

Alain Locke

Pioneer in Multiculturalism & Race Amity

Christopher Buck, PhD, JD



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Yale Collection of American Literature,
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript
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1078430, 1078431.

National Race Amity Conference 2011

Friday, June 10, 2011
Wheelock College
Boston, MA 02215



Alain Leroy Locke

Legacy & Contemporary Importance

Locke like Plato & Aristotle — MLK

*“We’re going to let
our children know
that the
only philosophers
that lived were
not Plato and
Aristotle, but W.E.B.
Du Bois and Alain
Locke came
through the
universe.”*

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,
“Address Delivered at Poor
People’s Campaign Rally.”
March 19, 1968. Clarksdale,
MS (THTa), 7 pp. [p. 7].
Martin Luther King, Jr.
Papers, 1950–1968, Mss.
680319-002. Martin Luther
King, Jr., Center for
Nonviolent Social Change,
Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.



Most Influential African American

*“Locke [was] the
most influential
African American
intellectual born
between W. E. B. Du
Bois and Martin
Luther King, Jr.”*

Leonard Harris & Charles
Molesworth, *Alain L. Locke:
Biography of a Philosopher*
(Chicago: University of
Chicago Press, 2008), 3.

Locke's Significance

1885-1954

- Race amity and multiculturalism intersect in Alain Locke.
- First African American Rhodes Scholar (1907).
- Associated with the birth of “cultural pluralism” which Locke called “a New Americanism”) precursor of multiculturalism (1907).
- “Dean” of the Harlem Renaissance (1925).
- Bahá'í “Race Amity” participant/organizer.
- Philosopher of Democracy.
- “Redefined” democracy by widening its scope to nine dimensions:
 - Local, Moral, Political, Economic, Cultural, Racial, Social, Spiritual and World Democracy.



A Founder of Cultural Pluralism

“Locke more recently has become best known as one of the founders of what we today know as multiculturalism, though his phrase for it was cultural pluralism.”

—
Leonard Harris & Charles Molesworth, *Alain L. Locke: Biography of a Philosopher* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 3.



Race Amity Leader

“If they will but see it, because of their complementary qualities, the two racial groups have great spiritual need, one of the other.”

—
Alain Locke, *The Negro in America* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1933), 50.

Locke Holds Smashing of Humanity's Barriers Civilization's Present Need

Howard University Professor Views Elimination of Bars Between Races, Sexes and Nations as Necessity for Progress

- **No more progressive step can be made in our present civilization than the breaking down of the barriers which separate races, sexes and nations.**

— Alain Locke (1930)

Source: The New York Amsterdam News (26 March 1930): 11.



1907

First Black Rhodes Scholar

*"The young Negro
has just won a
Rhodes scholarship
for Pennsylvania ...
[He] is the first Negro
to get a Rhodes."*

*New York Daily Tribune,
Sunday, March 17, 1907, p.
8.*



ALAIN LEROY LOCKE.

The young Negro who has just won a Rhodes scholarship for Pennsylvania, which entitles him to three years study at Oxford University. His home is in Philadelphia, and he is now a senior at Harvard. He is twenty-one years old. His father is a lawyer. He has won many scholarships before now, but is the first Negro to get a Rhodes.

Race uplifted

*"In what he has
achieved, a race has
been uplifted."*

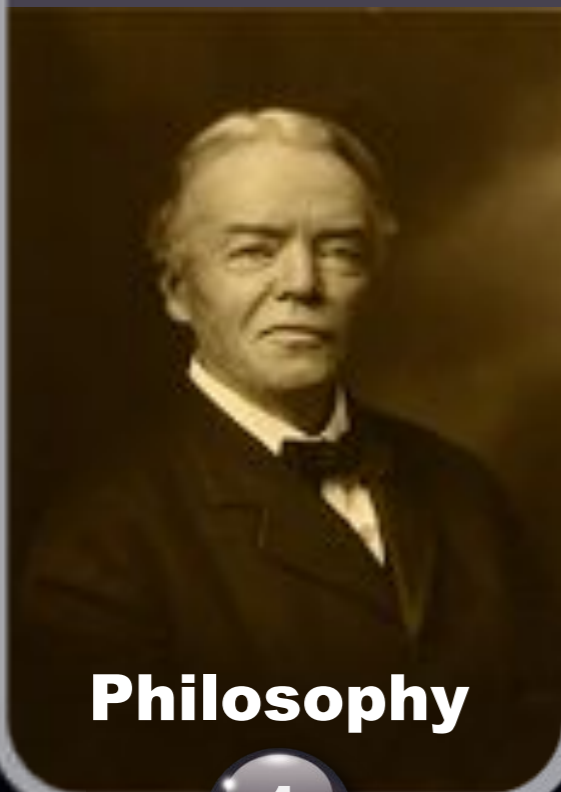
William C. Bolivar, "Alain
LeRoy Locke." *African
Methodist Episcopal Church
Review* 24.1 (July 1907): 19.



Alain Leroy Locke
Oxford Cosmopolitan Club (1907)

