlotte Linfoot, "Alain LeRoy Locke, 1886-1954" in *The Bahá'í World: An International Record*, Vol. 8, 1954-1963 (Haifa: Universal House of Justice, [1970] 1980) pp. 894-95. In this obituary, Linfoot states: "In the early 1920s Dr. Locke came into contact with the Bahá'í Faith in Washington, DC" (p. 895).

38. Louis Gregory (on behalf of the National Bahá'í Committee for Racial Amity), "Inter-Racial Amity Activities," *Bahá'í News*, No. 72 (April 1933) p. 6.

39. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-98, Folder 11: Illegible (Italian/Farsi)

40. Roger Dahl, Archivist, National Bahá'í Archives, letter to Buck, 16 February 2001.

41. Office of the Secretary Records, Bahá'í Membership Lists Files, Bahá'í National Center. These lists include: March 1922; September 1925; 1928-1929 (appears to be updated by hand and written over the typewritten 1927-1928 list); 14 January 1934; 22 January 1936; 1937; January 1938; 11 January 1939; 1940; 1941; 1942; 15 January 1943; 1944; 1945; 1946; 1947; 1948; 1949; 1950; 1951. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, Archivist, National Bahá'í Archives.



CONVENTION FOR AMITY  
between the White and Colored Races in America,  
Springfield, Massachusetts, December 5-6, 1921.

## Chapter Five

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# Race Amity

*A meeting such as this seems like a beautiful cluster of precious jewels—pearls, rubies, diamonds, sapphires. It is a source of joy and delight. . . . In the clustered jewels of the races[,] may the blacks be as sapphires and rubies and the whites as diamonds and pearls.”*

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá<sup>1</sup>

Prominent Washington activist and civic leader Henry Edwin Baker (1859-1928), a distinguished graduate (1881) of the Howard University’s law school, expressed the hope that many African Americans held for Locke as a “race man.” In an undated letter (probably written in the early 1920s), Baker wrote to Locke: “I am expecting great things of the young colored men who, like yourself, will, in increasing numbers, in the future, have the opportunity for the breadth of culture that alone can command the attention of the world’s thinkers, For, after all, it is the thinkers of the world who lead.”<sup>2</sup>

Locke was indeed such a “thinker”—a race leader in his own right. But he also served as a leader in a grand social experiment, known as “race amity,” a term that American Bahá’ís used to describe their public campaign to promote interracial unity. Their effort to bridge America’s racial divide stands as one of the most visionary, and yet pragmatic, efforts by any American group or faith community to bring about racial healing and justice. Locke was part of this audacious initiative. Of course, though the Bahá’ís had limited success at the time, racial unity was really quite impossible on a national scale during the

Jim Crow era.

Jim Crow laws were late nineteenth-century statutes passed by Southern states that codified and institutionalized an American system of racial separation. In 1883, 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. In 1896, the high court promulgated the “separate but equal doctrine” in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, resulting in a profusion of Jim Crow laws. By 1914, every Southern state had established two separate societies—one white, one “colored.” Segregation was enforced by law, with separate facilities in virtually every sector of civil society—in schools, streetcars, restaurants, health care institutions, and cemeteries. 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. The Jim Crow system was finally dismantled by civil rights legislation during 1964-1968.

More than progressive, Bahá’í “race amity” initiatives were quite radical by the standards of their day. Such efforts were by no means exclusive. The Quakers (Society of Friends), for instance, held a Conference on Inter-racial Justice on 24 October 1924, one day after the fourth Bahá’í Race Amity convention was held in Philadelphia.<sup>3</sup> Bahá’ís were nonetheless clearly in the forefront of race relations endeavors. They supported similar efforts by the NAACP and the National Urban League, the Quakers, and others. This Bahá’í activism had a “leavening” effect. Its full impact is impossible to determine, and it is further complicated by the fact that historians have virtually ignored what the Bahá’ís were doing. These early race-relations initiatives were part of a social evolution (some might say revolution) that historians will come to recognize as a minor but significant milestone in American social history.

The Bahá’í “race amity” era lasted from 1921-1936, followed by the “race unity” period of 1939-1947. A whole range of race-relations initiatives (such as the celebration of “Race Unity Day”) have been experimented with down to the present. The contemporary Bahá’í statement, “The Vision of Race Unity” (1991),<sup>4</sup> together with the video, “The Power of Race Unity,” have their roots in early Bahá’í race initiatives in which Locke played an important role. This study seeks to “connect” Locke’s secular race-relations efforts with his Bahá’í activi-

ties and to show the dynamic interplay between Locke's philosophy (as a cultural pluralist) and his faith (as a Bahá'í integrationist). This can best be demonstrated by illustrating Locke's role in early Bahá'í race-amity endeavors, with special attention paid to his Bahá'í essays and speeches.

The Bahá'í race-amity initiatives were critical in the internal development of the American Bahá'í community. The full implications of Bahá'í egalitarian principles had not yet been universally realized. A number of Bahá'ís were not ready for the personal and social transformation that full racial integration would require. While some gave intellectual assent to Bahá'í principles of interracial unity, not all were prepared to see these universalisms translated into everyday life.

Other Bahá'ís, who realized the social implications and imperatives of the Bahá'í social teachings, had a wider scope. Alain Locke was one of the Bahá'ís who grasped the "full picture." He himself had to deal with intransigence to social transformation within the Bahá'í community. He was one of the key African American Bahá'ís who, together with Louis Gregory and others, practiced their faith in a real and pragmatic way by putting the Bahá'í vision of ideal race relations into practice.

Within fledgling American Bahá'í communities across the nation—and in Washington, D.C. in particular—these internal and, at times, fractious struggles over how best to implement Bahá'í teachings on race relations can be seen as the growing pains of a new social movement in American history. To be a Bahá'í in a public and demonstrable way was no easy task. And to advocate principles of interracial unity, including interracial marriage, during the Jim Crow era was as courageous as it was exceptional.

Once he had converted to the Bahá'í Faith in 1918, Locke exemplified his commitment to what he would later call a "racial democracy," which in turn would promote a "spiritual democracy," ultimately leading to a "world democracy." While Locke, in his youth, had been relatively untarnished by racial prejudice in America, he would experience the pain of prejudice as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. Later, on returning to the United States in 1911, Locke would taste first-hand the bitterness and alacrity of the racialized Deep South. There were moments during Locke's travels with Booker T. Washington when he literally feared for his life. In 1915, the year that he first seriously investigated the Bahá'í Faith, Locke would be introduced to a vision of



America and of the world that was the very antithesis of Jim Crow. The Bahá'í vision of race amity catalyzed Locke's own highly articulate advocacy of racial justice and improved race relations, as demonstrated in his brilliant series of lectures on race relations in 1916.<sup>5</sup>

In Locke's philosophy of democracy, if America could transform its racial injustice into racial equality, America would then have the moral basis to fulfill its world role as a spiritual leader. It was in this sense that the Bahá'í Faith, a transplanted religion with Middle Eastern origins, was more true to American ideals than was America itself. What the Bahá'ís did religiously was what Locke did in secular terms.

Some of the leading biographers of Locke have given us only a sketchy picture of Locke's activities as a Bahá'í. Much of the reason for this is that the Bahá'ís themselves have written little or nothing on Locke's Bahá'í life. Gayle Morrison broke new ground in 1982, with her masterful biography of Louis Gregory, an African American lawyer from Washington, D.C. who became one of the most important Bahá'í teachers in the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> In effect, Morrison reconstructed the history of Bahá'í "race amity" and "race unity" initiatives, providing valuable information on Locke's participation and behind-the-scenes leadership.

Locke's years of Bahá'í service spanned over three decades. With the major exception of Locke's *Bahá'í World* essays and his editorial work for the Faith, Locke's contributions were primarily associated with Bahá'í efforts to promote "race amity." The services Locke rendered came at a critical juncture in Bahá'í development. With all of the vicissitudes the early Bahá'í community experienced, Locke maintained his active and personal commitment to the noble ideals of his chosen faith. There were, at the same time, periods of inactivity in which Locke distanced himself from the Bahá'ís—and from the local Washington Bahá'í community in particular. But this fact does not detract from the sporadic intensity of his efforts. And although he studiously avoided Bahá'í references in his professional life, Locke's *Bahá'í World* essays served as his public testimony of faith as a Bahá'í.

Locke served on several Bahá'í race amity committees and took part in a number of race amity conferences and other Bahá'í-sponsored events. The first four race amity conventions were held in these cities: (1) Washington, D.C. (19-21 May 1921); (2) Springfield, Massachusetts (5-6 December 1921); (3) New York (28-30 March 1924); and (4) Philadelphia (22-23 October 1924). Locke participated in all but the

second, and he was involved in the planning and execution of these events as well. Beginning with the task force that organized the first convention, Locke served on race amity committees from 1924 until 1932. There are records of Locke having spoken at Bahá'í-sponsored events from 1921 to 1952—a period of thirty-one years. According to archivist Roger Dahl, “Locke was a member of the [Bahá'í] National Race Amity Committee for at least five years between 1925 and 1932.”<sup>7</sup> Locke was officially appointed to the following race amity committees:

- (1) National Amity Convention Committee (1924-1925): Agnes Parsons, Elizabeth Greenleaf, Mariam Haney, Alain Locke, Mabel Ives, Louise Waite, Louise Boyle, Roy Williams (a black Bahá'í), Philip R. Seville, and Mrs. Atwater. Appointed 19 May 1924.<sup>8</sup>
- (2) Racial Amity Committee (1925-1926): Previous committee reappointed (except for Philip R. Seville): Agnes Parsons, Chair; Mariam Haney, Secretary; Elizabeth Greenleaf, Alain Locke, Mabel Ives, Louise Waite, Louise Boyle, Roy Williams, and Mrs. Atwater.<sup>9</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, D.C., in January 1927, to consult and make recommendations. The special committee’s letter to the National Spiritual Assembly was dated 8 January.)<sup>10</sup>
- (4) National Inter-Racial Amity Committee (1927-1928): 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>11</sup> In December 1927, the membership consisted of Agnes Parsons, Louis Gregory, Dr. Zia M. Bagdadi, Dr. Alain Locke, and Mrs. Pauline Hannen,<sup>12</sup> replacing Miss Rieves, who was traveling abroad.
- (5) National Inter-Racial Amity Committee (1928-1929): Louis Gregory, Secretary; Agnes Parsons, Mariam Haney, Louise Boyle, Dr. Zia Bagdadi, Dr. Alain Locke, Mrs. Loulie Matthews, Shelley N. Parker, Pauline Hannen.<sup>13</sup> For a period of time during this Bahá'í administrative year, the National Teaching Committee and the National Inter-Racial Amity Committee were affiliated for budgetary reasons.<sup>14</sup>
- (6) National InterRacial (sic) Amity Committee (1929-1930): 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>15</sup> No independent amity committee was appointed for the 1930-31 Bahá'í administrative year. Amity activities were subsumed under the National Teaching Committee, in which Louis Gregory served as NTC secretary for amity activities.<sup>16</sup>

- (7) National Racial Amity Committee (1931-1932): 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>17</sup>

These are seven Bahá'í committees to which Locke was consistently reappointed, and on which he served for eight out of nine years (1924-1932). It appears that Locke was not selected for the 1932-1933 committee.<sup>18</sup> (The National Inter-Racial Amity Committee itself was dissolved by the National Spiritual Assembly in 1936.<sup>19</sup>) While the reason for his absence during 1932-1936, the final period of the race amity cycle (1924-1936), 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.

To date, no systematic effort has been undertaken to reconstruct Locke's life as a Bahá'í. The following chronology will establish Locke's historic role in the early Bahá'í race relations initiatives.

*The First Race Amity Convention (1921):* This was both a tragic and momentous year for American Bahá'ís—tragic, because of the death of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and momentous because of the success of two race-amity conferences held that year. By design, they were 'Abdu'l-Bahá's creation, and the first amity convention was conceived, initiated, delegated, and approved under his supervision. Happily, he lived to see the fruits of his vision of interracial harmony. While the results of these conventions did not create any appreciable change in American society, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's vision of race unity had a prophetic element.<sup>20</sup>

The first Race Amity conference was organized by Agnes S. Parsons (a white woman prominent in Washington, D.C. society) at the instruction of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. During her second pilgrimage to Haifa (1920), he had said to her: "I want you to arrange in Washington a convention for unity between the white and colored people."<sup>21</sup> This came as quite a shock to Parsons, who had no prior experience in race relations. The wisdom of this historic mission with which the leader of the Bahá'í world charged Parsons would become evident over time. In having to overcome her original self-doubts about her abilities to take a leadership role in this capacity, Parsons would also have to confront her conservatism on at least one of the race amity committees several

years later.

The term “conservative” was actually used with reference to Parsons by her Bahá’í compatriot Louise Boyle, who in 1927, objected to “Mrs. P’s conservatism in the Race question.”<sup>22</sup> As Gayle Morrison explains, although Agnes Parsons “accepted—intellectually—the principle of the oneness of mankind,” she herself took an intermediate position between the “attitude of racial exclusiveness” of one Bahá’í group (the Pythian Temple Bahá’ís), whose orientation she found to be “more understandable than the demand for immediate integration of all [Bahá’í] meetings.” Parsons, moreover, “had difficulty with such practical demonstrations of oneness as intermarriage and social equality.” To her credit, Parsons overcame her own racial and social conservatism.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá advised Agnes Parsons not to undertake this work alone. Accordingly, Parsons consulted with the Washington Bahá’í 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>23</sup> Since Mariam Haney appears to have been Locke’s primary contact with the Bahá’í 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. In a letter that only context can date, Haney wrote Locke to say:

1302 Conn. Ave.  
Wednesday

Dear Friend of Mine:—

Your kind note was duly received, and I am very sorry not to have been able to send you an immediate recognition. I have been incapacitated for several days, with rather an unusual digestive disturbance. You will have “charity and sympathy,” I am sure, for you know how serious are these conditions.

It has been impossible to make any “dates” and I had to cancel several already scheduled. However, I want to say that dear Mr. Gregory is in town for about ten days, and I want to arrange a little gathering in a few days which I think is of the greatest importance at this time. If you will telephone me in a day or two, I will talk the matter over with you a bit before our meeting. I want to consult with you.

Kind greetings ever.  
Cordially,

Mariam Haney<sup>24</sup>

The language of this letter suggests that the race amity convention was the intended topic of consultation. While this is admittedly a surmise, no other planned event at the time would fit the description. Mariam Haney continued to be the liaison between Locke and the organizing committee. In a letter dated Saturday, 14 May (1921), less than one week before the event, Mariam Haney, on behalf of the organizing committee, wrote Locke:

My dear Friend:

We are arranging for a little meeting of consultation on Monday afternoon next at 2:30 o'clock with all those who are in town, or will be at that time, and who are on the program. We are especially desirous of having you with us.

If it is not entirely convenient for you to meet with us, please telephone me as soon as you can and we will try and arrange for another hour.

The kindest greetings for your lovely mother, and with more than the mere regard of,

Your friend sincerely,  
 Mariam Haney<sup>25</sup>

This letter was posted on Saturday, and would have to have been delivered on Monday to have ever reached Locke in time. One difficulty is that he had no telephone at home. While not on this early committee, there is a strong probability that Locke provided consultative advice. He also accepted to chair one of the sessions. The strategy of the committee was to appoint a Bahá'í chairperson to preside over each session,<sup>26</sup> which featured more non-Bahá'í speakers than Bahá'í 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>27</sup> Based on this single fact, it is clear that as early as 1921, Locke was already considered a professing Bahá'í. All of the thoughtful planning paid off, as the convention was a resounding success.

*The First Race Amity Convention:* 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 N.W. in Washington, D.C. Locke served as Session Chair on Friday evening, May 21.<sup>28</sup> A facsimile of the printed program has

been published.<sup>29</sup> This document, to the extent that each member of the audience had read it prior to the sessions, in effect began the program. That is to say, the program contained the essence of what the convention was designed to convey. The official program begins with this message:

Half a century ago in America slavery was abolished.

Now there has arisen need 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.

The printed program<sup>30</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 the result of Locke's influence in his role as consultant.

As to the 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 program. It contains Louis Gregory's report, which was published.<sup>31</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>32</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, May 20, a reporter for *The Hadleigh* 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>33</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>34</sup> Although the reporter is not named, this valuable press coverage was due to the efforts of Martha Root, assisted by Louis Gregory and Neval Thomas.<sup>35</sup>

The conference was a great success. It featured a rich artistic program, 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. Coralie Franklin Cook's presentation on "Negro Poets" included readings of poems by Phyllis Wheatley, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, William Stanley Braithwaite, Jessie Faucet, and others.<sup>36</sup> Coralie Cook was Chair of Oratory at Howard University. According to Morrison, Coralie Cook had "represented the Bahá'í Faith among black intellectuals in Washington, D.C. since about 1910."<sup>37</sup> Her husband, George William Cook was a professor at Howard University as well.

Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis suggests that the Cooks learned about the Bahá'í Faith as early as 1910, through Joseph and Pauline Hannen in Washington, D.C., and became Bahá'ís around 1913.<sup>38</sup> However, Louis Gregory, in his typescript history of the early Washington Bahá'í community, states: "The husbands of these two ladies [Coralie Franklin Cook and Harriet Gibbs Marshall], the late Prof. Geo. W. Cook and the late Capt. N. B. Marshall, although never formally declaring themselves believers, gave valued cooperation to the friends [Bahá'ís] in efforts to spread the Faith."<sup>39</sup> Locke, in his obituary of George Cook, writes in a similar vein: "But with all the conservatism of his mind, he was yet able to embrace whatever new truth seemed to him a logical extension of fundamental principles. On many occasions he expressed with earnestness and enthusiasm his appreciation of the great principles enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh for the perfecting of the human race, and unhesitatingly offered his home for Bahá'í meetings."<sup>40</sup>

The convention attracted crowds of fifteen hundred or more.<sup>41</sup> "An interesting aftereffect 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>42</sup> Apart from this, the convention had no measurable historic impact, since its goal was to foster good will rather than achieve a concrete objective.<sup>43</sup> Within the

Bahá'í community, however, the first Amity Convention was truly the “mother” of all future Bahá'í-sponsored race initiatives. Retrospectively, in its 1929-1930 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>44</sup>

‘Abdu’l-Bahá considered this meeting to have had paramount symbolic and social importance. In a message conveyed by Mountfort Mills (an American Bahá'í who conveyed the oral message upon his return from a visit to Palestine), ‘Abdu’l-Bahá 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>45</sup>

When the convention ended, Agnes Parsons cabled ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “Convention successful. Meetings crowded. Hearts comforted.” To which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá cabled back: “The white colored Convention produced happiness. Hoping will establish same in all America.”<sup>46</sup> In one of several Tablets to her regarding the convention, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá subsequently praised Agnes Parsons as “the first person to raise the banner of the unity of the white and the colored”:

The Convention, comprising the white and the colored, which thou hadst organized, was like the Mother, from which in near future many other meetings shall be born. But thou wert the founder of this Convention. The importance of every principle is at the beginning, and the first person to raise the banner of the unity of the white and the colored, wert thou. It is certain that it shall bear great results.<sup>47</sup>

On 4 October 1921, Mariam Haney wrote Locke: “Most important of all, the very wonderful Tablets which have come to Mrs. Parsons and myself about the Amity Convention.”<sup>48</sup>

In another letter to Parsons, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote:

The Convention of the colored and the white was in reality a great work. Because if the question of the colored and the white should not be solved, it would be productive of great dangers in future for America. Therefore the

Confirmations of the Kingdom of Abhá shall constantly reach any person who strives after the conciliation of the colored and the white. Thank thou God that thou art the first person who established a Race Convention.<sup>49</sup>

The “Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races Based on Heavenly Teachings” was a landmark event, if for no other reason than it proved to be a milestone in Bahá’í social history. It was the progenitor of all future race amity conferences. That noble enterprise enlisted Locke’s direct support for over a decade to come.

No doubt due to logistical factors, Locke had no apparent involvement in the second race amity convention, which was held in Springfield, Massachusetts on 5-6 December 1921 in the auditorium of Central High School.<sup>50</sup> A photograph of that event shows the auditorium filled to capacity, with African Americans likely in the majority of those attending.<sup>51</sup>

*With “The Friends” at Home and Abroad (1922):* For voting and administrative purposes, Bahá’í communities compile annual membership lists that are updated throughout the year. Each Bahá’í year begins on March 21, the Vernal Equinox, or the first day of spring. On the official “List of Bahá’ís in U.S. & Canada, Washington” dated March 1922, Alain Locke is registered as a Bahá’í in good standing.<sup>52</sup> This is the very first membership list in which his name appears. There is no ascertainable reason for his name not having surfaced in official membership records prior to this.

In the very same month, Shoghi Effendi established procedures governing the elections of local and national spiritual assemblies (Bahá’í governing councils) and the eventual election of the Universal House of Justice.<sup>53</sup> While he was never elected to a local or national Bahá’í council, Locke was appointed to national and local committees. In this respect, Locke acted on behalf of the Bahá’í institutions within the delegated authority with which each committee is invested. At this early stage in his Bahá’í life, therefore, Locke was certainly much more than a passive member of the community.

Locke was a very busy man. He belonged to a number of learned societies and professional organizations. As a public speaker, he was in great demand. This being the case, it is difficult to determine how “active” Locke was in his local Bahá’í community of Washington, D.C. But there are some indications that, in the first few years of his experience as a Bahá’í, Locke participated in some major events. The

following will suffice as an instance of this: In a letter dated 5 January 1922, Mariam Haney invited Locke to a memorial to commemorate the Ascension (passing) of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

1818 N St

Dearest Friend: —

Mrs. Parsons joins with me in extending to you and your mother a most gracious recognition of your kind thought of us in the expression of New Year’s Greetings. I have been sick in bed or you would have heard from me ere this.

Now I am writing to ask you, dear Dr Locke, come to the Memorial service for Abdul Baha to be held at the home of Mrs. Parsons, Friday evening of this week. The friends are asked to assemble at 11:45 p.m.—The service will begin at 12 midnight and extend into the night. It is a service for the believers only—or those who call themselves Bahais.

With loving greetings from Paul and me to you and your mother.

Your sister sincerely

Mariam Haney

Jan 5, 1922<sup>54</sup>

While Mariam Haney would always greet Locke and his mother together, this invitation was to him alone. Quite clearly, Haney considered him to be a declared Bahá’í, while his mother was not. Locke’s self-identity as a Bahá’í would become an issue for both himself and the Bahá’í community in later years. We do not know how he must have felt about Haney’s “believers only” requirement, nor do we know if he attended the Ascension meeting. Throughout his life, Locke obliged personal invitations such as this one more often than not.

*Mother’s Death and Impact on Locke’s Bahá’í Identity:* Locke’s depth of commitment as a Bahá’í was greatly influenced by his mother Mary Locke and intensified by her death. That year would prove an emotionally intense time for Locke, for this was when his mother passed away. Her influence on Locke was immense. His own commitment as a Bahá’í, in a very real sense, was an extension of her abiding influence. In a handwritten letter dated 28 June 1922, Locke wrote:

Alain LeRoy Locke

1326 R Street N.W.

Washington. D.C.

My dear Mrs. Parsons,

I am quite mortified to realize how long it has been since the receipt of

your very appreciated letter of sympathy. Please accept this belated acknowledgement.

Mother's feeling toward the [Bahá'í] cause, and the friends who exemplify it, was unusually receptive and cordial for one who had reached conservative years,—it was her wish that I identify myself more closely with it.

I have now time and energy somewhat released to give, and I shall feel it something of a dedicated service to be able to join more actively with the friends in this movement for human brotherhood.

With very best respects,  
Sincerely yours,

Alain Leroy Locke  
June 28, 1922<sup>55</sup>

There is typically something more compelling about a mother's wish if it is expressed late in life. While encouraging her son to deepen his commitment as a Bahá'í appears not to have been a deathbed wish as such, its effect was much the same. While she herself did not embrace the "Bahá'í Cause" as her son did, Mary Locke exemplified a number of Bahá'í virtues and the evidence indicates her sympathy for the Bahá'í teachings.

As David Levering Lewis recounts, Locke "was a person of truly exquisite, if somewhat eccentric, culture. His Howard University colleagues never forgot the wake Locke held in his apartment in the early twenties. He had served them tea while the embalmed remains of his mother sat in her favorite armchair."<sup>56</sup> I have heard corroborative reports of this story from Howard University faculty and graduates.

*International Bahá'í Experience:* During 1922, Locke visited the Bahá'ís of England. In a typewritten letter dated 21 October 1922, Locke wrote of that meeting:

Alain LeRoy Locke  
1326 R Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C.  
October Twenty-one  
1922

My dear Mrs. Parsons:

Please pardon a dictated letter, as I am anxious to reply to your appreciated letter of the fourteenth. . . .

I learned with great satisfaction from Mrs. Haney of the plans for the Amity Conference in New York. I shall most certainly attend, and if I can in

any way be of further assistance before or during the conference, please feel free to call upon me.

Through a miscarriage of plans, due to necessity of taking some [heart] treatment, I could not manage to meet the group of friends in Stuttgart. I did, however, have some very appreciated hours with the friends in England, especially Miss Rosenberg. . .

With best respects and thanks,  
Sincerely yours,  
Alain Leroy Locke<sup>57</sup>

The letter shows that Locke actively sought out Bahá'í contacts in the course of his travels during this period of his life. It was unfortunate that Locke could not see the Bahá'ís in Germany—a country that, after all, seems to have been his favorite in Europe. Whether or not Locke did succeed in connecting with the Bahá'ís in Germany at a future date is not known. Later in life, Locke would spend a few months in Haiti, but his relationship with the Bahá'ís there is also unknown. It is doubtful whether Locke attempted to contact the Bahá'ís in Egypt, where the Faith led a precarious, somewhat clandestine existence.

*Locke's Idealism and Activism:* Returning to America and his race-relations work at home, Locke's initial idealism as a Bahá'í manifested itself in his capacity as a fellow organizer and promoter of events aimed at bridging the racial divide and mitigating the racial crisis. Racial amity was a noble ideal—that was the mission of the early Bahá'í race relations work. For it to become a reality (or at least a possibility), that social ideal had to be translated into real life. The race amity conventions served this purpose. The ambience of these extraordinary meetings depended upon an elegant setting, enlivened by a program of inspiring speeches, music, and poetry. Locke's attention to detail in planning the race amity events appears in a subsequent letter, dated 1 November 1922, to Parsons in which Locke wrote of the forthcoming publication of poems by Mrs. Georgia Douglass Johnson in the *Bronze* series that he was editing: "I am now sending you copies and hope that Mrs. Osgood may be able to use some of them. One or two impressed me as likely to be very effective and in keeping with the moods we should stress in the Inter-Amity Convention."<sup>58</sup>

Culture, for Locke, was the goodwill ambassador of interracial contacts. The amity conventions seemed to reflect Locke's tastes, infusing these events with a literary and artistic dimension. This was cultural

pluralism at work. It was only natural that he would try to use art to promote Bahá'í principles. The meeting to which he refers in his letter was the third amity convention, which would be held in New York on 28-30 March 1924. Evidently, this event had originally been scheduled for late 1922. In a letter dated 16 November 1922 to poet Countee Cullen, Locke mentions the reason why he did not meet Cullen in New York, as planned: "You are probably wondering why you have not heard from me or seen me in New York. The Amity Conference, which I had promised to attend seems to have been delayed or postponed."<sup>59</sup>

In his letter of 21 October 1922 to Agnes Parsons cited above, Locke was enthusiastic about "plans for the Amity Conference in New York" about which Mariam Haney had told him. Her role as Locke's primary Bahá'í contact continued, as it had for seven years, dating back to 1915. Locke's promise to attend, and his offer to be of service, was sincere. The event would take place in the year after his first Bahá'í pilgrimage (1923).

*First Will and Testament:* Curiously, Locke wrote a last will and testament dated 30 June 1922, on stationery stamped "The Edward Steam Ship Company" and "On Board The Cunard R.M.S. 'Aquitania,'" but indicated as having been written and "duly witnessed" (with no witness signature) in Washington, D.C. Among other things, the will directs that a "\$200 memorial" be given "to Rev. O. L. Mitchell or successor for St. Mary's Chapel in the name of [illegible]."<sup>60</sup> Perhaps this was meant in memory of his mother. But further in the testament, Locke writes: "It is my preference [that] any small foundation [?] as will be made possible should bear the memorial name of my parents, Pliny Ishmael Locke and Mary Hawkins Locke rather than my own, in honor of their great sacrifices for me." Locke was probably still in grief over his mother's death, and evidently remembered the anniversary of her passing every year thereafter.

*Locke and Louis Gregory (1923):* This was an important year in Locke's development as a Bahá'í: service to youth, meeting Bahá'ís in England and Germany, pilgrimage, and possible influence on Shoghi Effendi's message to the Washington, D.C. Bahá'í community at the end of the year. We should also assume that he somehow became involved in the planning of the third amity convention that would take place in New York the following year. While the events of record tell us about the

more important Bahá'í services he rendered, there may well have been other contributions that Locke made for which there is no record. His correspondence provides some evidence and insight into the nature and extent of his Bahá'í activities.

Though Mariam Haney was clearly Locke's most important Bahá'í contact, another significant influence in Locke's Bahá'í life was Louis Gregory. On 12 March 1923, Louis Gregory wrote Locke:

1501 7th St. N. W.  
Washington D. C. 12 March, 1923.

Dr. Alain L. Locke  
1326 R Street N. W.  
City:

My noble Brother:

I am grateful for your cordial lines of the 8th inst., which find me still in town on account of unexpected and unavoidable delay. It was indeed a joy for me to serve with you in the awakening of souls. It is my prayer that your happiness will grow, that you may fill your environment with the joy of real life and that the human world be adorned thru your efforts.

Your idea of soul saving is also mine. The greatest attainment for the soul of man is to "soar in the atmosphere of realities." But this is possible only for those who are freed from the world of superstition, imagination and the various dogmas and material attachments that enthrall. To become universal in thot [sic] and sympathies is to be God-like. Thus man is elevated to the heaven of the Divine Will and in his life and character reflects the Divine virtues and perfections. Abdul Baha has indicated that the various Prophets have appeared that "veils might be rent asunder and reality become manifest."

It is certain that the youth for whom you are now doing so much will to a greater and greater degree, as the years pass, appreciate your service. Their illumination will in turn brighten others and the traces of divine education will spread thru the ages. In blessing you are blessed. In giving life you are its joyous recipient. Thus eternal life begins, even in this world of dust.

Please convey to your circle my best wishes and accept, in acknowledgement of your kindness, my warm appreciation and eternal good will.

Very cordially yours,  
Louis G. Gregory<sup>61</sup>

Here, Gregory is responding to Locke's letter of March 8th. Given the intervening time required for delivery, it is clear that Gregory gave Locke an immediate and cordial reply, reflecting the same warmth and friendship that was expressed in Locke's letter to him. It is hard to know the precise reference to their collaboration in "the awakening of souls." True, they had served together in the first race amity

convention in 1921. Extrapolating from the fact that Louis Gregory was practically a full-time Bahá'í itinerant “travel teacher,” certainly their joint endeavor involved teaching the Bahá'í Faith. Except for this letter, there might not have been any trace of Locke's involvement in the education of youth. This appears to have been, initially, a regular commitment. It could not have been a long-term one, however, given his plans for pilgrimage.

We simply would have had no idea of the extent of Locke's Bahá'í activities were it not for evidence gleaned from his correspondence. The fact that Locke kept much of his incoming correspondence, with occasional carbon copies of his outgoing letters, allows historians to reconstruct certain events in his life. For instance, in his letter dated 15 March 1923 to Countee Cullen, Locke refers to yet another postponement of the race amity conference: “This is just to get me started and to inform you on some neutral matters. The Inter-Amity Conference which I was to have attended in New York the twenty-first, twenty-second and twenty-third, again has been postponed. I am sorry to disappoint you about the twenty-first. I should dearly love to be there for your sake.”<sup>62</sup>

Often his letters contain allusive references, vague and written in passing. Such is the case in determining that Locke did finally succeed in meeting the Bahá'ís of Germany. Charles Mason Remey, a prominent Bahá'í of the time, mentions this in a letter dated 12 June 1923 to Locke: “I envy your meeting with the Bahá'ís of Germany, if it were possible for us to envy another's blessings.”<sup>63</sup>

## Notes

1. “Talk at Home of Andrew J. Dyer, 24 April 1912,” *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 56-57.

2. Henry E. Baker to Alain Locke, no date, Alain Locke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, DC, Box 164-12, folder 9. Available at <http://www.huarchivesnet.howard.edu/howarcorbaker1a.htm>.

3. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 149.

4. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, *The Vision of Race Unity: America's Most Challenging Issue* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991).

5. Alain Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations*, edited by Jeffery C. Stewart (Washington: Howard University Press, 1992).

6. Gayle Morrison, *To Move the World: Louis G. Gregory and the Advancement of Racial Unity in America* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982).

7. Dahl to Buck, 16 February 2001.
8. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 147.
9. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 155.
10. "National Committee on Race Amity Appointed," *Baha'i News Letter*, No. 16 (March 1927) p. 5. Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 166 and 344, n. 4. Morrison to author, e-mail dated 19 June 2002.
11. "Committees of the National Spiritual Assembly 1927-1928," *Baha'i News Letter*, No. 19 (August 1927) p. 4; Bahá'í Archives of Washington, D.C. Courtesy of Ms. Anita Chapman. This list is confirmed in a letter written by Louis Gregory himself. Gregory to Parsons, 10 July 1927, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, Archivist, enclosure sent 22 August 2001.
12. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 182.
13. Gregory to Parsons, 29 July 1928, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, Archivist, enclosure sent 22 Aug. 2001.
14. "Committees of the National Spiritual Assembly 1929-1930," *Baha'i News Letter*, No. 32 (May 1929) p. 4. See also "Interracial Amity Committee," *Baha'i News Letter* No. 40 (April 1930) pp. 10-12, and Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 186.
15. "Committees of the National Spiritual Assembly 1929-1930," *Baha'i News Letter*, No. 32 (May 1929) p. 4. Members: Louis Gregory (Chairman), Shelley Parker (Secretary), Agnes Parsons, Louise Boyle, Mariam Haney, Dr. Zia Bagdadi, Dr. Alain Locke, Loulie Mathews, Miss Alice Higginbotham.
16. Morrison to author, e-mail 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.
17. "National Bahá'í Committees: 1931-1932," *Baha'i News Letter*, No. 53 (July 1931) p. 2; Louis Gregory, "The Annual Convention," *Bahá'í News*, no. 52 (May 1931) p. 3; Locke to Gregory, 6 June 1931, Louis Gregory Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, Archivist, enclosure with letter dated 16 February 2001; Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 349, n. 29.
18. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 195. Committee members included Loulie Mathews, Mabelle L. Davis, Dr. Zia Bagdadi, Shelley N. Parker, Sara E. Witt, Coralie F. Cook, Louis Gregory.
19. Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 213-14, 244.
20. 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarded race unity as the fifth candle of his "Seven Candles of Unity." 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, trans. by Marzieh Gail, et al. (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978) pp. 30-32.
21. Gregory, "Inter-racial Amity," p. 281. See Morrison, *To Move the World*, 134-43.
22. Louise Boyle to Horace Holley, 1 February 1927, Interracial Committee Correspondence, Office of the Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada Records, qtd. in Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 168.
23. Gayle Morrison, "To Move the World: Promoting Racial Amity, 1921-1927," *World Order*, Vol. 14, no. 2 (Winter 1980) p. 15.
24. Haney to Locke, undated, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-33, Folder 49 (Haney, Mariam).

25. Haney to Locke, 14 May 1921, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-33, Folder 49 (Haney, Mariam).
26. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 139.
27. Morrison, "To Move the World: Promoting Racial Amity, 1921-1927," p. 16, citing Bahai Temple Unity, Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, 1922, p. 310, Bahai Temple Unity records.
28. Louis Gregory, "Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races." In *Star of the West*, Vol. 12, no. 6 (24 June 1921) pp. 117-18. Reprinted as Vol. 7 (Oxford: George Ronald, 1978). See also Gregory, "Inter-Racial Amity," in *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume Two, 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: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980) p. 281; and Gregory, "Racial Amity in America" in *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume 7, 1936-1938* (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, 1939; reprint, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980) p. 655; Mariam Haney (secretary, The Teaching Committee of Nineteen), "A Compilation of the Story of the Convention for Amity," 31 May 1921, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-106, Folder 7 (re: Amity Convention).
29. 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 Hundreth Anniversary of the Birth of the Bahá'í Faith* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1944). See also Horace Holley, "Survey of Current Bahá'í Activities in the East and West," in *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume II, April 1926-April 1928* (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1928; reprint, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980) pp. 22-23.
30. Program, Bahá'í Archives of Washington, D.C. Courtesy of Ms. Anita Chapman.
31. Louis Gregory, "Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races" in *Star of the West*, Vol. 12, no. 6 (24 June 1921) pp. 114-19, 123-24. Reprinted as Vol. 7 (Oxford: George Ronald, 1978).
32. 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, p. 5. Bahá'í Archives of Washington, D.C. Courtesy of Ms. Anita Chapman. See also Louis G. Gregory, "Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races," *Star of the West*, Vol. 12, no. 6 (June 24, 1921) p. 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."
33. *The Hadleigh* (Washington, D.C.), 20 May 1921, quoted by Mariam Haney, "A Compilation on the Story of the Convention for Amity," p. 9.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
37. Morrison, "To Move the World: Promoting Racial Amity, 1921-1927," p. 16, n. 30.

38. Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis, "African American Women in the Bahá'í Faith, 1899-1919," *World Order*, Vol. 25, no. 2 (Winter 1993-94) p. 47.
39. Louis Gregory, "Some Recollections of the Early Days of the Bahai Faith in Washington, D.C." Manuscript. 7 December 1937, Tuskegee Institute. Courtesy of Gayle Morrison, U.S. Bahá'í National Center.
40. Alain L. Locke, "Educator and Publicist," *Star of the West*, Vol. 22, no. 8 (November 1931) pp. 254-55. (Obituary of George William Cook, 1855-1931.)
41. Morrison, "To Move the World: Promoting Racial Amity, 1921-1927," p. 17.
42. Gregory, quoted by Morrison, *Ibid.*, p. 17.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.
44. 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, D.C. Courtesy of Ms. Anita Chapman.
45. Gregory, "Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races," p. 115.
46. Untitled report by Martha Root, in Mariam Haney, "A Compilation on the Story of the Convention for Amity," p. 12.
47. 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Parsons, 26 July 1921 and 27 September 1921, qtd. in Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 143 and 342, n. 34.
48. Haney to Locke, 4 October 1911, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-33, Folder 49 ("Haney, Mariam").
49. 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Parsons, 26 July 1921 and 7 October 1921, qtd. in Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 142-43 and 342, n. 33. Also published in the 1929-1930 Annual Reports, *Baha'i News Letter*, "Interracial Amity Committee," p. 10. An alternative translation is as follows: "The convention of the colored and white was in reality a great work, because if the question of the colored and white should not be resolved[,] it will be productive of great dangers in [the] future for America. Therefore the Confirmations [sic] of the Kingdom of Abhá shall continually reach any person who strives after the conciliation of the colored and the white." (Gregory, "Interracial Amity Committee" (1930) p. 10.) Note that this text differs from the translation given in another report (Gregory, "Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races," p. 115), but the gist is the same. In all likelihood, both translations were taken from the same Persian original.
50. See Roy Williams, "Convention for Amity Between the White and Colored Races, Springfield, Massachusetts, December 5 and 6, 1921" *Star of the West*, Vol. 13 (28 April 1922) p. 51.
51. Morrison, *To Move the World*, photograph opposite p. 137.
52. "List of Bahá'is in U.S. & Canada" dated March 1922. NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.
53. Robert Stockman, "The Bahá'í Faith in America: One Hundred Years," *World Order*, Vol. 25, no. 3 (Spring 1994) p. 14.
54. Haney to Locke, 5 January 1922, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-33, Folder 49 ("Haney, Mariam").
55. Locke to Parsons, 28 June 1922, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.
56. Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, p. 87.
57. Locke to Parsons, 21 October 1922, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist, enclosure sent 20 February 2001.
58. Locke to Parsons, 1 November 1922, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy



of Roger Dahl, Archivist, enclosure sent 20 February 2001.

59. Locke to Cullen, 16 Nov. 1922, Box 3, Fol. Locke, Countee Cullen Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

60. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 6 (Will and instructions in case of death).

61. Gregory to Locke, 12 March 1923, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-32, Folder 50 (Gregory, Louis G.).

62. Locke to Cullen, 15 March 1923, Box 3, Fol. Locke, Countee Cullen Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

63. Remy to Locke, 12 June 1923, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-80, Folder 1 (Remy, Charles Mason).





SHOGHI EFFENDI RABBANI

## Chapter Six

# Pilgrimage

The Holy Land—present-day Israel, the Dead Sea and the Negev desert, western Jordan, the Red Sea, and Sinai—is sacred to three great world religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. There is a fourth world religion, the Bahá'í Faith, which has its sacred shrines there also on Mount Carmel in Haifa, the third largest city in Israel.

As a Bahá'í, Locke undertook two pilgrimages to the Holy Land. The first was in 1923, the second in 1934. His first pilgrimage was immortalized in a travel narrative published in 1924, reprinted three times and endorsed by Shoghi Effendi, the grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá who became the head of the Bahá'í Faith after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing. It is significant that Locke's trips to Israel (then Palestine) were for the primary purpose of visiting the Bahá'í shrines, rather than Jerusalem. The fact that Haifa was his principal destination attests the primacy of Locke's religious identity as a Bahá'í rather than as a (former) Episcopalian, as he was always designated in the brief biographical notices of him published during his lifetime. (It was only in 1952 in an article "Bahá'í Faith: Only church in world that does not discriminate," in *Ebony* magazine, that Locke's Bahá'í identity was publicized in the popular media.<sup>1</sup>)

Bahá'ís are strongly encouraged to go on pilgrimage at least once in their lifetime. After declaring his faith in 1918, and probably having written to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the next step for Locke would be to make

his pilgrimage to Haifa. Before he could undertake such a voyage, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá passed away in 1921. Notwithstanding this loss for the Bahá’í world, Locke was about to meet someone who would make a lasting impression on him. In reviewing the scope of his Bahá’í life, surely Locke’s most profound experience as a Bahá’í was the event of his first pilgrimage, where he made a cordial and lasting connection with Shoghi Effendi. Locke (1885-1954) and Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957) were close contemporaries.

Beyond its personal value for him, Locke left a record of his pilgrimage for posterity. In April 1924, Locke’s essay “Impressions of Haifa” became his first Bahá’í publication. It was reprinted three times, in 1926, 1928, and 1930.<sup>2</sup>

Locke’s pilgrimage was part of a larger itinerary, which included the Sudan and Egypt. In a letter to Countee Cullen, Locke names two ships that he contemplated taking for his voyage abroad, reflecting the fact that he had already narrowed his choice: “Naturally I am depressed—you as bus-boy and Langston [Hughes] as galley-slave—when I had in imagination placed the trio in Europe this summer—you with the German mission—Langston with me. . . . I was going to take the same ship—as it is, I will sail the 27th on the *Paris* or the 30th on the *Empress of Britain*.”<sup>3</sup> Based on a postcard dated 12 July 1923 to Countee Cullen, the ship he chose was probably the *Empress of Britain*. Locke says: “You and Langston have been so much on my mind, especially during the long days of the ship’s journey.”<sup>4</sup> The postcard was printed in Oxford and the stamp was British.

Granted sabbatical leave to collaborate with the French Archaeological Society of Cairo, the highlight of his research trip was the reopening of the tomb of Tutankhamen. In the introduction to Locke’s “Impressions of Luxor,” the editor of *The Howard Alumnus* wrote that Locke had “spent several months in Europe, the Near East, Egypt, and the Sudan, 1923-1924.”<sup>5</sup> On his passport issued 26 June 1922, Locke was granted a visa in Berlin, dated 25 August 1923 (No. N. 3826), permitting him to travel to “Egypt, Palestine & United Kingdom.”<sup>6</sup>

Curiously, Locke had originally arranged for Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes to accompany him on his pilgrimage. In a letter to poet Countee Cullen, Locke writes: “As to Langston . . . I had an invitation to the Bahaist center at Haifa so worded as to include him.”<sup>7</sup> This indicates that Shoghi Effendi probably had extended an invitation

to Langston Hughes to visit the Bahá'í shrines, notwithstanding the fact that that the celebrated poet was not himself a Bahá'í and thus would not be undertaking a Bahá'í pilgrimage. Hughes probably could have accompanied Locke to Haifa had he wished to, as the two had spent time together in Paris and in Verona,<sup>8</sup> and previously in Paris.<sup>9</sup>

Evidence has come to light that narrows the date of Locke's pilgrimage to within a week. A nearly precise date comes from a memo written by the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Center:

Dr. Locke visited the Bahá'í World Centre on at least two occasions. We have not, however, been able to find a record of the exact dates of his pilgrimages. Dr. Locke's first visit appears to have taken place in November or early December 1923. As to the duration of his stay, we note that Dr. Locke, in a letter dated 5 December 1923 written from Egypt, informs Shoghi Effendi of his arrival in Cairo. The letter also refers to "the memory of the past week at Haifa . . ." <sup>10</sup>

Locke's first pilgrimage therefore took place in late November or early December 1923, or perhaps both, depending on how long the pilgrimage lasted. Originally, Locke had planned to spend a month in Haifa. In the same letter to Countee Cullen just cited, Locke writes: "I am going to stay there at least a month—and had hoped to do some writing there."<sup>11</sup>

The full text of Locke's letter of 5 December 1923 to Shoghi Effendi, written around a week after his pilgrimage, is unavailable. It is customary for the Bahá'í World Center to treat letters written to the central authorities of the Bahá'í Faith (Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi) as personal and confidential. However, for research purposes, complete or partial summaries of these letters may be provided to researchers. Further details of Locke's letter were provided by the Research Department:

After acknowledging his "safe and pleasant" arrival in Cairo, Dr. Locke states that his memory of his week in Haifa "is one of the happiest things I have to cherish—the experience itself being one of the most significant and beneficial experiences of my life."<sup>12</sup>

We should take Locke at his word. This statement, while lacking in specifics, reveals the impact that Locke's pilgrimage had on him. Typically, the intensity of a pilgrimage experience not only rejuvenates a person's faith, but also sustains it. By the concrete immediacy of

sacred space or place, pilgrimage leaves a deep and abiding impression on the pilgrim for whom the experience is richly rewarding. The specific claims that each religion makes as to the particular spiritual rewards of such an experience vary, of course. But the end result is much the same: The pilgrim renews his faith through a close, personal encounter with both the historic and present locus of spiritual power with which the sacred site is associated. Impressed as he was by the Bahá'í Shrines themselves, Locke was even more deeply struck by Shoghi Effendi.

Locke translated his private appreciation of his experience into a public one. Just as he was a public intellectual in his role as an academic, in his "Impressions of Haifa" Locke was a "public" pilgrim. "Impressions of Haifa" was published in 1924 in the Bahá'í magazine, *Star of the West*, then reprinted three times in the earliest volumes of *The Bahá'í World*.

Due to its descriptive excellence, the article would likely have been reprinted on its own merits. But the endorsement that the essay received from the Guardian himself gilded Locke's piece with an aura of approval that went beyond the question of authenticity. What emerges is a spiritual odyssey cast in the form of a travel narrative. This is what makes "Impressions of Haifa" qualitatively distinct from "Impressions of Luxor," even though both narratives are otherwise comparable in form and content.

On its merits, "Impressions of Haifa" is a descriptive masterpiece. It reveals this time, not a literary critic, but a man of letters—a frustrated artist perhaps, yet a talented one—resulting in one of the most significant records ever written by a Bahá'í pilgrim. Without trying to read too much into it, Locke's descriptions practically take on a dimension of allegory whose theme is the synergy between "the supernatural with the natural, beauty and joy with morality":

Everything seems to share the custody of the Message—the place itself is a physical revelation. I shall never forget my first view of it from the terraces of the shrine. Mount Carmel, already casting shadows, was like a dark green curtain behind us and opposite was a gorgeous crescent of hills so glowing with color—gold, sapphire, amethyst as the sunset colors changed—and in between the mottled emerald of the sea, and the grey-toned house-roofs of Haifa.<sup>13</sup>

Locke's use of the term, "revelation," is especially poignant for

Bahá'ís, since the truth-claims of their faith reside in a claim to the veracity and authority of the revelations of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. “Everything seems to share the custody of the Message” creates an expectation in the reader that the description to follow will somehow “translate” the Bahá'í revelation or message into a “physical revelation.” Locke’s choice of precious jewels to describe the colors he beheld appears to be deliberate: In so doing, he accentuates the inestimable value of the divine revelation as reflected in the “physical revelation” of the shrines themselves. He continues:

Almost immediately opposite and picking up the sun’s reflection like polished metal were the ramparts of ‘Akká, transformed for a few moments from its shabby decay into a citadel of light and beauty. Most shrines concentrate the view upon themselves—this one turns itself into a panorama of inspiring loveliness. It is a fine symbol for a Faith that wishes to reconcile the supernatural with the natural, beauty and joy with morality. It is an ideal place for the reconciliation of things that have been artificially and wrongfully put asunder.<sup>14</sup>

Opposite Mount Carmel, across the Bay of Haifa, is ‘Akká. The scene shifts to the site of the former Ottoman penal colony where Bahá'u'lláh, his family and followers were incarcerated beginning in 1868. For Locke, that pestilential fortress-prison is now transformed into “a citadel of light and beauty,” gilded with spiritual as well as historic significance. In this heavenly vista, what had been “artificially and wrongfully put asunder” is restored and reintegrated. Locke could have spoken of the “reconciliation” of races, an issue paramount both to him personally and to Shoghi Effendi as well. But, as with all good art, Locke exercises chaste control in his narrative in recreating the experience for the sheer sake of beauty. He resists any temptation to propagandize.

Towards the end of “Impressions of Haifa,” Locke gives his impressions of ‘Akká. Probably on the final day of his pilgrimage, Locke visited the Shrine (i.e., the tomb) of Bahá'u'lláh at Bahjí, whereof he writes:

Then there was the visit to the Bahjí, the garden spot of the Faith itself and to Acre, now a triumphant prison shell that to me gave quite the impression one gets from the burst cocoon of the butterfly. Vivid as the realization of cruelty and hardships might be, there was always the triumphant realization here that opposite on the heights of Carmel was enshrined the victory that had survived

and conquered and now was irrepressible. The Bahjí was truly oriental, as characteristically so as Mt. Carmel had been cosmopolitan.<sup>15</sup>

The image of a cocoon evokes the drab and dismal confines of the prison in ‘Akká. The butterfly is Bahá’u’lláh. Extending this metaphor, the butterfly in search of nectar wings its way to Mount Carmel. Instead of finding flowers, however, this butterfly will create magnificent gardens that, in due time, will attract others, like Locke himself, to their exquisite beauty and to the “nectar” of spiritual nourishment they provide.

Locke tells us nothing about his experience inside the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh. For a sense of this, his description of the Shrines of the Báb and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá will have to suffice. In his narrative, Locke takes the reader with him into the interior:

The shrine chambers of the Báb and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are both impressive, but in a unique and almost modern way: richly carpeted, but with austere undecorated walls and ceilings, and flooded with light, the ante-chambers are simply the means of taking away the melancholy and gruesomeness of death and substituting for them the thought of memory, responsibility and reverence. Through the curtained doorways, the tomb-chambers brilliantly lighted create an illusion which defeats even the realization that one is in the presence of a sepulchre. Here without mysticism and supernaturalness, there is dramatically evoked that the lesson of the Easter visitation of the tomb, the fine meaning of which Christianity has in such large measure forgotten, “He is not here, He is risen.” That is to say, one is strangely convinced that the death of the greatest teachers is the release of their spirit in the world, and the responsible legacy of their example bequeathed to posterity.<sup>16</sup>

This is an interesting passage, for it implies that the Bahá’í Faith has its own Easter message. While not predicated on an empty tomb and post-resurrection epiphanies, Locke senses the spiritual power—the living presence—of the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

While the Bahá’í shrines somehow preserve the charisma of the personages in whose memory they were built, Locke now turns to another charismatic figure, Shoghi Effendi. Deeply impressed by this man, Locke writes of him:

It was a privilege to see and experience these things. But it was still more of a privilege to stand there with the Guardian of the Cause, and to feel that, accessible and inspiring as it was to all who can come and will come, there was available there for him a constant source of inspiration and vision from

which to draw, in the accomplishment of his heavy burdens and responsibilities. That thought of communion with ideas and ideals without the mediation of symbols, seemed to me the most reassuring and novel feature. For after all the only enlightened symbol of a religious or moral principle is the figure of a personality endowed to perfection with its qualities and necessary attributes. Earnestly renewing this inheritance seemed the constant concern of this gifted personality, and the quiet but insistent lesson of his temperament.<sup>17</sup>

Locke was speaking of a living embodiment of Bahá'í qualities. In Locke's eyes, Shoghi Effendi was the perfect model of a true Bahá'í. In coming to a deep appreciation of Shoghi Effendi as a "gifted personality," Locke was privileged to see the Guardian's "refreshingly human"<sup>18</sup> side as well. The two enjoyed a long walk and conversation in the Bahá'í gardens:

Refreshingly human after this intense experience, was the relaxation of our walk and talk in the gardens. Here the evidences of love, devotion and service were as concrete and as practical and as human as inside the shrines they had been mystical and abstract and superhuman. Shoghi Effendi is a master of detail as well as of principle, of executive foresight as well as of projective vision. But I have never heard details so redeemed of their natural triviality as when talking to him of the plans for the beautifying and laying out of the terraces and gardens. They were important because they all were meant to dramatize the emotion of the place and quicken the soul even through the senses.<sup>19</sup>

The conversation dwelled on the aesthetics of the terraces and gardens surrounding the shrines. Although Locke was a philosopher, he and Shoghi Effendi did not engage in a discussion of Bahá'í metaphysics, although they easily could have. Nor did the two (based on this record) talk about race relations, though they may have discussed the Washington, D.C. Bahá'í community. Following their walk in the gardens, Locke was taken to the house of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

It was night in the quick twilight of the east before we had finished the details of inspecting the gardens, and then by the lantern light, the faithful gardener showed us to the austere retreat of the great Expounder of the teaching. It taught me with what purely simple and meager elements a master workman works. It is after all in himself that he finds his message and it is himself that he gives with it to the world.<sup>20</sup>

'Abdu'l-Bahá lived in almost austere simplicity. Shoghi Effendi, in furthering the Bahá'í message, gave artistic expression to it. As the

master landscape architect of the Bahá'í Gardens on Mount Carmel, Shoghi Effendi's work had permanent effect, because Bahá'ís have resolved to preserve the artistic integrity of his vision.

For Locke, his "Impressions of Haifa" were indelible. While the immediacy of it faded over time, its effects were enduring. As a result of that experience, Locke resolved to rededicate his life to the service of the Bahá'í "Cause." In a subsequent reference to the contents of Locke's letter of 5 December 1923, the Research Department relates:

As stated in the earlier summary, he shares his view that the best way for him to thank Shoghi Effendi is "to devote my best efforts to the Cause." He also asks to be remembered "with thanks to the friends" until he has had a chance to write them individually.<sup>21</sup>

Locke did not identify these other friends he was planning to write to. There is a body of correspondence with Bahá'ís preserved in the Alain Locke Papers at Howard University. This correspondence provides much of the evidence for reconstructing Locke's subsequent activities as a Bahá'í, as will be seen in the succeeding chapters.

One of the ways in which Locke did devote his "best efforts to the Cause" was through lending his pen to it. Locke published four major essays in several editions of *The Bahá'í World* (the Bahá'í year books), beginning with his "Impressions of Haifa."

That essay impressed the Guardian. In a letter, dated 12 March 1926, written on his behalf, Shoghi Effendi wrote: "The article by Prof. Locke is very good and sufficient."<sup>22</sup> Doubtless the article itself was widely appreciated by Bahá'ís. To what extent it was known and shown to anyone outside the Bahá'í community is not possible to determine. However, since *The Bahá'í World* volumes were intended for public distribution and were formally presented to civic leaders and other public officials, Locke's name attached to a Bahá'í essay lent considerable prestige to the Faith.

"Impressions of Haifa" was Locke's first public testimony of faith in being a Bahá'í. Just as his first pilgrimage experience reinforced his Bahá'í identity inwardly, Locke's "Impressions of Haifa" reinforced his Bahá'í identity outwardly. In a brief span of time, Locke had established high-level national and international contacts with some of the most important Bahá'í leaders of his day.

In looking back on the significance of his first pilgrimage experience, Locke's pilgrimage essay remains his most intimate testimony of

faith as a Bahá'í. Locke concludes his narrative in saying:

Surely the cure for the ills of western materialism is here, waiting some more psychological moment for its spread, for its destined mission of uniting in a common mood western and oriental minds.

There is a new light in the world: there must needs come a new day.<sup>23</sup>

Here, Locke has a prevision of the “destined mission” of the Bahá'í Faith, which is to unite East and West. If this is ever to take place, the West must first achieve its own unity. Locke understood this clearly. In secular terms, he expressed this prevision in terms of America becoming more truly a democracy, thereby gaining moral ground for assuming its world role to promote world democracy.

Following his pilgrimage in late November or early December, Shoghi Effendi wrote a letter dated 24 December 1923, to the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Washington, D.C., in which he admonishes the Bahá'ís to banish every trace of prejudice from their midst. As this concerns Locke's Bahá'í community in particular, it is worthwhile to reproduce the letter in full:

To the beloved of the Lord and the handmaids of the Merciful  
in Washington, D. C., U. S. A.  
Care of members of the Washington Spiritual Assembly

Beloved Friends!

May I, whilst awaiting with fresh hope the joyful tidings of the progress of your work, assure you, my dear friends, of my feelings of Admiration for, and unshaken confidence in, the unquenchable spirit of service which animates every one of you in your daily labours for His Cause.

I wish you, my dearly beloved co-workers to remain, however stupendous be the task, staunch and convinced supporters of that true Faith which alone can bring salvation to this sadly-stricken world. Our numbers may be small, our goal yet distant, our voice still to be raised in the councils of men, and the plight of the world wherein we toil and labour enough to blight the highest hopes, yet does not our beloved Master desire us to feel, nay to be truly convinced, that if we but hold fast to our faith, there will soon emerge out of this gloom and turmoil a new world order wherein His chosen ones are destined to play so noble and memorable a part?

I should be most pleased to hear that, with the trace of every difference and ill-feeling banished from your ranks, you have joined hands, combined your efforts, unified your purpose and directed your aim in endeavouring to win, not only the admiration and sympathy of the peoples of eminence and culture in your flourishing City, but also their active and whole-hearted allegiance for the promotion of the Baha'i Cause. May all the energy, time and treasure which you so abundantly and steadfastly expend in His service

be directed to those efficient channels which alone can reveal to the general public, as well as to the leaders and rulers of that great Capitol, the true significance of this Divine Revelation.

That the Call which has now been raised in every Continent of the world will some day resound in the heart of Washington, none of us can ever doubt, yet how sooner and fuller that awakening shall be if we, who have already recognized His Voice, bestir ourselves, first to deepen and unite, and then to arise as one triumphant host combating, by the example of our life and the sublimity of the Divine Utterance, those dark forces of evil which but for His redeeming Message are sure to engulf the world.

Every aim, and every purpose, however lofty and desirable for the advancement of the Cause, should, in this day, be subordinated to the vital and pressing need of delivering GOD's Divine Message to waiting humanity. Not that all other issues should be forgotten and suffer neglect, but rather that this matter of urgent importance be given, by all the friends, the widest publicity and the fullest support, as I feel, it is the most direct, the most feasible, the most effective means for the immediate expansion of the Cause we love so dearly.

May the believers in every land contribute their share in this supreme endeavor!

Your brother and fellow-worker,

(signed) Shoghi.

Haifa, Palestine

December 24th, 1923<sup>24</sup>

This letter must have been written in response to reports of racial and other tensions within Locke's local Bahá'í community. While there is no mention of this in his "Impressions of Haifa," Locke must surely have discussed with Shoghi Effendi the state of affairs of the Washington Bahá'í community. This was a very real and direct way in which the Guardian would keep abreast of developments within the Bahá'í world. Pilgrims like Locke provided a flow of valuable information that, at various times, informed Shoghi Effendi's decisions as leader of the Bahá'í world. Despite the fact that the Washington Bahá'í community had been the first to actively reach out to African Americans, it was also subject to the challenges and vicissitudes of racial integration in an era inhospitable to it.

## Notes

1. "Baha'i Faith, Only Church in World That Does Not Discriminate." *Ebony*, Vol. 7 (12 October 1952) pp. 39-46.
2. Reprints:

**1924:** Alain Locke, “Impressions of Haifa,” *Star of the West*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (1924) pp. 13-14. Original manuscript in Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-115, Folder 29 (“Impressions of Haifa” [typescript]).

**1926:** Reprint: Alaine (sic) Locke, “Impressions of Haifa,” in *Bahá’i Year Book, Volume One, April 1925-April 1926*, comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’is of the United States and Canada (New York: Bahá’i Publishing Committee, 1926) pp. 81, 83.

**1928:** Reprint: Alaine (sic) Locke, “Impressions of Haifa,” in *The Bahá’i World: A Biennial International Record, Volume II, April 1926-April 1928*, comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’is of the United States and Canada (New York: Bahá’i Publishing Committee, 1928; reprint, Wilmette: Bahá’i Publishing Trust, 1980) pp. 125, 127.

**1930:** Reprint: Alain Locke, “Impressions of Haifa,” in *The Bahá’i World: A Biennial International Record, Volume III, April 1928-April 1930*, comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’is of the United States and Canada (New York: Bahá’i Publishing Committee, 1930; reprint, Wilmette: Bahá’i Publishing Trust, 1980) pp. 280, 282.

3. Locke to Cullen, n.d. [1923], Box 3, Fol. Locke, Countee Cullen Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

4. Locke to Cullen, 12 July 1923, Box 3, Fol. Locke, Countee Cullen Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

5. Editor’s introduction to Alain Locke, “Impressions of Luxor,” *The Howard Alumnus*, vol. 2, no. 4 (May 1924) p. 74.

6. Visa, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-2, Folder 2 (Personal Papers—Passports, 1922, 1924).

7. Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, pp. 87 and 324, citing “Locke to Cullen, n.d. (1923), Box 3, Fol. Locke: CCP/ARC.” This refers to the the Cullen-Locke correspondence in the Countee Cullen Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University (p. 309). Having subsequently ordered this correspondence myself, I noticed that Locke used the term, “Bahaist.” Locke to Cullen, n.d. [1923], Box 3, Fol. Locke, Countee Cullen Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

8. Hughes and Locke to Cullen, postcard dated 31 August 1923 (Verona), Box 3, Fol. Locke, Countee Cullen Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. Both Locke and Hughes wrote greetings on the same postcard, with Locke saying: “We are together here again. Wishing we were three instead of two.”

9. Locke and Hughes to Cullen, postcard dated 26 July 1923 (Paris), Box 3, Fol. Locke, Countee Cullen Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University. As in the Verona postcard, Locke and Hughes wrote separate messages on the same card. Locke begins: “ ‘See Paris and die’—Meet Langston and be damned’.”

10. Research Department, Bahá’i World Center, Memorandum to The Universal House of Justice, 26 December 2001.

11. Locke to Cullen (n.d., 1923), Box 3, Fol. Locke, Countee Cullen Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.

12. Research Department, Bahá’i World Center, Memorandum to The Universal House of Justice, 12 June 2002.

13. Locke, “Impressions” (1930), 280.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*, p. 282.

16. Ibid., p. 280.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., 282.
20. Ibid.
21. Research Department, Bahá'í World Center, Memorandum to The Universal House of Justice, 12 June 2002.
22. From a letter dated 12 March 1926 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada Publishing Committee, "References to Dr. Alain Locke in Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi," Attachment, The Universal House of Justice to Buck, 16 July 2001.
23. Locke, "Impressions" (1930), p. 282.
24. Shoghi Effendi to the Washington, D.C. Bahá'í Assembly, 24 December 1923, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-79, Folder 9 (Rabbani, Shoghi).





THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE, 1925-1934  
brought African-American music, dance, artistic and  
literary achievement into the mainstream of American culture.

## Chapter Seven

# Harlem Renaissance and Bahá'í Service

In his lifelong quest to improve race relations, Locke probably made the greatest social impact as the strategist and spokesman of the Harlem Renaissance.<sup>1</sup> At least this is how history best remembers him. But his greatest personal contributions to race relations in America were probably the distinguished record of Bahá'í service he rendered in the path of “race amity” and, more significantly perhaps, in his role as a cultural pluralist. In promoting “racial democracy” as one component of his comprehensive model of “world democracy”—what Locke would later refer to as a “new Americanism”—Locke placed race relations in a global perspective. During the Harlem Renaissance, was enjoying his most active time as a Bahá'í.

*After Haifa (1924)*: While Locke was abroad, it he did much more than simply make his Bahá'í pilgrimage. For instance, in a letter dated 9 October 1924, W. E. B. Du Bois wrote: “My dear Mr. Locke: Claude McKay writes me that you had an interview with Ras Tafari [the King of Ethiopia]. Would you not like to write an account of it for the CRISIS? We would be glad to pay a very modest sum. I hope this will welcome you back from your trip.”<sup>2</sup>

After his trip to Haifa, Azizullah S. Bahadur wrote a letter dated 27 February 1924 in reply to Locke's letter from Egypt. It reads, in part:

Jinab-i-Fadil has written to Shoghi Effendi and me about you and has given a nice description of the day when he had lectured at your university. —Shoghi

Effendi was very glad indeed to hear from you and learn that you have been in good health. He cherishes in his loving heart great hope for your spiritual success. People as you, Mr. Gregory, Dr. Esslemont and some other dear souls are as rare as diamond. You should first be mindful of your physical health and then take steps along the channel of the regeneration of mankind. 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>3</sup>

Jináb-i Fadil (Mírzá Asadu'lláh Fadil-i Mázandarání) traveled throughout the United States as a Bahá'í teacher between 1920 and 1925. It is not clear whether or not Locke and Fadil ever met.

Locke really had two local Bahá'í communities. His second home was New York, where he would be instrumental in valorizing the Harlem Renaissance in 1925, and to which he would retire in 1953. This explains Locke's participation in a number of Bahá'í events in New York, the first being the third race amity convention.

*Race Amity Convention, New York:* The race amity conventions, originally conceived by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, were intended from the start to be ongoing. They were supposed to serve as a model that would be "exported" and creatively adapted in localities across America. They were instruments for the promotion of interracial harmony. In that sense, they almost took on the role of an institution unto themselves. But, like all institutions, they required popular support to keep functioning. Happily, this would be the case for 1924.

After a hiatus after the Springfield convention, and with perhaps a need for greater time in the planning process, the third amity convention was held in New York on 28-30 March 1924. This event went a step further than the previous two amity conventions in Washington and Springfield. 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 Bahá'í organizers enlisted the support of influential organizations whose humanitarian principles were consonant with Bahá'í ideals. Moreover, the participation of these organizations, especially the NAACP, served as a tacit endorsement of the Bahá'í initiative, with an assent to the objectives of that initiative. The collaboration of these organizations was all the more unusual given that

the Bahá'í Faith was not a mainstream religion, was typically regarded with suspicion by the populace at large, and was marginal at best in its influence.

Another significant development was the universalizing of race relations. This advanced the agenda beyond a primary focus on black-white relations. The scope of the program broadened to embrace other races and ethnic minorities. If a race-relations initiative is too narrowly focused on the black-white encounter, it misses other populations. Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans, for example, are left out.

As with any successful event, well-known speakers draw crowds. Considerable advance planning, negotiations, and logistics are required to arrange for such speakers. After all, an event without audience or publicity is a failed event, and the organizers, which now included civic groups as well as Bahá'ís, were intent on making this event a resounding success. Much to their credit, some impressive speakers were lined up. 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 Bahá'ís.<sup>4</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>5</sup> Unfortunately, there is no record of Alain Locke's speech, or even the title of it.

Franz Boas was arguably the most important speaker at the convention. It was he who had, for the first time in American history, advanced a sound scientific argument that could expose the pretensions and debunk the claims of pseudo-scientific racism. Bahá'ís instinctively sensed the moral and spiritual importance of what Boas was doing in the name of science. Their collaboration at this event worked powerfully.

Boas had significant contacts with Bahá'ís. How this came about is not clear. It is safe to say that Locke idolized Boas. He publicly praised Boas as a “major prophet of democracy.”<sup>6</sup> He was widely regarded by intellectual historians as one who “did more to combat race prejudice than any other person in history.”<sup>7</sup> Single-handedly, Boas had exploded the myth of “scientific racism.” He had exposed the racist assumptions that underlay this pseudo-science and the widespread acceptance

it commanded. Boas showed that race has no real basis in scientific fact. In 1915, Locke began his lectures by asserting Boas's distinction between racial difference and racial inequality: racial difference is biological; racial inequality is social.<sup>8</sup> The conference organizers could not have found a more significant speaker. "Indeed, no one was better qualified," as Morrison rightly observes, "to challenge the myth of white superiority."<sup>9</sup>

*Appointment by the National Spiritual Assembly to Interracial Amity Committee:* As impressive as Boas was, the presence of Alain Locke himself lent considerable prestige to the convention. He was a celebrity in his own right, owing to the renown he achieved when he became America's first black Rhodes Scholar in 1907. Locke's presence, in concert with the overall success of the event, led to a kind of institutionalization of it. According to Morrison, this event "seems to have spurred the appointment of an Amity Convention Committee by the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada."<sup>10</sup>

In what was marked "Assembly Letter No. 1," the National Bahá'í Assembly sent out a letter dated 19 May 1924, addressed "To the Assemblies of the United States and Canada," which announced appointments of eight national committees. The Assembly appointed Locke to the National Amity Convention Committee. Members included Agnes Parsons, Elizabeth Greenleaf, Mariam Haney, Alain Locke, Mabel Ives, Louise Waite, Louise Boyle, Roy Williams (another black Bahá'í), Philip R. Seville, and Mrs. Atwater.<sup>11</sup> Locke's response to his appointment was enthusiastic, for he saw considerable value in these race amity conferences. In a letter dated 22 May 1924, Locke wrote:

May 22, 1924

Dear Mrs. Parsons,

I received word today of the appointment on the Inter-Amity [sic] Committee, and am especially anxious to contribute my share to its conferences and findings. Especially because I have had such ill-luck with regard to the Washington meetings this year, when it seems that on quite every occasion I have either had some official University business or had some out of town obligation.

Again this week-end I must go to New York, but will get in touch with you Monday to ascertain your early convenience with respect to a personal

conference and the work of the committee.

With best Bahai greetings,  
Sincerely yours,  
Alain Locke<sup>12</sup>

Locke's work with this committee resulted in another successful amity convention. This time, it would be held in Philadelphia, Locke's hometown.

*Fourth Racial Amity Convention, Philadelphia:* Continuing his active involvement, both as planner and participant, Locke was one of the featured speakers at the "Convention for Amity Between the White and Colored Races in America Auspices of the Bahá'í Movement." This event was held 22-23 October 1924, in the Witherspoon Building at Juniper and Walnut Streets in Philadelphia. In addition to the assistance provided by Agnes Parsons, Louis Gregory, and Roy Williams, other individuals made significant contributions. Louise Boyle worked on publicity. Charles Mason Remey, a wealthy Bahá'í of Washington, D.C., made signs and distributed programs.<sup>13</sup> The printed program stated:

This is the fourth in a series of Inter-racial Congresses arranged under the auspices of the Bahá'í Movement. The first was held in 1921 at Washington, D.C., 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>14</sup>

The program was sent out in advance. It featured six passages from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and a quotation from Jesus ("These things I command you, that ye love one another.") Clergymen throughout Philadelphia received copies of the program, with a cover letter from Jessie Revell, secretary of the Philadelphia Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly. Several ministers were reported to have distributed the program to their congregations on the Sunday preceding the event. The convention was well publicized both before and after by the *Philadelphia Tribune*, a local African American newspaper. As a result, around six hundred people attended the first session, which was chaired by Horace Holley of New York. (As with previous conventions, the chairpersons were Bahá'ís.) Lectures were presented by Quaker speaker Agnes L. Tierney

and by Leslie Pinckney Hill, black principal of the Cheyney Training School for Teachers, and a Bahá'í as well. The session received excellent press coverage. Particularly noteworthy was a lengthy article published in the local *Jewish World* urging people to attend. All this had a definite impact. During the second session, nine hundred people attended.<sup>15</sup>

The second session, held on Thursday evening, October 23, was presided over by Dr. Zia M. Bagdadi. Instead of a Bahá'í prayer, the session commenced with an invocation by the Rev. John M. Henderson, pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Morton, Pennsylvania. Locke gave a presentation on "Negro Art and Culture."<sup>16</sup> Later that evening, Louis Gregory spoke on "Inter-racial Amity."<sup>17</sup> The two other speakers included Judge John M. Patterson of Philadelphia and Hooper Harris, a Bahá'í from New York.<sup>18</sup>

Here, an interesting pattern can be observed. As with the previous two race amity conventions, Locke was neither introduced as a Bahá'í speaker, nor did he identify himself as such. But Locke was not acting alone. He worked in concert with the conference organizers. Indeed, he was one of them. Of course, he could have simply expressed his preference not to be publicly identified as a Bahá'í, and his fellow Bahá'ís would have respected his wish. Had the event been too dominated by Bahá'í speakers, the balance of Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í speakers would have been upset, possibly to the detriment of the program itself, particularly the public's perception of it. The balance was this: Dr. Bagdadi's presence was balanced by the Rev. John M. Henderson. The presence of the two public Bahá'ís, Louis Gregory and Hooper Harris, balanced the ostensibly secular speakers, John M. Patterson and Alain Locke.

During the first session, it may have been that Leslie Pinckney Hill was also not identified as a Bahá'í. Another possible wisdom in this is that the church was the backbone of the black community. Too strong of a Bahá'í presence may have alarmed the more conservative Christian elements. The last thing the Bahá'ís wanted was to have their work undone by igniting a religious controversy. There is a psychology of unity that attaches to the effective prosecution of it. No matter how noble the principles, the speakers and others on the program were equally important.

Whatever the case, the impact of the event and its place in history are difficult to assess. As Morrison observes:

The Philadelphia amity convention, like those that preceded it, cannot be evaluated simply in terms of measurable results. Unlike anything like an anti-lynching crusade, or some other campaign directed toward a specific problem or grievance, the amity convention attempted to promote fundamental attitudinal change about human rights and the universality of human dignity. Progress in such an endeavor can scarcely be perceived, let alone evaluated. Indeed, even the most concrete forces shaping the movement for black equality in the twentieth century . . . are difficult to assess.<sup>19</sup>

*Harlem Renaissance and Bahá'í Travels (1925)*: On his return from Egypt, Locke found Howard in upheaval due to a student strike. On 15 June 1925, Locke was fired from Howard University by its white president James Stanley Durkee for Locke's support of an equitable faculty pay scale and for student demands to end mandatory chapel and ROTC.<sup>20</sup> At this time, Locke had given thirteen years of service at Howard, five of which were as full professor and head of the Department of Philosophy. Locke's own summary of what had happened is, in part, as follows: "By action of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of Howard University, Washington D.C., four teachers were summarily dismissed on June 15th (notification the following day), to take effect as of June 30th, without previous intimation of likely dismissal or definite official notice of charges of inefficiency or misconduct."<sup>21</sup> Locke clearly blamed President Durkee, whose wishes in this matter were supported by the Board—a body that Locke characterized as "collectively as stupid and arbitrary as he is individually."<sup>22</sup>

In protest against the firing of Locke and three other dissident faculty members, students staged an eight-day strike. In an undated letter to W. E. B. Du Bois written in 1925, Locke mentions the student strike: "So the students struck, placarded the campus with slogans directed both against the President personally and the faculty, maintained a cordon around the building[,] gave out press notices of their side of the issue, and for four days we were in anarchic upheaval."<sup>23</sup> The Board of Trustees voted to give Locke a leave of absence with full pay, beginning 1 July 1925, for one year. But, on 30 June 1926, the Board stipulated that "all connection of these persons with the University shall cease."<sup>24</sup> He did not return to Howard University until its new black president, Mordecai Johnson (elected by the Howard Board of Regents in June 1926), reinstated him.

Following his dismissal, since he was no longer employed and his income would run out within a year, Locke needed to find support of his intellectual work. He found his patron in Charlotte Osgood Mason, a wealthy white woman, with whom Locke faithfully corresponded until her death in 1940. It is possible that Agnes Parsons introduced Locke to her. In a letter dated 21 October 1922 to Parsons, Locke wrote: “Thank you indeed for telling us of Mrs. Osgood and the work she is doing.”<sup>25</sup> One source states that “Locke’s annual trips to Europe were financed for thirteen years, and he may have received other funds.”<sup>26</sup> To a great extent, because he was beholden to her for financial support, Locke was under her influence in spiritual matters as well as in artistic concerns. However, he seemed to have been able to maintain his Bahá’í commitments. Locke was multifaceted and could be, in a sense, all things to all people.

*Locke as a “Cultural Racialist”*: In 1911, fourteen years prior to the Harlem Renaissance, Locke resolved to promote the interests of African Americans as a result of his direct experience with racism in the South. In an unpublished autobiographical note, Locke reflected on the circumstances that led to this momentous decision in his life and career:

Returning home in 1911, I spent six months travelling in the South—and there acquired my life-long avocational interest in encouraging and interpreting the artistic and cultural expression of Negro life, for I became deeply convinced of its efficacy as an internal instrument of group inspiration and morale and as an external weapon of recognition and prestige.

So, while teaching philosophy at Howard University from 1912 to the present, I have devoted most of my literary effort and time to this avocational interest of Negro culture, with occasional excursions into the sociological side of the race question. My connection with the literary and art movement, styled in 1925 the “New Negro” renaissance, was thus a logical outcome of this artistic creed and viewpoint.<sup>27</sup>

In its mythic and utopian sense, Harlem was the “race capital” of America and the largest “Negro American” community in the world. The Harlem Renaissance, consequently, presented itself as a microcosm or “self-portraiture” of black culture. The movement was an effusion of art borne of the experience of “even ordinary living” that has “epic depth and lyric intensity.”<sup>28</sup> As editor of the anthology *The New*

*Negro*, Locke contributed the title essay, which served as a manifesto.

For Locke, art needed to contribute to the improvement of life—a pragmatist aesthetic principle Richard Shusterman calls “meliorism.”<sup>29</sup> The Harlem Renaissance sought to advance freedom and equality for blacks through art. It was “not just a great creative outburst in the stimulating atmosphere of the 1920s,” it was “actually a highly self-conscious modern artistic movement.”<sup>30</sup> Locke himself spoke of a “race pride,” “race genius,” and the “race-gift.”<sup>31</sup> This “race pride” was to be cultivated through developing a distinctive culture, a hybrid of African and African American elements.<sup>32</sup> Locke had hoped the Harlem Renaissance would provide “an emancipating vision to America” and would advance “a new democracy in American culture.”<sup>33</sup> But the Harlem Renaissance was more of an aristocratic than democratic approach to culture.<sup>34</sup> In principle, Locke was an avowed supporter of W. E. B. Du Bois’ idea of a cultural elite (the “Talented Tenth”), but differed with Du Bois’s insistence that art serve as propaganda.<sup>35</sup>

David Levering Lewis states that the Harlem Renaissance “evolved through three phases”: (1) the first phase, ending with the publication of Jean Toomer’s *Cane* in 1923, was deeply influenced by white writers and artists who were fascinated by black life and culture (which Lewis characterizes as “this new wave of white discovery”<sup>36</sup>) and sought to promote it; (2) the second phase (early 1924 to mid-1926) saw the collaboration of the “Talented Tenth” and “Negrotarian” whites within the orbit of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League, which were the twin pillars of the civil rights establishment; and (3) the last phase (mid-1926 to the Harlem Riot of March 1935), which was presided over by African American artists and writers themselves.<sup>37</sup> Thus there is a slight inconsistency in Lewis’s dates for the demise of the Harlem Renaissance, whether it be the “its sputtering end in 1934”<sup>38</sup> or the Harlem Riot of March 1935.

Although spanning the years 1919-1934/35, the actual birth of the Harlem Renaissance occurred in 1925, as Lewis notes: “Nineteen Twenty-five—Year I of the Harlem Renaissance—ended with Albert and Charles Boni’s publication of Locke’s book *The New Negro*, an expanded and much polished publication of poetry and prose spun off by the *Opportunity* contest and *Survey Graphic*.”<sup>39</sup> But if the official birth or launch of the Harlem Renaissance was in 1925, then the conception and gestation of it took place during the previous year.

According to Valerie Boyd, the Harlem Renaissance “had its formal genesis on March 21, 1924,”<sup>40</sup> at a dinner party of the Writers Guild held in the Civic Club, a restaurant on 14 West Twelfth Street near Fifth Avenue in Harlem. The new literary movement was actually christened a week later when the New York *Herald Tribune* wrote that Harlem was “on the edge of, if not already in the midst of, what might properly be called a Negro renaissance.”<sup>41</sup> However, according to Jeffrey Stewart, who is currently writing a biography of Locke, it was Locke himself who originally used the term “Renaissance” to describe the Harlem cultural movement.<sup>42</sup>

*Opportunity* editor, sociologist Charles S. Johnson, had invited a group of young writers and artists to what was then “the only uppercrust New York club without color or sex restrictions.”<sup>43</sup> The occasion was in celebration of the publication of Jessie Redmon Fauset’s first novel, *There is Confusion*.<sup>44</sup> Around 110 people attended. Langston Hughes was away in Paris, and Zora Neale Hurston had not been invited.

Alain Locke was the master of ceremonies on that “magic evening.”<sup>45</sup> At the Writers Guild dinner over which he presided, Locke was recorded as saying: “They sense within their group—meaning the Negro group—a spiritual wealth which if they can properly expound will be ample for a new judgment and reappraisal of the race.”<sup>46</sup> After the great W. E. B. Du Bois spoke, Locke introduced Carl Van Doren, white editor of *Century* magazine, who proclaimed: “What American literature decidedly needs at this moment is color, music, gusto, the free expression of gay or desperate moods. If the Negroes are not in a position to contribute these items, I do not know what Americans are.”<sup>47</sup> After the dinner ended, Paul Kellog, editor of the *Survey Graphic* (a national reform journal), approached Charles Johnson and made an “unprecedented offer” to “devote an entire issue to the subjects as treated by representatives of this group.”<sup>48</sup> After the deal was struck, Johnson asked Alain Locke to solicit and edit manuscripts for that very project. A deadline was set: March 1925.

Scholars agree that the birth of the Harlem Renaissance had everything to do with Alain Locke’s editing and publication of *The New Negro*. A showpiece for gifted young African American writers and artists drawn to the cultural Mecca of Harlem, *The New Negro* defined the Harlem Renaissance. Connecting the Renaissance idea and black life in Harlem,<sup>49</sup> Locke wrote the movement’s manifesto and awakened America at large to the richness and beauty of African and African

American culture. Never before had Negro art received such recognition. This was more than art appreciation, however. It was a strategy for creating a new respect and admiration for black culture as a part of the wider American culture. Locke had faith in “art and letters as a bridge across the chasm between the races” and believed, according to Mark Helbling, “art signified accomplishment and the artist symbolized and expressed the conscience of his race.”<sup>50</sup> Although decidedly elitist, artists are ambassadors and cultural leaders. In Locke’s view, artists and writers might gain the respect of “foreign” (white) power brokers under a Jim-Crow America. For these reasons, I have called Locke “the Martin Luther King of African American culture”<sup>51</sup> insofar as the Harlem Renaissance established a racial pride and group consciousness among African Americans that was a necessary precondition for the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s.

The Harlem Renaissance introduced the poetry of Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Charles McKay, the novels of Zora Neale Hurston, the music of jazz musician Duke Ellington and blues singer Bessie Smith, the performances of Josephine Baker and Paul Robeson, and the visual arts of painter Aaron Douglas and Winold Reiss, and sculptor Richmond Barthe, among others. It should also be remembered that white artists were involved in the movement as well, although it is the white patrons like Charlotte Osgood Mason whom history remembers most.

While a graduate student at Oxford, Locke had studied the Italian Renaissance and was inspired by Jakob Burckhardt’s notion of the Renaissance as a period in which European civilization was reborn and flourished, freeing people from the constraints on self-expression imposed by the church during Europe’s Dark Ages. Jeffery Stewart suggests that Locke used the term “Renaissance” in two ways. First, he drew parallels between the Italian and the Harlem Renaissances, even though he conceded that the art produced by the Italian Renaissance was superior to what was produced in Harlem.<sup>52</sup> Even so, Stewart draws two phenomenological parallels between the two.

There were some startling parallels, from a sociological perspective. Both movements were urban rather than rural. Both rebelled against the power of the church, which was a particularly strong institution in both Italy and the African American community. Like Renaissance Humanists, Locke recommended that African American artists look back to African art for inspiration,

just as the Renaissance artists had looked back to classical Greek sculpture for their models. Like Jakob Burckhardt, Locke saw the Renaissance as the birth of individuality for the first time for African Americans, who had been thought of *en masse* as “them” for hundreds of years.<sup>53</sup>

Stewart points out that Locke created a new myth of national proportions. Black civilization had been in a “deep sleep” ever since the dislocation and culture shock prompted by slavery. The Harlem Renaissance emerged from these “Middle Ages” through a rediscovery of the collective ancestral roots and cultural heritage of African Americans of their “classical past.”

Elsewhere, Stewart gives this assessment of the impact of the Harlem Renaissance: “For the first time in American culture, for better or worse, African American creative artists could claim that there was something distinctive about the Black experience, while at the same time arguing that it was an integral part of the American experience.”<sup>54</sup> The Harlem Renaissance began the process of forming an open-ended black nationalism, in which African American artists (with whom several white artists collaborated) began the process of reconstructing their identity and enriching their heritage. Stewart observes:

For Locke, I believe, the Renaissance was more than simply a historical period. The Renaissance was a way of thinking, a way of looking at one’s past as part of a rebirth in pride in one’s people in the present. Renaissance thinking was primarily idealistic thinking, a view of the world as something one can construct and reconstruct through the agency of one’s artistic creativity. A renaissance was a period of national awakening and pride; but it was also a commitment to Universalism, to expressing the travail and struggle of one’s life and times in forms that transcended the particular circumstances of their creation, and spoke to generations that came afterwards. And in that sense, I believe the Harlem and Irish and Indian Renaissance are all part of the Renaissance idea that we more normally associated with Italy in the 15th and 16th centuries. For the renaissance idea is not unique to 15th century Italy, but perhaps a kind of universal metaphor of how a society renews itself.<sup>55</sup>

Much criticized by other African Americans, Locke himself came to regret the Harlem Renaissance’s excesses of exhibitionism, after it had dissolved a few years later.<sup>56</sup> While the dazzling success of the movement was short-lived, it had a more subtle, enduring influence. According to Johnny Washington, the civil rights movement actually had its roots, in a subterranean way, in the Harlem Renaissance: “Locke was to the Harlem Renaissance what Martin Luther King, Jr., was to

the civil rights movement of the 1960s.”<sup>57</sup> In the end, however, the efflorescence of black culture failed to lead to civil and political rights for African Americans. Eventually, as Posnock points out, “Locke enunciated his theory of cosmopolitanism *post facto*, after the Harlem Renaissance, his principal site of engagement, had largely run its course.”<sup>58</sup> As Locke matured in his philosophical thinking, he favored open identities over closed social identities.

There was a certain synchronicity and synergy between Locke’s cultural nationalism and Bahá’í universalism. In his ongoing affiliation with the Bahá’í Faith,<sup>59</sup> Locke continued to act in concert with the Bahá’í community. So long as the Faith maintained race relations as its top priority, Locke was ready and able, to assist as needed. Throughout his career as a Bahá’í, there is almost a formulaic correlation between Locke’s Bahá’í activities and specific requests made of him by Bahá’ís.

*Bahá’í Congress, Green Acre:* From 4-9 July 1925, the Seventeenth Annual Convention and Bahá’í Congress were held at Green Acre, “rustic in scenes, beautiful in location, famous for its universal spirit.”<sup>60</sup> Evidently, these were two concurrent but distinct events. The Bahá’í Congress opened on Sunday afternoon, July 5. While its purpose was to promote Bahá’í teaching efforts, the conference theme was “The Dawn of Peace.” Howard McNutt presided. The first speaker was Alain Locke, whose address was on the topic of “Universal Peace.” The following is a published summary of what Locke said:

Dr. Alain LeRoy Locke of Washington, D.C., delivered a polished address, portraying the great part which America can play in the establishment of world peace, if alive to its opportunity. The working out of social democracy can be accomplished here. To this end we should not think in little arcs of experience, but in the big, comprehensive way. Let our country reform its own heart and life. Needed reforms cannot be worked out by the action of any one group, but a fine sense of cooperation must secure universal fellowship. He praised Green Acre, which he declared to be an oasis in the desert of materiality. He urged all who were favored by this glorious experience to carry forth its glorious message and thus awaken humanity. In final analysis, peace cannot exist anywhere without existing everywhere.<sup>61</sup>

Here, as in his Bahá’í essays, Locke mixes secular with Bahá’í forms of discourse. Bahá’ís were not accustomed to hearing the technical term “social democracy.” This reflects a mind gifted with

synthetic powers. Already an articulate speaker, Locke naturally and seamlessly merges Bahá'í ideals with social-science discourse, which informs his philosophical orientation, cultural pluralism. Locke's thesis that: "Needed reforms cannot be worked out by the action of any one group," is a clear reference to those Bahá'ís who might hold that all the cures for humanity's ills are to be found within the Bahá'í community. Locke insisted that "a fine sense of fellowship must secure universal fellowship."

Speeches by Bahá'í artist Juliet Thompson of New York and William H. Randall rounded out the Congress. Juliet Thompson represented Mme. D'Arcis, President of the World Union of Women for International Concord, in which she read a prepared statement by the latter as part of her talk. William Randall's concluding speech, "The Dawn of Peace," was focused exclusively on the Bahá'í perspective. The election of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís by the assembled delegates followed this event. Locke was not elected; however, he was reappointed to the National Race Amity Committee.

*Reappointment to Amity Committee:* Locke was reappointed to the Racial Amity Committee for the 1925-1926 Bahá'í year. This was his second committee appointment. With the exception of Philip R. Seville, the National Spiritual Assembly reappointed the previous committee members.<sup>62</sup>

The previous amity committee had planned for a convention to be held in April 1925.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps due to a conflict with the aforementioned Seventeenth Annual Convention and Bahá'í Congress held at Green Acre, no race amity convention was held. It is too bad that such an important public event had to compete with an event for Bahá'ís only. In fact, there were no race amity conventions in 1925 or 1926.<sup>64</sup> According to Morrison: "The failure to hold amity conventions in 1925 or 1926 was at least partly attributable to lack of enthusiasm in Washington, D.C., where the committee was centered."<sup>65</sup> Nationally, this problem was exacerbated by a serious shortfall of funds combined with an overall stagnation in growth.

*Protest Against Lynching:* One would naturally think that the Bahá'ís would be unequivocally opposed to lynching. They were. But this matter possibly never made it to the amity committee's agenda.

On 9 August 1925, Holley had written to Parsons to recommend that the amity committee take a public stand against lynching. “The news about another lynching in Missouri in yesterday’s paper filled me with anguish,” he told her, “and I realized our great spiritual responsibility to overcome this terrible injustice.”<sup>66</sup> Holley urged the committee to publish a public statement in the *Baha’i News Letter* to serve as a model for local committees. It was Holley’s wish that each Spiritual Assembly write to its local newspaper “expressing the sorrow of the Baha’is and their hope that the best citizens will combine and prevent such terrible happenings in the future.” His alternative suggestion was that he himself, in his capacity as secretary-general of the National Assembly, could send a general statement to the mayor and town officials, to the governor of the state of Missouri and its senators, as well as black organizations and newspapers. “Will you, as chairman,” Holley asked, “draft the statement for the News Letter? Or if you prefer, I will do it and print it over your name.”<sup>67</sup>

In her handwritten reply, Parsons confessed that she was at first enthusiastic over the idea of “a protest against lynching.” But she had been unable to write back immediately. Upon further consideration, she later thought that such “a widespread protest” might stir up “an antagonism toward us by the enemies of the colored people” that could seriously compromise the amity work. “Booker T. Washington,” she pointed out, “could never have accomplished what he did had his method not been a purely constructive one.”<sup>68</sup> This “purely constructive” method, of course, refers to Washington’s pragmatic and conservative solution to the racial and economic crisis by offering industrial education to young blacks, especially in the rural South, and refraining from all public protest.

In a letter dated 19 August 1925, Holley replied that he quite agreed that “anything which would interfere with the great work of the Amity Conventions would be most undesirable.” He went on to say, however, that such was never his idea to begin with. He simply felt that such letters “should express such a universal spirit that they would penetrate at least a little light into the gloom of racial hatred.” Continuing in this vein, Holley added:

I believe that this matter is something which you should take up with your committee as soon as possible and report back your conclusions to the N.S.A. As you know, the racial situation is rapidly approaching a climax and we should do all in our power to bring healing to this mortal world. I question

whether one or two Conventions a year, no matter how well conducted and how spiritual in character, are sufficient alone to turn back the flood.

I know that you will consider this in the most sympathetic way and as a means of assisting the Conventions and not interfering with them.<sup>69</sup>

Parsons responded that she had presented the recommendation to Louis Gregory, Mariam Haney, and Louise Boyle, and that none deemed such action “advisable.”<sup>70</sup> It is ironic that in the first amity convention back in 1921, the Hon. Martin B. Madden had spoken of anti-lynching legislation in his lecture. Had Parsons sought Locke’s advice, he surely would have counseled her to take a stand. Throughout his professional career, both in person and in print, Locke took a public stand against lynching. Had the Bahá’ís followed Locke’s example on this decisive issue, which was really a litmus test of moral authenticity on race, the outcome might have been different. Of course, to take a public position in advocacy of interracial harmony was no easy task either. It really was a sort of public protest against lynching in the guise of promoting interracial accord. By attacking the mentality behind lynching at its root, Bahá’ís sought to extirpate such virulent bigotry at the level of the soul, rather than at the level of the law.

Possibly this failure to act on the question of lynching was one of the reasons why the committee ceased to be effective. As the committee’s efforts ground to a standstill, at least Locke personally arose to take direct action to improve race relations. In this endeavor, he acted in concert with Louis Gregory, although probably at the latter’s initiative.

*Teaching Tour in the South:* As an extension of his race amity work, Locke undertook a lecture tour throughout the American South.<sup>71</sup> Locke traveled with his friend and cohort, Louis Gregory. In a typewritten letter to Agnes Parsons, Gregory writes:

Washington D. C.  
24 October, 1925.

Dear Mrs. Parsons:

Just a brief note yours of the 13th instant, the kind and generous spirit of which is apparent. I can only let the matter rest with the hope and prayer that in time all wounds will be healed. The closer such a relationship has been the deeper and more sensitive the wounds that may be inflicted; but to the Spirit and Power of the Divine Cause nothing is impossible. And I confidently feel

that in the end all will be well.

I understand that your plans for an Amity Convention to be held here next spring have had the approval of the National Spiritual Assembly. This is good news indeed in view of the critical nature of the local situation which it may go a long way toward helping. I hope that it will be possible with this new effort to do wise and systematic follow up work.

With a day or two I am leaving for the far South, but hope after a few months to return here to help in any way that is possible with this very noble endeavor.

With Abha greetings and every good wish,  
Very truly yours,  
Louis G. Gregory.<sup>72</sup>

If Gregory had left as planned, and Locke with him, the teaching trip would have commenced on 25 or 26 October 1925. However, a 1926 report states that the departure was actually later: "Leaving Washington last December Mr. Gregory traveled by sea to Northern Florida and made a complete tour of the state."<sup>73</sup> Morrison confirms that this tour occurred in 1925.<sup>74</sup> The trip lasted until the spring of 1926. How far is not certain.<sup>75</sup> In a handwritten letter dated 13 February 1926, from Miller's Hotel in Richmond, Gregory states: "It is my expectation to reach Washington early next month, at the very latest, and I have pleasurable anticipations of again seeing you and others of that loyal and devoted band."<sup>76</sup>

In a letter dated 28 January 1926, Horace Holley wrote to Locke:

I am delighted that the plans have worked out so well for your southern trip. I hope you will keep in touch with me during this trip and send me little memorandums of your public talks and any other news that might be of interest to the friends in the *Bahá'í News Letter*. You understand, of course, that I will present the story of your trip in an impersonal way and not refer to you as the source of the news. Consequently, please do not be so modest that you lean backward, because trips of this kind are most inspiring to all the friends and I feel that they have a right to know the details of what I am sure is going to be a remarkable speaking journey.<sup>77</sup>

It is clear that this trip must have ended before August 1926, as Locke was in Paris at that time.<sup>78</sup> Narrowing the time frame to a more precise dating, the lecture tour must have taken place at some point between October 1925 and March (or perhaps May) 1926. This can be inferred from a statement that appeared in the *Bahá'í News Letter*: "Dr. Alain Locke of Washington, D.C., who delivered one of the notable addresses at the 1925 Convention in Green Acre, is now making an extensive teaching journey into the Southern States which will bring

him in touch with the most influential audiences and individuals. Reports of this journey will be published from time to time.”<sup>79</sup>

Whether due to Locke’s disinclination to have such publicity or for some other reason, only one other report of Locke’s trip appears in the *Bahá’í News Letter*. After referring to the publication of *The New Negro* “by Dr. Alain Locke, our brilliant Baha’i brother of Washington, D.C. and New York City,” the article simply states:

Altogether inadequate has been the mention in previous issues of the *News Letter* of the remarkable work carried on throughout the South during the winter by Mr. Louis Gregory, Mr. Howard MacNutt, Dr. Locke and Mrs. Louise Boyle. These teachers, in cooperation with the Spiritual Assembly of Miami and many Baha’i groups and isolated believers, held an astounding number of meetings from autumn to spring, in churches, schools, clubs and private homes, with the result that a powerful concentration of spiritual forces was focused on this great and important territory.<sup>80</sup>

As will be seen, this association with the Miami Bahá’ís was critical for the future development of the Bahá’í Faith in the South.

The published accounts of this teaching trip are too general. They leave us with very little idea as to what actually happened. However, in the transcript for the 1926 Convention in a report from El Fleda Spaulding on recent Bahá’í efforts in the South, there is reference to Locke that indicates what his primary role may well have been: “The delicate problems here are being ably handled by Mrs. Boyle, Mr. Gregory and Mr. MacNutt. Dr. Locke also expects to speak before a number of the Universities.”<sup>81</sup> Some other details on Locke appear in the Southern Regional Teaching Committee Report, which was read into the transcript:

An important contribution to the teaching service has been rendered during the past few months by Dr. Alain Locke of Washington, who is regarded by many as the outstanding scholar of the Negro race in America. Having been invited to address many universities and colleges in various parts of the country Dr. Locke consented to present the Bahai Message to educators and student groups, and has been able to touch the best Negro institutions in the Middle South and Northern Florida. Before proceeding South he was called to the Middle West and was thus enabled to give the message at the Dunbar Forum of Oberlin, at Wilberforce University and at Indianapolis, Cleveland and Cincinnati.

Dr. Locke has been everywhere received with marked distinction. He writes of the deep spiritual refreshment experienced through his labours for the Blessed Cause. Through special arrangement with the President, Mrs.

Mary Bethune [,] he will make a return visit to the Daytona Industrial Institute in May, and at that time will visit Mr. Dorsey of Miami as his guest to confer on educational plans for the new city. He will also visit the Hungerford School near Orlando in which Mr. Irving Bachellor and other distinguished people are actively interested.<sup>82</sup>

Reference here to “Mr. Dorsey” deserves comment. According to the report, D. A. Dorsey (Dana Albert Dorsey, Miami’s first black millionaire) was the owner of the Dorsey Hotel, where weekly Bahá’í meetings were held. The report states:

Its owner, Mr. D. A. Dorsey, is a colored financier, highly regarded by all the promoters of Greater Miami. Having accumulated more than five million dollars, he is now actively engaged in founding a Model Negro City near Miami, in which he has donated a site for a Mashrak el Askar [Bahá’í House of Worship].

It is the desire of Mr. Dorsey to use his wealth for the advancement of his race and he will build schools, a university for the arts and sciences, a hospital, modern administration buildings and other institutions for the practical and cultural progress of his people. He is a man of the highest moral character, simple and unassuming, and respected by all—a noble-hearted God-directed man.<sup>83</sup>

The report also confirms that Dorsey enrolled as a Bahá’í, having “accepted the teachings wholeheartedly through the labours of Mr. Louis Gregory and Mr. [Howard] MacNutt and are constantly bringing people of all races to hear the Glad Tidings.”<sup>84</sup> The fate of this model city, the status of the land he endowed for a Bahá’í temple, as well as solid information on Dorsey’s Bahá’í affiliation, require further investigation.

In the course of his public address on “The Oneness of Mankind,” which he gave during the 1926 National Bahá’í Convention in San Francisco, Louis Gregory related a story that might possibly have involved Locke, who is not mentioned. While Gregory refers to the fact that there were two black men in this account, one of whom was Gregory himself, Locke’s identity as the other black man cannot be proven.<sup>85</sup>

The year 1925, measured in Bahá’í terms, was an extraordinary year for Locke. The combination of his speech on America at the Bahá’í Congress, his continued service on the National Racial Amity Committee, and his travel teaching tour of the Deep South stand out as a testament to Locke’s depth of soul as an committed Bahá’í.

*Teaching Tour in the South:* Although he served for a number of years on various race amity committees, this Bahá'í tour would be Locke's lengthiest sustained service to the Bahá'í Faith. It is the only one in which it could be said that virtually *all* of his focus was on promotion of the religion and his every public act was in his capacity as a Bahá'í. Because of the sparse and sketchy details at hand, a full reconstruction of this teaching trip eludes the historian. But what we do know is quite significant. The teaching efforts had results of historic significance for Bahá'í history, the highlight of which was the formation of a local Bahá'í council, the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Miami, although there is no evidence that Locke was directly involved.

*Special Consultation with National Spiritual Assembly:* In 1925 and 1926, the Bahá'í race amity work had been largely abandoned. Besides deficits in the Bahá'í fund, coupled with a lull in general enthusiasm for race amity efforts, there was another reason: The Bahá'í National Assembly had shifted its primary focus from race amity to world unity in its public relations. Racial unity was overshadowed by the broader concern of world unity, notwithstanding the fact that the former is, of course, a requisite of the latter.

Sooner or later, the National Spiritual Assembly would revisit the race amity program that had been of such paramount importance to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This reconsideration was probably spurred by those Bahá'ís like Louis Gregory who remained committed to the goal of furthering improved race relations in America, to which cause the Bahá'ís could continue to make a special contribution. Such champions of race amity would not fail in reminding the National Spiritual Assembly of this primary obligation, the overarching ideal of world unity notwithstanding.