Keys to Locke's Thought

Harvard



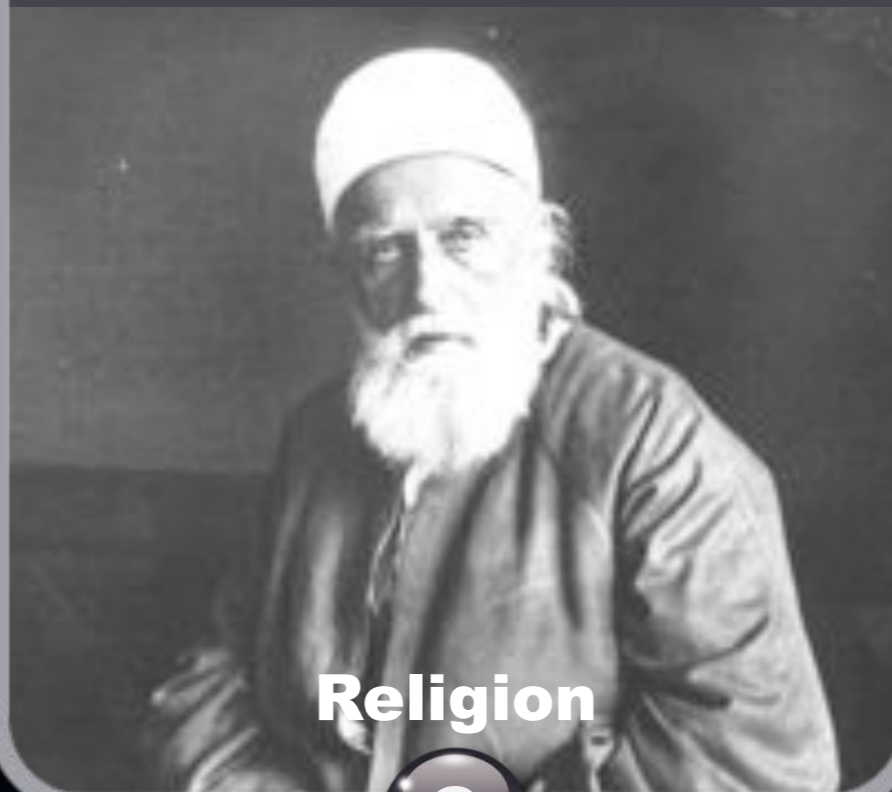
Philosophy

1

Josiah Royce

Harvard Philosopher

Haifa



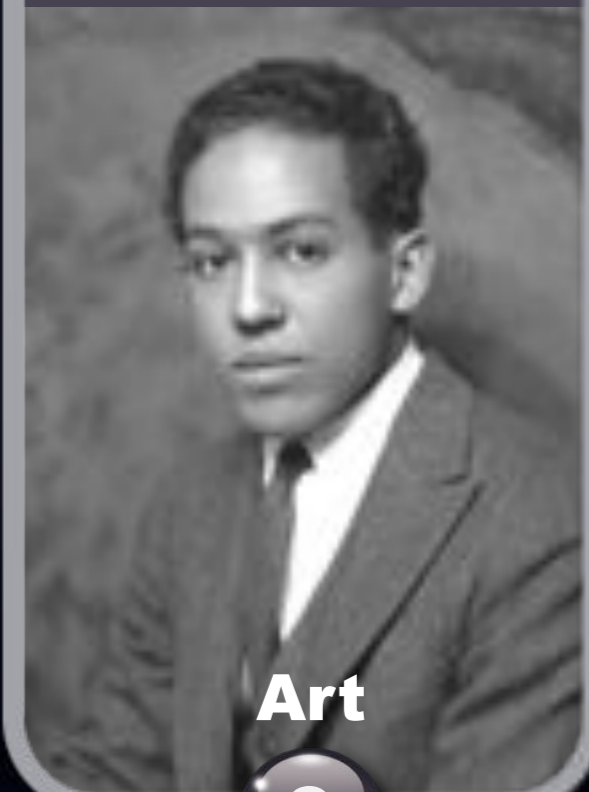
Religion

2

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Bahá'í Leader

Harlem



Art

3

Langston Hughes

Harlem Renaissance
Poet



Harlem Art for Race Amity & Democracy

Art for Amity

- **The Negro question ... is just as much, and even more seriously, the question of democracy.**
- **I believe there would be a profound change of social attitude toward the Negro if we were more generally aware of the high cost of prejudice.**
- **Enlightened self-interest would then operate to forestall the inevitable consequences of social shortsightedness.**
- **For successful peoples are rated, and rate themselves, in terms of their best. Racial and national prestige is, after all, the product of the exceptional few.**
- **Cultural recognition ... means ... the conscious scrapping of the mood and creed of “white supremacy.” ...**
- **For what? For making possible free and unbiased contacts between the races on the selective basis of common interests and mutual consent.**

— Alain Locke (1927)

Source: “The High Cost of Prejudice” in “Should the Negro Be Encouraged to Cultural Equality?” *Forum* 78 (October 1927): 500–510.



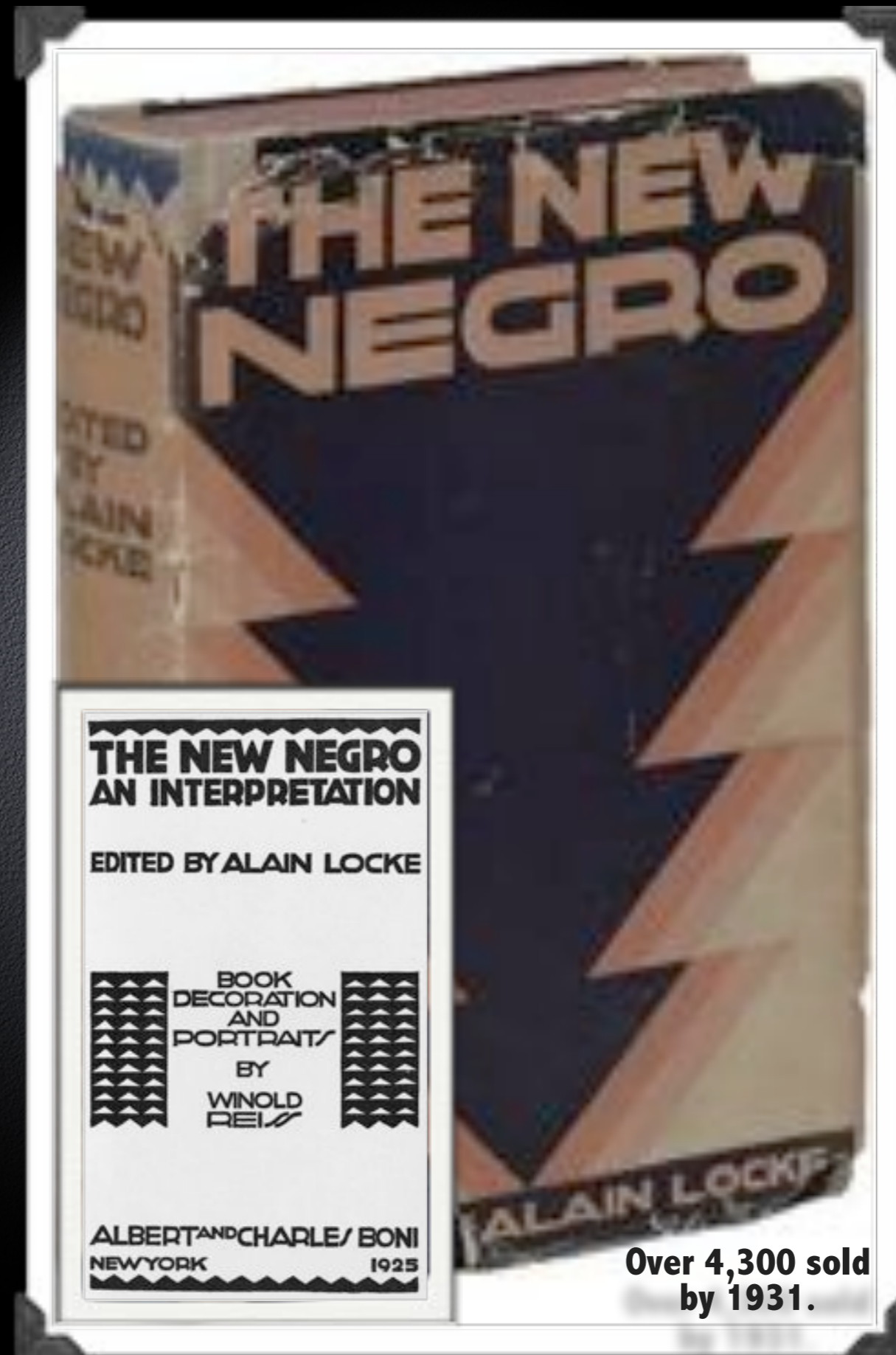
Alain Locke, Passport Photo (1922)

1925

“Our First National Book”

“The New Negro ... is perhaps our first national book, offering not only a description of streams of tendency in our collective lives but also an actual construction within its pages of the sounds, songs, images, and signs of a nation.”

—
Houston A. Baker, Jr.,
Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 85.



Over 4,300 sold
by 1931.

Launched the Harlem Renaissance

“To all of this the New Negro is keenly responsive as an augury of a new democracy in American culture.”

—
Alain Locke, *The New Negro: An Interpretation*
(New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1925), 9.

An Interracial Project



Winold Reiss, circa 1920
(1886–1953), a white
Bavarian artist.
Cover, imaginative
designs, and seventeen
portraits by Reiss
illustrate The New Negro:
An Interpretation, edited
by Alain Locke.



Alain Locke



1925

Winold Reiss
Alain Leroy Locke, in
The New Negro: An
Interpretation (1925)
Page/Plate Number:
facing page 6.
Schomburg Center for
Research in Black
Culture / Manuscripts,
Archives and Rare Books
Division

1926

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

—
Yale Collection of
American Literature,
Beinecke Rare Book and
Manuscript Library, Folder
1025, Image ID Number
3600164.



"Because it shatters traditions and smashes stereotypes, it comes in the nature of a flashing revelation. ... There is not a more vitally important book for Americans now offered to the public."

— James Weldon Johnson, for a brochure promoting *The New Negro*. Qtd. in Harris & Molesworth, *Alain L. Locke: A Biography* (2008), 211.

Harmon Foundation **Art Exhibits**

- At the 1931 Harmon Foundation Art Exhibit, Locke presented an award to sculptor, Richmond Barthé.
- The next slide is one of two rare (silent) films of Alain Locke.

1931



Promoter of African American Arts

Dr. Alain Locke, Professor of Philosophy at Howard University, visits the Exhibit with Richmond Barthé, the sculptor.