In taking its first step in reestablishing a consistent policy of support for race amity initiatives, the National Assembly, in a letter dated 13 November 1926, invited a group of Bahá'ís to Chicago for a special consultation on race to be held in January 1927. Each member of this group of black and white Bahá'ís—Louis Gregory, Agnes Parsons, Louise Boyle, Alain Locke, Leslie Pinckney Hill, Roy Williams, Dr. Zia Bagdadi, Mariam Haney, and Coralie Cook—had a distinguished history in Bahá'í race unity work. Either as a speaker, organizer, or both, each consultant had been involved in at least one of the four amity conventions. The invitation that Alain Locke and the other invitees had

received read as follows:

In view of the overwhelming importance of the racial amity problem in this country, and desiring to assist in any constructive plans that might be advanced by those of the friends who have given this subject deepest thought, the National Spiritual Assembly has voted to invite you to attend a special conference on the subject of racial amity to be held in Washington, D.C. on January 9th. The hope is that it will be possible for you to spend perhaps a day as a committee in drawing up some constructive plan of promoting racial amity and present this to the National Spiritual assembly at a joint meeting the evening of the same day.<sup>86</sup>

*Race Relations and Bahá'í Relations*: Both on the Bahá'í side and as a scholar, 1927 was a productive year. Although busy, Locke was still unemployed, however. On the title page of Locke's co-edited work published this year, *Plays of Negro Life*, the words "Selected and Edited by Alain Locke Formerly Professor of Philosophy, Howard University" accentuates the fact that he had been fired in June 1925. Montgomery Gregory, his co-editor, is similarly represented as "Formerly Professor of Dramatics, Howard University, Director of The Howard Players." The book was illustrated by Aaron Douglas, whom Locke had distinguished as the "pioneering Africanist" and whom some historians later hailed as "the father of Black American art."<sup>87</sup> Normally, such a publication would have been important for tenure. (Locke had already been promoted to full professor). But what Locke needed was to get his job back. Fortunately, he had some powerful and influential friends. In a letter dated 5 May 1927, W. E. B. Du Bois wrote to Jesse E. Moorland, to lobby for Locke's reinstatement. Du Bois's letter says, in part:

I am interested in having Alain Locke reinstated at Howard University. My interest has nothing personal in it. While I have known Mr. Locke for some time [sic], he is not a particularly close friend. I have not always agreed with him, and he knows nothing of this letter. . . . Mr. Locke is by long odds the best trained man among the younger American Negroes.<sup>88</sup>

The letter worked. Locke was reinstated in June 1927, under Howard's first black president Mordecai Johnson,<sup>89</sup> although Locke did not resume teaching there until 1928. This was because Locke was offered a position as an exchange professor at Fisk University for the 1927-1928 academic year. In the meantime, this year was another significant period in which Locke made contributions to the race amity

work. Picking up where the year 1926 left off, Locke's first contribution in 1927 was to serve as a race-relations consultant to the National Assembly.

*Special Committee on Racial Amity:* The special consultation with the National Assembly took place on 8 January 1927, a day earlier than had been originally proposed. Since he had already promised to assist with preparations for the World Unity Conference in Dayton, Louis Gregory was unable to attend. "Prof. Locke and Mrs. Boyle who are particularly well informed with regard to the inter-racial work in the Southern states," Gregory assured the National Assembly in his letter of 28 December 1926, "will doubtless be able to bring forth much that is illuminating and helpful."<sup>90</sup> All but two of the members (Gregory and Hill) of the Special Committee on Racial Amity were present.

The Committee had several recommendations to make. The first was that the National Spiritual Assembly appoint a National Amity Committee and that local Bahá'í Assemblies be encouraged to engage in race amity work and to cooperate with the national committee in such ventures. The next recommendation was that a national program be formulated "to stimulate racial activity by the local Assemblies." Further to this, Bahá'ís should avail themselves of proclamation opportunities and that a concerted effort be made to reach people of capacity. In other words, the recommended strategy was to inform "the wise men of the nation" of the Bahá'í principles of interracial harmony.<sup>91</sup> Apparently persuaded, the National Assembly immediately acted to put at least some of these recommendations into practice. The first was the appointment of a National Inter-Racial Amity Committee.

*National Inter-Racial Amity Committee:* On 14 January 1927, the following members were appointed to National Inter-Racial Amity Committee: Agnes Parsons ("Chairman"), Louis Gregory (Executive Secretary), Louise Boyle, Mariam Haney, Coralie Cook, Zia M. Bagdadi, Alain Locke.<sup>92</sup> Not counting the ad hoc committee, this was Locke's third appointment. In a letter dated 10 July 1927 to Agnes Parsons, Gregory lists the new Amity Committee members as: Mrs. A. S. Parsons, chairman; Mrs. C. F. Cook, vice chairman; Louis G. Gregory, executive secretary; Dr. Zia M. Bagdadi; Dr. Alain L. Locke; Miss Elizabeth G. Hopper; Miss Isabel Ives. Gregory adds: "Any departure from the above is only a clerical error. Unless some of those

appointed have declined to serve, the committee stands as above.”<sup>93</sup>

*The Eclipse of Racial Amity by World Unity:* In November 1926, in an effort to stimulate teaching, the National Spiritual Assembly announced its “World Unity” initiative. This program was relatively short-lived and unsuccessful. The focus was somewhat diffuse. In fact, the conferences did not necessarily connect the concept of world unity with Bahá'í teachings. This, in itself, disturbed a number of Bahá'ís, who favored a direct teaching method over the indirect approach. The several events that were staged failed to attract significant numbers of people, other than Bahá'ís, though some of the conferences were of a sufficiently high profile to create a favorable impression of the Faith in intellectual circles and among liberal-minded people. While well intentioned, these conferences diverted attention away from the race amity work, which stood in danger of being marginalized or even forgotten. Louis Gregory kept the issue alive.<sup>94</sup>

The four-day Dayton World Unity Conference was held in 13-16 January 1927. While not a race amity convention in its own right, Louis Gregory made a compelling case that world unity could not exist without interracial unity. The former depended on the latter. Concerned over the National Spiritual Assembly's priority on world unity conferences at the expense of race amity, Gregory proposed that race at least be integrated within the program itself: “if there are three sessions to consider world unity,” he advised, “devote one to international unity, another to religious unity and the third to inter-racial unity.”<sup>95</sup> The National Assembly took Gregory's recommendation under advisement, and implemented it. Meanwhile, there was trouble within the amity committee itself.

*Clash Within the Committee:* By personal inclination, Agnes Parsons would never have engaged in race-relations work had it not been for her faithful execution of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wishes. She exhibited a strange combination of progressive reform and social conservatism. Despite the fact that she spearheaded the first Bahá'í race amity efforts, which was a radical move for any wealthy, white socialite by the standard of that day, Agnes Parsons remained conservative. She expressed a distinct preference for gradualism. Morrison suggests that “she found herself stunned by the [amity] committee's ambitions.”<sup>96</sup> The crux of the problem was this: Agnes Parsons favored an “indirect” strategy

over direct teaching, whereas “the amity committee was interested only in a more directly Bahá’í approach.”<sup>97</sup> While she accepted racial amity in principle, she did not fully make the necessary connection between spiritual equality and “social equality” (i.e., racial integration).<sup>98</sup>

This clash of views was epitomized in the contrast between Agnes Parsons and Louise Boyle, each of whom wrote to National Spiritual Assembly secretary Horace Holley to apprise him of the problem. Morrison discusses both letters.<sup>99</sup> For these two letters to have been written at virtually the same time points to a struggle of some magnitude. Parsons advocated proceeding with caution, “before we, as Bahais, plunge into experiments.” In contrast, Boyle objected to “Mrs. P’s conservatism in the Race question.” Boyle characterized Parsons’ attitude as “paternalistic.”<sup>100</sup> No doubt due to Louis Gregory’s gift as a peacemaker, the committee continued to function. It resolved its internal problems. Measured by its achievements for this year, the committee was successful.

*Shoghi Effendi’s Praise of Committee’s Message to North American Bahá’ís:* Race relations has almost always been at the top of the national Bahá’í agenda. The National Committee on Inter-Racial Unity wrote a circular letter, dated 23 February 1927, to the National Spiritual Assembly and all local Spiritual Assemblies of the United States and Canada. Louis Gregory, writing on behalf of this committee on which Locke served, stressed the importance of race relations work and warranted its importance in statements made by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi.<sup>101</sup> The letter also announced a forthcoming compilation on race relations that its members had assembled under the committee’s auspices as part of its mandate.<sup>102</sup>

Comparatively speaking, this was a remarkable document. It contained seven specific recommendations: (1) “All the friends who at any time have received Tablets or Instructions from ‘Abdu’l-Baha or letters from Shoghi Effendi regarding race relations in America should send well authenticated copies to the secretary of the Committee”<sup>103</sup>[Louis Gregory], to guide the committee in its consultations and to provide material for a Bahá’í compilation on race relations. The next step would be: (2) “The compilation on race relations, when completed, should be read by all the workers in the Cause and given wide circulation.”<sup>104</sup> There was a second part to this recommendation: “The plan, programs and addresses of the five Amity Conventions already held, as far as

possible, should be studied as suggestions for new efforts.”<sup>105</sup> This recommendation presumes the existence of transcripts of these talks, including those given by Locke.

The next recommendation concerns youth: (3) Here, Bahá'ís are encouraged to focus on the “youth of America” who are “a fertile field.” “The Baha’i teachings on the harmony of races,” the letter continues to say, “have also been favorably received by many college students. Those studying sociology, with their professors, are most readily approached.”<sup>106</sup> This recommendation, in particular, appears to be Locke’s. He was partial to youth and, as a cultural pluralist, viewed recent developments in the social sciences as the most promising secular resource for furthering ideal race relations. After pointing out that a number of race-relations organizations have already been formed outside the Baha’i context, the fourth recommendation goes on to state: “(4) The Baha’i teachings should be brought to the attention of such [non-Bahá’í] committees and organizations” and that Bahá'ís should foster “consultation about race adjustments and how to right specific wrongs.”<sup>107</sup> This call for racial justice and specific redress of wrongs is remarkable in itself. No information has come to light as to how this recommendation may have been implemented, if indeed it was. The language of “race adjustments” sounds much like Locke and may represent one of his contributions to the committee’s general recommendations.

The final recommendations were that: (5) “Each Assembly should appoint a local inter-racial amity committee” that would serve as “an adjunct of the National Committee on Inter-Racial Amity.”<sup>108</sup> “In arranging programs,” the letter further advises, “it should invite Baha’is and outside speakers also, provided the latter are friendly to the Cause and are willing to speak in accordance with its universal principles.”<sup>109</sup> The presiding “Chairman of each session and at least one speaker at each Amity Convention should be trained in the Baha’i Cause.”<sup>110</sup> This had consistently been the practice in the past five conventions. The next recommendation (6) encourages Bahá'ís to acquaint other race-relations organizations with Bahá'í principles, and be ready to give out Bahá'í literature on request. Finally, (7) is a polite disclaimer, stating that these recommendations were simply offered as advice and that no Bahá'í should interpret these as mandatory.

This report struck Shoghi Effendi very much and was praised by him in a message that would impact the committee itself:

I have . . . received and read with the keenest interest and appreciation a copy of that splendid document formulated by the National Committee on inter-racial amity. . . . This moving appeal, so admirable in its conception, so sound and sober in its language, has struck a responsive chord in my heart. Sent forth at a highly opportune moment in the evolution of our sacred Faith, it has served as a potent reminder of these challenging issues which still confront in a peculiar manner the American believers.<sup>111</sup>

Whenever Shoghi Effendi praised anything, the Bahá'ís took such approval seriously. This ringing endorsement of the National Committee on Inter-Racial Unity was crucial to the committee's very survival, largely through the Bahá'í perception of its sustained relevance. Like race-relations work generally, the committee led a sometimes precarious existence. Shoghi Effendi's message went far towards sustaining support for the committee and its important work.

*The New Haven World Unity Conference:* At heart, the Bahá'í Faith preaches a gospel of unity. Its ultimate social mission is to bring about world unity. Since this is such an all-encompassing goal, it would make perfect sense for Bahá'í institutions to look to this single objective as sufficient unto itself. The problem is how to get from here to there. Louis Gregory was able to persuade the National Assembly that race amity should be regarded as an essential component of world unity. His paradigm was as simple as it was profound: World unity must encompass international unity, religious unity, and inter-racial unity.<sup>112</sup> Despite the fact that the Bahá'í national agenda had shifted focus to the ideal of world unity (effectively marginalizing "race amity"), Locke was able to further the cause of race unity even within the context of the world unity initiative. Locke's strategy was to subsume race relations under the broader rubric of cultural pluralism, which is the secular equivalent to the Bahá'í ideal of world unity.

Part of the credit for keeping the torch of race amity alight goes to the National Assembly itself. Holley invited Locke to speak at the World Unity Conference, on 27 March 1927, in New Haven, Connecticut.<sup>113</sup> In a handwritten letter dated 17 March 1927 on National-Assembly letterhead and addressed to Locke, Horace Holley wrote:

Dear Alain:

We are most anxious to have you give your talk on Cultural Reciprocity

at the World Unity Conference to be held Sunday, March 27, 3:30 P.M., in the Hotel Taft, New Haven. Herbert Adams Gibbons of Princeton is the other speaker, and the program is a brilliant galaxy!

I sent you a night letter last night but the Western Union reported this A.M. that the message was not delivered as you are out of town. Please wire me your acceptance collect. We can offer expenses and \$25.

Cordially  
Horace<sup>114</sup>

Locke did accept. He must have done so almost immediately. Holley acknowledged Locke's acceptance in a letter dated March 20: "Your wire of acceptance from Philadelphia is most pleasing. We included your name on the New Haven program, as you see, even before I heard from you, because we were so anxious to have you speak."<sup>115</sup>

The only record of his speech is a one-page manuscript, which appears to be a compressed version of the speech itself. The style is denser than usual for Locke, suggestive of a prepared text on which Locke would extemporaneously elaborate. While there is no way to know for certain if this was really the text of his speech, there is a strong likelihood that it was, for there is no other lecture or publication of Locke's that corresponds to this title. "Cultural Reciprocity" reads as follows:

Our practical problem of achieving world unity is not one of welding nationalities and races into some great confederation but one of discovering a spiritual unity for broader human understanding. The World War multiplied the family of nations and confronts us the [sic; read with] the problem of how the big nations can learn to respect the rights of little nations and how domineering majorities can reconcile themselves with insurgent minorities. We have in this situation either the seeds of the downfall of the civilization or the roots of an entirely new world order. The brotherhood of man which is an ideal the ethical religions have asserted for ages past must be worked out in a real fraternity of spirit among the various races, nations and classes of our discordant world. We must somehow find a common denominator for humanity.

Cultural reciprocity which at bottom is a renunciation of our Western bigotry of civilization must be developed and put into practice. Our understanding with an insurgent East and a sullen Africa, a revolutionary proletariat all depend on a change of spiritual values in a world view in which this bigotry is renounced. The Black, Yellow and Red perils are all products of our own bad social conscience, nightmares of imperialistic exploitation, oppression, and arrogance. To abandon the implied insult to our narrow views of civilization will do more for the future peace of the world than any indemnity for our past injuries of commercial and political exploitation. This only a few enlightened minds and souls realize with conviction. They are, however, the

prophets of the new society. Upon the success of their vision rests the future of Western and especially Anglo-Saxon civilization. In terms of this and this only can the apparent irreconcilables, the East and the West, the Black Man, the White Man and the Yellow Man be led to mutual self-respect and understanding. Without a universal scale of values no universality is possible. Without a reciprocity of culture no unity for humanity.

In no other text by a Bahá'í, to that date (except for the authoritative writings of Shoghi Effendi and, to a lesser extent, those of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Bahá'u'lláh) can such a forthright critique of the West be found. Locke's message, that the consequences of imperialism and colonialism have come back to haunt and threaten the West, brings the audience face to face with a real and present danger. Perhaps a Marxist could have said the same thing. But Locke's message goes well beyond critique. After framing the problem, he focuses on the solution: "a universal scale of values."

As a value theorist, of course, Locke might be expected to discourse on values. Observe how adroitly he connects values with social issues. Note also how Locke's perspective on race relations is internationalized. With synthetic power and crystal clarity, Locke has synergized faith and philosophy to generate a message that universalizes the Bahá'í perspective.

Holley thanked Locke in a follow-up letter dated March 30: "I regret having missed your talk, which the others enjoyed tremendously."<sup>116</sup> There is a reference further in the letter to "the young Baha'is of Portland, Oregon." But it is not clear from the context as to whether Locke had visited that Bahá'í community or not. Holley wanted to publish Locke's speech in a new, Bahá'í-sponsored magazine, *World Unity*, of which he was the editor-in-chief. In a letter dated 20 April 1927, on *World Unity* magazine letterhead, Holley wrote: "I hope that you will find it possible to work up into a magazine article your splendid talk on cultural reciprocity and send this to me before July first."<sup>117</sup> Judging from the fact that this solicited article was never published, it is safe to conclude that Locke never submitted his manuscript. In support of the new publishing venture, Locke lent his name as contributing editor of *World Unity: A Monthly Magazine Interpreting the Spirit of the New Age* (New York), the first issue of which was slated for October 1927.<sup>118</sup>

*First 1927 Race Amity Convention in Washington, D.C.:* A Bahá'í

race amity conference in Washington, D.C. was long overdue. There had been none since 1924 (Philadelphia). In 1927, Washington would hold two such conventions—one in April and the other in November. The April convention was the new amity committee's first scheduled event. As a member of the committee, Locke would have been part of the planning process. The first conference was so successful that it was decided another ought to be held later in the year.

*National Inter-Racial Amity Committee Reappointment:* For the 1927-1928 Bahá'í Year, Locke was again named to the National Inter-Racial Amity Committee. This was his fourth national committee appointment. Members included: Agnes S. Parsons, Chairperson; Coralie F. Cook, Vice Chairperson; Louis G. Gregory, Executive Secretary; Zia M. Bagdadi; Alain Locke; Elizabeth G. Hopper; Miss Isabel Rives.<sup>119</sup> Louis Gregory himself confirms this list in a personal letter.<sup>120</sup> No mention is made of Miss Hopper in the November 27 issue of *Bahá'í News Letter*. According to Morrison, “Possibly she declined the appointment.”<sup>121</sup> In December 1927, the membership consisted of Agnes Parsons, Louis Gregory, Zia M. Bagdadi, Alain Locke, and Pauline Hannen, replacing Miss Rives, who was traveling abroad.<sup>122</sup>

*Annual Souvenir:* Much of the documentary information we have on Locke is fragmentary. A case in point is an instance in which Locke was invited to speak, but information is lacking as to whether he did or did not. In a letter dated 14 June 1927, on behalf of the West Englewood Bahá'í Assembly, Roy Wilhelm asked Locke to speak at an upcoming event less than two weeks away:

Dear Doctor Locke:

I wrote you ten days ago care of Mrs. Haney, expressing the hope that you might be in New York or vicinity or possibly traveling this way so that you could give a short address upon the occasion of the Commemoration of the Annual Souvenir [of 'Abdu'l-Bahá], June 25th. Very probably this letter is still traveling around trying to locate you. This morning I have been so fortunate as to learn from Louis Gregory your former New York address and I am sending this letter trusting it may reach you.<sup>123</sup>

After mentioning who the other invited speakers were, Wilhelm states that “we are particularly anxious to hear . . . Dr. Alain Locke”—stating his name and title, probably to emphasize how much they were counting on his presence at this event. Wilhelm closes with this

open invitation: “At any later time you may be in this vicinity I wish you could give us an evening as we have a number of friends whom we want to hear your presentation of this Cause.”<sup>124</sup> At this point in his Bahá’í career, his reputation preceded him, and there appears to have been a perception among Bahá’í organizers that the effort they expended in trying to get Locke as a speaker was well worth the time and trouble. The reader should also bear in mind that Locke’s crowded schedule as a public speaker was largely due to the fact that his speaking engagements were an added source of income for him.

*Bahá’í Reception of the The New Negro*: How much time and energy Locke devoted to Bahá’í interests is difficult to assess. This probably fluctuated greatly, depending on a number of factors. These included his professional obligations, his many commitments to other organizations and their causes, his changing temperaments with regard to the Bahá’í Faith itself, and his personal social life. The historian must always keep these in perspective. Locke was not a full-time worker for the Bahá’í Faith.

Louis Gregory thought highly of Locke’s leadership role in the Harlem Renaissance, and doubtless communicated this to other Bahá’ís. In a typed letter dated 7 September 1927 to Agnes Parsons, Gregory writes:

The book edited by Prof. Lock[e], “The New Negro”, is one that seems worthy of every library in the land, almost a revelation to those who have never considered the subject. Even as England for centuries made little progress in governing Ireland, until at last it began to consider “Irish ideas”, so I think that the American people on the whole will find much interest and not a little entertainment in studying the increasing literary output of the intelligentsia of the colored race. An understanding of the various viewpoints of our American life is much conducive to harmonious citizenship. The bearing of this upon world peace becomes increasingly clear. The increasing interest in race relations in all parts of the country is a very hopeful sign.<sup>125</sup>

This appreciation of the “New Negro” movement was expressed in an official Bahá’í publication as well. As mentioned above, the release of *The New Negro* was announced in the *Bahá’í News*.<sup>126</sup>

*Race Amity Convention at Green Acre*: Notwithstanding the vicissitudes of maintaining a functional committee, a “Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races” took place on 22-23 July 1927

at Green Acre in Eliot, Maine. Notwithstanding the fact that he did not speak at this event, Locke's name appeared on the program anyway. 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; Miss Isabel Ives.<sup>127</sup>

On the program are two lectures of note, as they both evoke Alain Locke's concept of the "New Negro." The first is an address, "The New White Man," presented by Mr. Devere Allen, editor of *The World Tomorrow*, and "The New Negro," by Prof. Leslie Pinckney Hill. This speaks eloquently of the positive reception Locke's anthology *The New Negro* enjoyed in the Bahá'í community at that time.

*Friction Between National and Local Race Amity Committees:* The Green Acre amity convention was seen by some Bahá'ís as a model to follow. There were certain problems in adopting such an approach, however. This can be seen in the relationship of local committees to a national one. One of the roles of the National Race Amity Committee was to encourage local Bahá'í communities to further the race-relations work at the grassroots level. Naturally this necessitated the formation of local amity committees. At times, there was an overlap in spheres of responsibility. In certain cases, this created some tensions, especially if there was any perception of an unwarranted, controlling influence from above.

Louis Gregory discloses one instance of this. In a letter dated 1 October 1927 to Agnes Parsons, Gregory writes:

Miss Hopper's letter which you enclosed and which is herewith returned gives me the first direct information that the friends of Washington have organized a local inter-racial amity committee. In doing this they are entirely within their rights as the function of the national committee, according to my understanding, is to stimulate activities of this nature all over the country and to cooperate as far as possible with local committees who need and want help. As this particular matter was placed in your hands by the Master Himself and His wish to have this an annual affair given to you, it would seem that your separation from this work to any extent would be calamitous and likely to result in confusion and loss.

With this servant [meaning, Gregory himself] the case is entirely different. Miss Hopper intimates a desire on our part to conduct the coming Washington amity conferences as we did those at Green Acre. Green Acre is

an N. S. A. activity pure and simple and the arrangement for the amity convention here were made by the N. S. A. thru its committee appointed for that purpose. We happen to be members of that said committee. We did our best. I was by the committee itself authorized to arrange the program. But now I fear that there is a little under-current of bad feeling. This I do not feel at present physically strong enough to endure along with other hard work. Under the circumstances it seems wise to remain away from Washington until this special effort is over and this I shall do unless called there by invitation of the local committee.<sup>128</sup>

This letter may provide indirect evidence that Locke, whose already ambiguous relationship with his local Washington Bahá'í community would become problematic later on, represented part of this largely artificial problem, for which the wisest solution was to remain aloof. Practically speaking, local committees function best when granted autonomy. Since the Washington Bahá'í community had a past history of alternating enthusiasm and apathy for race-relations efforts, the best course of action was for the national amity committee to adopt a policy of noninterference with local amity committees.

*Second 1927 Race Amity Convention in Washington, D.C.:* In light of the foregoing discussion, the second Washington amity event in 1927 would be planned by the local Washington committee rather than by the national one. Although Locke belonged to the Washington, D.C. Bahá'í community, he had no formal involvement in planning this second event. Both conventions would take place in the same venue: the Mt. Pleasant Congregational Church and the Auditorium of the Playhouse.<sup>129</sup> As to Washington's second convention, held 10-11 November 1927, Locke published report titled "A Bahá'í Inter-Racial Conference" highlighting the event, the first and last paragraphs of which read as follows:

Washington, which the penetrating vision of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in 1912, saw as the crux of the race problem, and therefore of practical democracy in America, was for that reason selected as the place for the first convention under Bahá'í auspices for amity in inter-racial relations. On November 10 and 11 another of these conventions was held in Washington, this time at the Mt. Pleasant Congregational Church and the auditorium of The Playhouse, under the now formally organized Inter-racial Committee of the Bahá'ís of Washington. In many respects this convention was the most successful of any yet held, above all in that its discussion of the issues, without losing any of that universality of treatment which is a cardinal principle with the Bahá'í approach, came to

more practical grips with the problems of race relationships than ever before. A mere assertion of human unity will never unite us; the root causes of disunion and antagonism have to be faced and considered and some counter-moves and compensatory interests discovered and brought forward. . . .

As with every Amity convention, a feature of importance was the atmosphere of understanding and unity fostered by the meeting of many of the most representative elements of the white and Negro community, and the emphasis of understanding in terms of the universal language of music, which at this convention was generously furnished by Dr. C. Sumner Wormley, Mr. Claude Robeson, and Miss Virginia Williams.<sup>130</sup>

In a letter dated 1 October 1927, Gregory made an interesting comment that provides further insight into Locke's relationship with the Washington, D.C. Bahá'í community: "I have not written Dr. Locke about the Washington meeting. I am sure that he is available, however, if the Washington friends want him. His heart is deeply attached" [end of p. 2; rest of letter missing].<sup>131</sup> This statement gives pause for thought. Locke was not on the program. Although one cannot know for sure, he was probably available, but not invited. The fact that the Washington community did not seek Locke's participation to the extent that it might have did not escape Gregory's notice, although he was puzzled by it. Years later, the reverse situation would reflect a deteriorating relationship between Locke and his local Bahá'í community.

*Back at Howard (1928):* This was the year that saw Locke's long-awaited return to Howard, under its first black president. Locke was subsequently promoted to chair of the philosophy department. Locke is credited with having first introduced the study of anthropology, along with philosophy and aesthetics, into the curriculum at Howard.<sup>132</sup> He also lobbied for an African Studies program at Howard, although one was not established there until 1954, the year of his death.

With respect to his Bahá'í activities, by any standard, Locke was quite active and continued to be nationally prominent within the Bahá'í community, even though such was not the case in his local community. Locke's "Impressions of Haifa" was reprinted in the international publication *The Bahá'í World* for 1926-1928.<sup>133</sup> His name appears on the 1928-1929 "Washington, D.C." Bahá'í membership list, as a member in good standing and eligible to vote.<sup>134</sup> Service on a national committee had its challenges and vicissitudes.

It is a wonder that the National Inter-racial Amity Committee was able to accomplish what it did. The convening of meetings, which

evidently was Louis Gregory's role in his capacity as executive secretary, was problematic if not impossible at times. In a letter dated 28 December 1927, Louis Gregory proposed a meeting date of either 14 or 16 January 1928 for the "National Committee on Inter-racial Amity." Gregory wrote: "Mrs. Hanen [sic] and Dr. Locke are the other local members to be considered. Presume that Dr. Bagdadi is too far away to attend." Of the agenda, Gregory states: "I can think of nothing in the way of an agenda but the filling of two vacancies on the committee, which the committee itself has been empowered to do, and the reading of reports."<sup>135</sup> In a subsequent, handwritten letter dated 23 January 1928, Gregory informed Agnes Parsons: "It was found impossible to hold a meeting of the National Inter-racial Amity Committee during my recent stay in Washington as all members save Mrs. Hannen and this servant were away."

And yet, on a local level, Gregory reports success: "Enclosed is program of recent amity effort here [Wilmette, Illinois] which the local friends think very successful. About 450 people were in attendance approximately one third of whom were colored. All seemed quite happy." He further reports that "Shoghi Effendi appears greatly pleased with the committee of which you [Agnes Parsons] are chairman."<sup>136</sup>

The functioning of the committee that year continued to be hampered by the absences of the majority of its members. In a typed letter dated 29 July 1928, Gregory reported: "From the members of our committee, I have had no responses save from you, Mrs. Haney, Mrs. Boyle, and Dr. Bagdadi. Dr. Locke and Mrs. Matthews are probably abroad. Mesdames Parker and Hannen are silent."<sup>137</sup> Notwithstanding his other commitments and the logistical difficulties they entailed, Locke did find time to contribute to the committee work. One indication of his involvement comes from a handwritten letter dated 15 November 1928, in which Gregory tells Parsons:

Dear Mrs. Parsons:

Many thanks for your three good letters, all of which reached me. I am glad of your approval of the draft of the circular letter. Mrs. Matthews and Dr. Locke have suggested that mention of the youth be made in the final draft.

...

Mrs. Matthews and Dr. Locke are most enthusiastic over their idea that our committee should meet the N.S.A. in conference at their next session to consider the matter of spreading the teachings among the youth. I have conferred with Mesdames Boyle and Haney about the matter and they, too, approve. Mrs. Matthews wants to come to Washington for this purpose. To

my mind, the value of such a conference will lie chiefly in encouraging Mrs. Matthews and Prof. Locke. Mrs. Matthews has been doing some very effective work among the talented people and leaders of the colored race in New York and has her entire family interested in this spiritual endeavor. Prof. Locke seems to be now unreservedly a Baha'i but for some reason which I don't understand, seems left out of the local activities. He is not a member of the local amity committee, is often out of town.<sup>138</sup>

This is a very telling statement. Why was Locke "left out of the local activities" and "not a member of the local amity committee"? Was this the fault of the Washington Spiritual Assembly? Or was it Locke's own choice? Or was his unavailability interpreted as disinterest?

*Reappointment:* For the 1928-1929 Bahá'í year, those chosen to serve on the National Inter-Racial Amity Committee were: Louis Gregory, Secretary; Agnes Parsons, Mariam Haney, Louise Boyle, Zia Bagdadi, Alain Locke, Loulie Matthews, Shelley N. Parker, Pauline Hannen.<sup>139</sup> This was Locke's fifth appointment to a Bahá'í national committee. For a period of time during this Bahá'í administrative year, the National Teaching Committee and the National Inter-Racial Amity Committee were affiliated for budgetary reasons.<sup>140</sup>

Holley continued to pursue Locke's written work. In a letter dated 26 June 1928 to Louise Boyle, he wrote of his plans to publish a volume on race amity: "Please let me know whether there is any chance of getting the article from Alain Locke in time to be published with other articles in a symposium on racial amity. I have some excellent material on hand but his article on Cultural Unity would be a unique addition and I am extremely reluctant to give up hope."<sup>141</sup> If he intended Locke's written lecture on "Cultural Reciprocity," this shows Holley's persistence in trying to obtain this manuscript. Perhaps Holley had given up on requesting it directly from Locke, as he had done this several times previously.

*Contributions to Race Relations (1929):* Little documentation exists for this year. Locke's name appears on the "Washington, D.C." eligible voters list for 1928-1929.<sup>142</sup> Some information on Locke may be gleaned through third-party references to him. In a letter dated 22 February 1929 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to Agnes Parsons, after first acknowledging Parsons' race-amity work, he praised Locke's contributions as well:

Your constant and valued efforts to serve the Cause, are a source of deep satisfaction to him and he fully believes that in your own special fashion there lies a great field before you. He gladly welcomes your co-operation with Dr. Locke in bringing together the higher classes of the coloured people with representatives of the more liberal and sympathetic among your own, and even if it be not under a [sic] publicly-proclaimed Bahá'í auspices, it is sufficient that with your presence you will show that it is inspired by the Bahá'í spirit and teachings.<sup>143</sup>

Here, the term “liberal” is linked with “sympathetic”—or socially progressive in promoting positive social interaction between the elites of both the black and white communities. The early history of the Washington, D.C. Bahá'í community reveals how divisive these differences of opinion really were. Shoghi Effendi appears to accommodate Parsons' own preference (and possibly Locke's as well) for the indirect approach, in events that were not under “publicly-proclaimed Bahá'í auspices.”

The National InterRacial (sic) Amity Committee for the 1929-1930 Bahá'í year included: Louis Gregory, Chairman; Shelley N. Parker, Secretary; Agnes Parsons; Mariam Haney; Louise D. Boyle; Zia M. Bagdadi; Alain Locke; Miss Alice Higginbotham; and Loulie A. Mathews.<sup>144</sup> This was Locke's sixth national committee appointment.

*Locke's Continued Bahá'í Commitment:* In a letter dated 23 April 1929 to Agnes Parsons, Locke wishes to reassure her of his continued commitment as a Bahá'í: “I am constantly having to apologize but it seems a chronic condition of overwork.” He closes in saying: “Please rest assured of my continued cooperation and interest, and my deep hopes for the practical realization in Washington of the principles of our Cause.<sup>145</sup>

There may have been an ulterior motive in this, since Locke looked to Parsons as a prospective patron of African American art: “While I know your rather definite interests in purely research projects, as well as realize that this project originally proposed [as] to funds is a very sizable [one] for individual funding, I am, nevertheless, encouraged by Professor Sapir's suggestion in referring the matter to you for your consideration and possible support.”<sup>146</sup> Despite Locke's gifts as a thinker and writer, this is a very awkward sentence. Soliciting Parsons as a prospective patron of African art might have been equally as awkward.

*Contributions to Bahá'í Literature (1930)*: Locke served the Bahá'í Faith primarily in two capacities: race relations and publications. The one involved him more as a speaker; the other as a writer. "Impressions of Haifa" was reprinted in *The Bahá'í World* for 1928-1930.<sup>147</sup> Holley was planning to publish Locke's "Cultural Reciprocity," but never received the manuscript. In a letter dated 13 February 1930, Holley exclaims, with patent exasperation: "It has been a continued regret to me that your article on 'Cultural Reciprocity' has never turned up!"<sup>148</sup> The leader of the Bahá'í Faith, Shoghi Effendi, recognized Locke's literary abilities, and called on them by inviting Locke to comment on his working translation of the Kitáb-i Íqán, Bahá'u'lláh's most important doctrinal work.<sup>149</sup>

*Progress Report on Interracial Work, 1929-1930*: The annual report discloses that all committee decisions were reached by consensus: "No committee action has been taken upon matters referred to this committee by its chairman that has not had unanimous approval."<sup>150</sup> Green Acre was site of a third annual race amity convention. Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of the committee this year was its draft letter to First Lady Mrs. Herbert Hoover, who held a reception for black Congressman Oscar DePriest, in which the committee "pointed out that interracial amity is the basis of universal peace." The annual report states:<sup>151</sup>

By instructions from the National Spiritual Assembly, this committee prepared the draft of a letter to Mrs. Herbert Hoover, felicitating her upon her entertainment in the White House of the wife and daughter of Oscar DePriest, the colored Congressman and the only representative of the colored race in that great body, along with the families of other Congressmen, for which she received censure in some quarters. This letter, which explained the Bahá'í teachings on race relations, was adopted by the N. S. A. and by its secretary sent to Mrs. Hoover along with a copy of the Bahá'í World. This letter commended Mrs. Hoover and her distinguished husband on their stand for peace and humanitarian service. It was pointed out that interracial amity is the basis of universal peace.<sup>152</sup>

According to Morrison, in the following Bahá'í administrative year (1930-31), no independent amity committee was appointed. All amity activities were subsumed under the National Teaching Committee.

Louis Gregory served as secretary for amity activities.<sup>153</sup> So far as can be determined, this period was something of a hiatus in Locke's Bahá'í-related race activities. This time, the relative inactivity was through no fault of his own.

*Race Amity Committee (1931)*: For the 1931-1932 Bahá'í administrative year, Locke was appointed to the National Racial Amity Committee, whose members included: 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>154</sup> This was Locke's seventh and final national Bahá'í committee appointment. Of his acceptance, Locke, in a handwritten letter to Louis Gregory, writes:

June 6, 1931  
Alain Locke  
1326 R. St., N.W.  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Friend and Brother:

We are just completing a trying year at the University, but with effort, substantial progress goes on, but there is far too much controversy in the air. It has grieved and exhausted me.

Your letter about the Interracial committee was welcome and enheartening. I have written Mr. Lunt my acceptance, and hope next year to be called upon to participate more actively in the Amity conferences and consultations.

I am very sorry that I must again miss the Green Acre convention—as I go abroad for the summer, on what seems an urgent combination of health treatment, and business engagements. I wholly agree with your plans and activities, and think the work is gradually reaching wider and wider circles. I wish James Weldon Johnson and Mr. Hubert of New York could be persuaded to come to Green Acre—and while the visit would do Dr. Woodson good—his temperament is rather acid as you know—and might not keep [help?] the cause—although he is first and last a truth-seeker—and I would rather have this element even with some irritation than the deceptive platitudes of some of our friends, including even Dr. Leslie P. Hill.

Please accept these reactions as constructively meant, and with my keen regret—accept my prayerful wishes for great confirmation at Green Acre this summer.

Sincerely yours,  
Alain Locke<sup>155</sup>

From the context of the letter, it seems that Locke was critical of

certain Bahá'ís who were involved in the race-relations work. While Dr. Woodson is apparently spoken of as a Bahá'í here, this has yet to be confirmed. However, we do know that Dr. Leslie P. Hill was a Bahá'í.<sup>156</sup>

Because he was already on the national committee, Locke had not been appointed to the local amity committee. In a community list "Showing committee assignments for the year 1931-1932," Stanwood Cobb, Coralie Cook, Mariam Haney, and Agnes Parsons were identified as the members of the local "Inter-Racial" committee.<sup>157</sup>

*George Cook's Obituary:* On 25 September 1931, Mariam Haney, on behalf of the editors of *The Baha'i Magazine*, asked Locke to write a memorial for Bahá'í Howard professor, George William Cook (1855-1931). This Locke did.<sup>158</sup>

Haney's appeal to Locke reveals how his fellow Bahá'ís perceived him at that time. For instance, she writes: "We know you are very busy. Life is that way of course. And we would not have it otherwise. However, it is often said that if one wants anything done, ask the busy person." After giving her reasons why Locke was "the logical person to write this article" and stressing the importance of writing this tribute to an illustrious Bahá'í, Haney's grace and tact continues to shine through: "The article need not be long, and so we feel sure, with your gifts and graces, you will not be taxed in strength or time."<sup>159</sup>

*Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle:* Locke's Bahá'í literary contributions continued. Locke's article, "Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle"<sup>160</sup> was solicited in 1931. On 29 December, Mrs. Wanden M. La Farge, on behalf of the editorial board, prevailed upon him to complete and submit his manuscript: "Dear Doctor Locke: No article for the Bahai World has appeared from you and this is merely a warning that the next step will be not one but a series of telegrams collect. With very best regards."<sup>161</sup> This was an important essay, published in 1933. It functioned not only as effective Bahá'í propaganda in a positive sense, but as a further public testimony of Locke's continuing identification with the Bahá'í Faith.

*Locke's Bahá'í Activities (1932):* It appears that Locke was not appointed to the 1932-1933 National Inter-Racial Amity Committee,

whose members included Loulie A. Mathews, chairperson; Louis G. Gregory, secretary; Mrs. Witt; Zia Bagdadi; Mabelle L. Davis; Coralie Cook; Mrs. Shelley N. Parker; Dorothy Richardson; and Mrs. Edwin Horne.<sup>162</sup> That Locke was not appointed to the 1932-1933 National Inter-Racial Amity Committee cannot yet be explained. It did not prevent Locke from continuing to contribute to the Bahá'í race-relations work, however. If anything, it may have made him more available as a speaker at a major Bahá'í event in December.

On 27 February 1932, the Bahá'ís hosted an interracial banquet in honor of the NAACP and the National Urban League. W. E. B. Du Bois was one of the distinguished African Americans present and gave a short speech.<sup>163</sup> According to a story published in the *Chicago Defender*, Walter F. White, secretary of the NAACP, hailed “the Bahá'í movement” as “one of the great forces of human understanding.”<sup>164</sup> But, Locke was not part of this event.

At the end of the year, however, Locke did speak at the Racial Amity Convention in New York, which took place on 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 Bahá'í committee, and with the New York chapter of the National Urban League. Samuel A. Allen, who presided over the first session, chaired the local “Committee of Arrangements.”<sup>165</sup>

The first session was devoted to economics. The first speaker was Ira De A. Reid, director of the research department of the National Urban League. He was followed by Dr. Genieve Coy of Columbia University and Elsa Russell, both of whom were Bahá'ís and who presented a Bahá'í “vision of the new economics.”<sup>166</sup> Since there really is no such thing as “Bahá'í economics” as a distinct field or discipline, we can presume that the talks were general in nature.

With Philip A. Marangella presiding, Locke spoke at the second session, which “covered many phases of racial amity.” Here, Locke was once again on the same platform with his long-time friend Louis Gregory. The other two speakers were Mrs. Wanden M. LaFarge and Mr. James H. Hubert.<sup>167</sup> A musical presentation was held in the auditorium of the Harlem branch of the New York Public Library. Mrs. Ludmila Bechtold presided over this session. As Gregory reports: “One of its special charms was African music.”<sup>168</sup> This was followed by a special session devoted to art. “Mr. Saffa Kinney” urged African America musicians to refine their “wonderful native gifts in music”

and to develop a distinctive music “uninfluenced by foreign masters,” so as to “make a great contribution.” In the literary field, Arthur A. Schomburg, director of the Schomburg collection “of books about the Negro,” discoursed on “his fascinating studies.” The final session was an “interracial social,” which included a dinner banquet.<sup>169</sup>

In his 1933 report on behalf of the National Bahá'í Committee for Racial Amity, Gregory was delighted with Locke's public declaration of his Bahá'í 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 Bahá'u'lláh. 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>170</sup>

Evidently, judging by several factors, this event was a success, as Gregory reports: “An overwhelming number of the speakers and workers were Bahá'ís and there was a fine and enthusiastic response on the part of the most cultured circles of Harlem and other parts of the city.”<sup>171</sup> Locke was key to that success. As a Bahá'í, Locke was not a self-promoter, although he was a public figure. Gregory understood that Locke was someone who responded, more or less, “by invitation only.” Gregory was Locke's elder spiritual brother. He nurtured Locke and kept him engaged with the Bahá'í Faith. On this particular occasion, Locke gave a public and unequivocal testimony of faith. Responsibility for that signal act is Locke's. But to Gregory is probably owed the credit.

*Unity Through Diversity (1933):* This year saw the publication of Locke's book *The Negro in America*,<sup>172</sup> a bibliography that he compiled to advance adult education and interracial understanding. It is interesting to note that Locke uses the term “reciprocity” in posing the question as to “whether America is to acknowledge the ‘melting-pot’ conception or the ‘reciprocity’ notion.”<sup>173</sup> “Reciprocity” is one of

Locke's core concepts and a key term for understanding Locke's social thought. A counterpart to this term, in Bahá'í parlance, is "unity in diversity." Locke made this expression dynamic in the turn of phrase: "unity through diversity."

In 1933, the local Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Washington, D.C. incorporated.<sup>174</sup> During this time, Locke transitioned into a more literary phase of Bahá'í activity. Except for his essay on "Cultural Reciprocity," which was never published, there is no known instance in which Locke declined an invitation to write for the Faith. Given his overworked and overextended professional and lecture schedule, and his frequent international travels, whatever Locke was able to write for Bahá'í publication was highly valuable. A public speaking engagement might, at best, be summarized in a newspaper story, although there are several published transcripts of his talks on radio. There is practically nothing of substance from his first amity speech as session chair, and there are no transcripts of his other Bahá'í lectures. The only way that we can study his thoughts on his religion is through his published Bahá'í work. Locke's article, "Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle," in *The Bahá'í World* for 1930-1932 was published this year. Although he had previously contributed essays and articles for publication, this was perhaps his most outstanding Bahá'í essay.

*Second Bahá'í Pilgrimage (1934)*: Locke was part of the ebb and flow of Bahá'í race-relations efforts generally. Agnes Parsons was struck and killed in a car accident in January 1934, at the age of seventy-three.<sup>175</sup> In a way, her death symbolized the end of an era.

Although his name does not appear on the "List of Recognized Believers of the Bahá'í Community of Washington, D.C., January 14, 1934,"<sup>176</sup> Locke shows up in "The record of meeting 4/16/34" written above the "List of Recognized Believers of the Washington Bahá'í Community . . . (April 12, 1934)." Locke's name has no code beside it, indicating that he neither was present at the meeting nor had he mailed in his ballot.<sup>177</sup> Whatever the immediate reason, this data reinforces the pattern of a personal distance from his local Bahá'í community. However, Locke continued to make significant contributions to the Bahá'í community at the national and international levels.

Locke's second pilgrimage was quite brief and incomplete, lasting just one day. For reasons not yet clear, Shoghi Effendi was unavailable at that time. In determining the date of his second pilgrimage to Haifa,

key evidence comes from a letter Locke wrote to Shoghi Effendi on 1 August 1934, who received it on 18 August 1934. From the Research Department's summary of it, we are told:

The letter is written on board the ship "Roma," following Dr. Locke's brief visit to Haifa and the Bahá'í Shrines. He spent "a beautiful day" and visited "all three shrines" in the company of Ruhi Afnan, and as was the case on his first visit some 10 years ago, he was "deeply inspired, and spiritually refreshed."<sup>178</sup>

Late July 1934 can now be established as the date of Locke's second pilgrimage. According to a Research Department memorandum: "With regard to Dr. Locke's second visit, as noted above, it was very brief, lasting one day. While the actual date is not known, one can deduce that it took place just prior to 1 August 1934, the date of Dr. Locke's letter to Shoghi Effendi."<sup>179</sup> Although he compares the effects of this visit with his first, undoubtedly the first had greater effect. Locke continues (in paraphrase):

Dr. Locke expresses pleasure at seeing the beauty and care with which Shoghi Effendi has developed the Bahá'í properties on Mount Carmel and in 'Akká, and he comments that the Guardian's "nurture of the principles in concrete symbols is a great contribution." He states that he plans to share his impressions with the friends [the Bahá'ís].<sup>180</sup>

Evidently, this never happened, or at least there is no written record of it. He did not, so far as the evidence permits us to say, ever write or publish a sequel to his extraordinarily well-received "Impressions of Haifa." It is quite possible that Locke's *Bahá'í World* essay "The Orientation of Hope" (1936) was written partly as an overflow of his second pilgrimage experience. Consistent with his first visit, however, was Locke's appreciation of Shoghi Effendi's continued work in creating a garden out of a desert. Locke continues his letter, expressing his regrets over having missed the opportunity to see Shoghi Effendi:

Dr. Locke laments not having had the opportunity of seeing Shoghi Effendi. However, the "deciding factor" was "the chance of another visit, even though a glimpse." He hopes to return for a lengthier visit "as soon as practically possible."<sup>181</sup>

Such future plans to meet the Guardian never materialized. Precisely why Shoghi Effendi was not able to meet with Locke at this

time is not known. It raises the question as to the place of this visit in Locke's itinerary: Was this more of a spontaneous visit rather than one planned well in advance? The short duration of the visit may have been a factor. It seems to have been more on the order of a stopover than a prime destination. This misadventure still has historic significance, however. The next part of Locke's letter clearly indicates what was on his mind:

He indicates that he would have welcomed the chance to talk to Shoghi Effendi about some of the difficulties under which he had been working during the last several years. He mentions the impact on him of the "factionalism of race." He explains that as a teacher, he has tried to be "a modifying influence to radical sectionalism and to increasing materialistic trends—and in this indirect way to serve the Cause and help forward the universal principles," which he supports without reservation. He foreshadows seeking guidance from the Guardian on this matter in the future.<sup>182</sup>

In speaking of the "factionalism of race" and of its personal impact on him, Locke assesses his own contribution to furthering the Bahá'í cause. The key word here may be "indirect." Clearly, Locke opted to promote the Bahá'í principles of racial and ethnic, religious and international unity through what Bahá'ís refer to as "indirect teaching." Contrary to what his letter had promised, it appears that Locke never formally sought the Guardian's advice on race relations. According to the summary of it, Locke's letter ends as follows:

The letter ends with "cordial greetings, gratitude and brotherly affection" addressed to the Guardian, and Dr. Locke expresses the hope that "the dawn of Truth [may] come nearer through this terrible dusk of transition and strife."<sup>183</sup>

There is record that Shoghi Effendi wrote in reply to Locke. Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, this letter was dated 25 August 1934. The date is derived from the notation on the envelope of Locke's letter.<sup>184</sup> This letter has yet to be located. Assuming it was sent while Locke was still traveling, it is possible that the letter never reached him.

*Conclusions:* Locke's Bahá'í legacy is not nearly as well known as that of Louis Gregory. As a full-time Bahá'í teacher and administrator, Gregory publicly and fully identified himself with the Bahá'í Faith. As his Bahá'í mentor, Gregory took Locke under his wing. The two made

a great team together in their tour of the Deep South in 1925-1926. The two served on several race amity committees together. Throughout Locke's career, Gregory kept in touch.

Locke was one of few people of capacity to embrace the Bahá'í Faith during this time. He also had many demands on him from a wide variety of interests. As a Bahá'í, Locke was more effective outside of Bahá'í circles than within. Whether consciously or not, Locke transposed Bahá'í principles into both his professional and extracurricular life, making him particularly successful in what Bahá'ís term, "indirect teaching." The full extent of Locke's contributions to Bahá'í race-relations initiatives may never be known. But the historian is justified in reaching this conclusion: Locke lent his prestige, wisdom, and eloquence in the service of Bahá'í race endeavors. In so doing, he made a qualitative difference. Locke was unique—a fact that Bahá'í leaders appreciated.

## Notes

1. Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, p. xxviii.
2. Du Bois to Locke, 9 October 1924, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-26, Folder 8 (Du Bois, W. E. B. 1921-1929).
3. Bahadur to Locke, 27 February 1924, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-12, Folder 2 (Bahadur, Azizullah).
4. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 146; Gregory, "Inter-Racial Amity," p. 283; idem, "Racial Amity in America," p. 657; Locke to Parsons, 21 October 1922, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA.
5. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 147.
6. See Alain Locke, "Major Prophet of Democracy." Review of *Race and Democratic Society* by Franz Boas, *Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 15, no. 2 (Spring 1946) pp. 191-92. See also Mark Helbling, "Feeling Universality and Thinking Particularistically: Alain Locke, Franz Boas, Melville Herkskovits, and the Harlem Renaissance," *Prospects*, Vol. 19 (1994) pp. 289-314.
7. Cited by Peggy Pascoe, "Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of 'Race' in Twentieth-Century America," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 83, no. 1 (June 1996) p. 53, n. 23.
8. Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, pp. 396-97.
9. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 147.
10. Ibid.
11. National Bahá'í Assembly (sic) "To the Assemblies of the United States and Canada, 19 May 1924, Bahá'í Archives of Washington, D.C. Courtesy of Ms. Anita Chapman; Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 147.
12. Locke to Parsons, 22 May 1924, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of

Roger Dahl, Archivist, enclosure sent 20 February 2001.

13. Morrison, "To Move the World: Promoting Racial Amity, 1921-1927," p. 22.
14. Program, Bahá'í Archives of Washington, D.C. Courtesy of Ms. Anita Chapman.
15. Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 147-49.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 149; Gregory, "Racial Amity in America," p. 658.
17. Bahá'í Archives of Washington, D.C. Courtesy of Ms. Anita Chapman.
18. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 149.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Jeffrey Stewart, "Introduction," in Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations*, p. xlii. For a full discussion of this controversy, see Juan Williams and Dwayne Ashley, *I'll Find a Way or Make One: A Tribute to Historically Black Colleges and Universities* (New York: Amistad, 2004) pp. 119-30.
21. Locke to Franz Boas (handwritten letter on The Civic Club stationery), 3 December 1925, Boas Papers, American Philosophical Society. My thanks to Robert S. Cox, Keeper of Manuscripts.
22. Locke to Boas, 14 December 1925, Boas Papers, American Philosophical Society.
23. Locke to Du Bois, 1925, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-26, Folder 8 (Du Bois, W. E. B. 1921-1929).
24. Logan, *Howard University: The First Hundred Years 1867-1967*, pp. 235-36.
25. Locke to Parsons, 21 October 1922, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist, enclosure sent 20 February 2001.
26. Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists From 1792 to the Present* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993) p. 246.
27. "Biographical Memo: Alain (LeRoy) Locke," Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 2 (Autobiographical statements).
28. Locke, *The New Negro*, pp. 6 and 47, quoted in Astrid Franke, "Struggling with Stereotypes: The Problems of Representing a Collective Identity," *The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke: A Reader on Value Theory, Aesthetics, Community, Culture, Race, and Education*, ed. by Leonard Harris (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999) pp. 23 and 26.
29. Richard J. Shusterman, "Pragmatist Aesthetics: Roots and Radicalism," in *The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke*, pp. 102 and 109, n. 8.
30. Franke, "Struggling with Stereotypes," p. 22.
31. Locke, *The New Negro*, pp. 11, 47, 99, quoted in Shusterman, "Pragmatist Aesthetics," p. 105.
32. Fraser, "Another Pragmatism," pp. 15-17.
33. Alain Locke, *The New Negro*, pp. 52-3 and 9, quoted in Shusterman, "Pragmatist Aesthetics," pp. 102 and 104.
34. Molesworth, "Alain Locke and Walt Whitman," p. 185.
35. Harris, *Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 6. Locke expressed his enthusiastic support for Du Bois' concept in an essay, "The Talented Tenth," *Howard University Record*, Vol. 12, no. 7 (December 1918) pp. 15-18, but differed sharply with Du Bois over the latter's insistence that art be propaganda, in a later essay, "Art or Propaganda?" *Harlem*, Vol. 1 (November 1928) pp. 12-13. See discussion in Richard Keaveny, "Aesthetics and the Issue of Identity," in *The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke*, pp. 127-40.

36. Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, p. 92.
37. *Ibid.*, p. xxiv.
38. *Ibid.*, p. xxviii.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
40. Valerie Boyd, *Wrapped in Rainbows: The Life of Zora Neale Thurston* (New York: Scribner, 2003) p. 89.
41. Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, pp. 116 and xxi.
42. Jeffery Stewart, qtd. by Sheila Folliott, "The Renaissance." Online: <http://chnm.gmu.edu/courses/westernciv/video/ffolliott1.html>.
43. Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, p. 90.
44. Marcia A. Smith, *Black America, A Photographic Journey: Past to Present* (San Diego: Thunder Bay Press, 2002) p. 165
45. Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, p. 93.
46. Qtd. in Mark Helbling, "Alain Locke: Ambivalence and Hope," *Phylon*, Vol. 40, no. 3 (1979) p. 291, citing *Opportunity*, Vol. 2 (May 1924) p. 143.
47. Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, pp. 93-4.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 94-5.
49. Jeffery Stewart, qtd. by Sheila Folliott, "The Renaissance." Online: <http://chnm.gmu.edu/courses/westernciv/video/ffolliott1.html>.
50. Helbling, "Alain Locke: Ambivalence and Hope," p. 299.
51. Christopher Buck, "Alain Locke," *American Writers: A Collection of Literary Biographies*, Supplement XIV, edited by Jay Parini (Farmington Hills, MI: Scribners Reference/The Gale Group, 2004) pp. 195-219.
52. Jeffery Stewart, qtd. by Sheila Folliott, "The Renaissance." Online: <http://chnm.gmu.edu/courses/westernciv/video/ffolliott1.html>.
53. *Ibid.*
54. Jeffery Stewart, quoted in PBS Online News Hour Online Forum, 20 February 1998, "Harlem Renaissance: An exhibit in San Francisco explores the artistic and cultural legacies of the 1920s and 30s." Online: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/forum/february98/harlem3.html>.
55. Jeffery Stewart, qtd. by Sheila Folliott, "The Renaissance."
56. Molesworth, "Alain Locke and Walt Whitman," p. 176.
57. Johnny Washington, *Alain Locke and Philosophy: A Quest for Cultural Pluralism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986) p. xxv.
58. Posnock, *Color and Culture*, p. 198.
59. Locke appeared on the "Official List of Believers of Washington, D.C. As passed by the Spiritual Assembly. September 1925." NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.
60. "The Seventeenth Annual Convention and Baha'i Congress," *Baha'i News Letter*, No. 6 (1925) p. 2.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
62. Morrison, *To Move the World*, 155.
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
65. *Ibid.*
66. Holley to Parsons, 9 August 1925, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA, qtd. in Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 169.
67. *Ibid.*

68. Parsons to Holley, 13 August 1925, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA, qtd. in Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 169-70.
69. Holley to Parsons, 19 August 1925, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA, qtd. in Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 170.
70. Parsons to Holley, 21 August 1925, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA, qtd. in Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 170-71. I am skeptical of Parsons' statement.
71. "News of the Cause," *Baha'i News Letter*, No. 10 (February 1926) p. 6.
72. Gregory to Parsons, 24 October 1925, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, Archivist.
74. Southern Regional Teaching Committee (Louise D. Boyle, Agnes Parsons, Louis Gregory), "Report of the Southern Regional Teaching Committee" (15 April 1926) p. 74. Courtesy of Gayle Morrison, e-mail communication, 17 October 2002.
75. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 151.
76. "News of the Cause," *Baha'i News Letter*, No. 10 (February 1926) p. 6.
76. Gregory to Parsons, 13 February 1926, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, Archivist.
77. Holley to Locke, 28 January 1926, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-36, Folder 47 (Holley, Horace).
78. Holley to Locke, 17 August 1926, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-36, Folder 47 (Holley, Horace).
79. "News of the Cause," *Baha'i News Letter*, No. 10 (February 1926) p. 6. Cf. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 151, who states that this tour occurred in 1925.
80. "News of the Cause," *Baha'i News Letter*, No. 10 (February 1926) pp. 6-7.
81. Office of the Secretary Records, National Bahá'í Convention Files, Box 81. Courtesy Gayle Morrison, e-mail communication, 11 October 2002.
82. Southern Regional Teaching Committee (Louise D. Boyle, Agnes Parsons, Louis Gregory), "Report of the Southern Regional Teaching Committee" (15 April 1926) pp. 73-74.
83. Southern Regional Teaching Committee (Louise D. Boyle, Agnes Parsons, Louis Gregory), "Report of the Southern Regional Teaching Committee" (15 April 1926) pp. 73-74.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
85. Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 320-21.
86. Qtd. in *ibid.*, pp. 164-65 and 345, n. 1, citing National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States (Horace Holley, secy.) to Parsons et al., 13 November 1926, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA.
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88. Du Bois to Moorland, 5 May 1927, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-26, Folder 8 (Du Bois, W. E. B. 1921-1929).
89. Harris, *Philosophy of Alain Locke*, pp. 296-97, who gives the year 1928 rather than 1927.
90. Louis Gregory to Holley [National Spiritual Assembly], 28 December 1926, Interracial Committee Correspondence, Office of the Secretary, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada Records, NBA, qtd. in Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 165 and 345, n. 2.

91. Special Committee on Racial Amity to National Spiritual Assembly, 8 January 1927, Interracial Committee Correspondence, NBA. Qtd. in Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 165.
92. "National Committee on Race Amity Appointed," *Baha'i News Letter*, No. 16 (March 1927): 5; "Committees of the National Spiritual Assembly 1927-1928," *Baha'i News Letter*, No. 19 (August 1927) p. 4. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 166 and 346, n. 4. Morrison to author, e-mail dated 19 June 2002.
93. Gregory to Parsons, 10 July 1927, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, Archivist.
94. Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 159-62.
95. Louis Gregory to Holley [National Spiritual Assembly], 28 December 1926, qtd. in Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 165.
96. Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 167-68.
97. Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 176-77.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
99. Parsons to Holley, 2 February 1927, Boyle to Holley, 1 February 1927, quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 168-69.
100. Qtd. in *ibid.*, p. 168.
101. National Committee on Inter-Racial Unity, Gregory, secy., to National Spiritual Assembly and all Local Spiritual Assemblies of the United States and Canada, 23 February 1927, Inter-Racial Committee Correspondence, NBA. Excerpts published in "Inter-Racial Amity Conferences," *Baha'i News Letter*, no. 22 (March 1928) qtd. in *ibid.*, p. 172.
102. Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Oneness of Mankind: Teachings Compiled from the Utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, comp. Mariam Haney and Louis G. Gregory (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, n.d.). Cited by Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 173 and 346-47, n. 18.
103. National Committee on Inter-Racial Unity, Gregory, secy., to National Spiritual Assembly and all Local Spiritual Assemblies of the United States and Canada, 23 February 1927, Inter-Racial Committee Correspondence, NBA, p. 2.
104. *Ibid.*.
105. *Ibid.*.
106. *Ibid.*.
107. *Ibid.*.
108. *Ibid.*.
109. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
110. *Ibid.*.
111. Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, 12 April 1927. Originally published in "Letters from Shoghi Effendi," *Baha'i News Letter*, no. 18 (June 1927) pp. 7-8. Reprinted in Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932*, 7th rev. ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974) p. 129, qtd. by Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 173 and 347, n. 20.
112. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 165.
113. Holley to Locke, 17 March 1927; Holley to Locke, 20 March 1927; Holley to Locke, 30 March 1927, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-36, Folder 47 (Holley, Horace); and Box 164-112, Folder 21 ("Cultural Reciprocity").

114. Holley to Locke, 17 March 1927, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-36, Folder 47 (Holley, Horace); and Box 164-112, Folder 21 (“Cultural Reciprocity”).
115. Holley to Locke, 20 March 1927, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-36, Folder 47 (Holley, Horace).
116. Holley to Locke, 30 March 1927, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-36, Folder 47 (Holley, Horace).
117. Holley to Locke, 20 April 1927, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-36, Folder 47 (Holley, Horace).
118. Holley to Locke, 20 April 1927; Holley to Locke, 16 June 1927; Holley to Locke, 13 February 1930, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-36, Folder 47 (Holley, Horace).
119. “Committees of the National Spiritual Assembly 1927-1928,” *Bahá’i News Letter*, No. 19 (August 1927) p. 4; Bahá’í Archives of Washington, D.C. Courtesy of Ms. Anita Chapman.
120. Gregory to Parsons, 10 July 1927, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, Archivist.
121. Morrison to author, e-mail dated 19 June 2002.
122. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 182.
123. Wilhelm to Locke, 14 June 1927, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-93, Folder 9 (Wilhelm, Roy C.).
124. Ibid.
125. Gregory to Parsons, 7 Sept. 1927, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, Archivist.
126. “News of the Cause,” *Bahá’i News Letter*, No. 10 (February 1926) p. 6.
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129. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 181.
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131. Gregory to Parsons, 1 October 1927, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, Archivist.
132. Harvey, “The Philosophical Anthropology of Alain Locke,” p. 21.
133. Alaine (sic) Locke, “Impressions of Haifa,” in *The Bahá’i World: A Biennial International Record, Volume II, April 1926-April 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) pp. 125, 127. Original manuscript in Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-115, Folder 29 (“Impressions of Haifa” [typescript]).
134. “Washington, D.C.” for 1928-1929. NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.
135. Gregory to Parsons, 28 December 1927, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, Archivist.
136. Gregory to Parsons, 23 January 1928, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, Archivist.
137. Gregory to Parsons, 29 July 1928, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of

Roger M. Dahl, Archivist.

138. Gregory to Parsons, 15 November 1928, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl.

139. Gregory to Parsons, 29 July 1928, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, Archivist.

140. "Committees of the National Spiritual Assembly 1929-1930," *Baha'i News Letter*, No. 32 (May 1929) p. 4. See also "Interracial Amity Committee," *Baha'i News Letter* No. 40 (April 1930) p. 10-12, and Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 186.

141. Holley to Locke, 26 June 1928, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-36, Folder 47 (Holley, Horace).

142. "Washington, D.C." for 1928-1929. NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.

143. From a letter dated 22 February 1929 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to Mrs. Parsons, "References to Dr. Alain Locke in Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi," Attachment, The Universal House of Justice to Buck, 16 July 2001.

144. "Committees of the National Spiritual Assembly 1929-1930," *Baha'i News Letter*, No. 32 (May 1929) p. 4. Members: Louis Gregory (Chairman), Shelley Parker (Secretary), Agnes Parsons, Louise Boyle, Mariam Haney, Dr. Zia Bagdadi, Dr. Alain Locke, Loulie Mathews, Miss Alice Higginbotham.

145. Locke to Parsons, 23 April 1929, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA.

146. Locke to Parsons, 30 December 1929, Agnes Parsons Papers, NBA.

147. Alain Locke, "Impressions of Haifa," pp. 280, 282.

148. Holley to Locke, 13 February 1930, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-36, Folder 47 (Holley, Horace).

149. Ruhi Afnan (on behalf of Shoghi Effendi) to Locke, 15 February 1930; Afnan (on behalf of Shoghi Effendi) to Locke, 5 July 1930; Shoghi Effendi to Locke, 5 July 1930, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-10, Folder 2 (Afnan, Ruhi).

150. Louis Gregory, "Interracial Amity Committee" (1929-1930 Annual Report), *Baha'i News Letter*, No. 40 (April 1930) pp. 10-11.

151. Gregory, "Interracial Amity Committee," 12.

152. Ibid.

152. Morrison to author, e-mail dated 19 June 2002.

154. "National Bahá'í Committees: 1931-1932," *Baha'i News Letter*, No. 53 (July 1931) p. 2; Louis Gregory, "The Annual Convention," *Bahá'í News*, no. 52 (May 1931) p. 3; Locke to Gregory, 6 June 1931, Louis Gregory Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, Archivist; Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 349, n. 29.

155. Locke to Gregory, 6 June 1931, Louis Gregory Papers, NBA. Courtesy of Roger M. Dahl, Archivist.

156. This raises the issue of the Bahá'í proscription against saying anything negative about another person ("backbiting") and the need to preserve full and frank consultation, with unimpeded candor. Bahá'ís are forbidden to backbite, as this poisons human relationships. However, it would not be backbiting, in the context of committee business, to express opinions as to whether someone should or should not be invited to an event, and why. That is essential information for the committee to consider in making its decision. The honesty and forthrightness of Locke's criticism of "the deceptive platitudes of some of our friends, including

even Dr. Leslie P. Hill” suggest that the latter’s expressions of continued commitment as a Bahá’í were equally genuine. Positively, this letter reveals the way in which Bahá’í committee work at a national level operated. It was conducted primarily through correspondence, with occasional telephone calls and meetings. The decision-making process involved Bahá’í principles of consultation, with the goal of achieving consensus in every decision.

157. Bahá’í Archives of Washington, D.C. Courtesy of Ms. Anita Chapman.
158. Alain L. Locke, “Educator and Publicist,” *Star of the West*, Vol. 22, no. 8 (November 1931) pp. 254-22. (Obituary of George William Cook, 1855-1931).
159. Haney to Locke, 25 September 1931, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-33, Folder 49 (“Haney, Mariam”).
160. Alain Locke, “Unity through Diversity: A Bahá’í Principle,” in *The Bahá’í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume IV, April 1930-April 1932*, comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States and Canada (New York: Bahá’í Publishing Committee, 1933; reprint, Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1980) pp. 372-74. Reprint in Leonard Harris, ed., *The Philosophy of Alain Locke* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989) pp. 133-38.
161. Mrs. Oliver La Farge to Locke, 29 December 1931, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-43, Folder 50 (La Farge, Oliver).
162. “Committee on Inter-Racial Amity,” *Bahá’í News*, No. 64 (July 1932) p. 2.
163. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 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*.
164. Morrison, “To Move the World: Promoting Racial Amity, 1921-1927,” p. 18 and n. 39, citing Bessey Bearden, “New York Society,” *Chicago Defender*, 5 March 1932, part 2, p. 1, col. 1.
165. Gregory, “Inter-Racial Amity Activities,” *Bahá’í News*, No. 72 (April 1933) p. 6.
166. *Ibid.*
167. *Ibid.* See also Morrison, *To Move the World*, 194, citing “Committee Reports: Committee on Inter-Racial Amity,” *Bahá’í News*, No. 74 (May 1933) p. 13.
168. Gregory, “Inter-Racial Amity Activities,” *Bahá’í News*, No. 72 (April 1933) p. 6.
169. *Ibid.*
170. *Ibid.* Emphasis added.
171. *Ibid.*
172. Alain Locke, *The Negro in America* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1933).
173. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
174. Louis Gregory, “A Brief History of the Baha’i Religion in Washington, D.C.,” 7. Manuscript dated 28 October 1938. “Submitted by the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of Washington, D.C. to the Historical Religious Survey Division of the Works Progress Administration[,] United States Government.” Courtesy of Dr. Gayle Morrison, U.S. Bahá’í National Center.
175. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 198.
176. “List of Recognized Believers of the Bahá’í Community of Washington, D.C., January 14, 1934.” NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.
177. Bahá’í Archives of Washington, D.C. Courtesy of Ms. Anita Chapman.

178. Research Department, Bahá'í World Center, Memorandum to The Universal House of Justice, 26 December 2001.

179. Ibid.

180. Ibid.

181. Ibid.

182. Ibid.

183. Ibid. It was Shoghi Effendi's practice to write the receipt date on the back of each envelope, and also the date of his reply.



Courtesy of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University

**PHI BETA KAPPA INSTALLATION, HOWARD UNIVERSITY, 1953**  
Alain Locke (center right) and Ralph J. Bunche (center) participate in the installation ceremony of charter members of Phi Beta Kappa at Howard University.

## Chapter Eight

# Estrangement and Rededication

Over the years, Locke had periods of active involvement in the Bahá'í community punctuated by spans of inactivity. Although his levels of Bahá'í-related activity fluctuated over time, the nature of that activity usually did not involve close, personal association with the Bahá'í community. Locke's major contributions were in two spheres: (1) race amity work—accomplished as much through correspondence as by meetings; and (2) literary contributions—also done at long distance. There were occasions, of course, when Locke made appearances as a speaker at Bahá'í public events, as well as meetings for Bahá'ís only. Locke's presence, far beyond the interracial solidarity it represented, lent prestige and elegance to such occasions.

Locke maintained a wall of separation between his religious life and his professional life. Had Locke crossed over into the academic world with the reputation of being an avowed Bahá'í, would this have compromised his national standing as a “race man”? Would it have jeopardized his professional career? Or perhaps Locke was reluctant to identify himself as a Bahá'í for other reasons.

One disappointing development in the Bahá'í community may have been the appointment of a predominantly white amity committee for 1933-1934—an appointment that excluded Locke himself.<sup>1</sup> It was around this time that Bahá'í race amity initiatives went into decline.<sup>2</sup> The last race amity committee was appointed in 1935-1936. In July 1936, the committee reported: “The National Assembly has appointed

no race amity committee this year. Its view is that race unity activities have sometimes resulted in emphasizing race differences rather than their unity and reconciliation within the Cause.”<sup>3</sup>

With the demise of the race amity committees, it would seem that Locke’s special services were no longer needed. In a letter dated 29 February 1936 to Charlotte Osgood Mason, Locke speaks cynically of all lectures and committee work: “I am not as keen as I used to be about this sort of thing—committees and lectures on America’s pet delusions—I may come to life for a paragraph or two—but on the whole, what comes of it!”<sup>4</sup>

From various letters, Locke typically cites lack of time and energy—due to professional commitments and to health problems—as the reasons for his inactivity. True, his health was not robust. Therefore these were legitimate reasons and not simply excuses. However, a growing cynicism over just how effective Bahá’í race-amity efforts really were seems to have jaded his original optimism. To complicate matters further, Locke reacted to what he saw as stagnation in these efforts due to the stultifying influence of dominant Bahá’í personalities. His service on national Bahá’í race amity committees having come to an end, Locke’s services were not as greatly in demand as they were before. Throughout the rest of his Bahá’í career, Locke’s contributions would continue, but not without some difficulties in his relationship to the Bahá’í community. The polarities of alternating cynicism and love for the Faith he embraced in 1918 can perhaps best be considered together.

*Ripening into a Mature Philosopher (1935)*: While his formal training in philosophy was followed by a long and distinguished teaching career as an academic, with numerous publications to his credit, Locke did not publish a single article on philosophy until he was fifty years old—seventeen years after he had become a Bahá’í.<sup>5</sup> This significant fact accords with Locke’s psychograph in which he disclaims having ever been “a professional philosopher.”<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding, his work during this later period reflects his mature thinking as both a professor of philosophy as well as a philosopher by training. Locke’s first formal philosophical essay, “Values and Imperatives,” appeared in 1935. This marked the year that saw his “reentry into the doing of philosophy directly”<sup>7</sup> and thus back into the world of grand theory.

In a retrospective look at his career in Howard University, Locke

wrote that his “main objectives” had been “to use philosophy as an agent for stimulating critical mindedness in Negro youth, to help transform segregated educational missions into centers of cultural and social leadership, and to organize an advance guard of creative talent for cultural inspiration and prestige.” Moreover, he wanted to link “the discussion of colonial problems with the American race situation, toward the internationalization of American Negro thought and action.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, as Michael Winston observes: “With the dramatic rise of racial consciousness in the former European colonies, Locke’s influence became internationalized.”<sup>9</sup>

A tumultuous year in American history, 1935 was the year of the Harlem race riots. Despite how heavily this must have weighed on Locke’s mind, “his interest in writing philosophy revived,” according to Harris.<sup>10</sup> Locke had already contributed much to the Bahá’í race-relations work. It was now time for him to focus more on his professional development as a philosopher. As one instance of this new direction, Locke sponsored a conference on “Problems, Programs and Philosophies of Minority Groups” at Howard University, to which he invited several leftist scholars—most notably W. E. B. Du Bois.<sup>11</sup> In his invitation, dated 5 March 1935, Locke, after stating that no honorarium would be available for the proposed speaking engagement scheduled for April 5, asked Du Bois to accept the invitation notwithstanding: “However, we are presuming to ask your participation in the discussion of one of the most important topics ‘Minority Tactics as illustrated by Negro Experience’.”<sup>12</sup> Du Bois agreed to speak on April 6.<sup>13</sup>

Locke’s formal philosophical essay, “Values and Imperatives,” marked Locke’s debut as a serious scholar within the field of philosophy.<sup>14</sup> It was a brilliant piece of work. One might see this essay as his secularization of his Bahá’í universalism. Although his “Values and Imperatives” essay was based on his dissertation, which he wrote prior to becoming a Bahá’í, Locke’s philosophy certainly intersected, and later cross-fertilized with Bahá’í principles. Even if one were to argue that these existed in two separate spheres that were tangential at best, it is clear that Locke’s own grounding in values theory was not incompatible with his Bahá’í worldview. Rather, the former may have prepared him for the latter.

*Membership and Community Records:* One would have expected that, in the year following his second pilgrimage, Locke would somehow

have been energized and his efforts to promote ideal race relations redoubled. Quite the contrary. This is the year in which Locke placed some limits on his Bahá'í commitments.

A voting list for the election of delegates that took place on 14 March 1935, in Washington, D.C. indicates that Locke was absent and did not send in an absentee ballot. In other words, he did not vote, nor did others vote for him. Yet, in another voting list, Locke received a total of eleven votes.<sup>15</sup> This tally may have been for the voting that took place on 21 April 1935, in which Locke is marked as having mailed his ballot to the temporary Recording Secretary.<sup>16</sup> At long last, the local community seems to have gained a greater appreciation for Locke. But he did not reciprocate.

*Bahá'í Historical Record Card:* In 1935, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States had decided to conduct a census of the American Bahá'í community. The information was to be collected at the grassroots level. Consequently, the local Assembly of Washington, D.C. administered the census for its area. As is typical for a census generally, information was generated through the distribution of questionnaires. These particular questionnaires were called “Bahá'í Historical Record” cards, which were roughly half the size of a regular sheet of paper.<sup>17</sup>

Locke had been sent one of these cards to complete, but evidently had taken some time to do so. In a note to Locke written on a Bahá'í announcement, Joseph Harley III wrote: “Your Bahá'í record cards have not been received—Bring them Monday, please.”<sup>18</sup> Out of a total of 1,813 respondents, ninety-nine—thirty-seven men and sixty-two women—had identified themselves in some way as being black.<sup>19</sup> There were seven blacks respondents from the Washington, D.C. Bahá'í community.<sup>20</sup> This was a small number. It certainly did not reflect the enormity of effort that the champions of racial harmony like Locke had invested in bridging the racial divide.

While he did finally return the questionnaire, Locke did not fill out the card completely. But he did identify the date of his conversion as 1918. Not only did this card provide a historical record of the date of Locke's conversion, but it also indicates that Locke continued to identify himself as a Bahá'í in 1935. It permits the historian to say that Locke maintained his Bahá'í identity continuously for seventeen years, and that this was his primary, if not only, religious affiliation.

Considering the fact that Locke belonged to quite an array of community organizations, this would hardly be worth noting. But the Bahá'í Faith does not belong within the orbit of civic organizations. Religion is an intensely personal matter, and dual or multiple religious identities, while typical of other cultures, are not normal in the West. Rather, religious identity is usually closed—and exclusively so.

*Letter to National Spiritual Assembly:* His Bahá'í self-identity notwithstanding, Locke had personal reasons for not being fully active within the Washington Bahá'í community at this time. In the list of eligible members for the election (presumably of the local Spiritual Assembly) that took place on 21 April 1935 (using the 80-member 29 January 1935 list), Locke's name has the code "m" beside it, meaning "ballot mailed to Temp. Rc. Sec."<sup>21</sup> Although he had duly mailed in his absentee ballot, Locke had already contemplated writing the National Spiritual Assembly to alert it to what he perceived as the main reason behind the stagnation of the race amity work. In a letter dated 18 April 1935 to Horace Holley, Locke wrote:

Howard University  
Washington, D. C.  
April 18, 1935

Mr. Horace Holley  
New York City

Dear Horace,

Needless to say, I am both looking forward to seeing you next Saturday, and to having a Bahai note injected into our rather materialistic-minded conference. It has been going well so far as interest and attendance are concerned, but the heavy hits have been from the radicals and the materialistic side. There is another matter that I hope I will have time to talk over with you, even though it will be a busily crowded and I am afraid I will have to entertain at dinner that night.

Therefore, I am writing about it so that you may be prepared to react in what brief time we will probably have for drawing aside to talk the matter over. Since I last saw you, I have had two occasions to meet with the local friends, and have very effectively renewed my contacts with them. This has also given me occasion to make some comparisons between the work as I knew it rather intimately before and as it seems to be going now. I regret to have to call your attention to what seems to me to be something approaching stagnation in the inter-racial work at Washington. This but confirms a feeling that I have had all along now for several years that unfortunate personality influences have crept into the situation and decidedly hampered the develop-

ment of this very important practical phase of the Cause. For a considerable while I thought this was my own personal bias concerning Mrs. Haney and Mrs. Cook who have pioneered so much in this field and have now for a long while exerted a control in it which threatens to become a monopolistic and hampering one. Their conception, I fear, is limited by their own personal likes and dislikes and a notion that only select groups should be worked with. You will know for a fact that there has not been much enthusiasm or much real progress in this aspect of the work in Washington. While I am not prepared to say that this is the only cause, it seems to me to be one of the main reasons. Several of the friends who have more democratic and more vigorously crusading convictions in this matter have not been able to function because of this almost monopolistic conservatism and jealousy. Much as I dislike to sound a negative note, I feel that I must in order to get positive ones established.

I would like to talk over with you the wisdom of such practical steps as might be necessary, if after consultation it seems that this interpretation of the situation is even approximately correct.<sup>22</sup>

Active for many years in the Washington, D.C., Bahá'í community, Mariam Haney served on various national committees and was an editor of *The Bahá'í World*.<sup>23</sup> Locke's estimate of Haney was initially positive. After all, she was probably the one who originally invited him to his first Bahá'í fireside back in 1915. She remained his primary contact with the Bahá'í community for some years.

Locke's criticism of Haney is illuminated by archival material that has recently come to light: a series of five letters from Louise Boyle, a Washington, D.C. Bahá'í, to Florence (Breed) Khan, wife of Ali Kuli Khan, the Persian consul in Washington, D.C., both of whom were also Bahá'ís. Evidently, there was an "estrangement" between Agnes Parsons and Mariam Haney serious enough to cause "disruption" to the "Unity of Washington," which Parsons felt personally commissioned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to preserve.

Speaking of Parsons' death (1934), Boyle writes: "The fact that Mason [Charles Mason Remey], Alain Locke and I [Louise Boyle] were all 'brought back' at the time of her death should prove we could have accomplished nothing under the old condition."<sup>24</sup> This statement seems to imply that Remey, Locke, and Boyle were also affected by the estrangement, which appears to have developed into a conflict between Boyle herself and Haney. It was during Mariam Haney's absence (probably in August 1935) that Louise Boyle was elected as "chairman" to the local Amity Committee, which included "Locke, Cobb, Lehse, Atkinson, Florence King (whose father says she will not serve), and

Miss Armstrong from N.Y.”<sup>25</sup> In any event, Mariam Haney was not selected.

Within the committee itself, even with Haney’s absence, relations were fragile. Boyle writes: “I look upon the Race Amity Work as having tremendous possibilities for the future if we can have a little harmony in the Committee.”<sup>26</sup> These internal tensions were no doubt exacerbated by external problems. Boyle speaks of an “official investigation” into charges of Communism at Howard University. “Dr. Locke,” she notes, “is going to Russia this summer, he said, in order to be able to aid on his return, as having studied the conditions.”<sup>27</sup> In her next letter, dated 9 September 1935, Boyle remarks on Locke’s intent to ameliorate the situation: “Dr. Locke returns from Europe on the 23rd to strengthen both the teaching and Amity work.”<sup>28</sup> If true, this is a significant statement in that it shows that Locke was still an active Bahá’í locally at this time.

As previously mentioned, Coralie Franklin Cook was a Washingtonian Bahá’í. She was Chair of Oratory at Howard University and a member of the District of Columbia Board of Education. Her husband George William Cook was also a professor at Howard, having served as Professor of Commercial and International Law and as Dean of the School of Commerce and Finance.<sup>29</sup> Cook “represented the Bahá’í Faith among black intellectuals in Washington, D.C. since about 1910.”<sup>30</sup> Recalling that the National Spiritual Assembly invited a group of black and white Bahá’ís for a special consultation on race that took place on 8 January 1927, Haney and Cook and were both in that group, as was Locke himself. How and why Locke became disaffected from these two mainstays of the race amity movement is not clear.

Locke was critical of other leading Washingtonian Bahá’ís as well. By 1931, Locke had complained of “the deceptive platitudes of some of our friends, including even Dr. Leslie P. Hill.”<sup>31</sup> This is a particularly stunning statement since Hill, who was the black principal of the Cheyney Institute (a teacher training school), had spoken at the Philadelphia convention of 22-23 October 1924, and was among those invited by the National Spiritual Assembly in November 1926 to a special consultation on race.<sup>32</sup> That having been said, the Bahá’í committee work that Locke had consistently and enthusiastically accepted was in the planning and execution of Bahá’í-sponsored, race-unity events. Oddly enough, but predictably, Locke was not on the local “Inter-Racial Committee,” whose members had been appointed

in the preceding year of April 1934-April 1935, and reappointed by the local Spiritual Assembly of Washington, D.C. sometime prior to 29 June 1935 (presumably in April). Its members included “Mr.” [Dr.] Stanwood Cobb, Mrs. Coralie Cook, Mrs. Mariam Haney, Miss Florence King, and Mrs. Gertrude Mattern.<sup>33</sup> Locke’s name is conspicuously absent.

*Appointment to Teaching Committee and Resignation:* The Bahá’ís still had hopes for Locke. The Washington Bahá’í Assembly certainly did. Now that he was no longer serving on a national Bahá’í committee, why not a local one? The local Spiritual Assembly of Washington, D.C. appointed Locke to the Teaching Committee. The members of this arm of the Assembly consisted of Dr. Stanwood Cobb, Chairman; Charles Mason Remy, Vice Chairman; Mrs. John Stewart, Secretary; Mr. Clarence Baker; Mrs. Louise Boyle; Mr. William E. Gibson; Dr. Alain Locke; Mr. George Miller; and Mrs. Ethel M. Murray.<sup>34</sup> Locke may have attended some of the committee’s consultations. That he probably did is based on the following statement by Louise Boyle: “Dr. Locke returns from Europe on the 23rd to strengthen both the teaching and Amity work.”<sup>35</sup>

Locke may have reacted negatively to a situation described by Boyle as follows: “A member of the teaching committee is causing grave concern because she is in personal touch with the Guardian and is using his letters as a lever.”<sup>36</sup> In December, Locke declined to serve on this committee, as indicated in his letter of resignation:

December 10, 1935

Dr. Stanwood Cobb  
Chairman, The Teaching Committee,  
Washington Bahai Assembly

Dear Mr. Cobb:

I am indirectly informed of a meeting of the Teaching Committee set for December 14th, which I deeply regret not being able to attend because of important engagements in New York City over this coming week-end. Obviously information as to dates of meeting are given at the meetings themselves, and by reason of the Bahai calendar, these revolve and do not occur on the stated days of the week, nor is an advance calendar of meetings available.

Under the circumstances of having missed so many meetings of the Committee and the probability in view of heavy out of town engagements

from now through April, I consider it regrettably my duty to resign my membership, that my place may be filled by some worker who can participate more regularly and helpfully in the consultation so necessary to the effective work of the Cause. I deeply appreciate the confidence of the Community in offering me this post of service, which I would have been glad to discharge if my duties and commitments permitted. However, I have a heavy program of editorial and visiting lecture assignments, and as you know am frequently out of town on one or other of these missions.

With the hope that my position will be sympathetically understood and granted, and best wishes for the furtherance of the Committee's work, I am,  
Sincerely yours,  
[Alain Locke]<sup>37</sup>

The reader is struck by the tone of respect conveyed in this letter. Here Locke makes very clear how much he traveled. Perhaps this 1935 letter should be considered as evidence of his typical schedule—evidence that would go far in explaining why he was not involved in the community in 1934, and may account for why he did so little in 1936. In either or both cases, Locke was honest about the fact that his schedule did not permit him the luxury of involvement in extracurricular, local Bahá'í community affairs. In other words, he was simply unavailable. Notwithstanding, Locke would be available for some Bahá'í engagements outside Washington, D.C. While feeling impelled to resign from the Teaching Committee, Locke did not decline teaching the Bahá'í Faith.

*“Abdul-Bahá on World Peace” and International Banquet:* On 26 November 1935, Locke gave a public address at a Bahá'í-sponsored meeting in Washington D.C., held at the Tea House of the Dodge Hotel. His topic was “Abdul-Baha on World Peace.”<sup>38</sup> Of the details of this event there are none. But it helps delineate a pattern in which Locke was less inclined in later years to devote his time to the work of Bahá'í planning, though still willing to speak at Bahá'í-sponsored race-amity events.

Having personally observed (and possibly having been caught up in) personality conflicts in the course of committee work may have been the prime reason for Locke's estrangement from Bahá'í administrative service. Yet, when called upon to speak at a Bahá'í event, there is scarcely any record of his reluctance to do so. This pattern is borne out by Louise Boyle's description of an “International Banquet” at which Locke was invited to speak, either in late October or early

## November:

An International Dinner, or Banquet, as it was called, arranged by the Assembly—I should say, suggested by them and kept under their auspices, but arranged by poor me—had to be an Amity [i.e., interracial] affair, as any Baha’i meal must be, so the Amity Committee were the hosts for it and I the chairman. I did not dream it would be so wonderfully confirmed in all the circumstances, but it was. The Service Committee aided as hostesses and ushers. Was assisted in finding a most dignified place, run by Quakers, when the Dodge [Hotel] failed for us for that night after making the date! I got nine Negroes to sing the Spirituals without accompaniment, and Mason, Dr. Locke and a young Chinese [were scheduled] to [speak] briefly before Ruhi [Afnan]. The music was exceptionally impressive and the 115 or more guests all very happy. The singers gave “Steal away to Jesus” after an Ave Maria closed the meeting, and “stole” out, one by one in the dearest way. We all left the speakers table to thank them on the broad red velvet stairway, and they halted before the large doors, for an encore. There were tears in many eyes at the sheer beauty of the moment. The setting was the old Chas. Glover Mansion next the Washington Club.<sup>39</sup>

It is significant that nine African American singers performed spirituals at this event. Here was a conscious overture to the black community. Boyle also deliberately scheduled a Chinese speaker for the dinner, and she offers her view that “any Baha’i meal must” be an “Amity affair.” It appears that Locke, though scheduled as part of the program, could not be present. The same letter reports that: “Allen was away, though to have been a speaker.”<sup>40</sup> This was a rare exception to the rule that Locke, during this period of his Bahá’í life, would never turn down an invitation to speak. This observation is partly confirmed by Boyle herself, who further on in the letter writes: “Meanwhile the teaching work and public meetings are going forward,—the 12th and 26th [November] to be at the Dodge. Stanwood, Mrs. Parmelee, Allen Locke and me to speak.”<sup>41</sup> As a Bahá’í, Locke was more effective as a teacher rather than an administrator.

Locke began to distance himself from the local Washington, D.C. Bahá’í community, while remaining sporadically active on a national level for some time to come. The year 1935 marks the end of Locke’s active participation in the Washington, D.C. Bahá’í community.

*Growing Distance (1936)*: From here to the end of his life, Bahá’í documents on Locke are uneven and sparse. There are many gaps in the record. These may be due to the inadequacy of the documentary record or to Locke’s inactivity as a Bahá’í. Nonetheless, Locke’s contributions

as a Bahá'í did not trail off entirely. Some of his finest work was yet to come. After his Bahá'í compatriots had learned not to expect too much from Locke during these latter years, those contributions were as significant as his early ones. In some ways, they would prove to be even more important. Here, a definite pattern emerges: Locke's activity as a Bahá'í was primarily the outcome of his work at both international and national levels, rather than at a local level.

Shortly before the summer of 1936 began, Locke was extremely pained by the fall of Haile Selassie in Ethiopia. In a letter dated 5 May 1936 to his patron, Charlotte Osgood Mason, he comments: "Suppose the real gloom for the last week has been caused by the daily agony of the Ethiopian news—and the final collapse of Haile Selassie. I had forgotten your words about his bad tactics of trying to fight a white man's war instead of fighting according to native instinct; until talking it over with Professor [Ralph] Bunche yesterday, he said: 'Well if he had relied on his mountains instead of the League of Nations they would be fighting yet'."<sup>42</sup> In understanding how Locke thought, it is important to keep in mind that he always maintained a global perspective. For this and other reasons, experts on Locke credit him with having internationalized the racial crisis as not simply an American crisis, but as an international issue as well.

At home, Locke lectured across America, partly for academic advancement, and largely as a means of travel and for pay. At times his speaking schedule was so busy as to convey the impression that this was a second vocation. Take the month of March, for instance. On 2 March 1936, Locke spoke on "The Negro's Contribution to America" at Smith College. The next day, on 3 March 1936, Locke participated in the Springfield Forum, sponsored by the American Association for Adult Education in New York City. The topic of his speech was "The Negro in the Two Americas." Referring to this event in a letter, Locke wrote: "In the Springfield talk I will give the Nordic skull a round hard crack—but even that is fashionable now—except perhaps in New England."<sup>43</sup> Yet, in another letter, dated 30 March 1936, to patron Charlotte Osgood Mason, Locke despairs of getting "so little done that really amounts to anything."<sup>44</sup> Apparently, Locke did not consider himself to be terribly effective with his black audiences. He writes:

But then—and this isn't all alibi, the Negro audiences I meet—do not want the truth and do not keep at all within that very necessary soberness which so far

as I can see alone makes truth-speaking possible. Of course you could generate your own atmosphere—as I yet haven't that power. But it may come—and when it does I will begin to be effective. (Terrible waste of time, though.)<sup>45</sup>

Of course, all this meant that he would simply be unavailable for Bahá'í service. Whether at home or abroad, Locke was really too busy to participate much in local Bahá'í activities. But Locke preserved his Bahá'í commitment. He is included on the “List of Believers—January 22, 1936”<sup>46</sup> for that year.

The broader Bahá'í context is also needed to interpret Locke's fluctuating and somewhat waning levels of Bahá'í involvement. At the national level, Bahá'í race relations went into further decline. This year proved to be a great setback for Bahá'í race work. This was because the National Inter-Racial Amity Committee was dissolved by the National Spiritual Assembly in 1936. Locke had already been lost in the process. At the international level, Locke's signal Bahá'í contribution for this year was his essay, “The Orientation of Hope” published in *The Bahá'í World* for 1932-1934.<sup>47</sup> This is an instance of Locke's sporadic yet significant Bahá'í contributions made during this period and in the years to follow.

To place all this in the wider context of his personal and professional life, in 1936 under the auspices of the Associates in Negro Folk Education, Locke established the *Bronze Booklets on the History, Problems, and Cultural Contributions of the Negro* series, written by such leading African American scholars as Sterling A. Brown and Ralph Bunche. A problem arose when the ANFE commissioned W. E. B. Du Bois to contribute one of the Bronze Booklets, but exercised its veto power over Locke when it refused to publish Du Bois' manuscript. Locke himself wrote two *Bronze Booklets: The Negro and His Music* and *Negro Art Past and Present*. Published between 1936 and 1942, the nine booklets became a standard reference for teaching African American history. The reader can see that Locke invested the majority of his time in bolstering “race pride” and group self-respect among African Americans, on the one hand, and promoting improved race relations on the other. And his Bahá'í contributions were simply part and parcel of his larger work, whether as a “race man,” a cultural pluralist, or a Bahá'í.

*Cipher from Silence (1937)*: From the standpoint of Locke's Bahá'í activity, the year 1937 is a cipher. Locke was again on the Bahá'í

rolls: he is included on the eligible “Voting List—Washington Bahá’í Community—1937.”<sup>48</sup> Otherwise, he has temporarily vanished from the Bahá’í horizon.

*Preference for Activism (1938)*: Again, Locke’s name appears on a “list of Recognized Believers of the Washington Bahá’í Community, as approved by the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the City of Washington, D.C. January 1938.”<sup>49</sup> Political activism had entered Locke’s life. Unlike W. E. B. Du Bois, Locke strongly supported Roosevelt’s New Deal. In a letter dated 27 October 1938 to the editor of the *Chicago Defender*, Locke endorsed two candidates for Congress.<sup>50</sup> Bahá’ís are supposed to remain aloof from partisanship in politics. Here, Locke adheres to that principle somewhat, voting as an independent.

*Continued Absence (1939-1940)*: Locke remains on a “list of Recognized Believers of Washington (D.C.) Bahá’í Community” dated 11 January 1939.<sup>51</sup> Locally, Locke is a Bahá’í in name only. This would become cause for concern, especially on the part of Louis Gregory.

In 1940, the ANFE published Locke’s *The Negro in Art: A Pictorial Record of the Negro Artist and the Negro Theme in Art*, which was the leading book in its field and Locke’s best-known work after *The New Negro*. Certainly this project would have taken priority over any other commitments, Bahá’í projects included. There are other examples of Locke’s non-Bahá’í commitments during this period. Together with seventy-eight other leading American intellectuals this year, Locke became a charter member of the Jewish Theological Seminary’s Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion, which published its annual proceedings. This organization originated in a November 1939 colloquy of academics and seminary presidents convened by Jewish Theological Seminary president (later chancellor) Louis Finfelstein. Through its collaboration of scholars from a wide array of disciplines, the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion championed the preservation of democracy and intellectual freedom as a conscious response to the rise of totalitarianism in Europe.<sup>52</sup> Conference proceedings were, on most occasions, subsequently published, with Locke’s papers among them.<sup>53</sup> While he did write several essays for *The Bahá’í World*, and although these volumes were typically given to civic leaders and government officials, in practice the real audience for those essays

was the Bahá'ís themselves. Locke could not expect to reach the public through Bahá'í publishing venues.

*Contact by Louis Gregory:* Beside Locke's name on the Bahá'í list for 1940 is the note, "No telephone."<sup>54</sup> Assuming that such service was available and that he could have easily afforded it, Locke's choice not to have a phone provided some respite and relief perhaps from the many demands that were placed on him. His "castle" had a rampart that would not be breached by wires.

As his friend, admirer, and elder Bahá'í brother, Louis Gregory was keenly aware of Locke's situation. Gregory made repeated efforts—not so much to re-engage Locke as an active Bahá'í—but to urge him to become nationally known as a Bahá'í. Gregory faithfully kept in touch with Locke over the years, and the relationship was a reciprocal and genuine friendship, although not a close one. During 5-10 August 1940, at the Green Acre Bahá'í School in Eliot, Maine, Louis Gregory and Curtis Kelsey conducted a workshop on race unity. Prior to August 5, Gregory had sent Locke a syllabus of this course. (Oddly, Gregory and Kelsey do not cite Locke in the "Bibliography" that appears on the last page of the syllabus.) On that syllabus appears the following statement by Bahá'u'lláh, with no reference given, but reliably translated by Dr. Zia M. Bagdadi:

Fortunate are those souls who have not become slaves of the color of the world and whatever is contained therein, and who were honored by the color of God, which is sanctified above the different colors of the world. And none but those who are severed know that color.<sup>55</sup>

Handwritten on the title page was this short note: "We do not forget you. Call again! L.G.G."<sup>56</sup> Without wishing to belabor the obvious, it is clear that Locke had called Gregory. Even during relative lulls in his active Bahá'í life, even during periods of what might be regarded as estrangement, Locke kept alive some of his closest Bahá'í contacts. These relationships were neither defunct nor entirely one-sided.

*The National Stage:* An instance of Locke's predilection for a national stage is the Library of Congress concert. On 20 December 1940, the Music Division of the Library of Congress hosted a concert of traditional Negro folk music, performed by the Golden Gate Quartet, accompanied by Joshua White on guitar and vocals. Alain Locke gave

the opening commentary on “The Negro Spiritual” and served as the event’s “time-keeper”—probably a euphemism for “master of ceremonies.” Blues and ballads were introduced by poet Sterling Brown, with Alan Lomax as commentator on the “reels” and work songs that the quartet performed. The official program notes cite the occasion: “The Librarian of Congress and the Gertrude Clarke Whittall Foundation present a Festival of Music commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the proclamation of the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States.” Sound recordings of the concert were made in the Library of Congress’s Coolidge Auditorium in Washington, D.C. and produced by the Music Division and the Recording Laboratory of the Library of Congress.<sup>57</sup>

Jeffrey Stewart has published a transcript of Locke’s talk. Apart from the intrinsic value of his commentary, Locke made a trenchant statement on democracy:

Now, of course, the slave didn’t get his democracy from the Bill of Rights. He got it from his reading of the moral justice of the Hebrew prophets and his concept of the wrath of God. And, particularly, his mind seized on the experience of the Jews in Egypt and of the figure of Moses, the savior of the people, leading them out of bondage, and, therefore, there is not only no more musically beautiful spiritual, but no more symbolic spiritual than “Go Down Moses.”<sup>58</sup>

Over the next several years, Locke would focus more and more of his attention on the idea of democracy itself, which was bound up with the American experience. To be American did not necessarily entail being democratic in practice. But it did presume a commitment to democracy in principle. This principle, which dates back to the Declaration of Independence and which asserted itself as the supreme law of the land when enshrined in that other American scripture, the Constitution, became the African American’s most effective weapon for obliging white Americans to see and admit the contradiction between racism, forced segregation, and the ideals of American democracy.

On 7 May 1941, Locke was in the limelight when he spoke at a dedication ceremony that was nationally broadcast on radio. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was present to preside over the dedication of the Southside Community Art Center, a predominantly African American center in Chicago, built as part of the Illinois Federal Art Project.<sup>59</sup> Locke was one of nine “After Dinner Speakers.” In a letter dated 22

March 1941, Locke mentions having “had several recent contacts with her” and that “she has a copy of the book,” referring to his new publication, *The Negro in Art*.

*Retirement from the Bahá’í Community*: Locke was in such great demand that he had little time or inclination for Bahá’í activities. But to leave it at that evades a deeper issue. Naturally, for years Bahá’ís had high hopes for Locke’s promotion of their Faith. In many ways, Locke had frustrated these hopes and no doubt had disappointed many Bahá’ís. We can only imagine Locke’s nagging sense of having to explain himself to the Bahá’ís. That time came. It was precipitated by a letter of inquiry from the Washington Bahá’í Assembly. It read:

SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHÁ’IS  
of Washington, D.C.  
1763 Columbia Road  
January 27, 1941

Dr. Alain Locke  
1326 R Street N W  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Dr. Locke,

The Spiritual Assembly of this City has been requested by the National Spiritual Assembly to make any necessary revisions in the Membership List of our Baha’i community so that we can send an official list to enable them to determine the number of delegates to be assigned to this community for the coming Baha’i Convention.

Therefore, in line with duty, the Local Assembly is trying to function to the best of its ability, and would appreciate it to the fullest extent if you will advise us as soon as possible whether you wish to have your name retained on our membership list.

With cordial Baha’i greetings,  
In the service of the Cause,  
(Signed) Mariam Haney  
Corresponding Secretary<sup>60</sup>

There was a more basic question in the letter’s subtext: Did Locke still consider himself a Bahá’í? It took him over two months to reply, possibly after some soul-searching. Consequently, while his name does reappear on the Washington, D.C. Bahá’í membership list for 1941 (“No telephone”),<sup>61</sup> Locke requested that the local Assembly henceforth regard him as an “isolated believer” and therefore not a member of their community:

March 30, 1941

Mrs Mariam Haney  
 Corresponding Secretary  
 The Spiritual Assembly of  
 the Bahais of Washington,

Dear Mrs. Haney:

I hope my long delay in answering your inquiry of January 27th hasn't seemed discourteous. I have been very busy, with frequent out of town engagements, including a series of visiting lectures at Talladega College.

I naturally am reluctant to sever a spiritual bond with the Bahai community, for I still hold to a firm belief in the truth of the Bahai principles. However, I am not in a position, and haven't been for years, to participate very practically or even with the fullest enthusiasm, in the collective activities of the local friends. One of my reservations is, of course, the seeming impossibility of any real crusading attack on the practices of racial prejudice in spite of the good will and fair principles of the local believers. They are not to blame perhaps for their ineffectualness any more than we, who are in more practical movements are for our absorption of the time and energy in what we regard as more immediately important. Some time ago, I expressed to Mr Remy a desire to retire formally from the community and to be regarded as an "isolated believer." In view of your direct inquiry as to membership status, I respectfully and regretfully renew that request.

Very sincerely yours,  
 Alain Locke.<sup>62</sup>

Clearly there is some degree of estrangement here, although Locke was circumspect. In as polite a way as possible, he indicates that he does not have the "fullest enthusiasm" for participation in local Bahá'í activities. Locke's request to be an "isolated believer" was not meaningful in a Bahá'í context, as an "isolated believer" is a Bahá'í who lives in a city where no other Bahá'ís reside. Typically, an isolated believer may live some distance from other Bahá'ís. Locke used the term "isolated believer" to express his wish that he not be regarded as part of the community, while yet remaining a Bahá'í.

His reply indicates that Locke had made much the same request earlier. The letter simply formalized an apparently long-standing reality. Locke's avowal that "I still hold to a firm belief in the truth of the Bahai principles" allows for a distinction between his core belief as a Bahá'í and his estrangement from the local community. It appears that Locke's faith up to this point was unwavering at its deepest level, although his confidence in the local community was lacking. It should also be noted that Locke's status as a public figure created the attendant difficulties associated with fame and success.

*The Unfinished Business of Democracy (1942)*: Locke was called to a broader purpose. During the crisis precipitated by the attack on Pearl Harbor and the nation's entry into World War II, the exigencies of that moment in history and a sense of national purpose steered Locke in his resolve to draw the American public's attention to the "unfinished business of democracy." For America's world role would inextricably be bound to its own moral authority, compromised as it was by the "separate but equal" fiction of legal segregation. To exercise moral influence for democracy abroad, America had to resolve issues of democracy at home.

As a writer and editor, this was an extraordinary year for Locke. One of Locke's finest philosophical essays, "Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy," was published in the proceedings volume of the Second Symposium of the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion.<sup>63</sup> This was also the year Locke published *When Peoples Meet: A Study of Race and Culture*, a multi-author work that he co-edited with Bernhard J. Stern, lecturer in anthropology at Columbia University.<sup>64</sup> In November 1942, Locke served as guest editor for a special edition of the *Survey Graphic*, a volume entitled, *Color: Unfinished Business of Democracy*.

While Locke appears not to have publicly identified with the Bahá'ís at this time, he did do so privately. Respecting his written request not to be removed from the roster, Locke's name appears on the Washington, D.C. Bahá'í membership list for 1942.<sup>65</sup> Locke continued to discourse on spiritual topics, but without any direct reference to the Faith. A close study of his essays and speeches during this time reveals not a hint of lapsing back into his Episcopalian past, although he did speak in churches from time to time and enjoyed their worship services. At this point in his life, Locke's spiritual orientation transcended affiliation ("provincialisms," as he would say) and may be characterized as a "transconfessional affinity" with the followers of all religions. To all people of goodwill he spoke universally.

*Speaks on Spirituality Without Reference to Faith*: There is an example of this. On 28 May 1942, on a show called "Town Meeting," Locke on with panel of other speakers spoke on the topic, "Is There A Spiritual Basis for World Unity?" This is precisely the kind of question that would interest a Bahá'í, 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>66</sup> All 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, D.C.

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, related to university 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>67</sup> After idealizing 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." With withering criticism, Locke also spoke of the "superciliously self-appointed superior races aspiring to impose their preferred culture, self-righteous creeds and religions expounding monopolies on ways of life and salvation" as "poor seedbeds for world unity and world order." 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>68</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>69</sup>

True to his philosophical bent, Locke conveyed 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>70</sup>

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>71</sup> This was a question as excellent as it was leading, and it points to one of Locke’s weaknesses: While keen on framing problems, and articulate at the level of principle, he sometimes lacked the “practicability” that he himself said the world so desperately needed. Locke had already distanced himself from his own, chosen religion. As a result, he came across to the audience as somewhat critical of Christianity and vaguely favorable to Eastern philosophy.

*Haiti (1943)*: Locke’s role as cultural ambassador for the United States began early in 1943. Along with jazz orchestra leader Benny Goodman and composer Deems Taylor, in January, Locke was named to a special advisory committee to brief the State Department’s Division of Cultural Relations “regarding the stimulation of musical interchange among the American republics.”<sup>72</sup> This was an event leading up to his experience in Haiti.

One major engagement for Locke this year was the Institute for Religious Studies conference, sponsored by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York. At the session, “Group Relations and Group Antagonisms,” Locke, presented a lecture on “The Negro Group.” This talk was later published.<sup>73</sup> Also this year, Locke produced an annotated bibliography, *World View on Race and Democracy: A Study Guide in Human Group Relations*.<sup>74</sup> An oil-on-canvas portrait of Alain Locke was painted by Betsy Graves Reyneau, circa 1943-1944. The portrait was exhibited 2-28 May 1944 in the Smithsonian’s National Collection of Fine Arts, “Special Exhibition of Portraits of Leading Negro Citizens.”

Although a public intellectual, Locke at this time continued, for the most, to be a private Bahá'í. In addition to being unavailable to the Washington Bahá'í community, Locke would be out of town for a while. He was bound for Haiti. On his return, however, his attitude towards the Faith would take a turn for the better.

*Cultural Ambassador to Haiti:* From 9 April-10 July 1943, Locke took leave of Howard University to serve as Inter-American Exchange Professor to Haiti for three months under the joint auspices of the American Committee for Inter-American Artistic and Intellectual Relations and the Haitian Ministry of Education, whose director, Maurice Dartique, Locke personally met in March 1941, in Washington, D.C.<sup>75</sup> His appointment, which was originally scheduled for the previous academic year, was delayed because of the war, which prevented him from getting the necessary priority authorization for his trip to Port-au-Prince. (During that time, no definite plane reservations for travel abroad could be made without a government priority.) His appointment ended up being for the third trimester, which in Haiti ran from “the week after Easter to the middle of July.”

Prior to leaving for Port-au-Prince, Locke had paid Howard colleague Louis T. Achille the sum of \$200.00 to translate his series of Haiti lectures into French. On reaching Haiti, however, Locke realized that the intellectual elite there lacked the basic background as to the racial situation in the States. His lectures, as originally written, assumed too much and so he undertook extensive revisions to four of his lectures accordingly.<sup>76</sup> Dr. Camille Lherisson, who served as Locke's translator during the former's visits to various schools and short impromptu talks, then translated these revisions into French. Locke, who was fluent in German but “inadequate” in French, succeeded in presenting most of his public lectures in French, particularly his lecture series at the French Seminary at Cap Haitian. As a courtesy, Locke asked Lherisson to present the fifth lecture. “My French delivery,” Locke reports, “was far from perfect, but improved as the series went on.”<sup>77</sup> With the exception of the sixth and final lecture, which was held in the University of Haiti's Rex Theatre, all of Locke's public lectures were delivered in the Aula of the School of Law.

The sixth lecture, “The Negro in the Three Americas,” was published in English the following year. It expresses the underlying thesis of Locke's talks. Speaking of the historical legacy of slavery and its

persistent after-effects, and of the need to resolve these problems in the interests of democracy, Locke writes: “That the Negro’s situation in this hemisphere has this constructive contribution to make to the enlargement of the practice of democracy has been the main conviction and contention of these discussions.”<sup>78</sup>

According to Locke’s report, the lectures prompted a need for their publication. “After the series was over, in fact before,” he writes, “considerable demand became evident for publication of the full text; large quotation of passages having appeared in the newspapers.”<sup>79</sup> On the recommendation of U.S. Ambassador White, the American Haitian Coordination Committee (renamed the Committee on Intercultural Cooperation), underwrote the expenses for a print run of 1,200 copies of *Le rôle du Negro dans la culture des Amerique* (1943).<sup>80</sup> Locke was able to carry the project to near completion before he left Haiti for ten days in Cuba. The rest, including final proofreading, was in the capable hands of Dr. Lherisson, for subsequent publication by the L’Imprimerie d’Etat. Locke dedicated the book to President Lescot.<sup>81</sup> These lectures formed the nucleus of grand project that Locke believed would be his magnum opus.<sup>82</sup>

*Bahá’í Contacts in Port-au-Prince?:* Locke’s relationship with the Bahá’ís in Haiti remains unknown. American Bahá’ís had already traveled to Haiti as Bahá’í “pioneers” (missionaries). Louis Gregory and his wife Louise pioneered to Haiti in 1937, with the goal of establishing a Bahá’í community there. They left on 21 April 1937.

On 4 April 1943, Locke received a letter from another Bahá’í pioneer Ellsworth Blackwell (1902-1978) who was living in Haiti at the time. Blackwell was a distinguished African American Bahá’í who, after serving on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, pioneered to Haiti from 1940-1943, returning there in 1950, and again in 1960, where he remained until 1975. The letter read as follows:

L’Assemblée Spirituelle Des Bahais de Port-au-Prince, Haiti  
 Adresse:  
 Gerald G. McBean  
 Ruelle Charles Jeanty  
 Bas Peu de Chose  
 Port-au-Prince, Haiti

c/o American Consulate

Port au Prince, Haiti  
April 4, 1943

Dear Bahá'í Friend:

It is our understanding that you will soon be in Haiti. Therefore, we are taking this opportunity to welcome you in the name of the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Port au Prince.

Anything at all that we can do to make your stay in Haiti pleasant or any other assistance we can render, we will be most happy to do so.

You can reach us at either of the above addresses or you may call Mr. McBean at 3426.

The undersigned are, for your further information, the Bahá'í Pioneers to Haiti.

Hoping to hear from you in the near future, we are,

Faithfully in His Service,  
Ellsworth and Ruth Blackwell<sup>83</sup>

It is not known if Locke responded to this letter.

*Youth Rally for Race Unity (New York)*: After effectively having resigned from the Washington Bahá'í community in all but name, it is surprising perhaps to see Locke participating in a Bahá'í event once again. But his estrangement was really directed towards the Washington, D.C. Bahá'í community. Locke was more inclined to make appearances in the Bahá'í community of his other home, New York. One can call this a pattern of selective engagement. Locke's sudden reappearance at a public Bahá'í event would take place during the series of events leading up to Bahá'í Centenary (1944), marking the hundredth anniversary of the inception of Bahá'í history—which traces back to the Declaration of the Báb in Iran on 22 May 1844. Locke's speaking engagement took place on 24 October 1943.

Two individuals seem to have been instrumental in persuading Locke to accept this invitation to speak to youth. In a letter dated 11 October 1943 to Locke, Robert Gulick, a Bahá'í academic, wrote: "I understand from Miss Juliet Thompson that you are going to speak at the Bahá'í center on the afternoon of October 24th. You will recall my conversation with you concerning the Youth Rally for Race Unity to precede the other meeting. We have changed the date of the Rally to coincide with the time of your coming. We trust that you will find it possible to appear at the Rally at 2:30 P. M., October 24th."<sup>84</sup>

Bahá'ís who knew Locke were quite aware of his busy schedule. On this and on other occasions as well, organizers of Bahá'í events

were willing to the change dates of those events if that would ensure Locke's acceptance of their invitation. This shows how much Locke was valued as a Bahá'í speaker. On 21 October 1943, Bahá'í artist Juliet Thompson, whom Gulick mentioned, sent the following telegram:

DOCTOR ALAIN LOCKE =DELIVER 8 AM DEPT OF PHILOSOPHY HOWARD UNIVERSITY=WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD SO MUCH TO YOUR LUNCHEON WITH US ON SUNDAY AT 48 WEST 10 STREET AT ONE OCLOCK AND HOPING YOU WILL BE ABLE TO DO SO =JULIET THOMPSON.<sup>85</sup>

This is a significant event at this stage in Locke's Bahá'í career. Just as he enjoyed the company of artists, Locke found immense value in relating to youth and in serving as their mentor. During his tenure on the several national amity committees, Locke stressed the importance of youth in the cause of racial reconciliation.

The National Spiritual Assembly had called for a focus on the theme of race unity during the months of September and October 1943, as part of the Centenary. It was only natural that the Bahá'ís of New York would invite Alain Locke to speak on that topic. Of this event, Louis Gregory, in his annual report, states: "Guest speakers of different races took part in the Sunday afternoon public meeting during the two-month period, including Dr. Alain Locke of Howard University. . . . On October 24 a Youth Rally was held, with talks by Dr. Allan [sic] Locke and Dr. H. A. Overstreet of the College of the City of New York on unity between the white and Negro races . . ."86 No other information on the event is available from published Bahá'í sources. But Juliet Thompson registers her personal appreciation of Locke's visit. In her follow-up letter, dated 26 October 1943, Juliet Thompson had nothing but praise for Locke's interaction with the Bahá'í youth. She exclaimed:

Dear Dr. Locke

Your note did come Monday morning! The mails are so slow these days.

I am writing now to thank you with all my heart for what you did for us Sunday. The whole day was wonderful for me! The great service you rendered the Cause, your so very fine addresses and our talks at table when, in the midst of a crazy world, I found myself so eased by your clarity, all meant more to me than I can say, and I was so happy that when the night was over I wrote to the Guardian about it. Such things cheer him, laboring as he does, under heavy burdens.

Miss Austin's address is: 143 W. North St. N. W. Madame Dreyfus-Barney is at the Shoreham.

Hoping to see you soon again in New York, and with best regards from Mrs. [?]

Most sincerely  
Juliet Thompson  
48 W. 10 St.  
October 26

It was right when you spoke, at the Youth Rally, of the need to realize that this Cause is essentially universal and so—for all.<sup>87</sup>

His message that “this Cause [the Bahá’í Faith] is essentially universal and so—for all” was probably quite heartfelt and genuine. At least Locke passed the test of authenticity. His work with the youth was a success. The occasion marked the beginning of Locke’s reconciliation with the Bahá’í Faith. In so saying, there was no reconciliation with the Washington, D.C. Bahá’í community as such. Once again, Locke would participate in a Bahá’í event in New York, rather than in Washington, D.C.

*On the Same Speaker Platform with Bahá’ís:* On 28 November 1943, Locke lectured on “The Background of Negro Culture” in the New York Theosophical Society’s “Sunday Public Lectures” series. On the very same printed program, for the Sunday lecture two weeks prior (14 November 1943), Bahá’í diplomat Ali Kuli Khan was scheduled to speak on “The Bahai Faith and Its Relation to World Culture.” Khan is introduced as “former Persian Envoy to the United States, now President of the [New York] Bahai Council.” This shows that Locke was not averse to publicly appearing in association with the Bahá’ís.

*Moral Imperatives for World Order (1944):* Although Locke always had many speaking engagements, demand for his lectures seems to have increased in the course of this year. As would be expected, he had a crowded schedule. A few examples of his speaking engagements will suffice to illustrate this point. On 19 April 1944, Locke addressed the Rochester Young Women’s Christian Association on “The Negro’s Contribution to American Culture.” On 27-28 May 1944, Locke expatiated on “The Teaching of Dogmatic Religion in a Democratic Society” for the Society for Ethical Culture’s Conference on the Scientific Spirit and Democratic Faith in New York. During June 19-21, Locke pre-

sented three lectures at the Institute of International Relations at Mills College in Oakland, California: (1) Race in the Present World Crisis; (2) Race: American Paradox and Dilemma; and (3) Moral Imperatives for World Order.<sup>88</sup> On 24 June 1944, Locke gave a public lecture on “The Predicament of Minorities” Institute of International Relations, Seattle. On 25 June 1944, Locke gave the sermon for that Sunday at the First Methodist Church, Mount Vernon, Washington. On 26 June 1944, Locke lectured on “A Philosophy of Human Brotherhood,” again at the Institute of International Relations in Seattle. A month later, on 30 July 1944, Locke presented a talk on “Fraternity and Democracy” in the Church of All Nations in Los Angeles.

During this period, Locke intensified his campaign to link race relations and democracy for the benefit of his country and a wider audience. To a limited extent, he also became a political activist while maintaining his neutrality as an independent. Of course, Locke had edited a special issue of the *Survey Graphic* on *Color: Unfinished Business of Democracy*, Locke was interviewed about this special issue on the air. In a CBS radio program, “Woman’s Page of the Air,” broadcast from station KMYR in Denver on 6 August 1944 while World War II was in full furor, host Adelaide Hawley asked: “And you called in a staff of specialist consultants to work with you on the special ‘Color’ edition of the *Survey Graphic*, didn’t you, Professor Locke?”

Locke replied: “Yes, including such writers as Pearl Buck, Herbert Agar and Lin Yutang.” In response to the question as to what was meant by the “unfinished business of democracy,” Locke said: “Just as the foundation of democracy as a national principle made necessary the declaration of the basic equality of persons, so the founding of international democracy must guarantee the basic equality of human groups.”<sup>89</sup>

In response to the question, “And what do you think is America’s role in the NEW democracy?” Locke said: “Today we are, it would seem, on the swing back to a wider democracy. We have recanted our isolationism of 1919. We have instituted the ‘good neighbor’ policy—we had ‘lend-lease’ before our formal entry into the war. Moreover, the United States with its composite sampling of all human races and peoples, is by way of becoming almost a United Nations by herself.”<sup>90</sup> In reciting this sociological fact, Locke noted that democracy itself was “on trial” and that “winning democracy for the Negro means winning the war for democracy.”<sup>91</sup> This was a clear adaptation of America’s

World War II rhetoric to the race war at home.

At the Fourth Summer School Convocation of the Hampton Institute, Locke gave the plenary address on 18 August 1944. On 11 September 1943, in the Fourth Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion in their Relation to the Democratic Way of Life (Columbia University), Locke presented a paper in the session, "Philosophical Ideas and Enduring Peace." In a letter dated 15 November 1944, John H. Sengstacke, chairman of the National Non-Partisan League thanked Locke for "your service as a member of our National Board."<sup>92</sup> On 17 December 1944, Locke spoke on "Democracy and Christianity" at the Community Church of Summit, New Jersey (Unitarian). It seemed that Locke could relate democracy (and race relations) to just about everything that was happening in America. Whoever the audience and whatever the venue, Locke could adapt his lectures to fit particular occasions and to address vested interests.

Tracking themes in Locke's talks can give insight into the deeper structure of his thought. From time to time, Locke would continue to speak at certain Bahá'í functions. For it is safe to say that Locke's philosophy of cultural pluralism was sacralized by Bahá'í universalism, as his Bahá'í universalism was doubtless influenced by his philosophy. Thematically, the topics on which he spoke in Bahá'í-sponsored events compare quite favorably to the subjects of his other numerous lectures and articles. A synopsis of all these topics shows the threads that run throughout his lectures: linkages between democracy, race, and religion.

*Symmetry Between Professional and Bahá'í Discourses:* Locke continued to be in great demand as a public speaker. His schedule appeared to be fully booked. His themes are familiar now, but must have been fairly new for audiences previously unacquainted with him. In the aristocratic ambience of hotel ballrooms and suites, Locke never relented in his mission to speak to the conscience of people of capacity and to Americans across the nation.

One event seems to have stood out. For some reason, Locke kept three copies of the program announcing his 31 July 1944 luncheon lecture, "Race in the Present World Crisis," held in the Music Room of the Los Angeles Biltmore Hotel. The event was hosted by a citizen-based, non-political, non-profit organization called *Town Hall*, which held forums on issues affecting public policy. The 24 July 1944 news-

letter, Town Hall, introduced Locke's forthcoming lecture as follows:

While the preparatory phases of the present war [World War II] were featured by the preachers of false racist theories, the reconstruction period following the war will present very real racial problems. When the Nazi "Aryan supermen" and the Japanese jingoists have been utterly defeated, the world will be faced with the many questions surrounding the relations between White nations and non-White colonial peoples, between White majorities and non-White minorities within the same national boundaries.<sup>93</sup>

The copy for this advance notice appears to have been written by Locke himself. It illustrates the analogous connections he was able to make between foreign and domestic racist ideologies. In a similar vein, on 25 November 1925, Locke presided as chairman in the seventh general session during the twenty-fourth annual meeting of the National Council for the Social Sciences. The theme was the "Broader Realization of Democratic Values." This is hardly surprising. Locke was pro-democracy to an almost religious degree. But democracy in America had serious flaws. It needed to be more inclusive. American democracy had its victims. Issues of race, class, and gender still needed to be worked out. At this and in practically every one of his lectures to predominantly white as well as black audiences, Locke focused on the relationship between democracy and race.

*Woodrow Wilson Memorial:* Locke was asked to send a message on the occasion of the Bahá'í observance of the twentieth anniversary of the passing of Woodrow Wilson in New York. In a letter dated 28 January 1944, Robert Gulick made this request:

Dear Alain Locke:

February 3rd, 1944 will mark the 20th anniversary of the passing of Woodrow Wilson. As you will note from the enclosure, the NY Bahá'is are commemorating the event. Shoghi Effendi sent a special cablegram stating, "Greatly pleased associate myself . . ."

Pres. Seymour of Yale, Jan Masaryk, Sir Norman Angell & others have sent special tributes. We should be grateful if you would send a brief message to be read on the occasion, mentioning Wilson's pioneer efforts for international organization to abolish war and commending the NY Bahá'is for remembering his services. Apparently, this will be the only commemoration in New York! Please send your message to Hon. William Copeland Dodge, Chairman, 9 East 40th St., New York 18, N.Y.

Warm personal wishes and the hope that you may again visit New York in the near future.

Faithfully,

Robert Gulick<sup>94</sup>

From Gulick's next letter, we know that Locke did write and send the message as requested: "My dear Dr. Locke: I was in Washington last night and I am attempting to write this note on the return train. I tried a number of times to reach you by telephone. It was good of you to send the message for the Wilson meeting which, by the way, was a great success."<sup>95</sup>

Gulick's letter to Locke ended on a somber note. He wrote about the activities of a splinter Bahá'í group in New York that called itself the New History Society, and its leader Mirza Ahmad Sohrab: "The New History outfit is planning a centennial pageant. By hook or crook they have got together a more or less imposing advisory committee, a number of whose members know nothing of Ahmad's seamy past or unscrupulous methods. I note the name of William Pickens of the NAACP on the list. Do you know him and could you disillusion him about Ahmad Sohrab?"<sup>96</sup>

*Invitation from Shoghi Effendi:* Meanwhile, Shoghi Effendi had not forgotten about Locke, either. On 17 January 1944, he sent this Western Union cablegram to Locke: "WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE ARTICLE FROM YOUR PEN ON ANY ASPECT OF FAITH FOR CENTENARY ISSUE BAHÁ'I WORLD VOLUME NINE LOVING GREETINGS SHOGHI RABBANI."<sup>97</sup> The fact that Shoghi Effendi personally solicited this essay from Locke attests to the high regard the Guardian continued to have for him.

Locke received a follow-up letter, dated 1 February 1944, from the National Spiritual Assembly. The secretary Horace Holley wrote: "We are delighted to learn that the Guardian has cabled you asking for an article to use in Volume 9 of THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD." After clarifying which committee would be handling the editorial work, Holley concludes his letter: "The Guardian is being notified of your acceptance."<sup>98</sup> Shortly after, on February 3, Mabel Paine, secretary on behalf of *The Bahá'í World* Editorial Committee, stated: "We . . . would be glad to have your article sent to us within two weeks, but if this would prove difficult for you we can set March 1 as a deadline."<sup>99</sup> From a handwritten note dated 4 March 1944, we know that Locke did meet the deadline. But, in his haste to submit his manuscript on time, he had neglected to give it a title: "Dear Dr. Locke: Could you send us a title for your article? I'm

sure your title would be better than one we might invent.”<sup>100</sup> In what appears to be Locke’s own writing on Paine’s note, a provisional title is written: “The Lessons of World Crisis.” This title later was revised as “Lessons in World Crisis.”

*Moral Imperatives for World Order:* As mentioned above, on Wednesday evening, June 21, Locke spoke on “The Moral Imperatives for World Order” at the Institute of International Relations in Mills College, Oakland.<sup>101</sup> Based on rough notes published as an informative abstract, Locke began by saying that realism and idealism should be combined to achieve a world order. While existing loyalties were necessary and served to unite groups of people, such loyalties were limited in scope and “hopelessly inadequate as a foundation for a larger society.” Traditionally, these foundational loyalties concerned nation, race, and religion. These larger loyalties, however, became seeds of conflict and division, even though such loyalties were originally meant to bring people together. The present world crisis (that is, World War II), Locke argued, demands a more comprehensive framework.

One way of giving up a limited loyalty is to “find a way to transform or enlarge it.” National sovereignty, for instance, is purely arbitrary, even though historically grounded. If we are to resolve conflicts that flare up when nationalisms collide, “we must work for enlargement of all our loyalties.” This is all part of an ongoing process of social evolution by progressive enlargement of values that advances in stages throughout human history. Racial solidarity must not assert itself over others as superior, but as part of a confraternity, where parity of races and cultures becomes the new ideal. As a methodology for understanding and resolving conflicting religious truth-claims, Locke applies the critical relativism he had proposed in his philosophical essays as a viable strategy:

We must in the third place consider religion as having many ways leading to salvation. The idea that there is only one true way of salvation with all other ways leading to damnation is a tragic limitation to Christianity, which professes the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. How foolish in the eyes of foreigners are our competitive blind, sectarian missionaries! If the Confucian expression of a Commandment means the same as the Christian expression, then it is the truth also and should so be recognized. It is in this way alone that Christianity or any other enlightened religion can vindicate its claims to Universality; and so bring about moral and spiritual brother-

hood.<sup>102</sup>

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Locke concluded his talk by recapitulating his thesis: “The moral imperatives of a new world order are an internationally limited idea of national sovereignty, a non-monopolistic and culturally tolerant concept of race and religious loyalties freed of sectarian bigotry.”<sup>103</sup>

*Leader in Adult Education:* In 1946, Locke was elected president of the American Association for Adult Education for the 1946-1947 term, as the first black president of a predominantly white institution. Since more and more of his time would soon be taken as a national educational leader, Locke could hardly have been expected to devote much time to other commitments, including Bahá’í activities. As before, Locke’s name appears on the annual Washington, D.C. Bahá’í membership list for 1945.<sup>104</sup>

His relative unavailability notwithstanding, Locke still found time to contribute something significant to further the interests of the Bahá’í Faith. His primary Bahá’í contributions would be at the international level. In faithful response to Shoghi Effendi’s request, Locke’s final Bahá’í essay, “Lessons in World Crisis” was published in *The Bahá’í World* for 1940-1944.<sup>105</sup>

*University of Wisconsin:* During the 1945-1946 academic year, Locke was a visiting professor at the University of Wisconsin. One of Locke’s former students at Wisconsin, Beth Singer, described her professor as follows: “Locke was a quiet, extremely scholarly, and well organized lecturer; I do not recall his speaking from notes.”<sup>106</sup> After mentioning the fact that Locke was a Bahá’í, Singer recalls that “Dr. Locke seemed somehow aloof, and my friends and I were pretty much in awe of him.”<sup>107</sup>

Of his experience there, Locke, in a letter dated 8 March 1946 to his long-time friend Horace Kallen, wrote: “And I am delighted to tell you that things continue to go well out here at Madison. . . . The contrast both in student reaction, colleague’s [sic] friendliness, and of course, administrative attitude has been damning in Howard’s disfavor.”<sup>108</sup> As to his teaching responsibilities, Locke states: “Ironically I am having the best philosophical time of my life, and it may rejuvenate my mind; here’s hoping.”<sup>109</sup>

*Champion of Democracy (1946):* In constant demand as a public

speaker, Locke's lecture schedule was quite busy. Locke's talks and lectures continued to focus on the full realization of the founding principles of democracy in America.

During "Religious Emphasis Week," on 13 February 1946, Locke gave a presentation on the topic, "Comparative Cultures"—which was really more of a talk on "Comparative Religions"—in University of Wisconsin Memorial Union. The newspaper story "Dr. Locke Pleads for World Culture" quotes Locke as saying: "We are fast approaching a stage in which culture will have to be international. . . . This culture must have courtesy and reciprocity and must be aided by religious tolerance. . . . And in order to have tolerance, we must have every person intelligently aware of the common denominators of basic ideas and basic moral issues. That is necessary for basic unity."<sup>110</sup> The article closes with Locke citing several religious axioms.<sup>111</sup>

On the occasion of Negro History Week, 20 February 1946, Locke was invited to speak on "The Cultural Contributions of the Negro" at Union Theatre, presumably on campus. On 24 February 1946, Locke spoke at the Harmon Portrait Exhibit of Distinguished Negro Americans, Chicago Historical Society. These speaking appearances continued apace throughout the year. Of particular note is his commencement address, "On Becoming World Citizens," delivered on 28 May 1946 at the Thirty-Fifth Annual Commencement, Wisconsin High School of the University of Wisconsin.<sup>112</sup>

Locke's involvement in the arts was extensive. He served on the advisory board for Princeton Group Arts. On 4 October 1946, at the First Annual Conference of the African Academy of Arts and Research in New York, Locke chaired the session on "Education and Culture." On 29 November 1946, Locke spoke on "New Outlook in Adult Education," at the Thirty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English in Atlantic City, New Jersey. In this frenzy of speaking engagements, Locke still found time to give to the Bahá'í community.

*Invitation to Speak at Green Acre:* Of course, Locke's name appears on the "Bahá'í Membership List, Washington, D.C. Electoral District for 1946 State and Province Elections (Corrected List)."<sup>113</sup> But, there are other positive indications that Locke may have been on his way back to an active Bahá'í life. On 3 February 1946, Locke was invited to give a course on "The Negro in American Life" at the Green Acre Bahá'í

Summer School during the week of July 15. The alternative of any week of Locke's choice between July 1 and August 31, was offered as well.<sup>114</sup> The organizers were clearly earnest in trying to secure Locke's acceptance.<sup>115</sup> His non-involvement with the Washington Bahá'í community notwithstanding, Locke was still sought after by Bahá'ís, from Shoghi Effendi in Haifa to New York, to Rhode Island, and to Maine.

*"Democracy in Human Relations"*: In thematic symmetry with his secular lectures on democracy and race relations, another bright moment in Locke's life as a Bahá'í took place in March or April 1946 during a visit to Rhode Island, where he lectured on "Democracy in Human Relations" at the Rhode Island School of Design. This event was jointly sponsored by Negro College Club and the Bahá'ís of Providence.<sup>116</sup> Locke's lecture was reported on as follows:

When Dr. Alain Locke was scheduled as a speaker for the Rhode Island School of Design's exhibition of Negro art, the Negro College Club and the Providence Bahá'ís held a joint meeting for which Dr. Locke talked on "Democracy in Human Relations" and spoke of being a Bahá'í. There were twenty non-Bahá'ís present in spite of bad weather. His talk was reported and the next Sunday's program was announced in both the Urban League Bulletin and the Providence *Chronicle*. As a result of this unsolicited publicity, the Sunday meeting for Mr. George Goodman, a Negro Bahá'í from Hartford, Connecticut, had a record attendance.<sup>117</sup>

Here was another public event at which Locke explicitly identified himself as a Bahá'í, as Louis Gregory had encouraged him to do all along. Given his firm belief in the efficacy of improving race relations through culture, how could Locke pass up an opportunity to speak at an exhibition of Negro art, especially in such a venue as the Rhode Island School of Design?

Locke was ever mindful of his mortality, especially because of his heart condition. In a letter dated 25 December 1946 to Cornelia Chapin, Locke made reference to his plans for depositing his papers and art collection at Howard University.<sup>118</sup> Perhaps this partly accounts for his bursts of activity, for each year could very well be his last.

*Cynical View of the White Man (1947)*: World War II ended, and so Locke was no longer needed as a champion of democracy—much like when his role as a Bahá'í race leader came to an end when the race-amity initiatives went into decline in 1936. Although he had a change of venues that enriched his professional experience, tensions between

idealism and realism saw realism (or perhaps cynicism) briefly take the upper hand.

In a letter dated 14 August 1947, Kallen wrote to Locke: “And I mean to continue in this spinozan affirmation of life till the day I die, counting you as one of the dear friends beside me, fighting the daily fight for freedom that never ends.”<sup>119</sup> Locke did not share Kallen’s optimism. In an unpublished note dated 26 March 1947, he wrote: “The best argument against there being a God is the white man who says God made him.”<sup>120</sup> This could be interpreted as a negative affirmation of his faith. The only Bahá’í information we have on Locke during this year is, as usual, the membership list. His name is duly listed on the “D.C. Bahá’í Membership List, D.C. Electoral District for 1947 State and Province Elections.”<sup>121</sup>

*New School for Social Research:* On 14 March 1946, Horace Kallen extended Locke an invitation: “By vote of the Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science [New School for Social Research], I have been authorized to invite you to serve as Visiting Professor in the Graduate Faculty in the Department of Philosophy and Psychology for the Spring term 1947.”<sup>122</sup> The courses Kallen encouraged Locke to teach were “an open course in Social Philosophy, with special reference to minority problems, a graduate course in The Philosophy of the Arts, and a seminar in the Theory of Value.”<sup>123</sup> In a previous letter, Kallen said that “the salary would be from about \$2,000 to \$2500.”<sup>124</sup>

*Private Disclosures (1948-1949):* From 1948-1952, Locke taught concurrently at both the City College of New York and Howard University. Harlem was such a powerful cultural magnet that it would draw Locke to it practically every weekend. Indeed, he would typically leave for New York after fulfilling his teaching responsibilities at Howard, and this was his habit during each academic year. It is obvious that Locke was simply unavailable to his local Bahá’í community most weekends and summers. His time was now more constrained than ever, notwithstanding his growing disinclination to remain an active Bahá’í. However there was another, far more personal, issue that must be factored into an analysis of Locke’s relationship to the Bahá’í Faith.

As with some previous years—what one might call “gaps” in the narrative—the years 1948-1949 are absolute ciphers in Locke’s Bahá’í life. Apart from membership lists, there are no records of Locke having

had any meaningful connection with the Bahá'í community during this period of time. Again, as usual, Locke remained on the “Bahá'í Membership List: 1948 State Election, Washington, D.C. Electoral District.”<sup>125</sup> The next year would be the same: Locke is a “paper” Bahá'í, appearing on list of Bahá'í eligible voters, 6 April 1949<sup>126</sup> as well as on the “Bahá'í Membership List: 1949 State Election, Washington, D.C. Electoral District.”<sup>127</sup>

Locke publicly maintained a Christian paradigm of religion and yet, while never openly espousing his Bahá'í affiliation except on rare occasions, had moved a considerable distance away from orthodox Christian ideas. On a pensive Christmas day, Locke wrote: “I am sorry, but all my mind and temperament allow me for prayer is a Hail to the Source of Life and a bow to the Inscrutable.”<sup>128</sup> This did not mean that Locke's religious beliefs were diffuse or without form. Although the depth of his knowledge of the Bahá'í teachings is difficult to assess, the idea of “the Inscrutable” as God is far closer to the Bahá'í concept of God as “the Unknowable” than is the Christian “heavenly Father.” One must also remember that Locke knew that he could die at any time. In fact, he was in a twilight period, close to the end of his life.

Locke was planning to write an autobiography, evidently at the suggestion of friends and admirers. In a note dated 1 October 1949 and titled, “Auto-Biog,” Locke jotted down this reminder: “Mrs. Isaacs: You must write your memoirs.” This is direct evidence that individuals close to Locke urged him to write his autobiography for posterity. And that was a good idea. But the problem with an autobiography is that, to be authentic, it would have to reveal some intimate details of the author's personal life.

“*Achilles Heel of Homosexuality*”: It is well known that Alain Locke was homosexual. Leonard Harris refers to this as an “open secret.”<sup>129</sup> While direct evidence from Locke himself is scarce, an important self-disclosure is found in an archival note dated 1 October 1949, superscripted “Auto-Biog.” According to Harris's transcription of it, Locke wrote: “Three minorities—Had I been born in ancient Greece I would have escaped the first [homophobia]; In Europe, I would have been spared the second [racism]; In Japan I would have been above rather than below average [in height].”<sup>130</sup>

Searching the Alain Locke Papers at Howard University in June 2000, I encountered this same note. Harris's reading is entirely accu-

rate. However, some marginalia should be considered. Above the word “escaped,” Locke wrote “the \_\_\_\_\_ of,” which might have meant, “the stigma of” homosexuality. Moreover, over the line “the first, In Europe, I,” Locke inserted: “the weight + [illegible] of inferiority”—again, indicating racism. Locke added: “This I sensed intuitively soon early years.”<sup>131</sup> That a stigma attached to being homosexual was simply a social fact then (and still is today, although to a far lesser degree). His direct juxtaposition of the first two stigmas shows that Locke viewed homophobia in much the same constructivist terms as he saw racism: as an equivalent social construct, and equally reprehensible.

In interpreting this autobiographical text, one cannot draw the conclusion that Locke himself regarded his sexual orientation as inherently evil or something to be ashamed of. But it did conflict with Bahá’í values as well as with the social norms of the time. There was never a reconciliation between Locke’s homosexual private life and his Bahá’í identity. The two stood in unresolved tension, necessarily compartmentalized and insulated from one another. Locke’s homosexuality may have accounted for some of the considerable lapses in his active involvement as a Bahá’í.

That Locke exercised care in keeping his homosexuality discreet is one thing. That archivists and historians have done so as well raises fundamental academic concerns. According to Leonard Harris, Michael R. Winston, former head of the Moorland-Spingarn Library, “removed from scholarly access letters that explicitly discussed or alluded to Locke’s sexual life.”<sup>132</sup> Winston “told a curator, on her first day of work, to remove from the Locke papers all letters that discussed or alluded to homosexuality and give them to him.”<sup>133</sup> Harris adds: “It is rumored that such letters were progressively returned to the archives.”<sup>134</sup> Whatever the case, I discovered another autobiographical note that directly addresses the issue of Locke’s homosexuality—a document that appears to have eluded scholars until now. Dated 10 June 1948, Locke wrote:

My wise and loving Mother dipped me as a very young child in the magic waters of cold cynicism and haughty distrust and disdain of public opinion and this with satisfaction of an almost [illegible] child. However the all too vulnerable/invulnerable Achilles heel of homosexuality— [reverse of page] which she may have suspected was there, both for her sake and [for] my own safety, I kept in an armoured shell [?] of reserve and haughty caution. I realize that to bask in the sunshine of public favor, I would have to bathe in the dangerous fatal pool of publicity—. <sup>135</sup>

Disdain of public opinion notwithstanding, the risk of social stigma is that it can ignite adverse publicity and scandalize its victim. Thus we may take Locke's last statement: "the fatal pool of publicity," on its face. Locke was, after all, a public intellectual. To have openly disclosed his orientation would have ruined his career. Locke could scarcely afford to risk such adverse publicity. Harris makes this point quite clear:

Locke's choice of veiling during and prior to the [Harlem] renaissance was one among several reasonable options in a homophobic and racist world. Locke's mother once advised him to be careful because the "vice control," Howard University's administration, fired Montgomery Gregory from Howard's theatre teaching staff because he was seen leaving a "lurid" establishment frequented by homosexuals. Arguably, the lesson was not lost on Locke: veil or lose a complete intellectual and social world, not to mention the possibility of torture, lynching, or death.<sup>136</sup>

Although today he enjoys a certain iconic notoriety in the gay community, the question is open as to whether Locke wished to be remembered and valued in this way. Locke certainly did not want his private sex life to be made public during his lifetime. Perhaps the more interesting and controversial question is whether today, some fifty years later, Locke would have preferred to "unveil" himself or to keep his sexual life private.

Even so, it is reasonable to assume from the foregoing passage that Locke regarded his sexual orientation, at the time at least, as a social liability that could all too easily burst into negative publicity. Nor is it dogmatic to say that Locke's homosexuality did not accord with Bahá'í principles of morality. As a lifestyle, homosexuality stands in conflict with received Bahá'í values, both then and now. Sexual activity, by Bahá'í standards, is forbidden outside of marriage, whether heterosexual or homosexual.<sup>137</sup>

Bahá'í law, in terms of the moral standards it embodies and mental discipline it inculcates, has however been promulgated and applied gradually. This was certainly the case in terms of the American Bahá'í community, of which Locke was a prominent member. Precisely how much Locke knew about Bahá'í standards of sexual conduct is far from clear. It certainly would be anachronistic to adduce later official pronouncements on the issue to characterize what would have been considered normative within the Bahá'í community sixty or seventy years

ago.<sup>138</sup> In any case, Locke almost certainly never discussed or hinted at his sexual orientation in his personal interactions with Bahá'ís—and not with many others either. Thus Locke's homosexuality would go to his grave as a well-kept but “open” secret.

Jackson Armstrong-Ingram (1954-2004) has offered this interpretation of Locke's autobiographical statement:

Locke's use of classical imagery here is interesting particularly as he has stated that in the ancient world his homosexuality would not have relegated him to a 'minority' clearly indicating (with the following race reference also) that he regards any “minority” status he occupies as socially constructed not inherent in him. He asserts his independence from, even disdain for, the opinions of the modern world and equates his homosexuality with Achilles' heel. Yet it is not simply a point of weakness in an otherwise invulnerable body, like Achilles'. His homosexuality is his “vulnerable/invulnerable” point. It has been a source of both risk AND strength in dealing with the world.<sup>139</sup>

Armstrong-Ingram adds that Locke's autobiographical note “suggests a strongly positive attitude toward his sexuality.” Either way, Locke's orientation is simply a fact of his life, a facet of his personality that history ought not to obscure. The problem for the biographer is to assess how important this fact of Locke's homosexuality is. To what extent does it serve as a key to interpreting Locke's thought? Surely, Locke's homosexuality ought not diminish his greatness, whether as a “race man” or as a Bahá'í. For some, of course, Locke's homosexuality is an indispensable heuristic in properly understanding and appreciating his universalism.

Consonant with this interpretation is Harris's estimate: “How is it possible to honor Locke, that is, exalt him because of his intrinsic qualities, virtues of character—his courage? How can we love and respect him as an aesthete, friend, philosopher, pragmatist, American, African American, and homosexual?”<sup>140</sup> Harris answers this rhetorical question by saying: “One way it is possible, I think, to progressively surmount the vagaries of prejudice is through philosophies born of struggle to overcome oppression.”<sup>141</sup> That is, we can best honor Locke by carrying forward his philosophy.

*Louis Gregory's Appeal to Locke:* For three years in a row, it appears that Locke had practically vanished from the sight of Bahá'ís. Locke was an “isolated believer” because he had isolated himself.

Whether fully active in the Bahá'í community or inactive, Locke had never fully identified himself publicly—nationally—with the Bahá'í Faith. This is why Louis Gregory wrote Locke—with an appeal to accept a role as a public Bahá'í, to become a nationally known adherent, and to use his fame and prestige for that purpose:

Phone Kittery 1009-M  
Louis G. Gregory  
Little Akka  
Eliot, Maine  
6 April 1949

Dr. Alaine [sic] Locke  
Howard University  
Washington D.C.

My well beloved Brother:

My thoughts which have followed with appreciation and admiration your career for well nigh forty years are now intimately drawn to you by two notations, one of which is current: The Bahá'í News contains, among questions, the following: "What eminent Negro Bahá'í visited and wrote about Haifa?" The other is the dedication to me of that highly prized volume, "The Story of Philosophy," which follows: "To my dear friend and brother, Louis Gregory, with Bahá'í love. —Alaine [sic] Locke / Nov. 10, 1928."

Although your Bahá'í spirit has been admirably shown by so many traits and activities, yet I have the deepest longing that you will see the wisdom of wholly identifying yourself with the Faith, thereby increasing both your joys and usefulness, perhaps twenty-fold.

All the great events happening in a world-wide regeneration will take a longer time. But both are the promises of God Who alone knows His whole creation and by the appearance of His Manifestation [Bahá'u'lláh] makes His Plan known.

How I long to talk with you, but after forty years my travels are well nigh over. I am nearly 75. In my eagerness to share the knowledge discovered, I have been through all the States save the Dakotas and into ten other countries in two Hemispheres. Mrs. Gregory likewise through her knowledge of foreign tongues has carried the Message to various European countries. Jim crow cars, busses, poverty, hardships, privations, calumnies have been our lot, all of which by [missing rest of letter].

[On p. 1:] P.S. Another friend whom you will find very congenial is a Persian, Mr. Ala'i. The secretary is Miss Hopper, 2220 20th St. Wash. D.C.<sup>142</sup>

This is a particularly moving appeal. It reveals a great deal about Gregory himself, and of his life of total dedication to the one value

system that he hoped would bring healing to the races, religions, and nations of the world.

*A New Americanism (1950)*: In October 1994, Robert Stockman interviewed Elsie Austin (d. 2004), a prominent African American Bahá'í, about Alain Locke. This is the substance of her personal memories of Locke:

I finally was able to reach Elsie Austin on Friday night; she is a very busy woman, at age 86 or so! She is the only living person I know of who knew Alain Locke. Elsie is quite sure he was a Bahá'í, mostly because he went on pilgrimage and wrote about it, something we already knew. She said he spoke at many race unity conferences, which I knew already. Whether he left the Faith later in his life she did not know. She said the [19]50s were a time when there was relatively little commitment to race unity in the American Bahá'í community, and consequently many Black Bahá'ís were discouraged.<sup>143</sup>

If “many Black Bahá'ís were discouraged” over the relative lack of priority given to race relations within the Bahá'í community during the 1950s, as Elsie Austin claims, then surely Alain Locke was among them. Locke was one of 77 members of the Washington Bahá'í community in 1950, according to the “State or Electoral District Voting List—1950: Washington—District of Columbia.”<sup>144</sup> No other Bahá'í records have been found of Locke's Bahá'í activities for this year.

Whether due to health problems or other reasons, Locke's general level of activity seems to have suffered entropy. Locke's speaking engagements were considerably fewer than in previous years. On 4 May 1950, for instance, we know that Locke spoke in Andrew Rankin Chapel on the Howard University campus, on the occasion of the Initiation Ceremonies of the Alpha Delta Chapter of Pi Beta Lambda Society. In the summer, Locke left for Salzburg, presumably for heart treatments.<sup>145</sup> Later that fall, he presided as chair of panel on “Literature and Art” at the Washington Humanities Club on 14 November 1950, at the Whittall Pavilion, Library of Congress. This is a markedly diminished level of activity overall.

What is most significant about this year is the title of a lecture Locke gave at the November 8 meeting of the Philosophy Club, held in the faculty lounge of Douglass Hall on the Howard University campus. The meeting was sponsored by the Department of Philosophy. Locke lectured on “Cultural Pluralism: A New Americanism.” In itself, this

event was comparatively insignificant. Probably just a handful of students and faculty attended. But the title of this lecture seems to say it all, expressing the very essence of Locke's personal philosophy.

The Harlem Renaissance was history. Although this grand episode had immortalized Locke's name in the annals of American history, the New Negro movement, of which he was the primary spokesman, was now little more than an artifact, a cultural icon. Locke's subsequent role was that of a cultural pluralist. Locke opposed "pluralism" to "absolutism"—following the lead of American pragmatist philosophers, from Charles Peirce onward. Kallen started the movement, largely as a way to accommodate Judaism within American society, but Locke gave voice to cultural pluralism in a slightly but significantly different fashion, applying it to the ethnic and racial diversity in America. Cultural pluralism was thus an extension of Locke's theory of values. One could even go so far as to say that cultural pluralism was Locke's secular faith. "Cultural pluralism" was the secular counterpart of the Bahá'í principle of "unity in diversity" which, in his *Bahá'í World* essay, Locke called "unity through diversity"—a more dynamic way of communicating the same principle. To call cultural pluralism "A New Americanism" was another stroke of genius. And while the cultural pluralist movement was more loosely configured, and never succeeded in capturing the popular imagination, its essentials are still being kept alive by American philosophers. To this day, cultural pluralism remains "A New Americanism."

*Gregory's Last Appeal to Locke:* In the last year before his passing, Louis Gregory tried one last time to encourage Locke to fully identify himself with the Faith, and to lend his time, talent, and prestige to it.

Locke's status as a Bahá'í remained as it had been for the past decade or so: Alain Locke's name appears on the "State or Electoral District Voting List—1951: Washington—District of Columbia."<sup>146</sup> This is the last year for which a record of Locke's membership in the Washington, D.C. Bahá'í community exists. Some notable Bahá'ís on that list include Elsie Austin, Jamshed Fozdar, and Charles Mason Remey. There were 83 voters in the District. But, as with this and similar Bahá'í voting lists, not everyone listed was an active Bahá'í. (In fact, the number listed as "not voting" was 39, close to half of the eligible members of that list.) Such was probably the case with Locke at this time. Gregory had been painfully aware of this for years. In a

letter dated 21 January 1951, he writes:

My noble Brother:

I turn with heart and mind with admiration to you for your great accomplishments and services to humanity; but especially as I recall your services to the Plan of God to unite and guide a troubled world, my longing is, that you identify yourself fully with it. May I ask that you go deeply, carefully, and prayerfully into the Teachings and as never before, ask God about it through the medium of prayer? It is too tremendous a reality to be grasped by mind alone, however brilliant, but the Holy Spirit must illumine the heart, to make one's assurance doubly sure. As fine as your work has hitherto been, your power to aid mankind will be increased a hundred fold. Spiritual joys are unimaginable and indescribable. My most earnest hope is that you will see clearly the way to unite with the Baha'is in either Washington or New York, in the latter of which, I am told, you maintain a residence.

My discovery of the New Revelation harks back to 1908 in Washington where I then lived. The sacrificial devotion of two southern white friends, held my attention, until under their tutelage, I could make a very thorough investigation of the great Truth. This in part consisted of a journey to the Orient to meet 'Abdu'l-Baha. Living in a city where great men abound, I yet found Him greater than all others put together. Although over many years I have abandoned so much of what are considered the wealth, honors and even comforts of life to serve, yet now I feel that what I may have done for God, is infinitesimally small in contrast to what He has done for me.

My hope is that you will also partake of this great favor. The outpouring of the Spirit of God makes all things new, and creates immortality without death. It may make us conscious of worlds beyond as clearly as of this world of change.

If I can in any way serve you, please count me

Your willing servant

Louis G. Gregory<sup>147</sup>

Locke had little time to respond, for Louis Gregory passed away on 30 July 1951. One might say that this was an important death-bed wish for Gregory. There is evidence to suggest that Locke did, after all, respond to Louis Gregory's appeal in at least two significant ways: (1) an article published in *Ebony* magazine; and (2) a Bahá'í "fireside" in Toronto. One could say, perhaps, that Louis Gregory's appeal was successful in the end.

*Ebony Magazine (1952)*: Locke was approaching the end of his life, and he probably knew it. Although at the height of his cognitive powers, Locke's heart condition was worsening. In a letter dated 30 June 1952, Horace Kallen referred Locke to Dr. Joseph Wolffe of the Valley Forge Heart Hospital and Research Institute.<sup>148</sup> Locke would at last find a

physician in whom he had absolute trust and confidence. Although he had written at least three wills, indicative of Locke's acute sense of mortality is the fact that he established a scholarship fund in his name. On 12 June, 1952, the Epsilon Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma held "The First Annual Benefit of The Alain Locke Scholarship Fund."

In a letter dated 24 June to Kallen, Locke refers to the commencement at Howard University that took place on May 13, which was "certainly the most significant in all my forty [years] here." The commencement speech was given by President Harry S. Truman, which Locke praised as an "excellent civil rights speech." Not the least significant occurrence at this event was what Locke referred to as "incidentally my official emeritus exit." On May 14, the very next day, Locke suffered another episode of heart trouble, which confined him to his home in Washington, D.C.:

I came down with another recurrence of the heart trouble next day, with confinement to the apartment and constant medical attention since. Just out from under to the extent of being able to do a few things other than trade complete inaction for slowly reduced blood pressures and heart beats [sic]. The old enemy has been in the saddle off and on since January first, which accounts for my not having seen you.<sup>149</sup>

His heart trouble notwithstanding, Locke says that "the year has been happy nevertheless in many ways." That the students at Howard University had "dedicated the class year book to me" must have been personally rewarding. The dedication was as follows:

Through the years you have brought to the Negro youth of Howard University the inspiration that can come only from a great and brilliant teacher . . . . Through your personal achievements in scholarship you have proved that genius is sufficient to surmount all barriers of race and color. Because of your eminence as a scholar, philosopher, and teacher, we . . . proudly dedicate this . . . effort to you.<sup>150</sup>

Although this was his official exit from Howard, Locke states his intention to stay for a little longer: "I actually will hang on the rolls for another year but nominally in order to qualify for social security benefits, which it seems I'll need if I am to have additional expenses of continuous medical care." As though he had forgotten what he had previously written, Locke goes into more detail about his medical condition in a subsequent letter to Kallen. This time, the letter, dated

30 July 1952, was written from Fort Valley Heart Hospital in Fairview Village, Pennsylvania:

Just after commencement, my condition became near critical, and nothing several physicians could do would bring my pulse rate much below 130. I was beginning to have to sleep sitting up in a chair, and the least effort was an ordeal. Of course, my main anxiety, since I had always anticipated a quick end with a heart attack, was how on retirement income to afford a wheel chair and attendant.<sup>151</sup>

Locke also discloses that he had suffered from hyperthyroidism. His attending physician Dr. Wolffe managed to cut his thyroid activity and metabolic rate nearly in half and bring his heart rate down to around 90 and occasionally lower. The good doctor inspired such optimism, such a “psychological transformation” in Locke that he “calmly and confidently” contemplated “ten or so years or so of leisurely writing, lecturing and travel.”

*Fireside in Toronto*: Louis Gregory’s last letter, combined with his failing health, must have had an impact on Locke’s thinking as a Bahá’í. Locke’s last-known speaking engagement at a Bahá’í-sponsored event came to light when Michael Rochester, former member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Canada and Professor Emeritus of Mathematical Physics at Memorial University of Newfoundland, sent me the following e-mail message:

Dear Christopher Buck,

I have just scanned your article on Alain Locke in the just-arrived Bahá’í Studies Review v. 10, and look forward to reading it more thoroughly. But I noticed, and was intrigued by, your description of his withdrawal, at least for a decade or so in the latter part of his life, from “active involvement in” the Bahá’í community, and his having later “publicly identified himself as a Bahá’í . . . as late as 1952.”

A personal recollection of Alain Locke near the end of his life may be of interest to you.

Having been strongly attracted to the Bahá’í teachings in November 1951, as a student at the University of Toronto, I vividly remember attending a fireside held in January or February 1952, in a home in what was then a suburb of Toronto, at which Alain Locke was the speaker. Unfortunately Elizabeth Manser (later my wife) who organized that fireside, no longer remembers how Dr. Locke came to be in Toronto, to be invited to the fireside or the title of his talk. His persona made a great impression on me, not only because what I understood of the Bahá’í stand on the oneness of the human race and the importance of efforts to free ourselves from racial prejudice

was immensely attractive to me, but because his modest demeanour, and the wisdom and thoughtfulness with which he expressed himself, were so consonant with what I had already come to appreciate in and expect from the best Bahá'í speakers. He certainly clearly identified himself—indeed was introduced—as a Bahá'í to all of us there, Bahá'ís and seekers.