1931

Alain Locke & Richmond Barté, Sculptor

The Negro and Art

(Harmon Foundation, 1933)

Audio of Alain Locke's Voice "The Negro Spiritual"

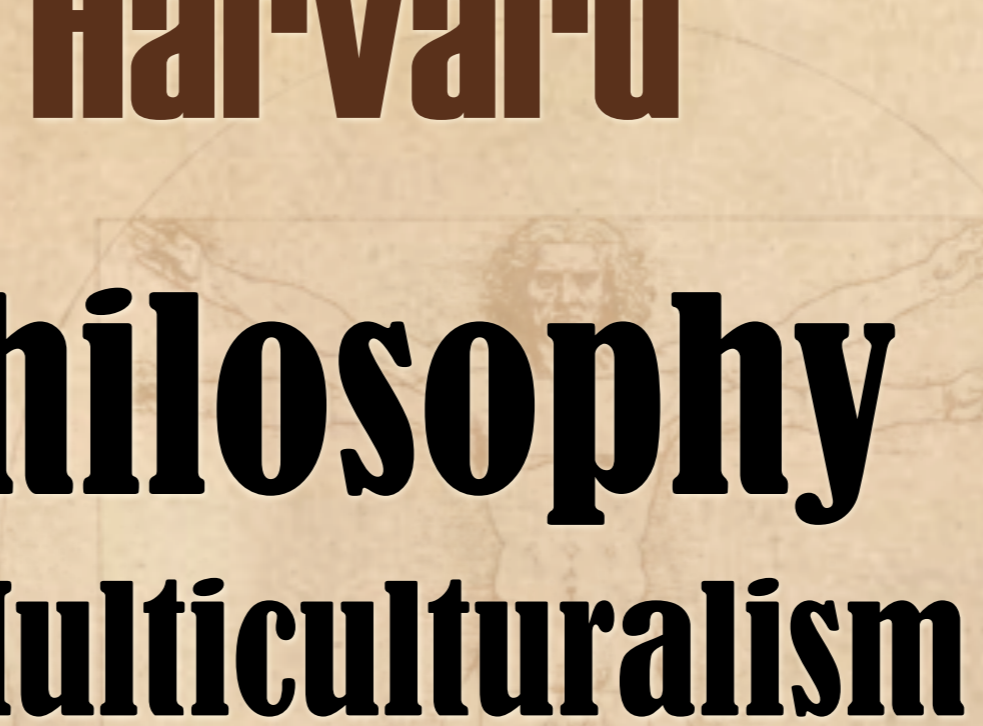


1940

Harvard

Philosophy

of Multiculturalism

A faint, sepia-toned background image of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man is centered behind the text. The figure is inscribed within a circle and a square, with arms and legs extended to touch the boundaries.

Professor of Philosophy & Writer



1937

"Dr. Alain Locke, at his desk."

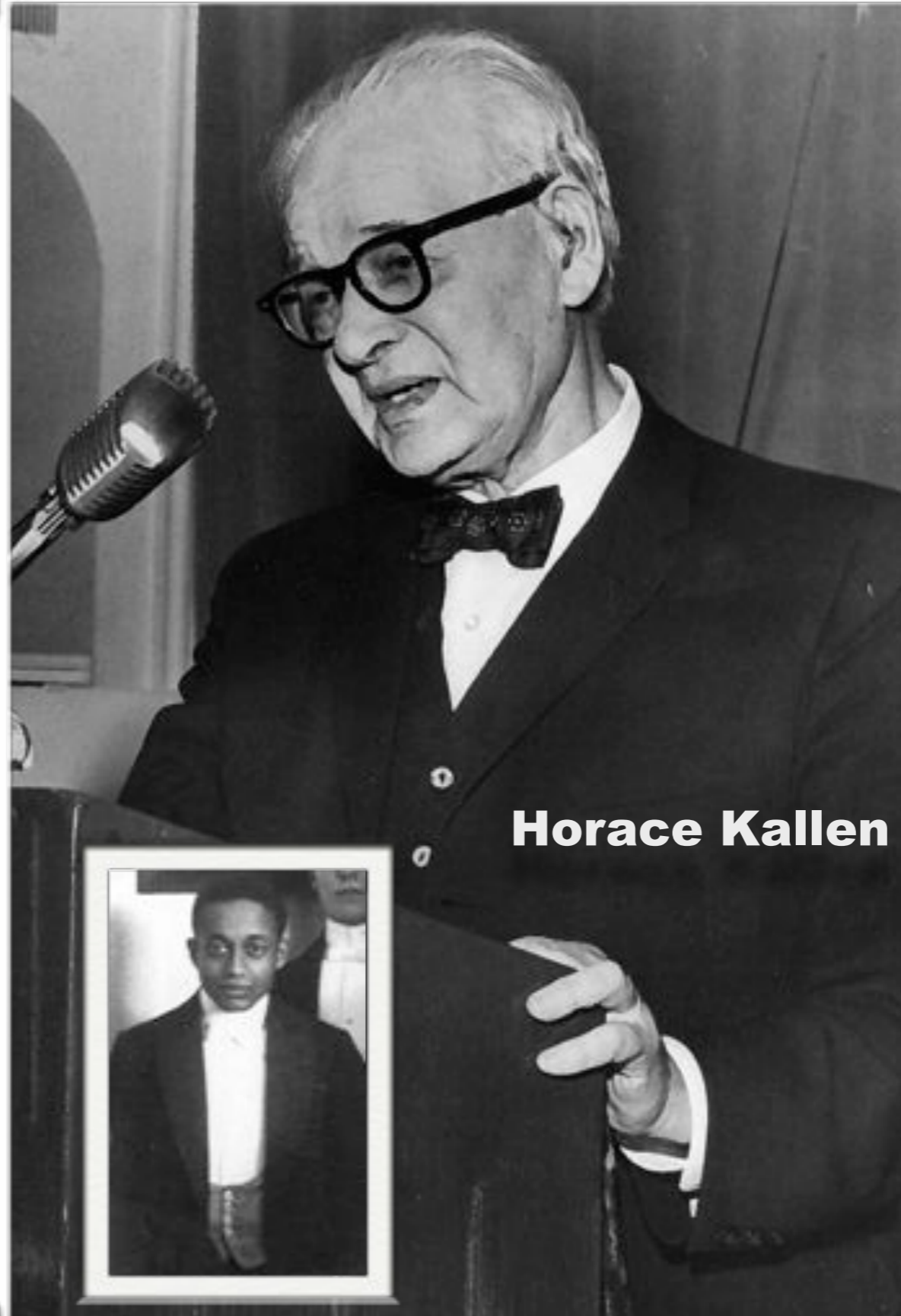
Negro Notables: Negro Education and Art in the U.S.

(Harmon Foundation in 1937)

1907

Horace Kallen Coins “Cultural Pluralism”...

At Oxford, recommencing their earlier conversation at Harvard, 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.”



Horace Kallen

Locke (Oxford)

in talks with Alain Locke

Elsewhere, Kallen says: “I used it first around 1906 or 1907 when Alain Locke was in a section of a class at Harvard where I served as assistant to Mr. George Santayana.”

1924

First used in print: Horace M. Kallen, Culture and Democracy in the United States (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924).

Cosmopolitan Pluralism

- *Alain Locke achieved a brilliant synthesis between the claims of the particular and the universal.*
- *His cosmopolitanism offered hope for a merger without fusion on the ground of democratic culture.*
- *Locke vigorously pursued black civil rights without restricting his focus to African Americans;*