I spoke with him briefly after his talk, but sadly no memory now remains of what we talked about. I do remember how excited I was, a few months later, to find an article by him in a Random House anthology of American Negro literature. It was not until a few years later (after his death), when my wife and I acquired all the earlier Bahá'í World volumes, that I discovered and relished his articles there. I have always felt privileged to have met and talked with this great but too-little-remembered figure in American intellectual history, this wise and fine Bahá'í.

With best wishes,  
Michael Rochester<sup>152</sup>

A Bahá'í fireside is an informational meeting intended to introduce new people to the Bahá'í teachings. Elizabeth distinctly remembers that Locke spoke at her fireside on Sunday, 23 March 1952, because it was her birthday. From 1949-1953, Elizabeth, together with her mother Jessie Harkness Manser, hosted very successful firesides in their apartment in Forest Hill Village, where they had lived since 1940. Neither Michael nor Elizabeth can recall just how she and her mother discovered that Locke was (or would be) in Canada, or how they contacted Locke to invite him to give that fireside. As late as 1952, therefore, we have evidence that Locke continued to identify himself as a Bahá'í.

Almost all of Locke's Bahá'í speaking engagements that we have been able to chronicle were highly visible, public events. In this case, Locke spoke at a private fireside—one that was by invitation only and, most likely, not publicized. This episode shows that Locke was willing to participate in private as well as public Bahá'í events and may suggest that he did this on other occasions that we have no record of. Perhaps the greatest significance this new information holds is that it dispels the notion held by some authorities that late in life Locke was a “freethinker,” uncommitted to any religion. It can now be argued, based on this fresh evidence, that Locke remained a Bahá'í until the end of his life.

*Article in Ebony Magazine:* Locke certainly had ample opportunity in his professional life to refer to his religious affiliation. So far as we know, he never did so. When Locke did publicly identify himself as a Bahá'í, it was in the context of Bahá'í-sponsored events. Only a relatively few people were present to hear Locke make such a testimonials

of faith. So that type of public statement was a relatively “safe” one to make.

Locke’s four essays published in several volumes of *The Bahá’í World* were also public declarations of his faith as a Bahá’í. *The Bahá’í World* was a public record and an international publication. However, this was a public association—not necessarily full identification—with the Bahá’í Faith. The competent reader would presume that Locke was writing as a Bahá’í, but it was not absolutely clear.

While Locke opted for the indirect method of teaching, Bahá’ís were at liberty to capitalize on Locke’s prestige both before and after his death in 1954. In October 1952, *Ebony* magazine published an article, “Bahá’í Faith: Only church in world that does not discriminate.”<sup>153</sup> On the first page of the article, it featured a photograph of Alain Locke alongside that of Robert Abbott, publisher of the *Chicago Defender*. The caption under Abbott states that he was the most famous African American Bahá’í. The caption beneath Locke’s photograph, interestingly enough, reads: “Alain Locke, Howard professor, joined movement in 1915, wrote for the *Baha’i Magazine*.” Especially because he kept a copy of this article on file, the presumption must be that Locke consented to the use of his photograph in the article. (Robert Abbott had died years earlier.)

At last, the name and fame of Alain Locke was publicly identified with the Bahá’í Faith. This would have made Louis Gregory very happy indeed. This, combined with the *Ebony* article itself and the national exposure that went along with it, signals Locke’s journey from estrangement to reconciliation with his Bahá’í community and personal identification with the Bahá’í Faith.

*Locke’s Last Active Year (1953)*: In a letter dated 18 February 1953 to Horace Kallen, Locke reports a clean bill of health: “A recent check up with Dr. Wolfee [sic] was favorable.”<sup>154</sup> That prognosis would not be favorable for long. That would be Locke’s last active year as a public intellectual.

Locke was awarded an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters upon his retirement on 5 June 1953. In his acceptance speech, which was also his parting speech, Locke referred to “these forty-one years of close professional and personal association.” Reflecting on a family tradition of education practiced by his parents and his grandfather Ishmael Locke, Locke noted that “teaching is a family calling.”

Locke said:

In coming to Howard in 1912, I was fortunate, I think, in bringing a philosophy of the market place not of the cloister. For, however much a luxury philosophy may be in our general American culture, for a minority situation and a trained minority leadership, it is a crucial necessity. This, because free, independent and unimposed thinking is the root source of all other emancipations. . . . A minority is only safe and sound in terms of its social intelligence.”<sup>155</sup>

In reference to the pending Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, Topeka, Kansas (decided in 1954), Locke commented that, “now that educational and other forms of official segregation are facing the Supreme Court[,] what we hope is their final judicial doomsday, that such special emphasis can and should lapse along with the situations of enforced separatism, and then be merged in one overall program of progressive and democratic social education.”<sup>156</sup> Although Locke did not live to see it, this was his prediction: “Even should this crucial legal turning point be further postponed, it is only too evident that in American race relations a new age of progressive integration is well upon us.”<sup>157</sup>

In reflecting on his involvement in the New Negro movement, and what it represented, Locke said:

When I began my teaching career, forty years back, in matters racial a sorry age of appeal and appeasement was just coming to an end. There was slowly beginning the era of the New Negro, in which it was a joy and privilege to participate. That phase we can now see as an important and inevitable age of transition, although at the time it seemed decidedly millennial. It was an age of racialist self-assertion and protest, involving much needed recovery of self respect and compensative self reliance. Fortunately, with a few exceptions like Garveyism, this inevitable period of self-assertion did not lead the Negro into a dead end of racial chauvinism and an impasse of voluntary separatism.”<sup>158</sup>

He then quoted a passage from his immortal manifesto in *The New Negro*, prefacing the citation: “For the record, may I now quote how it seemed from a philosopher’s viewpoint twenty-seven years ago.” That passage states, in part:

The Negro mind reaches out as yet to nothing but American wants, American ideas. But this forced attempt to build his Americanism on race values is a unique social experiment, and its ultimate success is impossible except through the fullest sharing of American cultures and institutions. . . . Democracy itself

is obstructed and stagnated to the extent that any of its channels are closed. . . . So the choice is not between one way for the Negro and another way for the rest, but between American institutions frustrated on the one hand and American ideals progressively fulfilled and realized on the other.”<sup>159</sup>

Despite his own criticism of the movement (described above as a “unique social experiment”) some years ago, Locke could now look back and appreciate, at aesthetic and social distance, “the logic of the intervening social development.” He added: “In taking his case and cause consistently on the basic values and ideals of the American culture, the Negro strategy and tactic has been signally vindicated.”<sup>160</sup> Locke himself was a prominent symbol of African American self-respect, and he succeeded in gaining the respect of that segment of white America that knew about him. Locke is now an American icon.

But instead of looking back, in his twilight years Locke looked forward:

Somewhat swiftly and courageously, however, the strategies of protest and racist compensation must be changed over to new ones of ready collaboration and positive acceptance of common causes. As Dr. Bunche so forcefully pointed out in his Phi Beta Kappa address here recently, we must stand ready to liquidate promptly and cheerfully all our vested interests in a segregated social order, and willingly renounce and reconstruct the separate church, the separate school, and whatever else was once a justifiable countershield against discrimination and ostracism. Nor should we assume the gradualism which on the other side has drawn our constant and vehement criticism. If the age of integration is on us,—and it seems to be, the time is now, without hesitation or regret. We must now face a new era reasonably free from self-contradiction, and in obvious harmony with the basic principles or which we have so long appealed. Although a comparatively sudden change, and one of course not fully established, this is the present challenge.<sup>161</sup>

Locke closed his speech with these moving words: “One who is old must pause for a blinking moment, and then hasten to salute the fortunate generation that stands on the threshold of such new opportunities. Nor is it envy that prompts a sobering reminder that these very fresh enlargements of life bring reciprocally new and arduous responsibilities. It is good to have lived to see even this much realization of the rich potentials of American democracy.”<sup>162</sup> Throughout his life, Locke presented the race problem as fundamentally a question of democracy. Indeed, race is the litmus test of the integrity of any democracy.

In July, Locke moved to New York (Harlem), which was really

his second home and his first love. According to critic Steve Watson, Locke's "wispy figure could be seen briskly strolling through Harlem in perfectly tailored suits, with a tightly wound umbrella as his stick (and in later years as a form of protection), delivering erudite pronouncements in high pitched rapid-fire sentences."<sup>163</sup>

*Centenary of Universal Religion:* In advance preparation for the event, Locke was invited to submit ideas for the "Centenary of Universal Religion."<sup>164</sup> This was the commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of Bahá'u'lláh's mystic experience of prophetic mission. In 1952, he was sent a press release issued by Nina Matthisen, Secretary of the Bahá'í Centenary News Service, announcing the special observance on 16 October 1952. This international event was marked by a series of four international conferences: Kampala, Uganda (February 1953); Wilmette, Illinois (May 1953), Stockholm (July 1953); and New Delhi (October 1953). The Bahá'í House of Worship was formally dedicated at the Wilmette event. It is not known whether Locke contributed in any way to this event. Furthermore, there is no record of his involvement with the New York Bahá'í community at this late stage in his life.

*Not Without Honor in His Own Country:* Locke lived on 12 Grove Street in New York. Not much is known of his activities at this time. One can surmise that Locke's heart condition was seriously deteriorating. He did review Ralph Barton Perry's *The Realms of Value*<sup>165</sup> and published a couple of other minor pieces. While Locke himself had hoped that his career as a scholar was not at an end, it was. Up until the end, Locke had been working on a project that was ultimately left unfinished. After his death, colleague Margaret Just Butcher published *The Negro in American Culture* (1956).<sup>166</sup> However, although based on his materials, it was not a genuine reflection of Locke's approach to culture.

*Bahá'í Prayers at Funeral:* Locke died on 9 June 1954, in Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. According to one obituary (found in the Alain Locke Papers!), Locke "died after a six-week illness." On June 11 at Bent's Chapel, Brooklyn, Locke's memorial was presided over by Channing Tobias, with cremation following at Fresh Pond Crematory in Little Village, Long Island.<sup>167</sup> Arthur Huff Fauset assumed the responsibilities of making all the necessary arrangements.

From a will that Locke wrote on 1 April 1943, it appears that Fauset had a “half-interest” in Locke’s properties at 2324 North Nineteenth Street, Philadelphia, as well as the apartment house on 1921 Diamond Street and the house on 1611 Pine Street—all in Philadelphia. Fauset’s address is given as 1611 Pine.<sup>168</sup> The brief notice that appeared in the *Baha’i News*<sup>169</sup> states that: “Quotations from the Baha’i Writings and Baha’i Prayers were read at Dr. Locke’s funeral.”

Orations in honor of Locke were given by William Stanley Braithwaite, Ralph Bunche, C. Glenn Carrington, W. E. B. Du Bois, Benjamin Karpman, Yervant Krikorian, William Stuart Nelson.<sup>170</sup> “His contributions,” remarked Karpman, “go beyond race; they belong to all humanity. . . . He had all but emancipated himself from the consciousness of color. . . . In his presence, one did not feel that he was speaking to a Negro or to a particular human known as American, but to an urbane cosmopolitan.” Of the difference he made in this world, Karpman said of Locke that “his influence has penetrated millions of human souls,” explaining that:

He gave the Negro an individuality to a greater degree than the race had ever known before. He gave him reasons to dream, visions that could be attained; he gave him a sense of belonging, a cause to struggle for. More than anyone else, he contributed to removing from the Negro the stigma of inferiority and gave him a social and human dignity as Emerson and Thoreau a century before gave it to the American. He gave the Negro a consciousness of being a part of mankind in general, a partner in man’s creative progress. Many a Negro today walks with a straighter gait, holding his head high in any company, because of Alain Locke.<sup>171</sup>

After Locke’s death, the Alain Locke Memorial Committee was formed and William S. Braithwaite was authorized to write an official biography on Locke. Evidently, this biography never came to fruition. In an undated letter to Fauset, chair of the Alain Locke Memorial Committee, Horace Kallen wrote: “I cannot think of a writer better fitted by his knowledge, sympathetic understanding and literary skill to deal with this theme in its relation to the life-problems of the American Negro in the material and spiritual economy of our country.” Kallen added this claim to his tribute to Locke: “What Booker T. Washington had been to the Negro and the American idea in the field of material skills and material achievement, Alain Locke was in the field of the spirit.”<sup>172</sup>

What keener assessment of Locke's contribution to American history than these words written by Kallen on 19 November 1959: "I believe that the role of Alain Locke in turning the cultural attitudes of American Negroes in new and creative directions forms an important part of the cultural history of the United States with ongoing consequences."<sup>173</sup>

In 1955, Howard University received the estate of Alain Locke, whose personal art collection of 365 pieces became the core of the Gallery of Art's classical African Art Collection. On 1 December 1973, in the Alain Locke Symposium, sponsored by *The Harvard Advocate*, Nathan Higgins explained Locke's interest in African art, and why he attached such great significance to it:

But Locke's thinking had a special import and that was to serve the refinement of Afro-American culture. We can now understand why African art as such has a special meaning for Locke. Here, after all, was an art created out of the religious and community experiences of a non-white people that exhibited the discipline and purity of form that could be called classic. In every sense African art demonstrated the intrinsic value that was possible to derive from refined generalized experience. African art not only supported his theory, but it represented the promise for Afro-American art. He did not expect that Afro-American art should imitate African art; he did not expect that Afro-American art should imitate African form. But he hoped that the existence of African art would suggest to the black Americans the possibilities of their own expressions.<sup>174</sup>

Remaining at Howard University, the African Art Collection was a philanthropic, far-sighted gift from Locke that augmented his legacy.

*Conclusions:* The fact that Locke was a Bahá'í was not well known in the American Bahá'í community, which largely forgot about him after his passing. Over the past five decades, Locke has been of far greater importance outside the Bahá'í community than within it. This asymmetry of interest has also led to an information gap. Locke's Bahá'í identity was simply not recognized as a matter of historical fact. The documentation provided in this study, therefore, will put to rest the myth that Locke had never formally become a Bahá'í.

Proving Locke's Bahá'í identity is one thing; reconstructing his Bahá'í life is quite another. In so doing, one question that must be asked was whether or not Locke fully identified himself with the Bahá'í Faith. Apart from his Bahá'í essays, speeches and articles, Locke never once

mentioned the Bahá'í Faith in any of his books, articles, or lectures, let alone admit his affiliation with it. Because of his rather uneven relationship with the Washington, D.C. Bahá'í community, there is all the more reason to investigate Locke's Bahá'í life more deeply.

The most honest appraisal one can make is that Locke held to a true belief in Bahá'í principles, was fully committed to its race-amity agenda, and contributed several Bahá'í essays that were substantially more than mere editorials. Moreover, Locke was particularly active and effective at both national and international levels of the Bahá'í movement. For reasons that he did not disclose, Locke never testified to his faith in his professional life. For reasons that he certainly did disclose, Locke experienced a growing estrangement from the Washington, D.C. Bahá'í community. At last, he disassociated himself from that local community.

Yet, through high-level contacts, Locke maintained his Bahá'í connections. He made several significant contributions to his religion during this period of estrangement. Despite his estrangement, he had a later reconciliation. The brightest moments in Locke's public Bahá'í life were three: (1) the first Race Amity Conference, in which Locke presided as a session chair on 20 May 1921; (2) his presentation at the Racial Amity Convention in Harlem, 10 December 1932; and (3) his lecture, "Democracy in Human Relations" at the Rhode Island School of Design in 1946.

Locke's later "reconciliation" with the Faith resulted in his most widely publicized and highly visible identification with it. This was the October 1952 issue of *Ebony* magazine in which his photograph and the caption beneath it clearly and publicly identified him as a Bahá'í. At that point, nothing more could be asked of Locke, having openly and effectively lent his prestige to the Faith that resonated most closely with his philosophy of cultural pluralism.

## Notes

1. For the list of members, see Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 195.
2. Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 194-213.
3. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 213.
4. Locke to Mason, 29 February 1936, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-71, Folder 9 (February-May 1936), pp. 1-2.
5. Harris, *Philosophy of Alain Locke*, pp. 8, 10.
6. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," p. 122.

7. Harris, *Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 9.
8. Private memorandum, Alain Locke Papers (MSRC), cited by Winston, "Locke, Alain LeRoy," p. 402.
9. Winston, "Locke, Alain LeRoy," p. 404.
10. Harris, "Chronology," *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 297.
11. Stephen G. Hall, "Locke, Alain (1885-1954)," *W. E. B. Du Bois: An Encyclopedia*. Edited by Gerald Horne and Mary Young (Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 2001) p. 126.
12. Locke to Du Bois, 5 March 1935, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-26, Folder 8 (Du Bois, W. E. B.).
13. Ibid.
14. Alain Locke, "Values and Imperatives," in *American Philosophy, Today and Tomorrow*, ed. Sidney Hook and Horace M. Kallen (New York: Lee Furman, 1935) pp. 313-33. Reprint: Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1968. Leonard Harris selected this essay to be the first in his magnificent anthology, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, pp. 34-50.
15. Bahá'í Archives of Washington, D.C. Courtesy of Ms. Anita Chapman.
16. Ibid.
17. Until research for this book had begun in earnest, no scholar had produced conclusive data on Locke's formal acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith. Therefore a debt of gratitude is owed to Roger Dahl, archivist at the U.S. Bahá'í National Archives for bringing the definitive document to light.
18. Joseph F. Harley, III, secretary of the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Washington, D.C. Harley to Locke, 27 August 1935, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-176, Folder 13 (Bahá'í Faith). From the Washington, D.C. Bahá'í Archives.
19. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 204.
20. Ibid., p. 205.
21. Bahá'í Archives of Washington, D.C. Courtesy of Ms. Anita Chapman.
22. Locke to Holley, 18 April 1935, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-36, Folder 47 (Holley, Horace).
23. Robert Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America: Early Expansion, 1900-1912* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1995) p. 189.
24. Louise Boyle to Florence [Breed] Khan, 19 July 1935, NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.
25. Louise Boyle to Florence [Breed] Khan, 28 August 1935, NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.
26. Louise Boyle to Florence [Breed] Khan, 30 August 1935, NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.
27. Ibid.
28. Louise Boyle to Florence [Breed] Khan, 9 Sept. 1935, NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.
29. Morrison, *To Move the World*, p. 140. See Alain L. Locke, "Educator and Publicist," *Star of the West*, Vol. 22, no. 8 (November 1931) pp. 254-55. (Obituary of George William Cook, 1855-1931). Mariam Haney had solicited this obituary. Haney to Locke, 25 September 1931, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-33, Folder 49 ("Haney, Mariam").
30. Morrison, "To Move the World: Promoting Racial Amity, 1921-1927," p. 16, n. 30.

31. Locke to Gregory, 6 June 1931, Louis Gregory Papers, NBA.
32. Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 148-49; 164; 182.
33. Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Washington, D.C., untitled report, 1935, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-176, Folder 13 (Bahá'í Faith).
34. Bahá'í Archives of Washington, D.C. Courtesy of Ms. Anita Chapman. See also Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Washington, DC, untitled report, 1935.
35. Louise Boyle to Florence [Breed] Khan, 9 Sept. 1935, NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Locke to Cobb, 10 December 1935, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-21, Folder 16 (Cobb, Stanwood).
38. Official program, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-176, Folder 13 (Bahá'í Faith).
39. Louise Boyle to Florence [Breed] Khan, 7 Nov. 1935, NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*
42. Locke to Mason, 5 May 1936, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-71, Folder 9 (February-May 1936) p. 1.
43. Locke to Mason, 29 February 1936, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-71, Folder 9 (February-May 1936).
44. Locke to Mason, 30 Mar. 1936, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-71, Folder 9 (February-May 1936).
45. Locke to Mason, 22 April 1936, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-71, Folder 9 (February-May 1936) pp. 1-2.
46. "List of Believers—January 22, 1936." NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.
47. Alain Locke, "The Orientation of Hope," *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record*, Volume 5, 1932-1934 (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1936) pp. 527-28. Reprint (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980). Reprinted again in Locke, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, ed. by Leonard Harris (1989) pp. 129-32. Harris' reference on p. 129 n. should be emended to read, "Volume V, 1932-1934" (not "Volume IV, 1930-1932"). Original manuscript in Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-123, Folder 11 ("The Orientation of Hope." 1934 [typescript]).
48. "Voting List—Washington Bahá'í Community—1937." NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.
49. "List of Recognized Believers of the Washington Bahá'í Community, as approved by the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the City of Washington, D.C. January 1938." NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.
50. Locke to Kallen, 15 April 1935, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-42, Folder 15 (Kallen, Horace M.).
51. "List of Recognized Believers of Washington (D.C.) Bahá'í Community." NBA. Meeting annually from 1940 to 1968, these conferences were variously held at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Columbia, Harvard, the American Philosophical Society, University of Chicago, and Loyola University.
52. "Next week the colored citizens of Chicago will have [the] unusual opportunity to further the progressive momentum of this New Deal aid to the Negro cause.

The elections there involve the issue of the return to the only assured representation of the Negro in Congress of an experienced[,] loyal and efficient New Deal congressman, Mr. Mitchell, and the sending to Washington of one of the staunchest and best friends of the Negro cause that I have had the good fortune to know, T. V. Smith, candidate for the post of Illinois Congressman at large.” Although these two candidates were Democrats, Locke refers to himself, “Like you and other independents,” making it clear that Locke was neither a registered Republican nor Democrat.

53. In a letter dated 15 April 1935 to Horace Kallen, Locke wrote: “T. V. Smith is a person for whom I have not only admiration but affection.” Online: [http://www.jtsa.edu/research/ratner/archives/jtsrec/rg\\_05.shtml](http://www.jtsa.edu/research/ratner/archives/jtsrec/rg_05.shtml). Archives: Records of the Jewish Theological Seminary. See further: Fred Beuttler, *Organizing an American Conscience: The Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion, 1940-1968*, Doctoral Dissertation (University of Chicago, Department of History, 1995).

54. NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.

55. Louis G. Gregory and Curtis D. Kelsey, “Syllabus for Class in the Study of Race Unity[,] Green Acre, Eliot, Maine. August 5-10,” Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-176, Folder 13 (Bahá’í Faith).

56. Louis G. Gregory and Curtis D. Kelsey, “Syllabus for Class in the Study of Race Unity, p. 1.

57. *Freedom: A Concert in Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States* (1940). Compact-disc. New York: Bridge, 2002. This CD digitizes two monaural (not stereo) sound tape reels: analog, 7 1/2 ips, 2 track, mono. ; 10 in. + 1 program ( 12 p.). Catalogued as recording AFS 6092-6095, Archive of Folk Song at the Library of Congress.

58. Alain Locke, “Spirituals,” in *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke: A Selection of His Essays on Art and Culture*, ed. by Jeffrey C. Stewart (New York and London: Garland, 1983) p. 126. On the compact disc recording issued by Bridge Records, Locke’s lecture is eliminated entirely, except for his last sentence, “The quartet will close with ‘Travelin’ Shoes” (Track 7). But Locke’s introduction, “The Negro Spiritual,” is featured on Track Two (1:14). At least this commercial release makes available Locke’s voice, so that one may get a sense of the tonality of his lectures and what it was like to have witnessed his erudition and spiritual vision.

59. A photograph of Mrs. Roosevelt speaking with Locke and Peter Pollack, supervisor of community art centers of the Illinois Art Project is available on the Smithsonian Archives of American Art web site, along with a facsimile of the official program for the dedicatory dinner honoring “Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt” herself. Facsimile of the official program for the dedicatory dinner honoring Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt on 7 May 1941. From the papers of Peter Pollack. The Smithsonian Archives of American Art. Online: <http://www.archivesofamericanart.si.edu/exhibits/presidents/rooseveltpollackhtm.htm>. Accessed 11 August 2003.

60. Haney to Locke, 27 January 1941, MSRC, Box 164-33, Folder 49 (“Haney, Mariam”).

61. NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.

62. Locke to Haney, 30 March 1941, MSRC, Box 164-33, Folder 49 (“Haney, Mariam”).

63. Alain Locke, "Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy." In *Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion, Second Symposium*. New York: Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion, 1942. Reprint in Locke (1989) pp. 51-66.
64. According to Leonard Harris, the idea for this volume emerged from presentations at the American Council on Education Conference in Chicago the previous year. Publication of this book was made possible by a subvention by the Progressive Education Association. This anthology was international in scope, promoting interracial and ethnic contacts through intercultural rapport. Correspondence between the two is archived as the "Bernhard Stern/Alain Locke Collection, 1931-1955" in the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division of the New York Public Library (Sc MG 176- Box 1).
65. NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.
66. Alain Locke, Mordecai Johnson, Doxey Wilkerson, 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) pp. 3-12.
67. Johnson, "Is There a Basis for Spiritual Unity in the World Today?", 4.
68. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
72. News clipping, "Three Named to Music Unit Of Cultural Relations," *Washington Herald*, 18 January 1943, Moe Papers, American Philosophical Society. My thanks to Robert S. Cox, Keeper of Manuscripts.
73. Alain Locke, "The Negro Group." *Group Relations and Group Antagonisms*, ed. by Robert M. MacIver (New York: Institute for Religious Studies, 1943).
74. Alain Locke, *World View on Race and Democracy: A Study Guide in Human Group Relations* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1943).
75. Maurice Dartique to Henry Allen Moe, 21 May 1942, Moe Papers, American Philosophical Society. 76. Locke to Moe, 5 June 1943, Moe Papers, American Philosophical Society.
77. Locke to Moe, 30 July 1943 ("Report: Visit to Haiti, April 3rd-July 10, 1943," p. 2), Moe Papers, American Philosophical Society.
78. Alain Locke, "The Negro in the Three Americas," *Journal of Negro Education* Vol. 14 (Winter 1944) p. 18. Reprinted in Jeffrey C. Stewart, ed., *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke: A Selection of His Essays on Art and Culture* (New York and London: Garland, 1983) p. 469.
79. Locke to Moe, 30 July 1943 ("Report: Visit to Haiti, April 3rd-July 10, 1943," p. 2), Moe Papers, American Philosophical Society.
80. Alain Locke, *Le rôle du Negro dans la culture des Amerique* (Port-au-Prince: Haiti imprimerie de l'état, 1943).
81. Locke to Moe, 30 July 1943 ("Report: Visit to Haiti, April 3rd-July 10, 1943," p. 2, Moe Papers, American Philosophical Society.
82. Winston, "Locke, Alain LeRoy," p. 403.
83. Blackwell to Locke, 4 April 1943, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-14, Folder 16 (Blackwell, Elsworth and Ruth).
84. Gulick to Locke, 11 October 1943, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-33, Folder 17 (Gulick, Robert L. Jr.).
85. Juliet Thompson to Locke, Western Union Telegram, 21 October 1943, Alain

- Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-89, Folder 43 (Thompson, Juliet).
86. Text of report courtesy of Gayle Morrison, e-mail message, 8 July 2002. See also Morrison, *To Move the World*, pp. 285 and 362, n. 27, citing Louis Gregory, "The Historic Thirty-Sixth Convention," *Bahá'í News*, no. 170 (Sept. 1944) p. 7.
87. Juliet Thompson to Locke, 26 October 1943, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-89, Folder 43 (Thompson, Juliet).
88. See link at the Alain L. Locke Society <http://www.alainlocke.com/lockes%20essay.htm>.
89. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-105, Folder 33: (re: America's position in world affairs in relation to race. Speech over station KMYR, Denver. 6 August 1944, p. 6.
90. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-105, Folder 33: [re: America's position in world affairs in relation to race.] Speech over station KMYR, Denver. 6 August 1944, p. 7.
91. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-105, Folder 33: [re: America's position in world affairs in relation to race.] Speech over station KMYR, Denver. 6 August 1944, p. 8.
92. Sengstacke to Locke, 15 Nov. 1944, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164, (Abbott, Robert S.). On *Chicago Defender* letterhead.
93. [John Russell?], "Next Monday," *Town Hall*, Vol. 6, no. 30 (24 July 1944).
94. Gulick to Locke, 28 January 1944, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-33, Folder 17 (Gulick, Robert L. Jr.).
95. Gulick to Locke, "25" [February 1944], Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-33, Folder 17 (Gulick, Robert L. Jr.).
96. *Ibid.*
97. Shoghi Effendi to Locke, Western Union cablegram, 17 January 1944, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-12, Folder 3 (Bahá'í World); also, "References to Dr. Alain Locke in Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi," Attachment, The Universal House of Justice to Buck, 16 July 2001. See also Holley to Locke, 1 February 1944, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-36, Folder 47 (Holley, Horace); Paine to Locke, 3 February 1944; and Paine to Locke, 4 March 1944, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-12, Folder 3 (Bahá'í World). Original manuscript in Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-106, Folder 22.
98. Holley (NSA) to Locke, 1 February 1944, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-36, Folder 47 (Holley, Horace).
99. Paine to Locke, 3 February 1944, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-12, Folder 3 (Bahá'í World).
100. Paine to Locke, 4 March 1944, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-12, Folder 3 (Bahá'í World).
101. Alain Locke, "The Moral Imperatives for World Order," *Summary of Proceedings, Institute of International Relations, Mills College, Oakland, CA, June 18-28, 1944*, pp. 19-20. Reprinted in Leonard Harris, ed., *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, pp. 143, 151-152.
102. Harris, ed., *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 152.
103. *Ibid.*
104. NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.
105. Alain Locke, "Lessons in World Crisis," in *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume IX, April 1940-April 1944*, comp. National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1945; reprint, 1981) pp. 745-47.

106. Beth J. Singer 1999. "Alain Locke Remembered," in Leonard Harris, ed., *The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke: A Reader in Value Theory, Aesthetics, Community, Culture, Race, and Education* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999) p. 328.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 329.

108. Locke to Kallen, 8 March 1946, Horace M. Kallen Papers, Manuscript Collection No. 1, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati Campus, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, Box 19, Folder 2 (Locke, Alain, 1946-1959). My thanks to Ms. Elise Nienaber for kindly providing me with a copy of this letter.

109. Kallen to Locke, 12 February 1946, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-42, Folder 15 (Kallen, Horace M.).

110. Singer, "Alain Locke Remembered," pp. 329-30.

111. Photocopy of article, "Dr. Locke Pleads for World Culture," in Alain Locke Papers.

112. See Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-123, Folder 8 ("On Becoming World Citizens." Commencement Address at University of Wisconsin High School, 28 May 1946. [typescript]).

113. "Bahá'í Membership List, Washington, D.C. Electoral District for 1946 State and Province Elections (Corrected List)." NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.

114. Genevieve L. Coy to Locke, 3 February 1946, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-22, Folder 18 (Coy, Genevieve L.).

115. No record has been found to indicate whether or not Locke actually did make it to Green Acre to conduct the course.

116. "Local Communities," *Bahá'í News*, No. 182 (April 1946): 6.

117. *Ibid.*

118. Katherine Biddle Papers, Georgetown University, Lauinger Library, Special Collections Division. Finding aid. Online: <http://www.library.georgetown.edu/dept/speccoll/biddlek/series2.htm>. Accessed 9 August 2003.

119. Kallen to Locke, 14 August 1947, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-42, Folder 15 (Kallen, Horace M.).

120. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-143, Folder 3 (Christianity, spirituality, religion).

121. "D.C. Bahá'í Membership List, D.C. [*sic*] Electoral District for 1947 State and Province Elections." NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.

122. Kallen to Locke, 14 March 1946, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-42, Folder 15 (Kallen, Horace M.).

123. *Ibid.*

124. Kallen to Locke, 5 March 1946, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-42, Folder 15 (Kallen, Horace M.).

125. "Bahá'í Membership List: 1948 State Election, Washington, D.C. Electoral District." NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.

126. "Voting Members of the Washington, DC Bahá'í Community, 6 April 1949, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-176, Folder 13 (Bahá'í Faith).

127. "Bahá'í Membership List: 1949 State Election, Washington, D.C. Electoral

District.” NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.

128. [Untitled], Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-143, Folder 5 (Writings by Locke—Notes. Christianity, spirituality, religion).

129. Leonard Harris, “‘Outing’ Alain Locke: Empowering the Silenced” in *Sexual Identities, Queer Politics*, ed. by Mark Blasius (Princeton University Press, 2001) pp. 321-41.

130. Qtd. in Harris, “‘Outing’ Alain Locke: Empowering the Silenced,” p. 338 (but without a precise archival reference).

131. Locke, “Auto-Biog” [handwritten note], 1 October 1949, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-143, Folder 5 [Autobiographical writings]).

132. Harris, “‘Outing’ Alain Locke,” p. 331.

133. Ibid.

134. Ibid.

135. “Auto-Biog” [handwritten note], 10 June 1948, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-143, Folder 5 [Autobiographical writings]).

136. Harris. “‘Outing’ Alain Locke,” p. 329.

137. “Bahá’í teachings on sexual morality center on marriage and the family as the bedrock of the whole structure of human society, and are designed to protect and strengthen that divine institution. Thus Bahá’í law restricts permissible sexual intercourse to that between a man and the woman to whom he is married.” (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 14 March 1973.)

138. Yet this is no cause for harboring prejudice towards homosexuals, as the Universal House of Justice clearly states: “To regard homosexuals with prejudice and disdain would be entirely against the spirit of the Teachings. The doors are open for all of humanity to enter the Cause of God, irrespective of their present circumstances; this invitation applies to homosexuals as well as to any others who are engaged in practices contrary to the Bahá’í teachings.” (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice, 1995, in “The Bahá’í Teachings on Homosexuality,” *The American Baha’i* (Qawl 152/November 23, 1995). Online: <http://bahai-library.org/uhj/homosexuality.uhj.html>

139. Jackson Armstrong-Ingram, personal communication, e-mail message dated 22 July 2004, posted in the “Tarikh” listserve.

140. Harris. “‘Outing’ Alain Locke,” pp. 338-39.

141. Ibid., p. 339.

142. Gregory to Locke, 6 April 1949, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-32, Folder 50 (Gregory, Louis G.).

143. Faxed memo, 10 October 1994, Robert H. Stockman, Research Office, Bahá’í National Center, Wilmette, IL, to Moojan Momen, General Editor, Bahá’í Encyclopedia Project, Bahá’í Encyclopedia Archives Files. Courtesy of Gayle Morrison, General Editor, Bahá’í Encyclopedia Project, e-mail, 3 July 2002.

144. “State or Electoral District Voting List—1950: Washington—District of Columbia.” NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.

145. Kallen to Locke, 13 June 1950, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-42, Folder 15 (Kallen, Horace M.).

146. “State or Electoral District Voting List—1951: Washington—District of Columbia.” NBA. Courtesy of Roger Dahl, Archivist.

147. Gregory to Locke, 21 January 1951, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-32, Folder 50 (Gregory, Louis G.).

148. Kallen to Locke, 30 June 1952,, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-42, Folder 15 (Kallen, Horace M.).

149. Locke to Kallen, 24 June 1952, Horace M. Kallen Papers, Manuscript Collection No. 1, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati Campus, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, Box 19, Folder 2 (Locke, Alain, 1946-1959). My thanks to Ms. Elise Nienaber for kindly providing me with a copy of this letter. See also the same letter, Locke to Kallen, 24 June 1952,, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-42, Folder 15 (Kallen, Horace M.).

150. Qtd. in Ralph J. Bunche, et al., “The Passing of Alain Leroy Locke.” *Phylon*, Vol. 15 (1954) p. 247.

151. Locke to Kallen, 30 July 1952, Horace M. Kallen Papers, Manuscript Collection No. 1, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati Campus, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, Box 19, Folder 2 (Locke, Alain, 1946-1959). My thanks again to Ms. Elise Nienaber for kindly providing me with a copy of this letter.

152. Michael Rochester, e-mail message, Wednesday, February 6, 2002. In a subsequent message, Professor Rochester wrote: “You are certainly welcome to cite or incorporate my all too brief recollections of meeting Alain Locke in your book. I’m not sure I could do a better job of rewriting it in narrative form as you suggest, particularly because I remember nothing of the substance of what he said—but will give it some thought.” February 7, 2002.

Rochester served on the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada from 1963 to 1992. His wife, Elizabeth Manser (Rochester) was also elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada and was a member of that council from 1966-1967 and 1972-1983. Trained as a social group worker at the University of Toronto, she became one of the most effective teachers of the Faith in Canada and one of the wisest counselors to troubled local Assemblies and individuals. In 1967, Elizabeth and Michael pioneered to St. John’s, Newfoundland. They both now serve on Regional Bahá’í Council for the Atlantic Provinces (one of six such councils in Canada).

153. “Baha’i Faith, Only Church in World That Does Not Discriminate.” *Ebony*, Vol. 7 (12 October 1952) pp. 39-46 [39]. Locke kept a copy of this article. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-147, Folder 12 (Articles, advertisements that mention Locke).

154. Locke to Kallen, 18 February 1953, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-42, Folder 15 (Kallen, Horace M.).

155. [Untitled] “Alain Locke, June 5, 1953,” Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 2 (Autobiographical statements) p. 1.

156. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

157. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

158. *Ibid.*

159. *Ibid.* Alain Locke, “Enter the New Negro,” *Survey Graphic*, Vol. 53, no. 11 (1 March 1925) pp. 631-34. Reprinted in Jeffrey C. Stewart, ed., *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke: A Selection of His Essays on Art and Culture* (New York and London: Garland, 1983) p. 9.

160. [Untitled] “Alain Locke, June 5, 1953,” Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 2 (Autobiographical statements) p. 4.

161. Ibid.
162. Ibid.
163. Quoted by Shaveda Scott, "Alain Locke." Can be found online at: <http://www.english.howard.edu/english/locke/alocke.html>. Accessed 9 August 2003.
164. Nina Matthisen to Locke, 5 September 1952; and press release (1953), Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-176, Folder 13 (Bahá'í Faith).
165. Alain Locke, "Values That Matter," Review of *The Realms of Value*, by Ralph Barton Perry, *Key Reporter*, Vol. 19, no. 3 (1954) p. 4.
166. Margaret Just Butcher, *The Negro in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956).
167. Harris, *Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 300. Locke instructed that his remains be cremated. See Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 6 (Will and instructions in case of death); and Folder 7 (Last will and testament, 1943). Along with many other Bahá'ís at that time, Locke was probably unaware of the Bahá'í religious proscriptions against cremation. See also William Stanley Braithwaite, Ralph Bunche, C. Glenn Carrington, W. E. B. Du Bois, Benjamin Karpman, Yervant Krikorian, William Stuart Nelson. *Alain LeRoy Locke funeral orations brochure, 1952-1954*. Rare Books and Manuscripts. Black history and literature collection (University Park, PA: University Libraries, Pennsylvania State University, 1954).
168. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 7 (Last will and testament, 1943).
169. *Bahá'í News*, No. 282 (1954) p. 11.
170. William Stanley Braithwaite, et al. *Alain LeRoy Locke funeral orations brochure, 1952-1954*.
171. Benjamin Karpman, in *Alain LeRoy Locke funeral orations brochure, 1952-1954*, qtd. in Washington, *Alain Locke and Philosophy*, p. xxx.
172. Kallen to Fauset, undated, Horace M. Kallen Papers, Manuscript Collection No. 1, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati Campus, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, Box 19, Folder 2 (Locke, Alain, 1946-1959). My thanks again to Ms. Elise Nienaber for kindly providing me with a copy of this letter.
173. Horace Kallen, undated, Horace M. Kallen Papers, Manuscript Collection No. 1, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati Campus, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, Box 19, Folder 2 (Locke, Alain, 1946-1959).
174. Nathan Higgins, "The Alain L. Locke Symposium, December 1, 1973." Edited by Archie C. Epps. *The Harvard Advocate*, Vol. 107, no. 4 (1974) p. 11.



ALAIN LOCKE

## Chapter Nine

# Bahá'í Essays.

Locke wrote four essays published in six volumes of *The Bahá'í World*: (1) “Impressions of Haifa” (1926, 1929, 1930), first published in *Star of the West* (1924)<sup>1</sup>; (2) “Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle” (1933);<sup>2</sup> (3) “The Orientation of Hope” (1936);<sup>3</sup> and (4) “Lessons in World Crisis” (1945).<sup>4</sup> *The Bahá'í World* volumes are a record of the international development of the Bahá'í Faith. These volumes were, at the time, the most important Bahá'í publications next to authorized translations of the Bahá'í sacred writings.

In the realm of public relations, *The Bahá'í World* volumes served as the official international voice of the Bahá'í Faith, prior to the establishment of the Bahá'í International Community at the United Nations. In this sense, therefore, Locke's *Bahá'í World* essays may be regarded as having official sanction. In addition, there is a fifth Bahá'í essay, untitled and evidently unpublished, that I discovered among the Alain Locke Papers. For convenient reference, we have assigned it a title drawn from the first line of the essay, “The Gospel for the Twentieth Century.”<sup>5</sup>

These essays profile Locke's perspectives as a Bahá'í. How he came to write these essays, which customarily were solicited, is an important consideration. Although Shoghi Effendi supervised its publication and approved its contents, normally the editors of *The Bahá'í World* issued invitations to writers for articles. This was the case with Locke, except that Shoghi Effendi personally solicited Locke's final

essay, “Lessons in World Crisis.” That the leader of the Bahá’í World made this personal request reveals the high regard that Shoghi Effendi had for Locke.

In 1930, in a letter written on his behalf to Mrs. French, a project editor of *The Bahá’í World*, Shoghi Effendi suggested that “some first-class men” be asked “to write some articles” for the volume. Articles of such high caliber would make a “great contribution” to the project. “For example Mr. [sic] Locke of Washington could be asked to write an article on the Bahá’í teachings and the colour problem. I am sure he would do it willingly.”<sup>6</sup> Later in this chapter, we will see how Shoghi Effendi sought Locke’s advice and feedback on the translation Bahá’u’lláh’s *Kitáb-i Íqán* (Persian, 1861). There is no doubt about the importance of Locke’s literary contributions to the Bahá’í community and Shoghi Effendi’s appreciation of their great value.

In his collection of Locke’s philosophical writings, Leonard Harris included two of Locke’s four *Bahá’í World* essays: “The Orientation of Hope” and “Unity through Diversity: A Bahá’í Principle.”<sup>7</sup> Locke’s Bahá’í essays are short, but written in a dense style, packed with a special vocabulary of technical philosophical terms that double as common words, which the uninitiated reader will gloss over, missing their deeper meaning. Locke’s conceptual colors are deceptively simple, but rich and vivid. His “Impressions of Haifa” has already been discussed above.

“*Unity Through Diversity: A Bahá’í Principle*”: Mention has already been made of Shoghi Effendi’s recommendation that Mrs. French invite an article from Locke for the forthcoming number of *The Bahá’í World*. The full text of that request is as follows:

Shoghi Effendi does not at present have any suggestions to give you about the forthcoming number. Maybe he will have some in the future. The only constructive suggestion he can now make is concerning the articles. Maybe if you from now ask some first-class men to write some articles and assign the subjects in such a way as to make them an interesting whole, it will be a great contribution to the book. The articles should, however, be scholarly and written by competent men. For example Mr. [sic] Locke of Washington could be asked to write an article on the Bahá’í teachings and the colour problem. I am sure he would do it willingly.<sup>8</sup>

Alain Locke was the first (and only) name that immediately came to Shoghi Effendi’s mind when suggesting that articles be solicited

from “first-class men” who were “competent” to write “scholarly” articles. This advice also reflects the Guardian’s agenda, where he accords priority to America’s racial crisis.

Locke was typically overworked and overbooked, although he did take considerable time off for his international travels. Consequently, he was often behind in his writing schedule, including his commitments to Bahá’í publications. A short letter, dated 29 December 1931, that Locke received from Mrs. Wanden M. La Farge, one of the staff involved in *The Bahá’í World* project reads: “Dear Doctor Locke: No article for the Bahai World has appeared from you and this is merely a warning that the next step will be not one but a series of telegrams collect. With very best regards.”<sup>9</sup> Needless to say, Locke completed his essay and sent it in time for publication.

As to the essay itself, any reader who is familiar with this particular Bahá’í principle will be struck by the title Locke chose, for the simple reason that Bahá’ís are accustomed to seeing it expressed as “unity in diversity.” Here, Locke offers a variant: “unity *through* diversity.” Assuming his choice of “through” was deliberate rather than accidental, clearly “through” has a dynamic quality largely lacking in the static preposition “in.” The sense here is that unity must work to fuse disparate elements of society rather than simply exist in the midst of them. Diversity is elemental to unity and a necessary component of it. That is why “through” is deeper, more thoroughgoing than “in.” We shouldn’t press this distinction too far, however, for elsewhere in his essay he does speak of “unity in diversity.”<sup>10</sup> So the two forms are synonymous.

In humanity’s search “to cure . . . modern ills,” Locke writes that “any remedy seriously proposed must be fundamental and not superficial, and wide-scale or universal rather than local or provincial.” Reflecting on the signs of the times, Locke writes: “Ten years ago, national, racial, or some equivalent circumscribed loyalty and interest would have been unquestionably assumed, and agitated almost without apology as axiomatic. I regard this change, although as yet a negative gain, as both one of the most significant and positive steps forward that humanity has taken,—or rather,—has been forced to take.” The growing “demand for universality” is “beyond doubt the most characteristic modern thing in the realm of spiritual values.”<sup>11</sup>

In a trenchant critique of Western values, Locke takes the West to task for having made the mistake of conflating unity with unifor-

mity. “What the contemporary mind stands greatly in need of,” writes Locke, “is the divorce of the association of uniformity with the notion of the universal, and the substitution of the notion of equivalence.” Equivalence is a key philosophical concept for Locke. The problem is that, in its emphasis on sameness, the West has adopted the paradigm of the melting pot, which, rather than eliminating all differences, effectively maintains the cultural dominance of Anglo-Saxonism. Locke calls this “the specific blight and malady of the modern and Western mind.” These are strong words. To achieve “spiritual unity,” this is what Locke prescribes: “What we need to learn most is how to discover unity and spiritual *equivalence* underneath the differences which at present disunite and sunder us, and how to establish some basic spiritual *reciprocity* on the principle of unity in diversity.”<sup>12</sup>

“Equivalence” and “reciprocity” are key philosophical notions in Locke’s philosophy, just as are other terms—like the principle of “loyalty” which derives wholly from Locke’s Harvard mentor Josiah Royce, particularly Royce’s *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (1908) and “The Religion of Loyalty” (1912). Locke cautions that Bahá’ís ought not to claim ownership of these principles, but rather to promote them. And here he speaks to his Bahá’í audience. There is a very real danger, he warns his fellow Bahá’ís, in asserting this teaching of unity in diversity as somehow “exclusively” Bahá’í. This does not mean that Bahá’í truth-claims are invalid. Quite the contrary. Locke recognizes that indeed “there is no escaping the historical evidences of its early and its uncompromising adoption by the Bahá’í prophets and teachers.” But Bahá’ís must not insist “on this side of the claim.” Rather, Locke advises that “the intelligent, loyal Bahá’í should stress not the source, but the importance of the idea, and rejoice not in the originality and uniqueness of the principle but rather in its prevalence and practicality.”<sup>13</sup>

“The idea,” moreover, “has to be translated into every important province of modern life and thought, and in many of these must seem to be independently derived and justified.” Locke offers a true test of Bahá’í universality: “The purity of Bahá’í principles must be gauged by their universality on this practical plane. Do they fraternize and fuse with all their kindred expressions?” In other words, are Bahá’ís promoting their own principles primarily for the purpose of making this world a better place, rather than for proselytizing? Here, Locke uses purity of motive and disinterestedness as criteria of Bahá’í authenticity.<sup>14</sup>

After cautioning Bahá'ís against the appearance of “sectarianism” in “our factional and denominationalized world,” Locke makes a very interesting comment that seems to justify, however obliquely, his own involvement in the Harlem Renaissance and the “New Negro” movement that it promulgated: “Can anyone with a fair-minded sense of things, give wholesale condemnation to the partisanship of Indian Nationalism, or Chinese integrity and independence, or Negro and proletarian self-assertion after generations of persecution and restriction?” In spending half his essay in framing these problems “of national, class and racial strife,” Locke asks the question: “Is there no remedy?” This is where Locke’s faith as a Bahá'í and his philosophy as a cultural pluralist explicitly converge: “Josiah Royce, one of the greatest of the American philosophers saw this problem more clearly than any other Western thinker, and worked out his admirable principle of loyalty, which is nothing more or less than a vindication of the principle of unity in diversity carried out to a practical degree of spiritual reciprocity.”<sup>15</sup>

Locke implicitly defines Royce’s principle of loyalty as the “equivalence of value” between loyalty to one’s group and those of other groups. “In starting with the unequivocal assertion of equivalence and reciprocity between religions,” Locke adds, “the Bahá'í teaching has touched one of the trunk-nerve of the whole situation.” Here, “*equivalence and reciprocity* between religions” is Locke’s philosophical recasting of the “*oneness* of religion,” so common in Bahá'í parlance. He calls on Bahá'ís to carry this principle “into the social and cultural fields” in order to enlist the support of “the most vigorous and intellectual elements” of those societies. In so doing, Bahá'ís will have “translated into more secular terms” their own principles, achieving thereby “a positive multiplication of spiritual power” and an “application and final vindication of the Bahá'í principles.” He exhorts “every Bahá'í believer to carry the universal dimension of tolerance and spiritual reciprocity into every particular cause and sectarianism he can reach,” and to “share the loyalties of the group, but upon a different plane and with a higher perspective.”<sup>16</sup>

Locke ends this remarkable essay by saying: “Each period of a faith imposes a new special problem.” The special challenge of “this particular critical decade” is the “task of transposing the traditional Bahá'í reciprocity between religions into the social and cultural denominationalisms of nation, race and class, vindicating anew upon this plane

the precious legacy of the inspired teachings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Bahá’u’lláh.”<sup>17</sup>

Given the nature and purpose of *The Bahá’í World*, whose intended audience was primarily the non-Bahá’í public, Locke’s essay is atypical. Virtually all essays in these volumes are sermonic in tone, but in such a way that propounds and promotes Bahá’í principles for the benefit of an outside audience. Locke’s admonitions to Bahá’ís represent a curious inversion of this norm. One cannot escape the feeling that—in this essay especially—not only was Locke setting the standards by which the Bahá’í Faith would be judged by the world, but also revealing how he himself would judge the Bahá’ís and his own involvement with the Bahá’í community.

*“The Orientation of Hope”*: “The Orientation of Hope,” according to Harris, “is a definitive expression of Locke’s belief in the Bahá’í Faith and its focus on the universal principles definitive of spiritual faiths.”<sup>18</sup> In this essay, Locke offers some fraternal advice to Bahá’ís, in much the same vein as the previous essay. At the same time, as Harris rightly observes, it is Locke’s eloquent testimony to the strength of his own convictions as a Bahá’í.

In troubled times, where should we “orient our hopes”? The answer must be “worthy of the possessors of a virile and truly prophetic spiritual revelation”—meaning the Bahá’ís and the Bahá’í Faith. In the “present twilight hour,” in “this dusk of disillusionment,” Locke calls upon “those of us who are truly dawn-minded” to rise to this challenge. As Locke frames it:

Must we not as true Bahá’í believers in these times embrace our principles more positively, more realistically, and point everywhere possible our assertion of the teachings with a direct challenge? . . . Especially does it seem to me to be the opportunity to bring the Bahá’í principles again forcefully to the attention of statesmen and men of practical affairs . . . Is it not reasonably clear to us that now is the time for a world-wide, confident and determined offensive of peaceful propaganda for the basic principles of the Cause of brotherhood, peace and social justice? . . . And to do that powerfully, effectively, the Bahá’í teaching needs an inspired extension of the potent realism of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by which he crowned and fulfilled the basic idealism of Bahá’u’lláh.<sup>19</sup>

Locke reaffirms here his faith and solidarity with his fellow Bahá’ís. He advocates bringing the Bahá’í principles “forcefully to the attention of statesmen and men of practical affairs.”

The reader may wish to skip over the middle of the essay, in which

Locke quotes H. G. Wells at some length. “I have cited this quotation,” Locke explains, “as a representative sample of the drift of intelligent thought today upon the whole world situation.<sup>20</sup> What likely governed Locke’s choice here was Wells’s use of the term, “new world order,” which ties in with the Bahá’í vision of the future as articulated by Shoghi Effendi, who uses the same term.