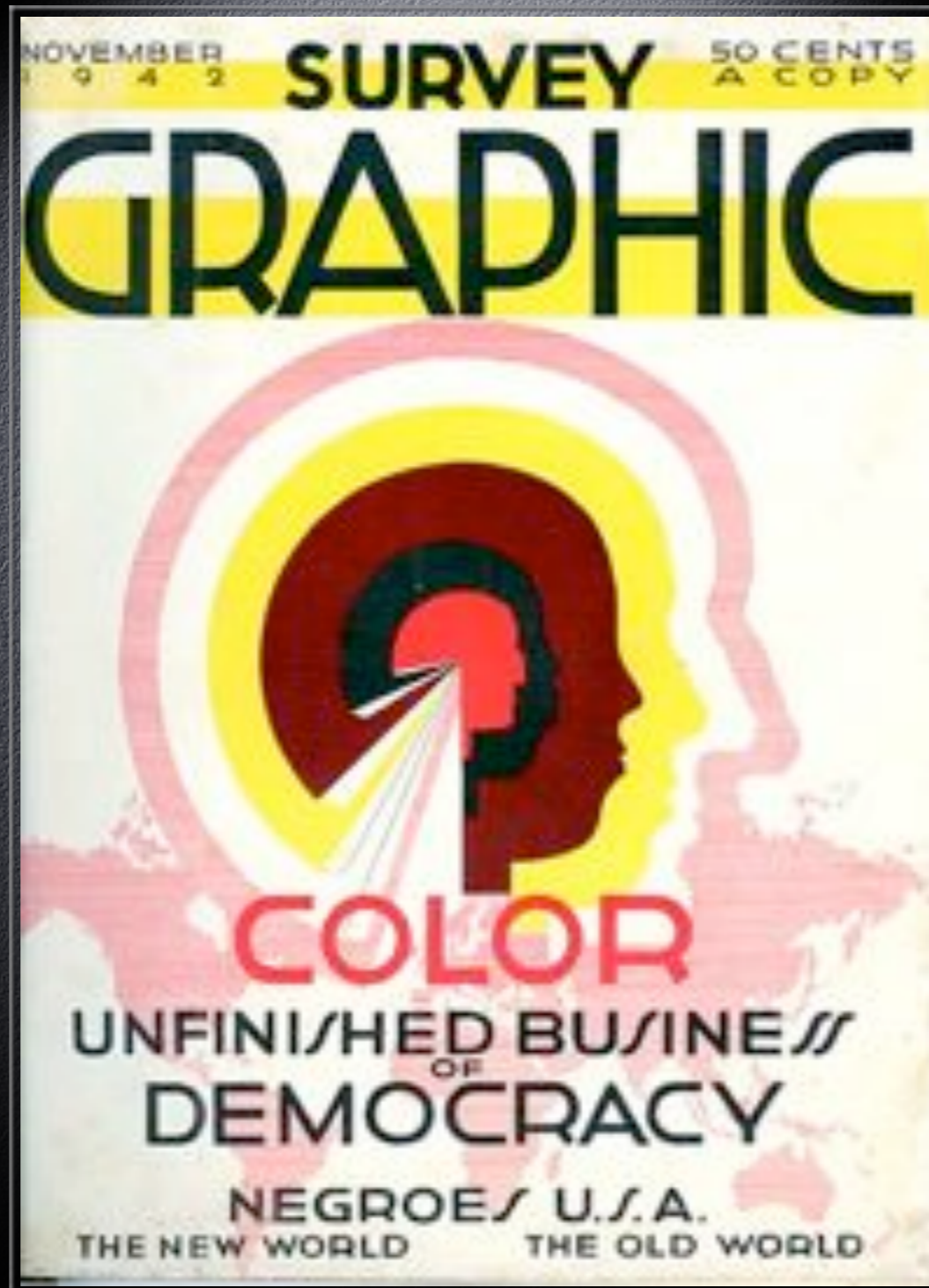


LIFE (18 Nov. 1946): 112.

- *He thus avoided both assimilation and black separatism.*
- *Like W. E. B. Du Bois—but with greater consistency perhaps—Locke championed a democratic cultural pluralism while simultaneously exerting his indefatigable energy on behalf of efforts aimed at achieving racial justice for African Americans.*
- *Everett Helmut Akam, “Merger Without Fusion: Alain Locke’s Cosmopolitan Pluralism.” *Transnational America: Cultural Pluralist Thought in the Twentieth Century* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 139–166 [139–140].*

Unfinished

The crux of this inner conflict is whether our vision of world democracy can clear-sightedly cross the color line ... Color becomes the acid test of our fundamental honesty in putting into practice the democracy we preach. ... The parity of peoples is the main moral issue of this global conflict.



Democracy

... 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 ... world democracy would be within reach of attainment.

— Alain Locke, "The Unfinished Business of Democracy," *Survey Graphic* 31 (November 1942): 455–461 [456].

Locke's Philosophy of Democracy

- Local democracy (“local citizenship”).
- Moral democracy (“the ideal of the moral equality of human beings ... freedom of worship and the moral liberty of conscience.”).
- Political democracy (“the ideal of political equality: (1) equality before the law; (2) political citizenship ... freedom of the individual ... fundamental rights of man ... ‘Liberty, equality and fraternity’.”)
- Economic democracy (“economic equality of opportunity”).
- Cultural democracy (“mutual respect for our various group differences and a working reciprocity among our various minorities”).
- Racial democracy (“race equality”).
- Social democracy (“social justice”).
- Spiritual democracy (“basic spiritual reciprocity on the principle of unity in diversity.”).
- World democracy (“a constructive peace into an effective world order — one based on the essential parity of peoples and a truly democratic reciprocity of cultures ... of thoroughgoing internationalism”).

Locke's Definition of Democracy

To make America truly American

- In a democracy built out of many peoples by this great historical process of immigration, the only safe principle of democracy is that embodied in this conception of democracy:—
- A democracy is a system of government and corporate living in which there is no distinction between minority and majority rights; and under which life is safe and equally abundant for all minorities.
- In historical perspective[,] this is really the distinctive foundation [all] principle of American life. Our task today is to make America truly and consistently American.
- — Alain Locke, MSRC, Box 164-141, Folder 14.

“Cosmopolitan Pluralist”



1937

Alain Locke, Washington, DC

Negro Notables: Negro Education and Art in the U.S.

(Harmon Foundation in 1937)

Flesh & Blood of Democracy


“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 reenforcement [sic] 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.”

Source: “The Preservation of the Democratic Ideal” (1938). In “Alain Locke: Four Talks Redefining Democracy, Education, and World Citizenship.” Edited and introduced by Christopher Buck & Betty J. Fisher. *World Order* 38.3 (2006/2007): 21–41 [24].

Photo: July 23, 1941, New York. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Image ID Number 1095991.



Haifa

Religion

as the Spirit of Democracy & Multiculturalism

1918

Awarded
Harvard
Ph.D.

Dissertation:
*The Problem of
Classification in the
Theory of Value: or
an Outline of a
Genetic System of
Values.*



& joined the
Baha'i Faith

*See "Baha'i
Historical Record"
card that Locke
completed and
signed in 1935.*

Bahá'í Historical Record

1
9
1
8

BAHÁ'Í HISTORICAL RECORD

1. Locke, Alan L. 2. Reported through Spiritual Assembly Washington, D.C.
Name of individual believer *City*

3. Address 1326 R. St. N. W. Washington D. C.
Number *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 ☒ *Minor* *Adult* *Adopted*

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

13. Date of acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith 1918

A. As isolated believer B. As member of Bahá'í group ☒ C. As member of Bahá'í Community

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

Date of acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith: 1918.

Place of acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith: Washington, D.C.

Bahá'í Historical Record

1
9
3
5

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 transfers (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)

17. Additional information (do not fill in)

18. Photograph

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

19. Signature

Alain Leroy Locke

Signature: "Alain Leroy Locke"
"Bahá'í Historical Record": 1935

17. Additional information (do not fill in)

(Additional notes may be attached to this card)

“Salvation of Democracy”

- **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 ... 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 ...**
- **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 (1925)

Source: Qtd. in “The Bahá’í Congress at Green Acre,” Star of the West 16.1 (April 1925): 525.



Friday, June 10, 2011

citement. Among the prominent Colored Bahá'ís may be mentioned Dr. Alain Locke, Rhode's scholar and professor of philosophy of Howard university; Mrs. Coralle Franklin Cook,

“Racial Boundaries Disappear”

Louis Gregory—“Baha’i Movement,” *Chicago Defender* (June 17, 1933), p. 10.

- The Baha’i religion ... demolishes all superstitions, all prejudices.
- Here racial boundaries disappear as men gaze upon the souls and characters of their fellows ...
- Here men and women have the same rights and neither tries to enslave the other.

“The Power to Unify Mankind”

Louis Gregory—“Baha’i Movement,” *Chicago Defender* (June 17, 1933), p. 10.

- Here each person must investigate and see the truth for himself.
- Here religion and science in their common origin support each other.
- Here is encouragement... to speak one language.
- It has the power to unify mankind.