While eloquent, as practically all of Locke’s essays are, “The Orientation of Hope” has the feel of having been hastily written. Again, the message comes across as a sermon for the benefit of Bahá’ís, lest they become too insular and parochial. “I have but one practical suggestion,” Locke writes, “that without forgetting the language in terms of which we ourselves have learned the principles, we shall take pains to learn and speak a language which the practical-minded man of affairs, and the realistic common man can and will understand.”<sup>21</sup> In transposing the Bahá’í principle of “unity through diversity” into the conceptual framework of cultural pluralism, and then translating this into a discourse of democracy that Americans could appreciate, Locke did precisely this in his own work.

“*Lessons in World Crisis*”: In January 1944, Shoghi invited Locke to contribute what would be his final *Bahá’í World* essay. “The Twentieth Century seems destined,” Locke begins his essay, “to be the age of a terrestrial revelation of the essential and basic oneness of mankind.” Out of this welter of chaos and crisis, “the lesson of unity must be learned” on “a world-scale.” Locke expresses the hope that in the aftermath of a terrible war humankind might finally learn from “the staggering futilities of disunity.” This crisis can be “solved only by a fundamental change of our individual and social attitudes,” which Bahá’í teachings had advocated for nearly a century. The event of the Bahá’í Centenary (1944) provided an opportunity to reflect on world war and world peace, and on the principles that the Bahá’í revelation brings to bear on them.

What once was an issue contemplated only by “a few prophetic minds” along with “a small minority of clear-sighted liberals” has now become a matter of global concern. People “may not know the solution to the problem, . . . but they do know it as a basic issue.” They “vaguely sense that it represents the great impasse of our present-day civilization.” Furthermore, a growing number of people now “realize that some basic spiritual reorientation is a prerequisite to the effec-

tive solution of many, if not most, of the specific political, economic and cultural issues of our time.” Locke uses the term “psychological disarmament” and points out that it was “found impossible because on the political and economic plane we had no moral conviction or even insight about an integrating principle.”<sup>22</sup>

Locke speaks of the benefits of interfaith cooperation: “In our religious life, the leading religious liberals are increasingly recognizing the imperative need to inter-faith movements.” Locke refers to the ecumenical movement, to Protestant-Catholic rapprochement, and to Jewish-Christian dialogue. But “such effort has not as yet been adequately extended to the Muslim and Oriental fronts,” Locke says. In oblique reference to his own philosophical orientation, Locke recognizes the “leadership of cultural anthropologists.” Like the great Franz Boas, these researchers are “willing to admit the essential parity of cultures—a very necessary spiritual foundation for any true world order of peoples and nations.” Continuing in this vein, Locke notes that the “field of education” appears to be “on the verge of realizing that international-mindedness,” which can only come about through “a sense of common purpose among educators throughout the world.”<sup>23</sup>

Addressing racial issues, Locke observes that there is a general public awareness of the “threat of race and class cleavage within our Western societies” and that “no basic sense of human unity on a world scale can develop” unless and until world leaders arrive at “the desirable and right human values and attitudes.” Here, Locke argues that the most fundamental and surest recourse for changing the world is to transform how we look at it. Through a basic reorientation involving a global-minded change of consciousness, “a convergence of moral growth and development in the practical implementation of the ‘oneness of humanity’ “ might be attained.<sup>24</sup>

Locke concludes his essay by drawing a connection between the experience of World War II and its synchronicity with Bahá’í history: “It is highly significant that such developments as these coincide with the first Centennial of the Bahá’í revelation of these basic principles.”<sup>25</sup> Locke speaks of a “converging series of confirmations” that “warrant our initial statement” that “The Twentieth Century seems destined to be the age of a terrestrial revelation of the essential and basic oneness of mankind.”<sup>26</sup> In this short essay, Locke has skillfully woven together major trends in current events and has made sense of them in terms of humanity’s terrible ordeal borne of profound disunity.

Unlike the two previous essays, which were really directed towards Bahá'ís, Locke's "Lessons in World Crisis" is clearly written for the non-Bahá'í public. This shift in Locke's focus is a new development for him. It reflects a move away from his preoccupation with reorienting Bahá'ís and encouraging them to redirect their energies to place a higher priority on deeds rather than words. Locke's "Lessons in World Crisis" is a thoughtful and subtle invitation for seekers to investigate the truth-claims of the Bahá'í Faith in light of its universal principles.

*Translation of the Book of Certitude:* One result of my archival research was the discovery of another contribution Locke had made to Bahá'í literature—one that had no connection with race relations whatever. Among the Alain Locke Papers were two letters to Locke, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi by his secretary, Ruhi Afnan. These letters are dated 15 February and 5 July 1930.<sup>27</sup> The first begins: "Dear Dr. Locke: Shoghi Effendi has been lately spending his leisure hours translating the Book of Iqan for he considers it to be the key to a true understanding of the Holy Scriptures, and can easily rank as one of the most, if not the most, important thing that Bahá'u'lláh revealed explaining the basic beliefs of the Cause. He who fully grasps the purport of that Book can claim to have understood the Cause."<sup>28</sup>

The "Book of Iqan" is better known today as the Kitáb-i Íqán, or the Book of Certitude, Bahá'u'lláh's preeminent doctrinal text.<sup>29</sup> In efforts to perfect his working translation of the Íqán from Persian to English, Shoghi Effendi called upon Locke as the person "best fitted to render him [Shoghi Effendi] an assistance" in giving critical feedback on the translation itself. He requested that Locke "go over it [the translation] carefully, studying every sentence—its structure as well as choice of words—and giving him [Shoghi Effendi] your [Locke's] criticism as well as constructive suggestions that would make it more lucid, English and forceful." He adds, "Shoghi Effendi is fully aware of the many duties you have and how pressing your time is, and had he known of an equally fitting person he would surely have saved you the trouble. Yet he finds himself to be compelled." The first letter was accompanied by the first half of the translation. The second half was mailed later.

Always precise in wording and unambiguous in meaning, Shoghi Effendi's statement that "had he known of an equally fitting person he would surely have saved you the trouble" is a superlative compliment to Locke's superior intellect and literary prowess. Beyond the manner

that he has distinguished Locke, it is significant that the *Guardian* does not convey even a hint of tokenism. Here, the Bahá'í leader sought the assistance of the scholar purely and solely on the basis of Locke's excellence. Race is erased from the discourse, as the two enjoyed a mutual admiration and respect that transcended race and spanned decades.

Locke did as requested. Locke's undated letter, postmarked 11 June 1930, to Shoghi Effendi reads in part:

As a whole the translation is a triumph of labor and insight into another language. It reads well and euphonicly—and for so complicated a sentence structure is unusually clear. I know the need for full and literal translation, and therefore did not dare suggest certain cuts and shortening which would be desirable from the English and American readers' point of view. It is a difference primarily between the structure of the Eastern language and those [languages] of the West. The coordinate phrases give us the impression of prolixity—and the constant repetitions do not always increase the effectiveness of the writing. Perhaps you can consider this question, and obtain some condensation by joining several coordinate statements in subordinate clause constructions or for phrases use the mechanical advice [device?] of hendiadys occasionally. Still, those who would really be interested in this inspired discourse will not be impatient anyhow. I look forward to the time when we may all see it in print. We shall be ever grateful to you for your devoted labours in making it accessible. May it speed the Cause to the ears of the learned and influential!<sup>30</sup>

A subsequent letter, dated 5 July 1930, again written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, was sent to Locke to acknowledge his editorial assistance: "Though they were not so many, he [Shoghi Effendi] found the suggestions you gave most helpful. . . . Shoghi Effendi has already incorporated your suggestions and sent his manuscript [to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada] for publication." A most interesting comment follows: "It naturally depends upon that body and the reviewing and publishing committees to decide whether it should come out immediately or not." The potential value of reaching the Western intelligentsia was noted as well: "The most important service that can now be rendered to the Cause is to put the writings of Bahá'u'lláh in a form that would be presentable to the intellectual minds of the West. Shoghi Effendi's hope in this work has been to encourage others along this line."

At the end of the letter, Shoghi Effendi penned the following in his own hand:

My dear co-worker:

I wish to add a few words expressing my deep appreciation of your valued suggestions in connection with the translation of the *Iqan*. I wish also to express the hope that you may be able to lend increasing assistance to the work of the Cause, as I have always greatly admired your exceptional abilities and capacity to render distinguished services to the Faith. I grieve to hear of the weakness of your heart which I trust may through treatment be completely restored. I often remember you in my prayers and ever cherish the hope of welcoming you again in the Master's home.

Your true brother,  
Shoghi.<sup>31</sup>

This exchange of correspondence should go far in dispelling any doubts about Locke's integrity as a Bahá'í or the depth of his convictions. He lived at a time when it was simply unacceptable to be anything but a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew—the three religions that dominated America at that time. It seems that he chose to keep his Bahá'í affiliation private, rather than risk his professional and social standing.

*“The Gospel for the Twentieth Century”*: Without doubt, this was Locke's finest Bahá'í essay. It is certainly his most mature. It is also the only one in which Locke has quoted Bahá'u'lláh directly. More significant, perhaps, is Locke's discussion of the relevance of Bahá'í principles to the destiny of America. And of no less interest is the way in which Locke presents the Bahá'í gospel of social salvation as the complement and fulfillment of Christian ideals.

The manuscript itself is something of a discovery. The circumstances of its writing are unknown. For whatever reason, the essay was never published. From the first line of the essay, it seems logical and appropriate to title it, *“The Gospel of the Twentieth Century.”* Locke opens his essay as follows:

The gospel for the Twentieth Century rises out of the heart of its greatest problems,— and few who are spiritually enlightened doubt the nature of that problem. The clashing ominous [t]est of issues of the practical world of today,— the issues of race, sect, class and nationality, all have one basic spiritual origin, and for that reason, we hope and believe one basic cure.<sup>32</sup>

Here, the writer's choice of the term “gospel” creates the expectation of a religious discussion of some kind. This is reinforced by the idea of a “spiritual” cure. Locke identifies “the issues of race, sect, class and nationality” as among the “greatest problems” of the twentieth

century. Locke says that “only a widespread almost universal change of social heart, a new spirit of human attitudes, can achieve the social redemption that must eventually come.” After speaking of the Christian millennial ideal of peace on earth, Locke uses a Christian vocabulary to express Bahá’í ideals:

The redemption of society,— social salvation, should have been sought after first,— the pragmatic test and proof of the fatherhood of God is after all whether belief in it can realize the unity of mankind; and so the brotherhood of man, as it has been inspirationally expressed. “Oneness of humanity” must be in our day realized or religion die out gradually into ever-increasing materiality. The salvation we have sought after as individuals in an after-life and another sphere must be striven for as the practical peace and unity of the human family here in this [world].

The reader should bear in mind that this is an unedited manuscript, and so it is rough in spots. The message is lucid, nonetheless. Locke presents “social salvation” as the necessary complement of personal salvation. This is a Bahá’í teaching. One might see here an oblique critique of Christianity when he speaks of the “finest and most practical idea of Christianity, the idea of the millennium,— of peace on earth,” as having lapsed into “a mystic’s mirage of another world.” The social consequence is that the “Brotherhood of Man” has been weakened into a “negligible corollary of the fatherhood of God.”

In a secular vein, Locke introduces a somewhat novel, although not entirely new, concept of democracy: “Much has been accomplished in the name of Democracy, but Spiritual Democracy, its largest and most inner meaning, is so [read, still?] below our common horizons. . . . America, that has in an economic and material way labored through to the most promising material elements of democracy, is spiritually very far from the realization of her own organic [i]deal.” Or, to put it more bluntly: “The fundamental problems of current America are materiality and prejudice.”

Each of these problems—class and race—has a separate history. Still, they have but one root: “selfishness.” While their outward manifestations are seen in poverty and prejudice, these are simply manifestations of an inner crisis: “And so we must say with the acute actualities of America’s race problem and acute potentialities of her economic problem, the land that is nearest to material democracy is furthest away from spiritual democracy . . .” Yet, Locke sees hopeful signs in “new and promising efforts of race cooperation.” A “New South” is emerg-

ing, rising above the ashes of an “Old South.”

Here are a few clues to when this essay may have been written. Locke speaks of “the new movement for the equalization of public school expenditures, health and public welfare measures” that has “only recently begun.” Locke also mentions “the great industrial migration of the Negro away from the South, which has led to ameliorative measures to retain this economically valuable but hitherto socially mis-valued group, and the increasing self-esteem and direction of the New Negro.” The “New Negro” movement is commonly dated from 1925, with the publication of Locke’s book, *The New Negro*. Based on this information, and with no reference to either World War II or the Great Depression, a tentative date of 1926-1928 may be assigned to this essay.

Locke goes on to contrast “uniformity” with “reciprocity” or “spiritual reciprocity.” Here, Locke transitions into philosophy. He explicitly praises “the philosophy of the Austrian Rudolf Maria Holzapfel, with its professed basic principle of the ‘Pan-Ideal,’ where universal values, the point of view of all mankind is to be substituted for the narrowing and hopelessly conflicting scales of value that race, class, nation and sect have made almost chronic defects in our thinking.” Holzapfel and his notion of a “Pan-Ideal” are now quite obscure. The significance of Locke’s mention of these is that Locke was speaking here *both* as a philosopher *and* a Bahá’í. In Locke’s view, there is something in Holzapfel’s philosophy that resonates with Bahá’í values. One sees here an attempt on Locke’s part to harmonize, however briefly, some of the more progressive developments in philosophy with the teachings of his religion.

What ultimately is needed, according to Locke, is “a revolution within the soul.” Collectively, the aggregate effect of people’s change in attitudes towards a more positive valuation of diversity will eventually lead to what Locke calls the “salvation of society.” While philosophy provides an important adjunct to this shift in values, it is probably in the sphere of religious influence that the greatest change in social attitudes will occur. Relatively few people listen to, much less are persuaded by, what philosophers have to say. This is probably why Locke ends his essay on a religious note. Leading up to his conclusion, he writes:

And we must begin heroically with the great apparent irreconcilables; the East and the West, the black man and the self-arrogating Anglo-Saxon, for unless these are reconciled, the salvation of society in this world cannot be. If the

world had believably understood the full significance of Him who taught it to pray and hope “Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven” who also said “In my Father’s house are many mansions”, already we should be further toward the realization of this great millennial vision.

To a Western audience, the language of “salvation” pertains to the doctrinal vocabulary of Christianity. To be “saved” is to become a Christian. Locke transfers this idea to the Bahá’í worldview. He uses the Christian ideal of salvation as a bridge to the Bahá’í teachings, which in principle fulfill the Christian millennial vision. This is how Locke concludes his essay:

The word of God is still insistent, and more emphatic as the human redemption delays and becomes more crucial, and we have what Dr. Elsemont [John E. Esslemont] rightly calls Baha’u’llah’s “one great trumpet-call to humanity”: “That all nations shall become one in faith, and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled . . . These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and family.”

This quotation comes from Cambridge Orientalist Edward G. Browne’s historic interview with Bahá’u’lláh in 1890.<sup>33</sup>

*Conclusions:* There is nothing in these Bahá’í essays that is exceptionally brilliant or revolutionary, except to say that the interracial unity that Locke was advocating was quite radical by the standards of his day. Locke’s Bahá’í essays are really the first effort by a Western philosopher to represent the Bahá’í principles in the language of contemporary philosophy. True, it was not a systematic effort. What we should take very seriously is the fact that Locke brought his own philosophy to bear on the great social issues of his day. Except for some legislative milestones that have punctuated American social history between then and now, the issues of race, class, and gender remain much the same.

Locke’s Bahá’í essays are remarkably unapologetic. If anything, he spent more time writing for the benefit of Bahá’ís than for others. For whichever audience he wrote or spoke to, Locke never lost sight of the whole question of values and their impact on society. To effect social change was to advocate a shift in our social values. Values are, at heart, the secular counterpart of beliefs. Religion makes values sacred. For there to be social salvation in the secular world, religion needs to

promote “unity through diversity” and all that it implies in terms of public policy and individual behavior.

Locke’s gospel was one of social salvation. It was a universal message unencumbered by any particular religious affiliation. By submerging his Bahá’í witness, he converted a great number of Americans to what could be thought of as Bahá’í principles. Locke was truly universal. In trying to save society from its cardinal sins of racial injustice, poverty, and the like, his faith and philosophy fused into a message that continues to be relevant today.

In a strictly secular context, arguably the most important element of Locke’s philosophy is his discussion of the need for America to become a “spiritual democracy.” The next chapter explores Locke’s philosophy of democracy, treating it in nine dimensions, ranging from concepts of “local democracy” to “world democracy.”

## Notes

### 1. Reprints:

**1924:** Alain Locke, “Impressions of Haifa,” *Star of the West*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (1924) p. 13-14. Original manuscript in Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-115, Folder 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. by National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States and Canada (New York: Bahá’í Publishing Committee, 1926) pp. 81, 83.

**1928:** Alaine (sic) Locke, “Impressions of Haifa,” in *The Bahá’í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume II, April 1926-April 1928*, comp. by 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) pp. 125, 127.

**1930:** Alain Locke, “Impressions of Haifa,” in *The Bahá’í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume III, April 1928-April 1930*, comp. by 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) pp. 280, 282.

2. 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) pp. 372-374. Reprint (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1980). Reprinted again in Locke, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, ed. by Leonard Harris, pp. 133-138. Harris’ reference on p. 133 n. should be amended to read, Volume IV, 1930-1932 (not “V, 1932-1934”).

3. Alain Locke, “The Orientation of Hope,” *The Bahá’í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume V, 1932-1934* (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1936) pp. 527-28. Reprint Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1980. Reprinted

again in Locke, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, ed. by Leonard Harris, pp. 129-132. Harris' reference on p. 129 n. should be emended to read, "Volume V, 1932-1934" (not "Volume IV, 1930-1932"). Original manuscript in Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-123, Folder 11 ("The Orientation of Hope." 1934 [typescript]).

4. Alain Locke, "Lessons in World Crisis," *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record*, Volume IX, 1940-1944 (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1945) pp. 745-47. Reprint Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981.

5. Untitled essay, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-143, Folder 3 (Writings by Locke—Notes. Christianity, spirituality, religion).

6. From a letter dated 4 July 1930 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to Mrs. French, "References to Dr. Alain Locke in Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi," Attachment, The Universal House of Justice to Buck, 16 July 2001.

7. Harris, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, pp. 130-32, 134-38.

8. From a letter dated 4 July 1930 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to Mrs. French, "References to Dr. Alain Locke in Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi," Attachment, The Universal House of Justice to Buck, 16 July 2001.

9. Mrs. Oliver La Farge to Locke, 29 December 1931, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-43, Folder 50 (La Farge, Oliver).

10. Harris, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 135.

11. *Ibid.*, 134

12. *Ibid.*, 135. Emphasis added.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-36.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-37.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 137.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-38.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 130, 132.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

22. Locke, "Lessons in World Crisis," *The Bahá'í World* (1945), 745.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 746.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 746-47.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 747.

27. Ruhi Afnan (on behalf of Shoghi Effendi) to Locke, 15 February 1930; Afnan (on behalf of Shoghi Effendi) to Locke, 5 July 1930; Shoghi Effendi to Locke, 5 July 1930, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-10, Folder 2 (Afnan, Ruhi).

28. *Ibid.*

29. See Christopher Buck, *Symbol and Secret: Qur'án Commentary in Bahá'u'lláh's Kitáb-i-Íqán*. Studies in the Bábi and Bahá'í Religions, Vol. 7 (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1995). Republished online as an electronic book at: <http://www.bahai-library.org/books/symbol.secret>.

30. Locke to Shoghi Effendi, undated (postmarked 11 June 1930), Research Department, Bahá'í World Center, Memorandum to The Universal House of Justice, 26 December 2001.

31. Shoghi Effendi to Locke, 5 July 1930, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-10, Folder 2 (Afnan, Ruhi).

32. Alain Locke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Manuscript Division, Box 164-143, Folder 3 (Writings by Locke—Notes. Christianity spirituality, religion).
33. Browne, *A Traveller's Narrative*, p. xl.



Courtesy of the Moorland-Spangam Research Center, Howard University

ALAIN LOCKE WITH FIRST LADY ELEANOR ROOSEVELT at the dedication of the South Side Community Art Center, May 7, 1941. Located in the “Black Metropolis” (or “Bronzeville”) at 3831 S. Michigan Avenue, this Chicago landmark is the sole survivor of the more than 100 centers established nationwide by the WPA/FAP during the 1930s and ‘40s. The dedication ceremony, at which both Locke and the First Lady spoke, was nationally broadcast on CBS Radio.

## Chapter Ten

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# Philosophy of Democracy: America, Race, and World Peace

*Bahá'í Principles and the leavening of our national life with their power, is to be regarded as the salvation of democracy. In this way only can the fine professions of American ideals be realized.*

Alain Locke, "America's Part in World Peace,"  
Bahá'í Congress at Green Acre, April 1925<sup>1</sup>

Locke was, at once, the spokesman of his race and a statesman for America as a country. He forged a dynamic linkage between race relations at home and international relations abroad. His vision was world embracing, reflecting his religious convictions as a Bahá'í. In widening the horizons of democracy on a world scale, Locke wanted to "Americanize Americans"<sup>2</sup> so that America might help democratize the world. In other words, Locke wanted to make democracy in America more democratic.

America, after all, was "a unique social experiment."<sup>3</sup> In certain ways, the experiment had failed. Locke dedicated his life to making that experiment succeed. By giving a fuller description of democracy, Locke gave greater breadth and depth to the concept of democracy. Democracy is not merely political; an ideal democracy is something beyond the adversarial politics of a two-party system. It transcends tolerance and demands more. It calls into question the assimilationist paradigm of the "melting pot." For Locke, democracy is something more.

In fact, Locke speaks of at least nine dimensions of democracy.

This chapter will present these dimensions by collating his various essays and public talks on the topic and categorizing them under the various rubrics that he commonly, although unsystematically, used. This chapter presents Locke's views on democracy, but imposes an order on them that amounts to a typology or systematization of what seems to be a deep structure within Locke's philosophical thought.

From station KMYR in Denver, on 6 August 1944, Locke spoke on America's position in world affairs in relation to race.

It is indeed a privilege for me to be talking with you this evening about America's position in world affairs in relation to race; new vistas suddenly open before us; the question is, are we going on with the THEORY or the PRACTICE of democracy? . . .

America must continue to be a laboratory on racial issues; what nation can better set the example than America? We must continue to solve our own racial problems in order to keep the confidence of all other nations. There are problems we must solve in So[uth] America and in the Caribbean area, as well as in our own loved land. Democracy implies the equality of all races, Oriental, Jewish, Negro . . . We must have poly-racial freedom for all races. What, after all, has made America great? It is that we have a common denominator, which is, loyalty to our ideals. Yes, we must continue to be a world example. Here is the great new world of the Pacific area opening up; we must demonstrate to those living within that sphere what democracy really is; all impediments must be removed; we must show both the Orientals and the Negroes what democracy really can accomplish.

It is true that Russia practices democracy, having more nationalities within her borders than America, but America can compete with Russia; both nations will, from now on, be concerned with international as well as national racial issues. Yes, the United Nations will become a moral as well as mechanical arsenal, and work on the problems of all minorities. In our own country, north, south, east, mid-west, and west, all of us must be working on these problems that arise from time to time.<sup>4</sup>

This was but one instance of Locke taking his philosophy of democracy to the people. It is interesting that Locke, in this radio broadcast, referred to Russia as a "nation without prejudice" and to China as "a non-white nation as a principal in the struggle on the democratic side."<sup>5</sup> From the context, it appears that Locke is more concerned with the demographic fact of "democracy" as a metonymy for what today would be called "diversity." Communism, under both the Russian and Chinese forms of it, was antithetical to the American system of governance. Therefore, this part of Locke's talk was unexplained.

As a public intellectual, Locke gave similar speeches on this topic before live audiences, in civic and university settings, lecture halls

and town halls, as well as in the broadcast studio. As an art and literary critic, Locke worked with artists and writers as “the champions of democracy.”<sup>6</sup> As educator and national leader in adult education, Locke supported “an organized campaign for teaching American youth the principles and the attitudes of democracy.”<sup>7</sup> In 1947, Locke himself taught a course in “Philosophy of Democracy” at Howard University.<sup>8</sup> In all these venues, Locke sought to expand popular and scholarly thinking about democracy, and what this meant for America. He challenged his audiences to reflect on the jingoist and largely unreflective public assumptions about democracy. Locke’s philosophy of democracy proceeds from the problematics of American society, at the heart of which is the question of race.

One could say that Locke’s entire life was a discourse on America, democracy, and race. Race was central to this discourse because the color line, at that time, defined America. If America was a democracy in principle, it was not so in practice. As Harris observes: “American democracy for Locke was hardly a finished social experiment, especially since it excluded most of the population from participation.”<sup>9</sup> Locke was not alone in this pejorative view of America. Langston Hughes, in his celebrated poem, “Let America Be America Again,” suggests that America was never truly “America” since it had never lived up to its egalitarian ideals. Songwriter Leonard Cohen, in his song “Democracy,” expresses a similar, but optimistic sentiment in his refrain: “Democracy is coming to the USA.” Indeed, much of American literature has focused on the ideal of America.

An ardent supporter of democracy in principle, yet a trenchant critic of it in practice, Locke’s vision of America transcended politics. He expanded America’s understanding of democracy by adding breadth and depth to the public conception of it. A survey of his essays and speeches reveals a more complex and a richer approach to democracy than has been described in the previous literature.<sup>10</sup> While he did not formalize his philosophy of democracy in any systematic way, one can say that his conception of democracy was both evolutionary and multi-dimensional. In the notes for his lecture “Concept of Democracy,” delivered on 10 December 1947, Locke spoke of how the “idea of democracy has evolved.”<sup>11</sup>

This chapter will present a typology of Locke’s philosophy of democracy in nine dimensions, with special reference to Locke’s vision of America and the relation of this vision to parallel concepts pro-

pounded in the Bahá'í Faith, whose principles he sought to secularize in order to promote them. An inventory of these nine dimensions will serve to more fully represent the profundity of Locke's philosophy of democracy in relation to his vision of America.

*Scrapping the Melting Pot:* Locke rejected the paradigm of the "melting pot" as a definitive vision of America. For Locke, the vortex of American democracy was race. Race is myth, a product of social forces at variance with the ideals of democracy: "Consciousness of kind," Locke wrote, "is a force" that can lead to "unhealthy and rather unjust distinctions in human society." It is "the blight of modern society."<sup>12</sup> And yet obliteration of all such distinctions is equally odious, which is why Locke criticized the idea of America as a "melting pot." In a speech on "The Negro Renaissance" held in Chicago at the Women's City Club and reported in the *Chicago Defender*, Locke publicly declared: "America must scrap the idea of the melting pot democracy, and instead encourage the development of that group's [Negro] culture."<sup>13</sup> Locke equally rejected the "mosaic" nature of Horace Kallen's cultural pluralism. Locke's own version may be characterized as midway between the American melting pot and the Canadian mosaic.

Locke conceived of democracy in several dimensions, against all of which he measured America's fidelity to its democratic ideal. Although Locke was not systematic in his thinking, for analytical purposes it may be useful to attempt a systematic description of his view on democracy. It should be noted that Locke's dimensional model of democracy is not only typological, but evolutionary as well. If we attempt to systematize Locke's thinking, these are some of the various dimensions of democracy that Locke spoke and wrote about:

- 1) Local democracy
- 2) Moral democracy
- 3) Political democracy
- 4) Economic democracy
- 5) Cultural democracy
- 6) Racial democracy
- 7) Social democracy
- 8) Spiritual democracy
- 9) World democracy

A careful reading of both his published and unpublished works reveals clear patterns in Locke's thought. Ordering his dimensional treatment of democracy in this way is simply a logical extension of what Locke must have been thinking. Indeed, there may be a correspondence between these dimensions of democracy and Locke's typology of values. Here is a possible correlation:

- (1) Local democracy to *Hedonic Values*
- (2) Moral democracy to *Moral and Ethical Values*
- (3) Political democracy to *Logical or Cognitive Values*
- (4) Economic democracy to *Economic Values*
- (5) Cultural democracy to *Aesthetic Values*
- (6) Racial democracy to *Organic Values*
- (7) Social democracy to *Utility Values*
- (8) Spiritual democracy to *Religious Values*
- (9) World democracy to *a Transvaluation of All Values*

Locke's theory of democracy was both historical and phenomenological. It was anchored in history, grounded in philosophy, and validated by personal experience. Locke's travels to the South in 1912 with Booker T. Washington and his teaching trips throughout the South in 1925-1926 as a Bahá'í spokesman impressed upon him the evils of Jim Crow America and the real prospects of racial justice, healing, and harmony offered in the Bahá'í experience. His analysis of the race question was nothing new. But his presentation of the race answer was. His point of departure was, of course, the historical development or evolution of democracy.

In his farewell address at Talladega College (1941), Locke presented an evolutionary view of democracy in five phases. He began by saying that most Americans have a limited and unreflective concept of democracy, something that is all-too-easily taken for granted:

And now, I should like to talk about something that we all take for granted—these are things we know least about. The words most frequently used are words understood least—Democracy is one of those words. Thinking Negroes, of course, know much about what democracy is not, and have a more workable conception of what democracy truly means than those who have just enough to be content with or those to whom it is just a commonplace concept and way of life. Democracy, of course, is one of the basic human ideals, but as an ideal of human association it is something quite superior to

any outward institution or any particular society; therefore, not only is government too narrow to express democracy, but government from time to time must grow to realize democracy.<sup>14</sup>

Not only is government too narrow a concept of democracy, but democracy started out historically as a narrow concept as well. Its ideals were confined to a select few, and they took not just centuries, but millennia, to enlarge. Its application is still uneven, even if universal in its modern ideological formulations.

*Local Democracy:* Since there is no one who exemplifies Plato's ideal of the philosopher-king, and because politicians are not philosophers, it is up to pragmatic philosophers to work out a coherent philosophy of democracy. Such a philosophy may never succeed in influencing politicians directly, but the philosophers will still find ways to influence public opinion.

Locke's own theory was not only coherent, it was comprehensive. His theory comprehends the rise of Western civilization, encompassing Christianity in the process. His historical origins of democracy hark back to Athens, as one would expect. And while it is a breakthrough concept of profound historical moment, Locke emphasizes its limitations:

It may be a little daring in the time we have at our disposal, but let us put on seven-league boots and trace democracy—one of the great social concepts. Both in concept and in practice democracy began in Greece—in the Greek city state. In its day it was a great achievement, but in that day democracy was a concept of local citizenship. Our nearest approach to it is the kind of fellowship we find in college fraternities and sororities in which the bonds are of “like-mindedness” excluding others. The rim of the Greek concept of democracy was the barbarian: it was then merely the principle of fraternity within a narrow, limited circle. There was a dignity accorded to each member on the basis of membership in the group. It excluded foreigners, slaves and women. This concept carried over into the Roman empire.<sup>15</sup>

In staging the evolution of democracy in this way, Locke insinuates an incipient teleology with respect to democracy. As a necessary preparation for its ultimate destiny as the ideal form of government for the entire world, democracy needed to be expanded. Its basis had to widen. And for that to happen, its principles needed to be universalized by giving them a moral compass and wider scope. The next great stage in the evolution of democracy, accordingly, was Christianity.

*Moral Democracy:* Christianity, in Locke's estimate of it, provided the ideal basis for a moral democracy. Ideally universal, and socially so in its pristine beginnings, over time Christianity became circumscribed:

Christianity was responsible for the introduction of the next great revision in the concept of democracy. We owe to Christianity one of the great basic ideals of democracy—the ideal of the moral equality of human beings. The Christian ideal of democracy was in its initial stages more democratic than it subsequently became. It always held on to the essential ideal of moral equality of man within the limits of organized Christianity—anybody else was a potential member only as he became converted. Christianity was thus a crusading ideal in bringing humanity into wider association. But the Christian church was a political institution and in making compromises often failed in bringing about real human equality.<sup>16</sup>

Principles are powerful. But they can all too easily be compromised. Early American history illustrates this point. Elsewhere, Locke shows that Christian America could not, at first, tolerate nonconformists, even if those nonconformists were fellow Christians:

Our American tradition of democracy, let us remember, began merely as a passionate rationalization of religious non-conformism, the conscientious demand of a convinced minority about freedom of worship and the moral liberty of conscience. And at that time, it had not even matured to the adult principle of abstract freedom of conscience as the religious intolerances of colonial settlers proved; migrating non-conformists themselves, they still could not stand the presence of non-conformity in their midst.<sup>17</sup>

It was really due to the immaturity of the Christian community that its moral democracy was later compromised by fractious denominations, creating a “house divided.” From the city-state to the nation-state, secular developments again seized the initiative and led the way. The separation of church and state was a necessary development in the evolution of democracy. The American system would be based on the Judeo-Christian ethic, and on a diffuse notion of Providence as well, but not on Christianity itself. While Christian ethics were viable, the Christian institutions were not. New institutions had to be brought into being. These new institutions were based on the Constitution, not on Christianity.

*Political Democracy:* The popular understanding of democracy is the received, traditional notion of a political form of government that is the most effective conduit of representation and self-government. This

political view of democracy is essentially correct, but represents an historical development of democracy, in Locke's view of it.

To define democracy only in terms of its political manifestation is too narrow, too provincial, and ultimately unreflective. In articulating political democracy within its evolutionary paradigm, Locke explains the profound influence of the French Revolution on the establishment of American democracy. In one speech, Locke states:

Then later came that political and secular strand of colonial experience, which out of the fight against tyranny and taxation grew into the issue of political freedom and the liberty of self-government. But even then, when these developments had been fought for and won, and were being institutionalized, it took another strain of radical thinking imported from Revolutionary France to consolidate this into a formally democratic doctrine, the fundamental historical creed of American democracy that we know so well and rightly treasure so highly.<sup>18</sup>

Locke is consistent in maintaining that political democracy is yet another stage in the evolution of democracy, albeit a pivotal development that coincides with—and in many ways defines—the establishment of America as we know it today. Neither Greece nor Christianity were decisive at this stage in the evolution of democracy. It was the political philosophy of the French that most impressed Thomas Jefferson and profoundly influenced the development of democracy in America:

The third great step in democracy came from Protestant lands and people who evolved the ideal of political equality: (1) equality before the law; (2) political citizenship. This political democracy pivoted on individualism, and the freedom of the individual in terms of what we know as the fundamental rights of man. It found its best expression in the historic formula of “Liberty, equality and fraternity.”<sup>19</sup>

That the Constitution of the United States is a “living” document susceptible of revision allows for the discovery of its undemocratic elements and provides for its remedy of these inherent defects. Locke sees this process of amending the Constitution as “progressive” but not perfect. He appreciates the Bill of Rights and subsequent Amendments as milestones in the evolution of American democracy. But the political system—not to mention the social manifestations of democracy—are still far from perfect:

In terms of this ideology our country's government was founded. But for generations after many of the fundamentals of our democracy were pious objectives, not fully expressed in practice. In the perspective of democracy's long evolution, we must regard our country's history as a progressive process of democratization, not yet fully achieved, but certainly progressing importantly in terms of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth amendments, and the amendment extending the right of franchise to women. It is still imperfect.<sup>20</sup>

It is all too easy to assume that because the United States is constituted as a political democracy, it is truly democratic. Political democracy is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a fully democratic society. Locke pressed this point on a number of occasions: "If we are going to have effective democracy in America we must have the democratic spirit as well as the democratic tradition, we must have more social democracy and more economic democracy in order to have or keep political democracy."<sup>21</sup> This statement reveals the cornerstone of Locke's philosophy of democracy: that democratic ideals must be complemented by democratic attitudes. In other words, the democratic spirit is what really animates a democracy, not simply its institutions and legal safeguards. Consistent with this analysis is Locke's progression from political to economic democracy, in which human values (on which political democracy is ostensibly based) can and must be linked to economic values.

*Economic Democracy:* While his theory of democracy encompasses a wide range of dimensions, first in Locke's mind were issues of race and class. Indeed, they were tied to each other in that "white privilege" required a minority underclass. Although Locke was no economist, he clearly understood that reality. It was obvious within the black community. Economic reform was a necessary development of democracy:

The fourth crucial stage in the enlargement of democracy began, I think, with the income tax amendment. Woodrow Wilson tried to put into operation an extension of democracy which may well have been seriously hindered by World War number one. The income tax amendment was an initial step in social [economic] democracy as distinguished from the purely political,—a step toward economic equality through the partial appropriation of surplus wealth for the benefit of the commonwealth.

In this country for many generations we thought we had economic equality. What we really had was a frontier expansion which developed such surpluses and offered such practical equality of opportunity as to give us the illusion of economic equality. We later learned that we did not have economic democracy, and that in order to have this, we must have guaranteed to all citi-

zens certain minimal standards of living and the right to earn a living. Faced with the crisis of unemployment, the New Deal has been confronted with the problem of inaugurating some of these beginnings of economic democracy and of constitutionally implementing a larger measure of social justice. The whole program of what is now called Social Security is directed toward such objectives.<sup>22</sup>

Race and class being his primary concerns, Locke did not try to improve on political democracy as such. He endorsed Western, liberal democracy as the basis of all democratic societies and the foundation of all subsequent democratic developments. Locke took American political democracy as a point of departure for his discussion of the other dimensions or extensions of democracy. This rhetorical strategy served to inspire confidence in his audiences that his message was not politically subversive. Rather, it was quintessentially American and was aimed at resolving some of the major contradictions in the practice of democracy.

Locke spoke of “the two basic economic roots of war—unequal access to markets and sources of raw materials and widespread differentials of living standards and economic security.”<sup>23</sup> Locke taught that political freedom ought to lead to economic democracy. What Locke means by economic democracy is an “equitable distribution of wealth.”<sup>24</sup> Redistribution of surplus wealth is part of that process.

At the conclusion of an unpublished essay, “Peace Between Black and White in the United States,” Locke wrote:

We used to say that Christianity and democracy were both at stake in the equitable solution of the race question. They were; but they were abstract ideals that did not bleed when injured. Now we think with more realistic logic, perhaps, that economic justice cannot stand on one foot; and economic reconstruction is the dominant demand of the present-day American scene.<sup>25</sup>

But just as political democracy is a necessary but not a sufficient requirement for a fully democratic society, so also is economic democracy. But even if, in theory, equality of opportunity existed and economic equality could be achieved, intercommunal conflict would not be resolved. America, although prosperous by virtue of its free market economy, still had to deal with racism (an historical aftereffect of slavery) and all its social, educational, and economic consequences.

*Cultural Democracy:* Locke’s next form of democracy is clear enough,

although his name for it is not. It is not so much “cultural” as it is “communal.” Locke sums up the problem he is addressing as follows: “Less acute than race prejudice, but by no means unrelated to it, is the social bias and discrimination underlying the problem of cultural minorities. . . . Cultural bias, like that directed against the Mexican, Orientals, the Jew, the American Indian, often intensifies into racial prejudice.”<sup>26</sup> As an antidote to this social ill, Locke advocates cultural pluralism and rejects “Americanization,” whether enforced by law or coerced by social pressures. As Locke explains:

A fifth phase of democracy, even if the preceding four are realized, still remains to be achieved in order to have a fully balanced society. The present crisis forces us to realize that without this also democracy may go into total eclipse. This fifth phase is the struggle for cultural democracy, and rests on the concept of the right of difference,—that is, the guarantee of the rights of minorities. Again in the colonial days, we achieved the basic ideals of this crucial aspect of democracy, but scarcely realized them in fact. Today we have the same problems of the freedom of speech, worship and conscience, but in a complex modern situation these things are even more difficult to work out.

One of our greatest problems then today is a real democratic reciprocity for minorities of all sorts, both as over against the so-called majority and among themselves. These contemporary problems of democracy can be vividly sensed if we realize that the race question is at the very heart of this struggle for cultural democracy. Its solution lies beyond even the realization of political and economic democracy, although of course that solution can only be reached when we no longer have extreme political inequality and extreme economic inequality.<sup>27</sup>

Given the latitude of meaning inherent in Locke’s use of the term “cultural,” perhaps it would not be redundant to say that “cultural democracy” can effectively be served by culture. During the heyday of the Harlem Renaissance, and throughout the post-Renaissance period, Locke expressed the hope that writers and artists would achieve a “victory” through “a psychological conquest of racism, prejudice, and cultural intolerance.”<sup>28</sup>

*Racial Democracy*: “The race question,” wrote Locke in 1949, “has become the number one problem of the world.”<sup>29</sup> His next statement follows from the first: “Race really is a dominant issue of our thinking about democracy.”<sup>30</sup> In his small book, *World View on Race and Democracy: A Study Guide in Human Group Relations*, Locke puts this another way: “Of all the barriers limiting democracy, color is the

greatest, whether viewed from a standpoint of national or world democracy.”<sup>31</sup> Locke sees this as part of what he calls “total democracy.”<sup>32</sup>

Locke was alive to the glaring contradiction of racial segregation in American life, but he was careful in how he presented the naked truth about the arrested development of American democracy. At a popular level, an artist can be more effective than a politician. In the wake of the Red Summer of 1919, in his review of the play *And They Lynched Him on a Tree*, Locke refers to Walt Whitman’s celebration of democracy, but treats his patriotic, exuberant adulation of America as an arrested stage in the popular understanding of democracy. And so, Locke writes, the play speaks volumes about the need for a racial democracy:

In the days of its youth, democracy needed, no doubt, the lusty praise and encomiums of a Walt Whitman; and many of the contemporary works on this theme [democracy] have obviously the Whitman flavor. But democracy today needs sober criticism, even courageous chastising, and . . . *And They Lynched Him on a Tree* gives our democracy in crisis just that much-needed heroic challenge and criticism. So doing, it universalizes its particular theme and expands a Negro tragedy into a purging and inspiring plea for justice and a fuller democracy. When, on occasion, art rises to this level, it fuses truth with beauty, and in addition to being a sword for the times it is likely to remain, as a thing of beauty, a joy forever.<sup>33</sup>

Prophetically, Locke forged a linkage between racism as an American problem and racism as a world problem. He explicitly states: “Race as a symbol of misunderstanding has become fully the great tragedy of our time, both nationally and internationally.”<sup>34</sup>

Race is the crux, the litmus test, the hinge on which the entire project of democracy hangs. In an unpublished report on racism, Locke writes:

The American race problem may eventually become just a phase and segment of the world relationship of races, and in slight degree it is already in process of becoming so. Historically, and in the general American thought of it, whether among the Negro minority or the white majority, it is thought of as peculiarly and exclusively a national problem. In some respects, its situations are relatively unique. . . . So, as between the white and the black peoples, the American situation is the acid test of the whole problem; and will be crucial in its outcome for the rest of the world. This makes America, in the judgment of many, the world’s laboratory for the progressive solution of this great problem of social adjustment.<sup>35</sup>

Locke takes Christianity to task for its failure to bring a democratic “Kingdom of Heaven” on earth, as Jesus preached: “It is a sad irony,”

Alain Locke wrote, “that the social institution most committed and potentially most capable of implementing social democracy should actually be the weakest and most inconsistent, organized religion.”<sup>36</sup> Particularly egregious, in Locke’s view, is what today is termed “self-segregation”: “Of all the segregated bodies, the racially separate church is the saddest and most obviously self-contradicting. The separate Negro church, organized in self-defensive protest, is nonetheless just as anomalous, though perhaps, more pardonably so.”<sup>37</sup>

Self-segregation was raised as a Christian issue in Niebuhr’s famous book, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*. “But as Buell Gallagher points out in *Color and Conscience*,” Locke continues, “the separate church of any type stands self-contradicted; from both the religious and the democratic points of view. . . . However, as Gallagher remarks, it is only in the true democracy of the few pioneer interracial churches that the movement for a return to first principles is really vitally alive.”<sup>38</sup> Such “pioneer” churches are, in the words of Gallagher, “not mere experiments, they are a prophecy.”<sup>39</sup>

Endorsing Gallagher’s clarion call to “bring the whole family of God within the circle of brotherhood,” Locke comments: “It is because religious liberals are beginning to think and act in such realistic but at the same time logical fashion that there is renewed hope for some early progress toward racial and social and cultural democracy.”<sup>40</sup> Here, Locke is a participant observer. As a “universalist in religion”—as he describes himself in his psychograph—Locke was one of the religious liberals of whom he spoke.

From his days at Oxford, Locke knew that his destiny was to be a “race man” and champion of his people. As an integrationist, however, Locke’s “race loyalty” was part of a more sweeping and transcendent vision of interracial unity. In an unpublished reflection on the Harlem experience, Locke states: “There is the so-called ‘New Negro movement,’ which deliberately aims at capitalizing race consciousness for group inspiration and cultural development. But it has no political or separatist motives, and is, in this one respect, different from the nationalisms of other suppressed minorities.”<sup>41</sup> Now that the Harlem Renaissance is history, Locke’s thought on race relations takes on a renewed relevance. There is a linkage here between racial equality and cultural pluralism on both a national level and on a world scale. Racial democracy can hardly be divorced from world democracy. Indeed, it was Locke who internationalized the issue of racial justice, which is a

necessary but not sufficient condition for racial democracy.

*Social Democracy:* Equivalence may be drawn between Locke's concepts of cultural pluralism and social democracy. In "Reason and Race" (1947), Locke underscores "the fact that the contemporary world situation clearly indicates that social democracy is the only safe choice for the survival of Western and Christian civilization."<sup>42</sup>

At the Seventeenth Annual Convention and Bahá'í Congress, 5 July 1925, Locke delivered an address:

Dr. Alain LeRoy Locke of Washington, D.C., delivered a polished address, portraying the great part which America can play in the establishment of world peace, if alive to its opportunity. The working out of social democracy can be accomplished here. To this end we should not think in little arcs of experience, but in the big, comprehensive way. Let our country reform its own heart and life. Needed reforms cannot be worked out by the action of any one group, but a fine sense of cooperation must secure universal fellowship. He praised Green Acre, which he declared to be an oasis in the desert of materiality. He urged all who were favored by this glorious experience to carry forth its glorious message and thus awaken humanity. In final analysis, peace cannot exist anywhere without existing everywhere.<sup>43</sup>

Democracy too is meant to be universal, to be enjoyed and participated in by the whole—not by the part—of any human society. A democracy that diminishes or excludes segments of its population is selective at best, and oppressive at worst. The very integrity of democracy itself is put to test by the state of its race relations. At another Bahá'í-sponsored race amity event, Locke said:

When the merits of different races are understood they will bring a kinship of humanity. We shall not then consider superficial differences, nor deny our basic unity. We stand in our own shadows if we deny culture to others because their culture differs from our own. In religion we are interested only intellectually and render only lip service if we do not regard the stranger as our brother.<sup>44</sup>

*Spiritual Democracy:* Democracy is more than a political system: it is a state of mind, a province of the heart, a radiation of attitudes from which all actions flow. Spiritual democracy is the democracy of the heart. It is a place, a state of mind, that legislation cannot reach. It is the interiority of democracy that Locke emphasized:

Constitutional guarantees, legal and civil rights, political machinery of democratic action and control are, of course, the skeleton foundation of democracy, but you and I know that attitudes are the flesh and blood of democracy, and

that without their vital reinforcement democracy is really moribund or dead. That is my reason for thinking that in any democracy, ours included, the crucial issue, the test touchstone of democracy is minority status, minority protection, minority rights.<sup>45</sup>

Minority rights are a reflection of the will of the majority. Since democracy is, by definition, based on the rule of the majority, the voices of racial and ethnic minorities can be muffled, or perhaps only pierce through the silence with the shrill tenor of protest. Indeed, the plight of minorities is the touchstone of the truth of those democratic ideals to which a nation professes. Collectively, minorities function as the litmus test of democracy, indeed as the very conscience of democracy. During the height of World War II, Locke wrote:

The world crisis has led to the reexamination of the traditional doctrines of human equality and brotherhood among the leading thinkers of the Christian churches. As a result, a fresh crusade for aligning organized religion with the constructive forces of world democracy has come to the vanguard of liberal religious thought and action. Both intercultural, intersectorian and interfaith movements have grown out of these considerations.<sup>46</sup>

In his unpublished Bahá'í essay, Locke expresses his conviction that "Spiritual Democracy" is the dimension of democracy with the "most inner meaning." Locke states:

The gospel for the Twentieth Century rises out of the heart of its greatest problems . . . Much has been accomplished in the name of Democracy, but Spiritual Democracy, its largest and most inner meaning, is so below our common horizons. . . The land that is nearest to material democracy is furthest away from spiritual democracy . . . The word of God is still insistent, . . . and we have . . . Bahá'u'lláh's "one great trumpet-call to humanity": "That all nations shall become one in faith, and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled . . . These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and family."

Alain Locke preached a secular "gospel for the Twentieth Century" that was directly inspired by the ideals of the religion to which he had converted in 1918, the Bahá'í Faith. Locke's use of term "gospel" to express his vision of America as "spiritual democracy" is not unlike Martin Luther King's notion of the "gospel of freedom" coined in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail." By representing their visions of

America as gospels, these two race leaders sought to sacralize the secular.

The notion of a spiritual democracy is not without precedent. For instance, in his essay, “Democratic Vistas,”<sup>47</sup> Walt Whitman’s vision of the New World unfolds in three stages. First there is the foundation of democracy itself, as enshrined in the twin American scriptures, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Material civilization follows, with the technological wonders that Whitman praises in “Passage to India,” in which science plays an almost salvific role. Then there is spiritual democracy, which for Whitman is religious at a personal, but not an institutional, level. Although a comparison between the two is limited at best, Whitman’s three stages roughly correspond with Locke’s concepts of political, economic, and cultural democracy. Using other criteria, Charles Molesworth has formally compared the two visionaries in his thought-provoking article, “Alain Locke and Walt Whitman: Manifestos and National Identity.”<sup>48</sup>

In a speech he addressed to a Bahá’í-sponsored, race amity convention, Locke expressed his conviction that there is, indeed, a “spiritual” dimension of democracy. Harking back to the Greek notion of the “barbarian” at the inception of democracy in the Greek city-state, Locke observes:

Let us first consider the question of morals. Our ideas of humanity are largely governed by the impressions of the small fraction we see. But it takes many a type to round out humanity. Cultural and spiritual democracy are impossible unless all humanity comes under its scope. Spiritual perception is necessary to understand the merits of others. For that which makes a man a barbarian, as we understand him, is the difference between him and ourselves. This difference measures the degree of our understanding. This is not his failing, but ours.<sup>49</sup>

Locke’s ideal of “spiritual democracy” appears primarily in his Bahá’í essays and speeches. It was probably inspired—and certainly catalyzed—by his Bahá’í ideals. In a secularized translation of his own Bahá’í thought, Locke spoke of the dawn of “a new age of reason on the subject of race.”<sup>50</sup> Locke’s concept of spiritual democracy synthesizes his social philosophy.

Spiritual democracy, of course, pivots on the notion of spirituality itself. Throughout his writings, Locke differentiates “spiritual” and “material” spheres of human activity. At the conclusion of his

essay, “Enter the New Negro” (1925), Locke states: “. . . if in our lifetime the Negro should not be able to celebrate his full initiation into American democracy, he can at least, on the warrant of these things, celebrate the attainment of a significant and satisfying new phase of group development, and with a spiritual Coming of Age.” This spiritual awakening that was stirring within the African American community was not defined by any specific religious reference, but represented the “spirit”—that is, consciousness—of a collective self-image.

So far as I can tell, Locke did not mention the Bahá’í Faith by name outside of a Bahá’í venue or context. As universal and egalitarian as were his Bahá’í ideals, Locke took the far more practical route of transposing those ideals into philosophical discourse, educational reform, and cultural criticism. Cultural pluralism was Locke’s secular gospel. Cultural pluralism provided the social philosophy most needed for democracy,<sup>51</sup> not just in America, but across the world. Cultural pluralism was thus “the philosophic faith that Locke became a spokesman for.”<sup>52</sup> As his primary philosophical framework, cultural pluralism would make possible a general theory of “unity in diversity.”<sup>53</sup>

One of the keys to Locke’s thought and role as a cultural pluralist is that he did not write or act from within a parochial perspective. Yet the more one studies him, the more one is struck by the resonance that reverberates between Locke’s secular and religious speeches and essays—the synergy between his philosophical and faith commitments.