1933 Locke as Bahá'í: Pittsburgh Courier

PAGE SIX—FIRST SECTION

The Pittsburgh Courier

SATURDAY, JUNE 17, 1933

ALAIN LOCKE ADDRESSES BAHAIS

CHICAGO, June 15—Alain Locke, professor of philosophy at Howard University, lecturer and author of "The New Negro," was guest speaker at the Bahai Temple in Wilmette, Sunday, during the convention of the movement celebrating the 25th anniversary.

Dr. Locke spoke to 3,000 people who crowded into the Temple. He came to Chicago for the express purpose of addressing the religious assemblage. He was the house guest of Harry Pace, president of the Supreme Liberty Life Insurance Company, during his brief sojourn in the city.

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

munities surrounding Wilmette.

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

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

When one enters their Sacred Temple he forgets racial differences and think only of the human race.

Locke as Bahá'í: Pittsburgh Courier



1943

- “To discriminate against any race ... is a flagrant violation of the spirit that animates the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh,” declares Shoghi Effendi of the Bahai faith in his book ‘The Advent of Divine justice’.”
- “Among some of the national colored leaders who have been attracted to the Bahai cause are Alain Locke ... professor of philosophy at Howard University ... and the late Robert S. Abbott, publisher of the Chicago Defender.”
- — “Writer Hits Race Bias In Book.” *The Pittsburgh Courier* (Dec. 25, 1943): 16.

Writer Hits Race Bias In Book

Among a group of the nation's colored leaders who have been attracted to the Bahai cause are Alain Locke, professor of philosophy at Howard University; Louis Armstrong, national basketball star; and Austin, Tex., attorney, Minnie Ellsworth, publisher of the Chicago Defender, and Robert S. Abbott, publisher of the Chicago Defender. Other people in Central and South America.

1943 Locke as Bahá'í: NY Times

16

L +

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1943.

BAHA'I
BAHA'I FAITH 119 W. 57th St.
6th Floor
Sunday—2:15 P. M.—YOUTH RALLY
Speakers: DR. HARRY OVERSTREET
DR. ALAIN LOCKE
4:15 P. M.—Dr. Locke, "World Ultimatum"
Mon., 8:15—Study Class, Dr. Ali-Kuli Khan

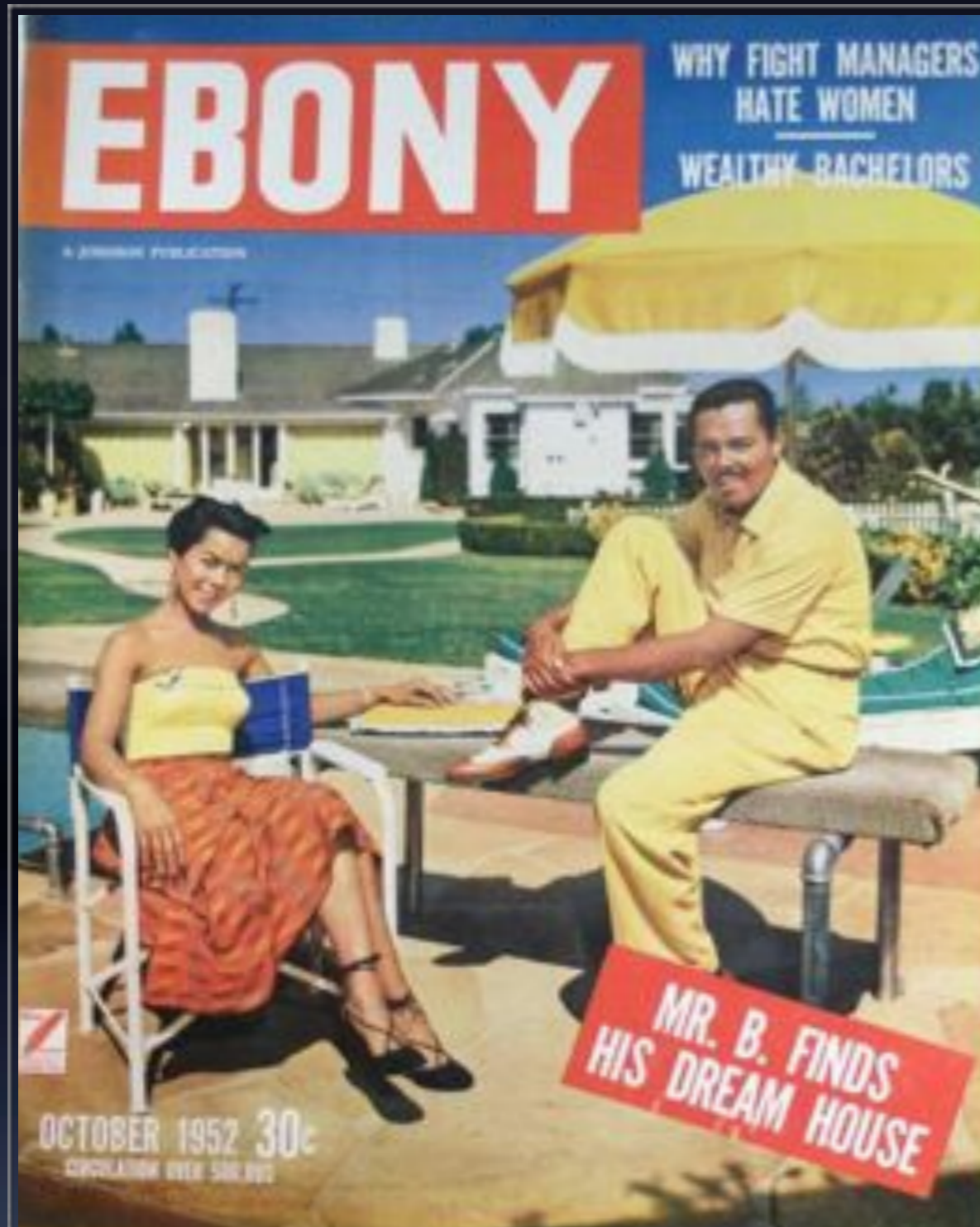
Page A

NEW YORK AMSTERDAM NEWS

Saturday, October 23, 1943

BAHA'I FAITH
119 WEST 57th STREET
Meeting Every Sunday, 4:15 P. M.
SUNDAY, OCT. 24th
2:15 P. M. Youth Rally
Speakers: Dr. Harry Overstreet
Dr. Alain Locke
4:15 P. M. Dr. Alain Locke
"World Ultimatum"
Mon. 8.15 Baha'i Study Class,
Dr. Ali-Kuli Khan
Free Admission All Welcome
Send for Lecture Program

1952 Locke as Bahá'í: Ebony



BAHA'Í FAITH

Only church in world that does not discriminate

BAHA'ISM is a mile blind religion. It is the only white-dominated faith in the world with absolutely no segregation or discrimination. Its policy championing interracialism is boldly explicit. Yet, only 700 Negroes among the 7,000 Baha'is in the United States have been attracted to its tenets.

Introduced to this country during the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, one of the first American converts to this Persian-founded faith was Mrs. Phoebe Hearst, mother of newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst. The first Negro convert was her brother, Robert Turner. The most famous Negro Baha'í was Robert S. Abbott, founder of the Chicago Defender, who joined the sect in 1912 and was active in the Baha'í community until his death in 1940.

Chief reason why so few Negroes embrace Baha'ism, despite its open-minded racial attitude, is its ultra conservatism. Totally un-spectacular, it lacks the dirty laws, dogma, rituals and paganism of other faiths. It has no clergy and no services which are informally conducted by members of the congregation, no vestments are worn. Only a cappella music is permitted. There is no begging, no plate passing. Nobody receives a salary, and only the treasurer knows how much one gives.

Spiritual Assemblies of the Baha'í faith are located in every capital in the 48 states, and all of their activities are completely interracial—even in the Southland. They have never had trouble in practicing their beliefs before the Dixie line.

Says one Negro Baha'í, "If every human being would accept Baha'í teachings the world's problems would be solved overnight." Says another, "Baha'ism will suck racism together and break down hate barriers."

Evidence of the high level of integration in the Baha'í faith is the presence on the nine-member National Spiritual Assembly of two Negroes, Mrs. Elsie Austin, prominent Ohio attorney, and Matthew Bulluck, one-time chairman of the Massachusetts Fair Play Board.