*World Democracy:* On a world scale, democracy is global self-governance. Locke’s universalism is most evident in his discussion of world democracy, for which “internationalism” appears to be a synonym. World democracy is really the logical and pragmatic expansion of the democratic principle, from a national to an international level. “World democracy,” writes Locke, “presupposes the recognition of the essential equality of all peoples and the potential parity of all cultures.”<sup>54</sup> On a radio program, “Woman’s Page of the Air” with Adelaide Hawley, broadcast on 6 August 1944, while World War II was at its height, Locke said: “Just as the foundation of democracy as a national principle made necessary the declaration of the basic equality of persons, so the founding of *international democracy* must guarantee the basic equality of human groups.”<sup>55</sup>

It is at this level that democracy attains its ultimate fruition, and finds its fullest expression. Both as a cultural pluralist and as a Bahá'í, Locke was a supporter of world federalism in principle and of the United Nations in practice. It was the phoenix that rose out of the ashes of the conflagration of World War II, which Locke regarded as a global civil war. "Democracy at war," Locke declared, "must more clearly outline its position and more unequivocally avow its principles."<sup>56</sup> Of the international body, Locke writes:

Significantly enough, the Phalanx of the United Nations unites an unprecedented assemblage of the races, cultures and peoples of the world. Could this war-born assemblage be welded by a constructive peace into an effective world order—one based on the essential parity of peoples and a truly democratic reciprocity of cultures—world democracy would be within reach of attainment.<sup>57</sup>

Moreover, the United States, with its composite population sampling all the human races and peoples, is by way of being almost a United Nations by herself. We could so easily and naturally, with the right dynamic, become the focus of thoroughgoing internationalism—thereby realizing, one might say, our manifest destiny.<sup>58</sup>

Accordingly, Locke noted, "we must find common human denominators of liberty, equality, and fraternity for humanity at large."<sup>59</sup> In the quest to universalize democracy, "color becomes the acid test of our fundamental honesty in putting into practice the democracy we preach."<sup>60</sup>

In his essay, "The Unfinished Business of Democracy," written during World War II, Locke eloquently defines America's world role:

To the farsighted, the future is not divorced from present action. Every constructive step in social democracy, in social justice, is not only net gain for the present but assured dividends for the future. So linked up are the home and foreign fronts of race, that it matters little where the moves begin. Any gain is a world gain; any setback, a world loss. . . .

Conversely, a lynching in Mississippi, over and above its enemy echo on a Tokyo short-wave, has as much symbolic meaning in Chunking, Bombay, and Brazzaville as it has in tragic reality in the hearts of Negro Americans. Steps taken to abolish second-class citizenship in Florida or to democratize the American army or our war industry have, on the other hand, favorable repercussions almost to the ends of the earth. It helps build up not necessarily a democracy of extended political power and domain, but a much more needed democracy of full moral stature, world influence and world respect. It is such unfinished business, foreign and domestic, that waits on democracy's calendar today.<sup>61</sup>

Locke's theory of democracy, with its primary focus on America, may be seen as a secular application of the Bahá'í vision of America's destiny to lead all nations spiritually, with which Locke himself was probably conversant. In an unpublished letter, dated 1 August 1934 to Shoghi Effendi, Locke spoke of the "factionalism of race" in America, and of his resolve to be "a modifying influence to radical sectionalism and to increasing materialistic trends—and in this indirect way to serve the [Bahá'í] Cause and help forward the universal principles."<sup>62</sup> In his essay, "Unity through Diversity: A Bahá'í Principle" (1933), Locke effectively "translated" Bahá'í ideals "into more secular terms" so that "a greater practical range will be opened up for the application and final vindication of the Bahá'í principles" in order to achieve "a positive multiplication of spiritual power." Locke's philosophy of democracy, as it relates to America and world peace, may therefore be seen as an extension of his Bahá'í values.

Locke forged a vital linkage between American democracy and world democracy. Exploring the relationship between America and world democracy, Locke postulated that "World leadership . . . must be moral leadership in democratic concert with humanity at large."<sup>63</sup> In so doing, America must perforce "abandon racial and cultural prejudice."<sup>64</sup> "A world democracy," wrote Locke, "cannot possibly tolerate what a national democracy has countenanced too long."<sup>65</sup>

World peace can only be established on a foundation of principle of the oneness of humankind—harmony of races, religions, and nations. All peace-building policies and instruments depend on this. This is Locke's vision of America and his prescription for world peace: "The moral imperatives of a new world order are an internationally limited idea of national sovereignty, a non-monopolistic and culturally tolerant concept of race and religious loyalties freed of sectarian bigotry."<sup>66</sup> In "Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy" (1942), Locke wrote that: "The intellectual core of the problems of the peace . . . will be the discovery of the necessary common denominators and the basic equivalences involved in a democratic world order or democracy on a world scale."<sup>67</sup>

*Conclusions:* This inventory of the dimensions of democracy in Locke's philosophy does not exhaust his expansive uses of the term and the concept. Perhaps all these are summed up in Locke's felicitous

expression: “equalitarian democracy.”<sup>68</sup> Doubtless, there is a great deal of overlap in the various terms of Locke’s nomenclature. Yet there is a certain degree of consistency in it. His evolutionary, developmental view of democracy remains consistent. “All of these enlargements of democratic thought and practice in the perspective of one trained to expect democracy to evolve,” reflects Locke, “are viewed and accepted in a natural and meaningful way as part of a necessary process.”<sup>69</sup>

This is not a taxonomy in the political, scientific sense. Locke had other concepts of democracy as well. For example, on 28 May 1946, in his commencement address at the University of Wisconsin High School, Locke spoke of “the gallant natural democracy of youth.”<sup>70</sup>

Locke used the term “practical democracy” in a variety of contexts. For instance, in reporting on a Bahá’í-sponsored race amity convention, Locke wrote: “Washington, which the penetrating vision of Abdul Baha in 1912 saw as the crux of the race problem and therefore of practical democracy in America, was for that reason selected as the place for the first convention under Bahai auspices for amity in inter-racial relations.”<sup>71</sup>

“Creative democracy” is Locke’s term for visionary and revisionist efforts to further align principle with practice. He spoke of “the successive maturing of the democratic tradition in America” and of the “enlargements of democratic thought and practice.”<sup>72</sup>

Locke also spoke of “intellectual democracy.” In his essay, “Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy,” originally published in the proceedings of the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion (1942), Locke defines the social responsibility of the scholar and public intellectual. “What intellectuals can do for the extension of the democratic way of life is to discipline our thinking critically into some sort of realistic world-mindedness. Broadening our cultural values and tempering our orthodoxies is of infinitely more service to enlarged democracy than direct praise and advocacy of democracy itself. For until broadened by relativism and reconstructed accordingly, our current democratic traditions and practice are not ready for world-wide application. Considerable political and cultural dogmatism, in the form of culture bias, nation worship, and racism, still stands in the way and must first be invalidated and abandoned.”<sup>73</sup> While “intellectual democracy” is not the province of scholars alone, they are public intellectuals who wield considerable influence.

Locke was gifted with a universal perspective. His vision was

world embracing. He saw the American racial crisis as a problem of world-historical proportions. Locke used historical retrospect to create new future prospects for democracy. In *The Negro in America* (1933), Locke wrote:

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>74</sup>

Locke inwardly felt that what America really needed was to embrace Bahá'í principles (though not necessarily the Bahá'í Faith itself). “Dr. Alain Locke of Washington, D.C., speaking on the subject, ‘America’s Part in World Peace’,” according to a news report, “pointed out the priceless value and the great necessity of a good example if America is to perform a real service to the world.” He said:

America’s democracy must begin at home with a spiritual fusion of all her constituent peoples in brotherhood, and in an actual mutuality of life. Until democracy is worked out in the vital small scale of practical human relations, it can never, except as an empty formula, prevail on the national or international basis. Until it establishes itself in human hearts, it can never institutionally flourish. Moreover, America’s reputation and moral influence in the world depends on the successful achievement of this vital spiritual democracy within the lifetime of the present generation. (Material civilization alone does not safeguard the progress of a nation.) Bahá'í Principles and the leavening of our national life with their power, is to be regarded as the salvation of democracy. In this way only can the fine professions of American ideals be realized.<sup>75</sup>

Locke was America’s ambassador of democracy to America itself. His theory of democracy was both evolutionary and multi-dimensional. It would only be a matter of time until the various aspects of that theory would fall into focus and be articulated in a more coherent form. As theoretically elegant as it was, Locke’s philosophy of democracy always had a practical emphasis and application. And for that reason, it can never be said that his philosophy ended in mere words. “But now, it seems to me,” Locke told an audience of social workers in 1938, “the soundest, wisest and most appropriate slogan,—if we must have a slogan, is to americanize Americans in their social attitudes and behav-

ior, to establish democracy in the heart of our social relations.”<sup>76</sup> Once that happens, America could have the requisite moral authority to adopt its “world role.”<sup>77</sup> Locke’s philosophy of democracy, in essence, was to realize the American ideal in all its dimensions—locally, morally, politically, economically, culturally, interracially and socially, spiritually, globally, naturally, intellectually, practically, and creatively.

## Notes

1. Harlan Ober, “The Bahá’í Congress at Green Acre,” *Star of the West*, Vol 16, no. 1 (April 1925) p. 525. Courtesy of Jeff Palermo, e-mail message, 1 May 2002.
2. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-124, Folder 15 (“The Preservation of the Democratic Ideal”) p. 5.
3. Alain Locke, “Enter the New Negro,” *Survey Graphic*, Vol. 53, no. 11 (1 March 1925) p. 631-34. Reprinted in Jeffrey C. Stewart, ed., *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke*, p. 9.
4. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-105, Folder 33 ([re: America’s position in world affairs in relation to race.] Speech over station KMYR, Denver. 6 August 1944).
5. *Ibid.*
6. Alain Locke, “Reason and Race,” in Stewart, *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke*, 327.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 326.
8. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-112, Folder 6: “Concept of Democracy.” Outline of lecture for Philosophy of Democracy course. 10 December 1947.
9. Leonard Harris, “Preface,” in *The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke*, p. xi.
10. Judith Green, “Cosmopolitan Unity Amidst Valued Diversity: Alain Locke’s Vision of Deeply Democratic Transformation,” in *Deep Democracy: Community, Diversity, and Transformation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999) pp. 95-134. Other previous literature will be cited throughout.
11. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-112, Folder 6 (“Concept of Democracy.”). Outline of lecture for Philosophy of Democracy course. 10 December 1947, p. 1.
12. Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations*, p. 66.
13. *Chicago Defender*, no date available.
14. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-113, Folder 4 ([re: democracy] Departure speech to students at Talladega College, 1941) p. 1.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
17. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-112, Folder 18 (“Creative Democracy”), 1.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
19. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-113, Folder 4 ([re: democracy] Departure speech to students at Talladega College, 1941) p. 2.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.
21. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-124, Folder 15 (“The Preservation of

- the Democratic Ideal”) p. 5.
21. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-113, Folder 4 ([re: democracy] Departure speech to students at Talladega College, 1941) pp. 3-4.
  23. Alain Locke, “Democracy Faces a World Order,” *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 12, no. 2 (March 1942) pp. 124.
  24. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-112, Folder 6 (“Concept of Democracy”). Outline of lecture for Philosophy of Democracy course. 10 December 1947, p. 1.
  25. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-123: Folder 19 (“Peace Between Black and White in the United States”).
  26. Alain Locke, *World View on Race and Democracy: A Study Guide in Human Group Relations* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1943) p. 5.
  27. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-113, Folder 4 ([re: democracy] Departure speech to students at Talladega College, 1941) pp. 4-5.
  28. Alain Locke, “Reason and Race,” in Stewart, *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke*, p. 320.
  29. Alain Locke, “Dawn Patrol: A Review of the Literature of the Negro for 1948,” *Phylon*, Vol. 10, no. 1-2 (1949) pp. 5-14; 167-72. Reprinted in Jeffrey C. Stewart, *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke: A Selection of His Essays on Art and Culture* (New York and London: Garland, 1983) pp. 337-49 [337].
  30. Alain Locke, “Reason and Race,” in Stewart, *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke*, p. 325.
  31. Alain Locke, *World View on Race and Democracy*, p. 1.
  32. *Ibid.*, p. 2, citing Howard H. Brinton (no reference given).
  33. Alain Locke, “Ballad for Democracy,” *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life*, Vol. 18, no. 8 (August 1940) p. 228, cited by Wayne D. Shirley, “William Grant Still’s Choral Ballad ‘And They Lynched Him on a Tree,’” *American Music*, Vol. 12, no. 4 (Winter 1994) pp. 425-37.
  34. Alain Locke, “A Critical Retrospect of the Literature of the Negro for 1947,” *Phylon*, Vol. 9, no. 1 (1948) pp. 3-12. Reprinted in Jeffrey C. Stewart, *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke: A Selection of His Essays on Art and Culture* (New York and London: Garland, 1983) pp. 329-36 [329].
  35. “[Through Mrs. Ruth Cranston] Report on The Race Problem in the American Area.” Alain Locke Papers, MSRC. Box 164-43, Folder 3 (Writings by Locke—Notes[:] Christianity, spirituality, religion.) p. 1.
  36. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-105, Folder 34 (“American Education’s Latest Task: Teaching Democracy.” [incomplete]) p. 8.
  37. *Ibid.*
  38. *Ibid.* Locke here refers to the book, *Color and Conscience: The Irrepressible Conflict* (1946) by Buell Gordon Gallagher (1904-1979).
  39. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-105, Folder 34 (“American Education’s Latest Task: Teaching Democracy.” [incomplete]) p. 8.
  40. *Ibid.*
  41. “[Through Mrs. Ruth Cranston] Report on The Race Problem in the American Area.” Alain Locke Papers, MSRC. Box 164-43, Folder 3 (Writings by Locke—Notes[:] Christianity, spirituality, religion.) p. 3.
  42. Alain Locke, “Reason and Race,” in Stewart, *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke*, p. 327.
  43. “The Seventeenth Annual Convention and Baha’i Congress,” *Baha’i News*

Letter, No. 6 (1925) p. 3.

44. Louis Gregory, "A Convention for Amity," p. 273.

45. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-124, Folder 15 ("The Preservation of the Democratic Ideal") pp. 1-2.

46. Alain Locke, *World View on Race and Democracy*, p. 18.

46. Walt Whitman, "Democratic Vistas," in *Leaves Of Grass And Selected Prose*, ed. Ellman Crasnow, pp. 505-59 (London: Orion Publishing Group, 1993 [1871]), cited by Jim Garrison (Virginia Tech.), "Reflections on Whitman, Dewey, and Educational Reform: Reclaiming 'Democratic Vistas,'" Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy, 29th Annual Meeting, Portland, Maine, March 7-9, 2002. Online: [www.american-philosophy.org/2002\\_Conference/2002\\_papers/tp-5.htm](http://www.american-philosophy.org/2002_Conference/2002_papers/tp-5.htm).

48. Molesworth, "Alain Locke and Walt Whitman."

49. Louis Gregory, "A Convention for Amity," *The Bahá'í Magazine, Star of the West*, Vol 15, pp. 272.

50. Alain Locke, "Reason and Race," *Phylon*, Vol. 8, no. 1 (1947) pp. 17-27. Reprinted in Jeffrey C. Stewart, *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke: A Selection of His Essays on Art and Culture* (New York and London: Garland, 1983), pp. 319-27 [327].

51. Mason, "Social Philosophy of Alain Locke," p. 26.

52. Kallen, "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism," p. 127.

53. Green, "Alain Locke's Multicultural Philosophy of Value," p. 87.

54. Alain Locke, *World View on Race and Democracy*, p. 14.

55. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-105, Folder 33: [re: America's position in world affairs in relation to race.] Speech over station KMYR, Denver. 6 August 1944, p. 6.

56. Alain Locke, "Democracy Faces a World Order," p. 122.

57. Alain Locke, "The Unfinished Business of Democracy," *Survey Graphic: Magazine of Social Interpretation*, Vol. 31 (November 1942) pp. 455-61 [456].

58. *Ibid.*, p. 458.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 455.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 456.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 459.

62. Locke to to Shoghi Effendi, 1 August 1934, Bahá'í World Center Archives. Courtesy of the Universal House of Justice.

63. Locke, "The Unfinished Business of Democracy," p. 459.

64. *Ibid.*

65. Locke, "Democracy Faces a World Order," p. 128.

66. Harris, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 152.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

68. Alain Locke, *World View on Race and Democracy*, p. 12.

69. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-112, Folder 18 ("Creative Democracy") 1.

70. See Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-123, Folder 8 ("On Becoming World Citizens." Commencement Address at University of Wisconsin High School, 28 May 1946. [typescript]).

71. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-176, Folder 13 (Bahá'í Faith).

72. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-112, Folder 18 ("Creative Democracy")

p. 3.

73. Harris, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 63.

74. Alain Locke, *The Negro in America* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1933) p. 50.

75. Harlan Ober, "The Bahá'í Congress at Green Acre," *Star of the West*, vol. 16, no. 1 (April 1925) p. 525. Courtesy of Jeff Palermo, e-mail message, 1 May 2002.

76. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-124, Folder 15 ("The Preservation of the Democratic Ideal") p. 5.

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Courtesy of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University

STUDIO PORTRAIT OF ALAIN LOCKE

## Chapter Eleven

# Concluding Observations

*In the context of today, accordingly, world citizenship means more than enlightened citizenship transforming narrow nationalism into enlightened political nationalism, although it does mean that importantly. It also means an equally important crusade for world culture with its enlarged tolerances and understandings and on the moral plane, at least a world-wide truce, if not eventually a world-scale alliance of the major religions.<sup>1</sup>*

—Alain Locke

In terms of his impact on American history, Alain Locke is certainly the most important Western Bahá'í to date. While his place in the history of the Bahá'í Faith in America is not insignificant, Locke is generally not well known within the Bahá'í community itself and his Bahá'í identity in the academic world has remained little more than a footnote until now. As several Locke scholars have explained, part of the historical difficulty in providing a proper assessment of Locke's importance is the fact that so much of his writing remains unpublished. To illuminate his roles as a Bahá'í race-relations activist, leading African American intellectual, and philosopher of democracy, this study has relied on unpublished archival material to supply some of the missing pieces. This book has stressed Locke's contributions both as a Bahá'í and as a cultural pluralist. Largely through his Bahá'í orientation, Locke brought both his faith and philosophy to bear on what he saw as the most challenging issues of the day.

This study seeks to demonstrate how Locke's Bahá'í ideals were integrated into his philosophy and *vice versa*. This synergy between Locke's religious profession as a Bahá'í and his vocation as a philosopher is critical. That synergy is best demonstrated through a comparison of Locke's confessional (Bahá'í) essays and his professional (academic) essays.

*Locke as a Bahá'í:* For more than three decades, Locke would work within the Bahá'í community to foster ideal race relations, which Bahá'ís first referred to as “race amity” and later as “race unity.” This fact will come as a surprise to many. Most historians either ignore or, at best, make only passing mention of Locke's Bahá'í affiliation—and may even express doubt that Locke was ever an enrolled Bahá'í. One reason is that, outside of Bahá'í venues, Locke made practically no mention of the Bahá'í Faith. He seems to explain this by saying that Bahá'ís need to export their principles and, in effect, secularize them. Only in this way can Bahá'ís ever hope to exert any real social influence. This was the pragmatist in Locke, which constrained and disciplined his idealism.

That Locke was a committed Bahá'í over a long period of time—for over half his life—is not to say that he had an idealized view of the Bahá'í community. Locke had alternating periods of affinity and estrangement, close friends and “personality clashes,” time and lack of it, and so on. At home, he was often over-committed and overbooked. So long as he could afford to, he traveled abroad annually, usually during the summer. There were moments—considerable stretches of time—when Locke seemed to give up on the Bahá'í community. Deeply committed at the level of principle, Locke experienced crises of faith, owing to stagnation in the race amity work. The fact that Locke nonetheless continued to render valuable services to the “Bahá'í Cause” is a testament to the depth of his convictions, and to his enduring loyalty to his religion.

Locke's Bahá'í service included his participation in a “Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races” which took place in Washington, D.C., 19-21 May 1921. Accordingly, the Washington Bahá'í community became the point of effective origin for Bahá'í race-unity initiatives across America. While his activity as a Bahá'í was sporadic, Locke's role in planning and executing the Race Amity

conferences was as central as it was sustained over the duration of years of committee service. Almost certainly his role was critical.

For various personal reasons, Locke later withdrew from active involvement in the Washington Bahá'í community. For one thing, Locke preferred New York to Washington. In a letter to Countee Cullen, Locke opines: "I hope if you ever come to Washington to teach, it won't be the same Washington which is at my throat or rather weighing down on my spirit,—for it is almost impossible to find buoyancy and inspiration in the place. New York is infinitely better, even Harlem."<sup>2</sup> But there were moments when Locke publicly identified himself as a Bahá'í. It must have been with Locke's permission that his photograph appeared in an *Ebony* magazine article late in his life (1952).<sup>3</sup>

*Locke as a Philosopher of Religion:* American pragmatism dethroned epistemology and conceptualized knowledge as subjective, social, and communal. Locke anchored philosophy in human values and formulated his own theory of relativity with regard to their philosophical and social implications. The title of one of Locke's lectures in later life captures the essence of his philosophy: "Cultural Pluralism: A New Americanism." Locke gave this lecture on 8 November 1950, at Howard University.<sup>4</sup> We should hasten to add that, for Locke, integration was not assimilation. To the end of his life, he held to the Bahá'í principle of unity in diversity, which he reformulated as "unity through diversity."

Locke was a professional philosopher. Besides presiding as chair of the Department of Philosophy at Howard University, Locke served as visiting professor of philosophy at Fisk University (1927-28), the University of Wisconsin (1945-46), The New School for Social Research in New York (1947), the College of the City of New York (1948), and the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies. Locke was also an inter-American exchange professor to Haiti in 1943 for three months. There has recently been a revival of interest in Locke's philosophy, much of which remains unpublished.

Scholarship has largely glossed over Locke's perspective on religion. Yet there are references to religion throughout both his published and unpublished writings. According to Locke, philosophy ought to be mindful of the importance of religion:

It is of the utmost importance to supplement the many secular trends toward world order by religious movements and moral perspectives of similar scope and outlook. Although there has been considerable organizational initiative and effort in world-wide religious rapprochement, there still is little internal renouncing on the part of religious bodies of their sectarian parochialisms and their mutually conflicting claims.

Yet here obviously is the crux of the whole issue: if the brotherhood of man is an inescapable corollary of the 'fatherhood of God' principle, so also is the confraternity of religions. The enlightened religion must learn,— that the realistic way to become a world religion is not through world pretensions and world rivalry, but through promoting world-wide peace and understanding and moral cooperation of all sorts on a world-scale.

On that outcome hangs a goodly part of any real ideological peace, since religion, for all its universalistic claims, instead of being a universalizer has so often been the prime weapon in the rationalization of partisan strife and limited attitudes and loyalties.<sup>5</sup>

As early as his dissertation, Locke recognized the integral place religion has in human society. Religion figures prominently in Locke's paradigm of values. Locke's model can be represented by the acronym HEALER: (1) Hedonic; (2) Economic; (3) Artistic; (4) Logical; (5) Ethical; (6) Religious. In his 1935 essay, "Values and Imperatives," however, Locke reduces his taxonomy to four types of values, which I represent with the acronym REAL: (1) Religious; (2) Ethical/Moral; (3) Aesthetic/Artistic; (4) Logical/Scientific. In addition, Locke's *Bahá'í World* essays not only furnish his most complete statement of Bahá'í principle, they are his most complete statements on religion itself.

*Locke as Bahá'í Philosopher:* Philosophy has traditionally systematized religious thinking. Locke's religious works (his *Bahá'í World* essays) were certainly informed by his philosophy. Indeed, the presence of key philosophical concepts in Locke's Bahá'í essays accentuates the religio-philosophical (Bahá'í/cultural-relativist) synergy. "What we need to learn most," writes Locke, "is how to discover unity and spiritual *equivalence* underneath the differences which at present so disunite and sunder us, and how to establish some basic spiritual *reciprocity* on the principle of unity in diversity."<sup>6</sup>

"The purity of Bahá'í principles," Locke argues, "must be gauged by their universality on this practical plane." Locke then poses a challenge in the form of a test of authenticity: "Do they [Bahá'í principles] fraternize and fuse with all their kindred expressions? Are they happy in their collaborations that advocate other sanctions but advance toward

the same spiritual goal? Can they reduce themselves to the vital *common denominators* necessary to mediate between other partisan *loyalties*?" This is Locke's philosophy transposed within a Bahá'í value system.<sup>7</sup>

Bahá'í values suffuse Locke's philosophical thought. Judith Green observes: "Locke's work shows the influence of serious engagements with Marxism, with diverse religious and spiritual traditions including, among others, Christianity, Buddhism, and Bahá'í."<sup>8</sup> This appears to underestimate the importance of the Bahá'í influence. Locke transposed Bahá'í principles of unity into his philosophy. As Washington notes: "During the latter part of his career, he accepted the Bahá'í faith and attempted to integrate it into his own philosophy of values."<sup>9</sup>

It should also be borne in mind that, despite his intense commitment to Bahá'í principles, only rarely did Locke directly cite the Bahá'í writings. Although he acknowledged that "there is no escaping the historical evidences of its [i.e., unity through diversity's] early advocacy and its uncompromising adoption by the Bahá'í prophets and teachers," Locke's advice to Bahá'ís was that "the intelligent, loyal Bahá'í should stress not the source, but the importance of the idea, and rejoice not in the originality and uniqueness of the principle but rather in its prevalence and practicality." Locke continues: "The idea has to be translated into every important province of modern life and thought, and in many of these must seem to be independently derived and justified."<sup>10</sup> This statement signals Locke's intention and method: to apply Bahá'í principles to his own "province of modern life and thought"—philosophy.

"For Locke, cultural pluralism and cultural relativism," according to Mason, "both have their foundation in the Bahá'í principle of unity in diversity."<sup>11</sup> In demonstrating a thematic simultaneity in Locke's religious and philosophical writings, Mason says: "In the following examination of Locke's social philosophy I hope to demonstrate fully that Locke was, theoretically and practically, concerned with the very social issues stressed in the Bahá'í Faith: justice, equality, nonviolence, tolerance, and racial and ideological peace."<sup>12</sup> Mason was not alone in making this assertion. Kenneth Stickers suggests:

The Bahá'í religion provided Locke the concrete experience of unity in diversity, for a central teaching of that faith is that the Word of God is essentially one but is spoken differently through the prophets of the various religions of the world, in ways relative to unique sociohistorical conditions. Locke expressed the Bahá'í principle with this metaphor: "Think of reality as a central fact and a white light broken up by the prism of human nature into a spectrum of values."<sup>13</sup>

This has implications for future Locke studies, for African American history, for Bahá'í studies, and for mainstream American philosophy in general.

Unity in diversity is a Bahá'í principle that Locke transposed into his philosophy: "It is just at this juncture that the idea of unity in diversity seems to me to become relevant, and to offer a spiritual common denominator of both ideal and practical efficacy." Locke wanted to replace absolutes with universalisms: "Even though it is not yet accepted as a general principle, as a general desire and an ideal goal, the demand for universality is beyond doubt the most characteristic modern thing in the realm of spiritual values, and in the world of the mind that reflects this realm." Through the vehicle of philosophy, Locke replaced "identity" with "equivalence" and "difference" with "unity in diversity."<sup>14</sup> In so doing, Locke offered "a solution reconciling nationalism with internationalism, racialism with universalism."<sup>15</sup>

Both as a philosopher and as a Bahá'í, Locke, as a matter of principle, envisioned a series of "progressive integrations" that would progress "in due course" and "step by step, from an initial stage of cultural tolerance, mutual respect, reciprocal exchange, some specific communities of agreement and, finally, commonality of purpose and action."<sup>16</sup> But since he was not a thoroughly systematic thinker, we cannot read this statement with full confidence in its sequence. Green calls this a "peacemaking democratic transformation . . . by stage-wise progression."<sup>17</sup>

It is clear that Locke wanted to make a contribution to world peace as well. If intellectuals were inspired with the same vision and could agree on a common paradigm, their leadership had the potential to further that aim. In his essay, "Cultural Relativism and Ideological Peace," Locke states: "Cultural relativism may become an important source for ideological peace" and, indeed, may serve "as a possible ideological peacemaker." "Cultural relativism" Locke believed, "can become a very constructive philosophy by way of integrating values and value systems." "In looking for cultural agreements on a world scale," Locke further explained, "we shall probably have to content ourselves with agreement of the common-denominator type and with 'unity in diversity' discovered in the search for unities of a functional rather than a content character, and therefore of a pragmatic rather than an ideological sort." In other words, Locke has proposed a formula for

promoting cultural relativism as a “realistic instrument of social reorientation and cultural enlightenment.”<sup>18</sup>

Locke gave specific reasons as to why this program might work. For Locke, cultural relativism had “constructive potentialities”<sup>19</sup> and offered new hope for ideological peace. For relativism to work, it first had to be implemented. Just how would one begin to carry out a program of cultural relativity? Locke had such a plan. Its rationale is developed alongside its strategy. There were three stages in his plan, each of which was intended to have a calculated, cumulative result. The three stages were: (1) cultural equivalence; (2) reciprocity; and (3) limited cultural convertibility.

In his efforts to universalize philosophy, Locke sought to promote intercultural understanding. He thought that scholars (especially “cultural anthropologists”) ought to lead the way through a systematic process of conceptual translation based on formal comparison:

The principle of cultural equivalence, under which we would more widely press the search for functional similarities in our analyses and comparisons of human cultures, thus offsetting our traditional and excessive emphasis upon cultural difference. Such functional equivalences, which we might term “culture-cognates” or “culture-correlates,” discovered underneath deceptive but superficial institutional divergence, would provide objective but soundly neutral common denominators for intercultural understanding and cooperation.<sup>20</sup>

The search for cultural counterparts is, for Locke, a sound way of trying to make sense of the bewildering diversity of societal norms and mores that, upon investigation, reveal a recognizable logic. “Functional equivalence” for Locke, seems to be synonymous with “real basic similarity” in values. Similarities are seen in function rather than form.<sup>21</sup>

Beyond tolerance, but assuming notions of equivalence based on “loyalty to loyalty,” is a second concept: reciprocity. Reciprocity promotes cross-cultural dialogue and cooperation. “Social reciprocity for value loyalties,” writes Locke, “is but a new name for the old virtue of tolerance, yet it does bring the question of tolerance down from the lofty thin air of idealism and chivalry to the plane of enlightened self-interest and the practical possibilities of value-sharing.”<sup>22</sup> This is an understatement, for reciprocity is something much more than mere toleration for the purpose of reducing intercommunal conflict:

The principle of cultural reciprocity, which, by a general recognition of the reciprocal character of all contacts between cultures and the fact that all modern cultures are highly composite ones, would invalidate the lump esti-

mating of cultures in terms of generalized, en bloc assumptions of superiority and inferiority, substituting scientific, point-by-point comparisons with their correspondingly limited, specific, and objectively verifiable superiorities or inferiorities.<sup>23</sup>

This is both a historical as well as procedural statement. Cultures are syncretistic. A simple realization of this fact should suffice to dispel pretensions of cultural superiority. This new virtue—reciprocity—is tolerance transformed into a real exchange of values. As Moses observes: “Locke’s principle of reciprocity first emerges as a historical law that may be discerned through careful consideration of what has contributed to civilized progress in many an age.”<sup>24</sup> Locke translates this historical law into a present-day ethic. In this part of Locke’s plan comparisons must become very specific. The “culture-correlates” would then be weighed, and even judged as to their relative superiority or inferiority. There would be particular cultural values that could be exported and taken up within other modern cultures, which are themselves composites in any case.

As a student of history, Locke foresaw the strong possibility that culture might selectively adopt a foreign cultural value. In assimilating that value to itself, the transplanted value would take root and become part of the new cultural landscape. And so, Locke sees a third concept coming into play:

The principle of *limited cultural convertibility*[:] that, since culture elements, though widely interchangeable, are so separable, the institutional forms from their values and the values from their institutional forms, the organic selectivity and assimilative capacity of a borrowing culture becomes a limiting criterion for cultural exchange. Conversely, pressure acculturation and the mass transplanting of culture, the stock procedure of groups with traditions of culture “superiority” and dominance, are counterindicated as against both the interests of cultural efficiency and the natural trends of cultural selectivity.<sup>25</sup>

Locke claims that these “three objectively grounded principles of culture relations” might, if properly implemented, “correct some of our basic culture dogmatism and progressively cure many of our most intolerant and prejudicial cultural attitudes and practices.”<sup>26</sup> Discovery of cultural equivalences was supposed to result in an agenda for intercultural understanding, which would, in turn, provide a common foundation for intercultural cooperation.

In my own reading of his work, there is a progression in Locke’s social philosophy in which tolerance leads to reciprocity, which in turn

culminates in “unity in diversity.” Locke describes his own universalism as a “fluid and functional unity that begins in a basic progression of value pluralism, converts itself to value relativism, and then passes over into a ready and willing admission of both cultural relativism and pluralism.”<sup>27</sup> Locke’s hierarchy of loyalty, tolerance, reciprocity, cultural relativism, and pluralism (the philosophical equivalent of “unity in diversity”) was a pragmatic application of quintessentially Bahá’í values.

“Loyalty” expresses group solidarity. Loyalty is related to the idea of tolerance. Loyalty is love of one’s own race, ethnicity, and culture. The concept of loyalty is connected with the notion of community. “Indeed,” as Stickers states, “it was Royce’s theories of loyalty and community and Locke’s experience in the Bahá’í faith . . . that provided the main intellectual influences on Locke’s pluralism.”<sup>28</sup> Locke’s attraction to Royce’s ideas owes a great deal to the fact that Royce was “the only major American philosopher during the early 1900s to publish a book condemning racism.”<sup>29</sup> Locke’s cultural relativism was grounded in Royce’s social ethic of “loyalty to loyalty,” which values a people’s loyalty to their own particular culture and value system, so long as respect is maintained for broadly humane values as well.<sup>30</sup>

“Tolerance” has both individual and social dimensions. Locke’s concept of “tolerance” has its roots in the philosophy of John Locke, but goes far beyond. In his essay, “Two Lockes, Two Keys, Tolerance and Reciprocity in a Culture of Democracy,” Greg Moses compares the philosophies of Alain Locke and John Locke. If not in theory then in practice, John Locke’s ethic of toleration has been “poorly applied by liberal civilizations.”<sup>31</sup> While John Locke stressed mutual tolerance in an exchange of ideas between individuals, Alain Locke advocated such tolerance between groups.<sup>32</sup> All too often, however, tolerance has proven to be little more than a thin veneer of acceptance, with an air of condescension and paternalism by the dominant group. As Locke stated in a lecture on 10 December 1947, in his *Philosophy of Democracy* course, “People want respect, not tolerance.”<sup>33</sup>

“Reciprocity” is really an extension of democracy in that it constrains group dominance through promoting the equality of groups. Moses sums this up eloquently when he concludes his essay by saying: “Reciprocity—to shift figures in function and form—would be key to the new [Alain] Locke, as tolerance had been key to the old [John Locke].”<sup>34</sup>

The most recent and sophisticated treatment of Locke's philosophy of unity in diversity is that of Judith M. Green. In her book, *Deep Democracy: Community, Diversity, and Transformation* (1999), Green devotes an entire chapter to Locke.<sup>35</sup> Green observes that a great deal of Locke's work remains unpublished, and that his contribution has been largely forgotten until recently. Green identifies two streams of thought and experience in Locke's life and work. One stream is an African American historical, cultural, and intellectual tradition—the specific loyalty that “links Locke with forebears in struggle like Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth, with older contemporaries like Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois (who assisted his early career), with younger contemporaries like Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm (X) Shabazz, and with our living generations of African American public intellectuals.”<sup>36</sup> Speaking of America, Locke stated that “this ominous rainbow . . . shows a wide diffusion of bias and prejudice in our social atmosphere and, unfortunately, presages not the passing, but the coming of a storm . . . and unless America solves these minority issues constructively and achieves minority peace or minority tolerance, in less than half a generation she will be in the flaming predicament of Europe.”<sup>37</sup>

The other stream is his cosmopolitan outlook, particularly his commitment to “cultural pluralism.” Locke's pluralism compensated for some of the deficiencies of liberalism. As Segun Gbadegesin rhetorically asks: “How, if at all, does liberalism differ from pluralism? Liberalism's emphasis is freedom: freedom is its battle cry. But there are other values, including justice . . . and community.”<sup>38</sup> Locke's cosmopolitan paradigm of unity is a “theoretical and praxical transformation of classical American pragmatism.”<sup>39</sup> According to Green, Locke had precociously conceptualized “deep democracy” as “cosmopolitan unity amidst valued diversity.”<sup>40</sup>

Locke also spoke of the role of education in cultivating “international-mindedness.”<sup>41</sup> Art, education, as well as philosophy were venues through which Locke sought to move the world. Education would play a transformative role in helping to bring about a world culture—one characterized by a “race-transcending”<sup>42</sup> consciousness.

*Final Thoughts:* It is in the realm of race relations that Alain Locke speaks to America today. He was—and still is—a statesman across America's racial divide. In a letter dated 7 November 1943, to the editor

of *The Washington Star*, Locke cites with approval a story appearing in the Salt Lake *Tribune*, which quoted him as saying:

There must be complete consistency between what democracy professes and what democracy practices. . . . Public opinion in America has got to be sold on racial democracy. Now is the time for the people to face this question. Race equality alone can secure world peace. . . . To save the United States from moral bankruptcy we must solve the color problem.<sup>43</sup>

If interracial unity—beyond racial justice—was Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “dream” for America, it was also Locke’s vision for the world. Locke prized unity. He had a disdain for black “self-segregation”<sup>44</sup> as well as for Jim Crow segregation. In an unpublished essay that Washington has titled, “The Paradox of Race,” Locke not only advocated racial integration but encouraged interracial marriage as well.<sup>45</sup> It is quite clear that Locke’s vision of interracial unity was inspired by his experience as a member of the early American Bahá’í community. Interracial unity, in Bahá’í parlance, is often described as “unity in diversity”—a term that encompasses the entire range of human differences.<sup>46</sup> This term appears in both Locke’s philosophical as well as religious essays.

One can tentatively say that the Bahá’í principle of “unity in diversity” has indirectly influenced African American philosophy by way of Locke. This study has also suggested that Locke’s religious works were informed by his philosophy. Not only was there a synergy between the two, but there was also a creative connection between Locke’s Bahá’í values and his philosophical commitments. For instance, in his essay, “Unity through Diversity: A Bahá’í Principle,” Locke writes: “Josiah Royce, one of the greatest American philosophers[,] saw this problem more clearly than any other western thinker, which is nothing more or less than a vindication of the principle of unity and diversity carried out to a practical degree of spiritual reciprocity.” Here, Locke directly correlates religious and philosophical principles.

Except in conferences at which he presented, Locke contributed relatively little to the formal, academic philosophy of his day. He took his philosophy of democracy directly to the people, especially in radio broadcasts and public lectures during World War II. Locke has only recently entered the canon of American philosophy and taken his rightful place alongside other great philosophers with the appear-

ance of John Stuhr's *Pragmatism and Classical American Philosophy* (2000).<sup>47</sup> This is a belated but welcome recognition of Locke's contribution as a pragmatist philosopher. Indeed, Louis Menand, in his edited anthology, *Pragmatism: A Reader*, credits Horace Kallen, Alain Locke, and Randolph Bourne with the philosophical shift from metaphysical to cultural pluralism. In an unpublished "Private Memorandum," Locke reflected on his achievements:

I have taught continuously at Howard University from 1912 to date, with the exception of two years, 1925-27 when I was discharged. My main objectives have been to use philosophy as an agent for stimulating critical mindedness in Negro youth, to help transform segregated educational missions into centers of cultural and social leadership, and to organize an advance-guard of creative talent for cultural inspiration and prestige. Unless education be construed in the broad sense of moulding thought and public opinion, my work has no special claims in this field, but rather in that of *belles lettres* on the one hand and race relations on the other.<sup>48</sup>

As one indication of Locke's contribution to American pragmatism, Locke, in his essay "Values and Imperatives" has identified a gap—a flaw really—in American philosophy, for not having given due consideration to the role of feelings in the formation of social values. As though pragmatism itself was guilty of its own inert abstraction, Locke writes:

We again have made common cause with the current scientific attitude; making truth too exclusively a matter of the correct anticipation of experience, of the confirmation of fact. Yet truth may also sometimes be the sustaining of an attitude, the satisfaction of a way of feeling, the corroboration of a value. To the poet, beauty is truth; to the religious devotee, God is truth; to the enthused moralist, what ought-to-be overtops factual reality. It is perhaps to be expected that the typical American philosophies should concentrate almost exclusively on thought-action as the sole criterion of experience, and should find analysis of the emotional aspects of human behavior uncongenial. This in itself, incidentally, is a confirming example of an influential value-set, amounting in this instance to a grave cultural bias.<sup>49</sup>

In racially segregated America with its Jim Crow coercions, Locke's universalism far exceeded the scope of his contemporaries. Locke's prophetic pragmatism drew its inspiration from the trinity of Bahá'u'lláh, Royce, and Boas. One can say that Locke has synthesized faith (Bahá'u'lláh) and philosophy (Royce), reinforced by scientific anthropology (Boas). In Harris's rediscovery of Locke's published work

and recovery of his unpublished work, we find that Locke's philosophy of democracy stands just as tall, as eloquent, and as inspired today as it did then. It can broaden our scope and enlarge our moral vision. But Locke did much more. As a catalyst of black culture—Locke was the godfather of an artistic movement that was truly historic.

As a religious personality, Locke was always listed in biographies as an Episcopalian, the denomination in which he was raised. In a real sense, Locke was a Christian-Bahá'í. His religious convictions were, at times, expressed in different ways. For instance, in an unpublished autobiographical statement, Locke wrote: "I am really a Xtian [Christian] without believing any of its dogma, because I am incapable of feeling hatred, revenge or jealousy—though filled all the time with righteous indignation. . . . I have always hoped to be big enough to have to justify myself not to my contemporaries but to posterity. Small men apologize to their neighbors, big men to posterity."<sup>50</sup>

Compare this private statement to one that was almost certainly intended for the public: In his untitled manuscript, "The Gospel of the Twentieth Century," Locke expresses his appreciation of—and solidarity with—the Bahá'í Faith, in these words:

The gospel for the Twentieth Century rises out of the heart of its greatest problems—and few who are spiritually enlightened doubt the nature of that problem. . . . The redemption of society—social salvation, should have been sought after first . . . The fundamental problems of current America are materiality and prejudice. . . . And so we must say with the acute actualities of America's race problem and the acute potentialities of her economic problem, [that] the land that is nearest to material democracy is furthest away from spiritual democracy . . . And we must begin heroically with the greatest apparent irreconcilables: the East and the West, the black man and the self-arrogating Anglo-Saxon, for unless these are reconciled, the salvation of society cannot be. If the world had believingly understood the full significance of Him who taught it to pray and hope "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven," who also said "In my Father's house are many mansions," already we should be further toward the realization of this great millennial vision. The word of God is still insistent, and more emphatic as the human redemption delays and becomes more crucial, and we have what Dr. Esslemont rightly calls Baha'u'llah's "one great trumpet-call to humanity": "That all nations shall become one in faith, and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled . . . These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and family."<sup>51</sup>

Public intellectuals dare not be perceived as parochial. Locke was at his religious best in not being openly religious. In secularizing the sacred, Locke was following a venerable American tradition. Through his unique synergy of faith and philosophy, Locke fused pragmatism with prophecy to achieve a constructive synthesis—his multidimensional philosophy of democracy.

Locke imposed upon himself the “task of transposing the traditional Bahá’í reciprocity between religions into the social and cultural denominationalisms of nation, race and class, and vindicating anew upon this plane the precious legacy of the inspired teachings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Bahá’u’lláh.”<sup>52</sup> In an age of social conformity and racial oppression, Locke championed Bahá’í principles, always “transposing” these ideas into his vocation as a philosopher, and then back again through his contributions to the Bahá’í community.

Alain Locke was a great American. Historically, he expressed, not the *consciousness*—but rather the *conscience*, of America. He continues to do so today. Over fifty years after his death in 1954, Locke is alive in his contemporary relevance to all Americans. His life was dedicated to the realization of quintessential American ideals, which are intrinsically universal ideals. In part, Bahá’í principles helped Locke accomplish far more than any politician could—in inspiring a democracy of the heart within the soul of America. This philosopher of faith restores a faith in philosophy, in an embrace of race and a fusion of democratic values and vision.

## Notes

1. Untitled essay, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-143, Folder 3 (Writings by Locke—Notes. Christianity, spirituality, religion) pp. 9-10.
2. Locke to Cullen, n.d., Box 3, Fol. Locke, Countee Cullen Papers, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University.
3. “Baha’i Faith, Only Church in World That Does Not Discriminate.” *Ebony*, Vol. 7 (12 October 1952) pp. 39-46 [39]. Locke kept a copy of this article. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-147, Folder 12 (Articles, advertisements that mention Locke).
4. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-167, Folder 4: 1950-1953 (Programs on which Locke’s Name Appears).
5. Untitled essay, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-143, Folder 3 (Writings by Locke—Notes. Christianity, spirituality, religion) p. 9.
6. Harris, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p.135.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 136, emphasis added.

8. Green, *Deep Democracy*, p. 97.
9. Washington, *Alain Locke and Philosophy*, p. xxv.
10. Harris, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 135.
11. Mason, "Locke's Social Philosophy," p. 26.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
13. Kenneth W. Stickers, "Instrumental Relativism and Cultivated Pluralism: Alain Locke and Philosophy's Quest for a Common World," *The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke*, pp. 214-15.
14. Posnock, *Color and Culture*, p. 202.
15. Harris, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, pp. 134, 135, 203.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-17.
17. Green, *Deep Democracy*, p. 124.
18. Alain Locke, "Cultural Relativism and Ideological Peace," in *Approaches to World Peace*, ed. by Lyman Bryson, Louis Finkelstein, and R. M. MacIver (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), 609-18. Reprinted in Harris, *Philosophy of Alain Locke*, pp. 67-78.
19. Harris, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 72.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
24. Moses, "Two Lockes, Two Keys," 166.
25. Harris, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 73.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.
28. Stickers, "Instrumental Relativism and Cultivated Pluralism," p. 214.
29. Leonard Harris, *Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 4. See Josiah Royce, *Race Questions, Provincialism, and Other American Problems* (1908; reprint, Freeport: Books of Libraries Press 1967).
30. Green, "Alain Locke's Multicultural Philosophy of Value," p. 88. See also Royce, *Race Questions*.
31. Greg Moses, "Two Lockes, Two Keys: Tolerance and Reciprocity in a Culture of Democracy," in Harris, *The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke*, p. 168.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
33. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-112, Folder 6 ("Concept of Democracy." Outline of lecture for Philosophy of Democracy course. 10 December 1947) p. 2.
34. Moses, "Two Lockes, Two Keys," p. 173.
35. Green, "Cosmopolitan Unity Amidst Valued Diversity," p. 132.
36. Green, *Deep Democracy*, p. 97.
37. Alain Locke, "Minorities and the Social Mind," *Progressive Education*, Vol. 12 (March 1935) p. 142.
38. Segun Gbadegesin, "Values, Imperatives, and the Imperative of Democratic Values," in Harris, *The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke*, p. 288.
39. Gbadegesin, "Values, Imperatives, and the Imperative of Democratic Values," p. 288.
40. Green, *Deep Democracy*, p. 96.
41. Alain Locke, "Lessons in World Crisis," p. 746.
42. Rudolph V. Vanterpool, "Open-Textured Aesthetic Boundaries: Matters of Art,

- Race, and Culture,” in Harris, *The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke*, p. 141.
43. Locke to *The Washington Star*, 7 Nov. 1943, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-91, Folder 54 (*The Washington Star*).
44. Hutchison, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*, p. 86.
45. Johnny Washington, *A Journey into the Philosophy of Alain Locke* (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1994) p. 103.
46. It should be noted that Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 2nd rev. edn. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974 [1938]), used this term to refer to differences of ethnic origins, climate, history, language, tradition, thought and habit (p. 41)—generally, in the sense of a lack of conformity except in essentials—as the bedrock of the Bahá'í administrative order. It is therefore misleading to represent “unity in diversity” as applying only to race. (I am indebted to Gayle Morrison for this important observation.)
47. John J. Stuhr, ed., *Pragmatism and Classical American Philosophy: Essential Readings and Interpretive Essays*, 2nd edn. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
48. Private memorandum, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 2 (“Autobiographical statements”). Photocopy of typescript in present writer’s possession. Michael R. Winston, “Locke, Alain LeRoy,” in Rayford W. Logan and Michael R. Winston, eds. *Dictionary of American Negro Biography* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1982) p. 402.
49. Harris, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 37.
50. Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-1, Folder 2 (Autobiographical statements).
51. Untitled essay, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-143, Folder 3 (Writings by Locke—Notes. Christianity, spirituality, religion).
52. Harris, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 138.

# Appendix





# Appendix

## Letters from Shoghi Effendi to Alain Locke

Persian Colony, Haifa

15-II-30

Dear Dr. Locke:

Shoghi Effendi has been lately spending his leisure hours translating the Book of Iqan for he considers it to be the key to a true understanding of the Holy Scriptures, & [sic] can easily rank as one of the most, if not the most, important thing that Baha'u'llah revealed explaining the basic beliefs of the Cause. He who fully grasps the purport of that Book can claim to have understood the Cause.

Yet, Shoghi Effendi believes that mere translation into English phrases is not sufficient. It is essential to make the idioms & expressions lively English, a thing which he alone cannot possibly achieve. Thinking, therefore, that you will be the best fitted to render him an assistance along that line, he is sending you the part that he has already completed. He would be most appreciative if you go over it carefully, studying every sentence— its structure as well as choice of words— & giving him your criticism as well as constructive suggestions that would make it more lucid, English & forceful. As it is a Holy Scripture, Shoghi Effendi has tried to put it in the English of the Bible, preferring its ways of expression better than any other. What he sends you now is half of the book, the rest he will mail as it is translated.

The form that it is in at present is far from being the last one. Yet he wishes to have all the possible suggestions before he puts it in its final form.

Shoghi Effendi is fully aware of the many duties you have & how pressing your time is, & had he known of an equally fitting person he would surely have saved you the trouble. Yet he finds himself to be compelled. He hopes, therefore, that you will give this work your close attention.

If the book is completed & rendered into a lucid & forceful language, the service it will render to the Cause will surely repay all your endeavours. In many places you will see the same idea expressed in other words & inserted in parenthesis [sic]. You can chose [sic] any of the two. In case you have any suggestions just mention in what page & line it is. You need not send him back the copy after going over it, for he may desire to refer to them later. He has enough copies here. Though he wishes you to give it all your attention he will be much obliged if you take it up immediately.

With deepest appreciation  
Yours ever sincerely

Ruhi Afnan

49 Persian Colony  
Haifa, Palestine  
5-7-30

Dear Prof. Locke:

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter as well as the mss. of the Iqan which you had so kindly gone over. Though they were not so many, he found the suggestions you gave most helpful. In translation work the greatest difficulty is to give the thought a lively English expression. This is most difficult for the person who gets absorbed into the original form & is charmed with its beauty. Shoghi Effendi has already incorporated your suggestions & sent his manuscript to the National Assembly for publication. It naturally depends upon that body & the reviewing & publishing committees to decide whether it should come out immediately or not.

The most important service that can now be rendered to the Cause is to put the writings of Baha'u'llah in a form that would be presentable to the intellectual minds of the west. Shoghi Effendi's hope in this work has been to encourage others along this line.

In closing may I express Shoghi Effendi's best wishes for your health as well as for the services you are rendering to the Cause.

Yours ever sincerely

Ruhi Afnan.

[Postscript in the Guardian's own hand:]

My dear co-worker:

I wish to add a few words expressing my deep appreciation of your valued suggestions in connexion with the translation of the Iqan. I wish also to express the hope that you may be able to lend increasing assistance to the work of the Cause, as I have always greatly admired your exceptional abilities & capacity to render distinguished services to the Faith. I grieve to hear of the weakness of your heart which I trust may through treatment be completely restored. I often remember you in my prayers and ever cherish the hope of welcoming you again in the Master's home.

Your true brother,

Shoghi



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