An example of how the Baha'is are practicing their interracial beliefs is the recent marriage (shown on the following page) of attractive brown-skinned Betty Major and handsome, Swedish Roger Lador.

The couple will continue their activity in the faith that united them. At the invitation of Shoghi Effendi, head of the International Baha'í Spiritual Assembly in Haifa, Palestine, they will attend the international conference in Stockholm, Sweden, next year. Mr. and Mrs. Lador will remain in Europe as "pilgrims." Baha'is have no missionaries.



Spectacular \$4,000,000 Baha'í Temple in Wilmette, Ill., is one of most beautiful buildings in U.S.A. Swedish Roger Lador and pretty Betty Major are one of many interracial couples sharing membership in faith.

Robert S. Abbott, founder of Chicago Defender, gave heavily to movement. Baha'í services were read at his funeral.



Walter Latta, Howard professor, joined movement in 1935, wrote for Baha'í Magazine.



Continued on Next Page 39

Washington, DC

**The Birth
of Race Amity**



1920



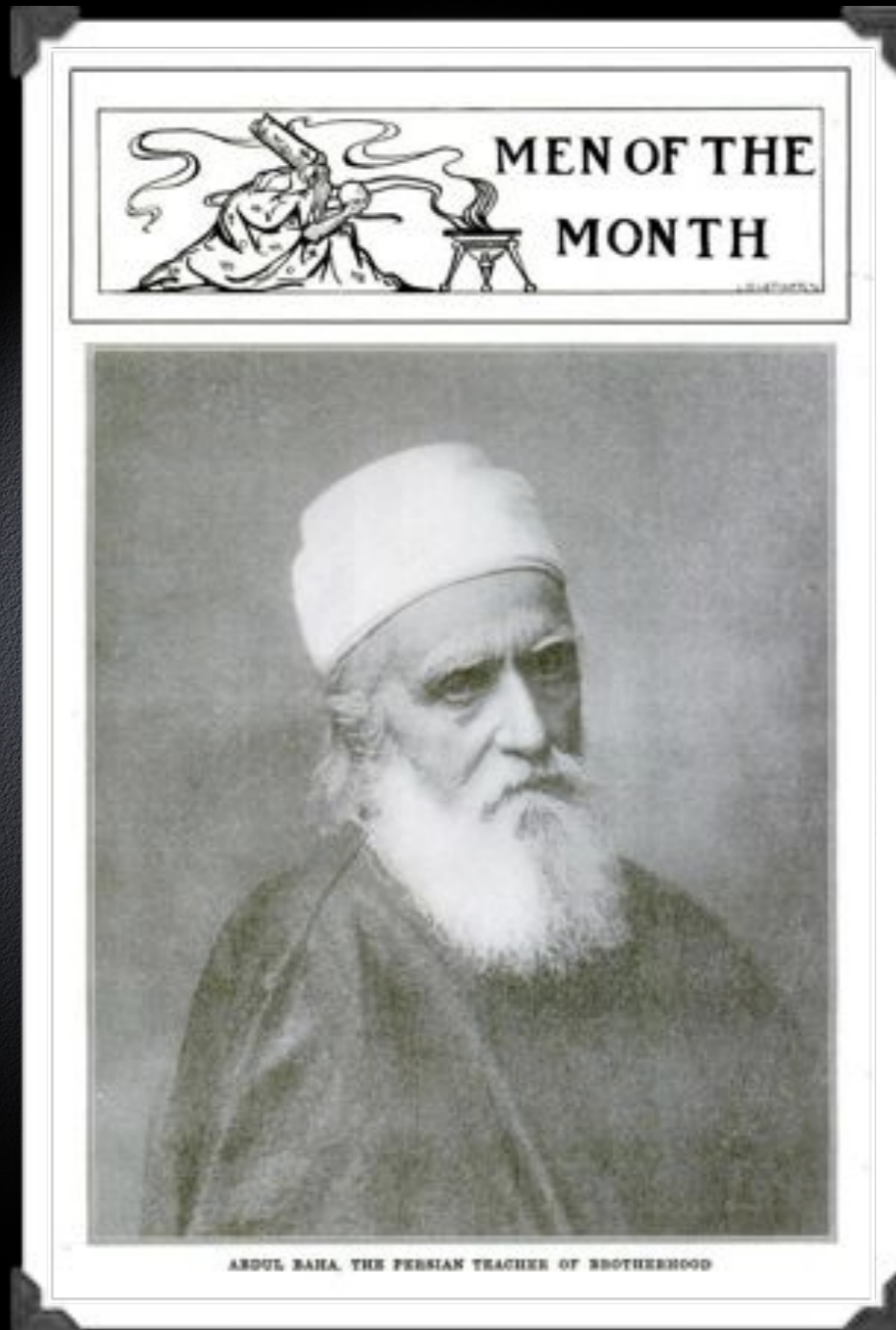
'Abdu'l-Bahá inaugurates Race Amity Conferences

Photo: 'Abdu'l-Bahá, New York, 1912. From the Collection of Albert C. Killius. Courtesy of the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Springfield, Illinois. Published as frontispiece in Christopher Buck, *Paradise and Paradigm: Key Symbols in Persian Christianity and the Bahá'í Faith* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).

1921

W.E.B. Du Bois & 'Abdu'l-Bahá

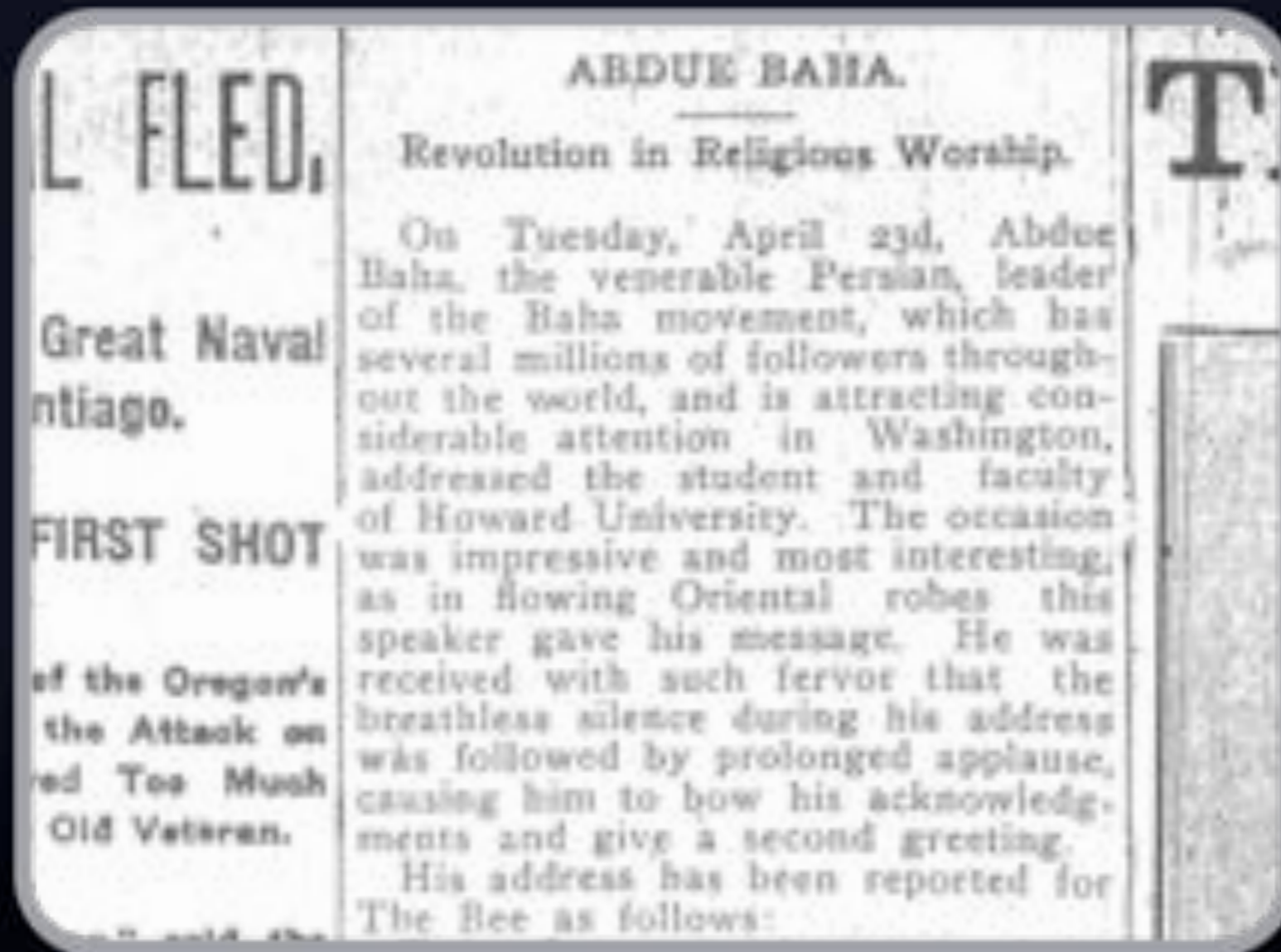
- As editor of *The Crisis*, W. E. B. Du Bois ran a series called "Men of the Month."
- This column regularly featured African American men (and women) of interest.
- In a remarkable departure from this practice, Du Bois devoted the first part of the May 1912 column to 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
- *The Crisis* 4.1 (May 1912): 14–16.



Du Bois:

- In the June 1912 issue, Du Bois published one of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's speeches presented at the Fourth Annual Conference of the NAACP.
- After 'Abdu'l-Bahá's death on November 28, 1921, Du Bois wrote:
- "Two men sit high before the world today—Eugene Debs and Abdul Baha. One is free of chains which should never have bound him—the other ['Abdu'l-Bahá] of Life which he tried to free of race and national prejudice."

“Breathless silence ... prolonged applause.”

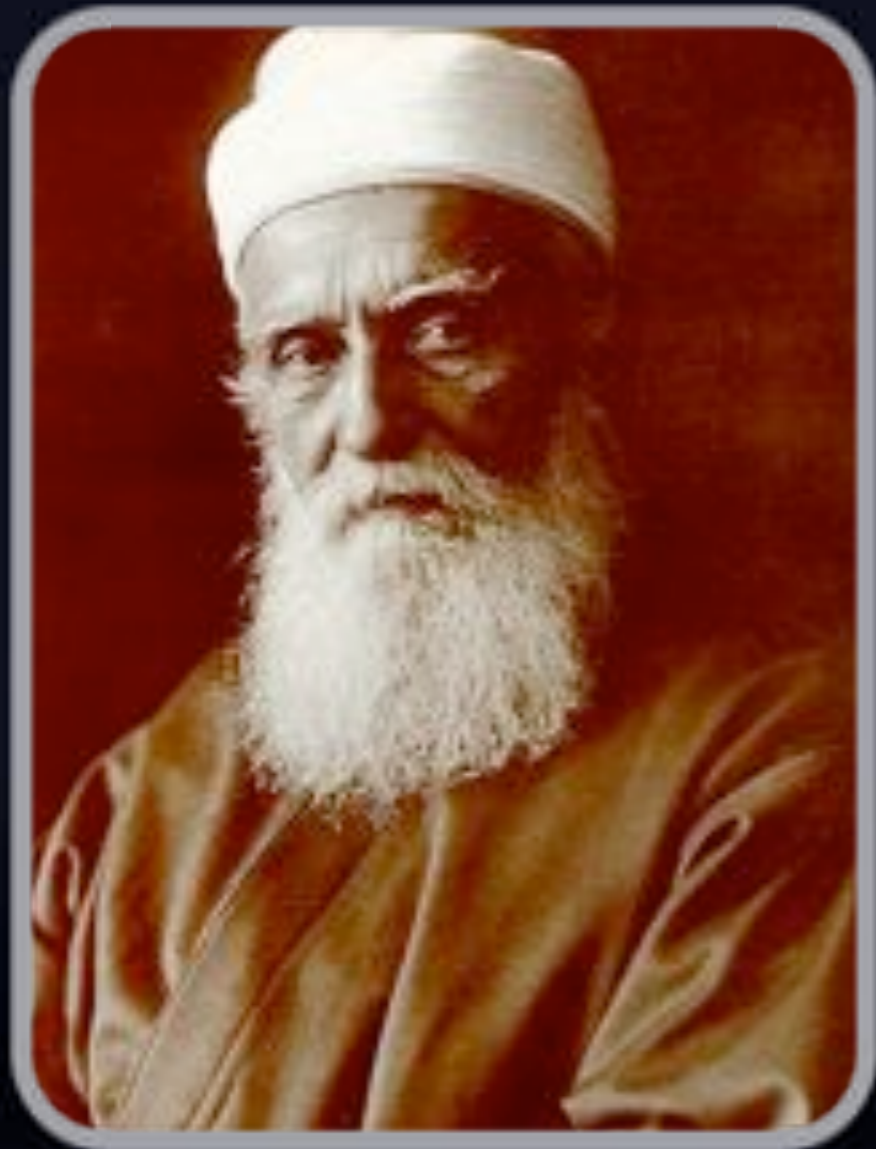


“On Tuesday, April 23d [sic], Abdue (sic) Baha, the venerable Persian, leader of the Baha (sic) movement, ... addressed the student and faculty of Howard University. The occasion was impressive ... as in flowing oriental robes this speaker gave his message.”

“He was received with such fervor that the breathless silence during his address was followed by prolonged applause, causing him to bow acknowledgments and give a second greeting.”

Source: *The Washington Bee*, Vol. 32, Iss. 51 (May 25, 1912): 3.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Howard University, April 23, 1912



- “Strive earnestly, and put forth your greatest endeavor toward the accomplishment of this fellowship and the cementing of this bond of brotherhood between you.”
- “Each one should endeavor to develop and assist the other toward mutual advancement. ... Love and unity will be fostered between you, thereby bringing about the oneness of mankind.”
- “For the accomplishment of unity between the colored and white will be an assurance of the world’s peace.”

Blacks & Whites

“Rubies & Pearls”

1912

- 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.
- How glorious the spectacle of real unity among mankind!
- This is the sign of the Most Great Peace; this is the star of the oneness of the human world.

— 24 April 1912, Talk at Home of Andrew J. Dyer,
1937 Thirteenth Street, NW, Washington, D.C.

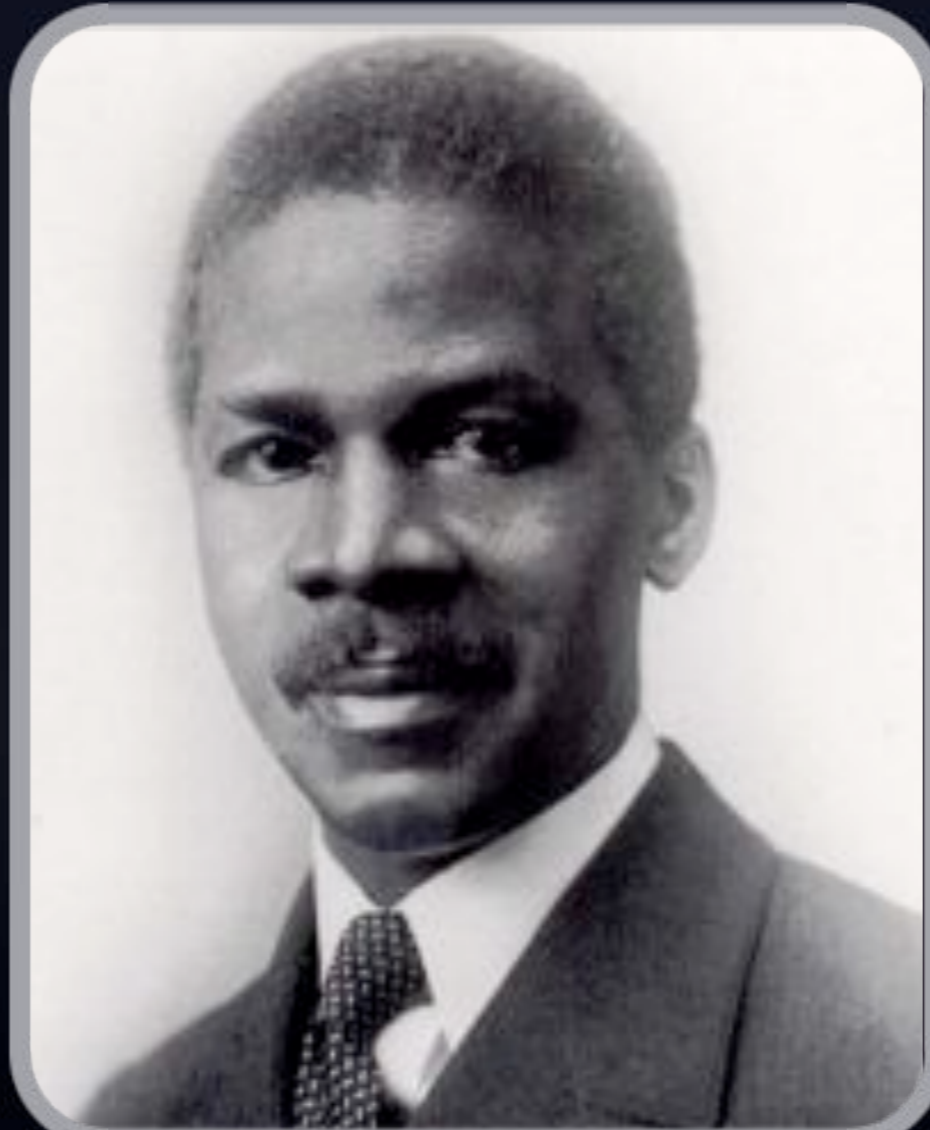


Race Amity Leaders

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Agnes Parsons
Washington, DC



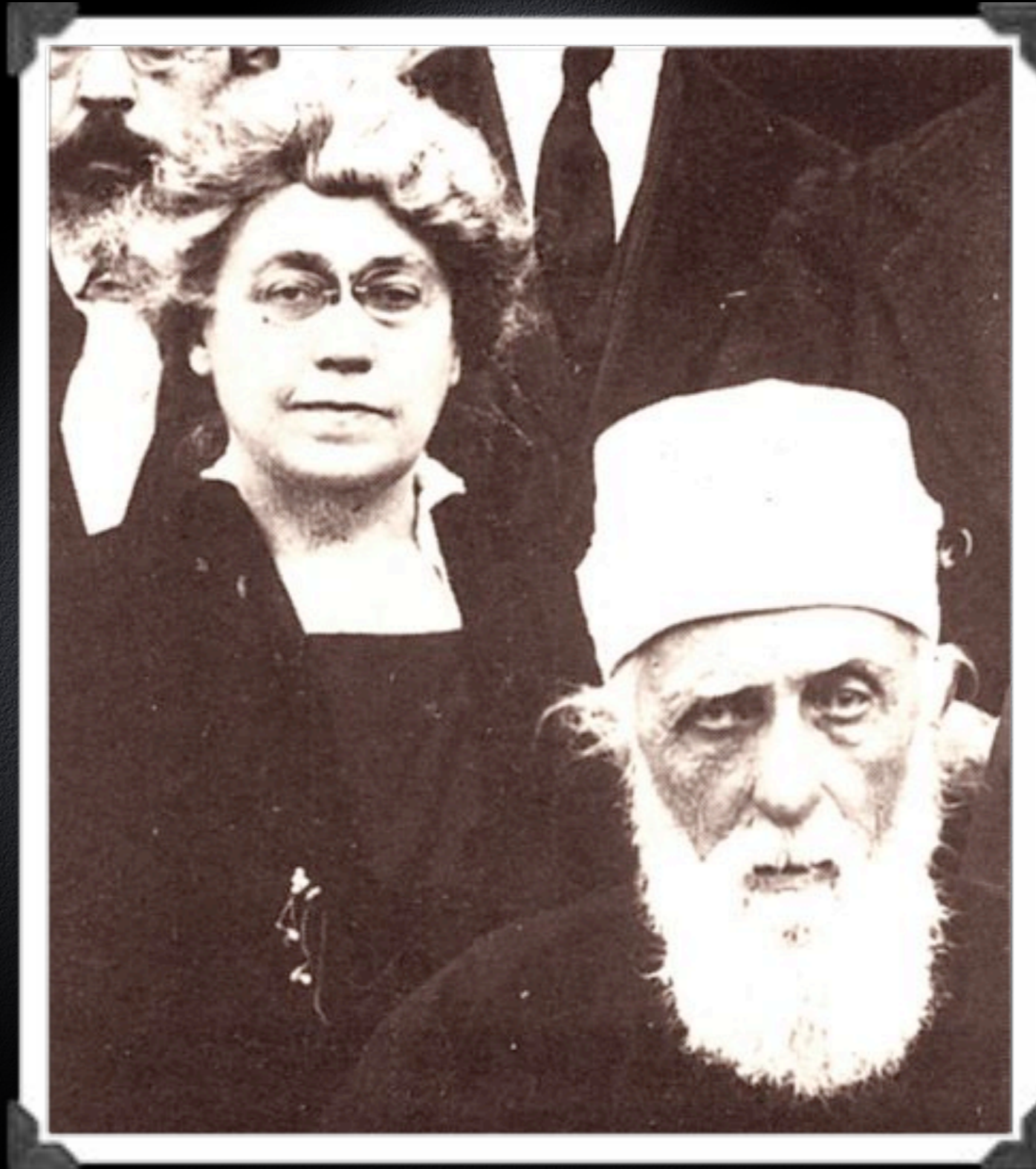
Louis G. Gregory
Washington, DC



Dr. Alain Locke
Washington, DC

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**'Abdu'l-
Bahá Asks
Agnes
Parsons**



**To Arrange
Convention
for Racial
Amity**

1920

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Instructions to Agnes Parsons (1920)

- One evening at supper time when there were about twenty, twenty-two or twenty-four people at the table Abdul Baha suddenly turned to me, quite out of the blue . . . and said: “I want you to arrange a convention in Washington for amity between the colored and the white.”
- I thought I would like to go through the floor, because I did not feel I could do it. He said: “You must have people to help you.” I waited for more instructions and he said nothing more.
- I then made an appeal. I said: “Mr. and Mrs. So and So will also help me.” This man was in official life and I thought they could help me, at that moment. He said: “He is interested in his own people, but she might help you.”
- Well, then a very extraordinary thing happened. I felt suddenly the power of his creative words. . . . I was really getting the confidence that of course was necessary, and Abdul Baha said absolutely nothing more to me.

Bahai Temple Unity, Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, 1922, p. 308, Bahá’í Temple Unity Records., National Bahá’í Archives (U.S.). Qtd. in Gayle Morrison, *To Move the World: Louis G. Gregory and the Advancement of Racial Unity in America* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1982), 136.

Senator
Moses
Edwin
Clapp



gives
Agnes
Parsons
advice ...

1921

Agnes Parsons asks Sen. Clapp for Advice

- On Tuesday last I met at Mrs. Boyle's by appointment ex. Senator Clapp, a man of ripened experience & tender heart who for years has been a friend of the colored. By temperament he is a man of force & action but life has taught him to be cautious."
- When I asked him: 'Must we not stand for the abolition of Jim Crow cars? & c. & c.' he replied: 'Carry this work into the spiritual realm & let this be a Convention to create sentiment'."
- He spoke of the importance of enlisting the sympathies of society women who stand for betterment & letting the work be under their auspices."
- He did not approve of announcing the Convention under Bahai auspices because we would then antagonize people of other religions."
- Source: Notepad copy of letter, dated Dec. 25, 1920, by Agnes Parsons to Jenabe Fazel. Agnes Parsons Papers, Box 20: Notes—Race Amity Convention DC, 1921, National Bahá'í Archives.

Locke Invited to Amity Committee:

**Contribution to first Convention for Amity not known, yet
warranted appointments to amity committees for next decade.**

Saturday, 14 May [1921]

My dear Friend:

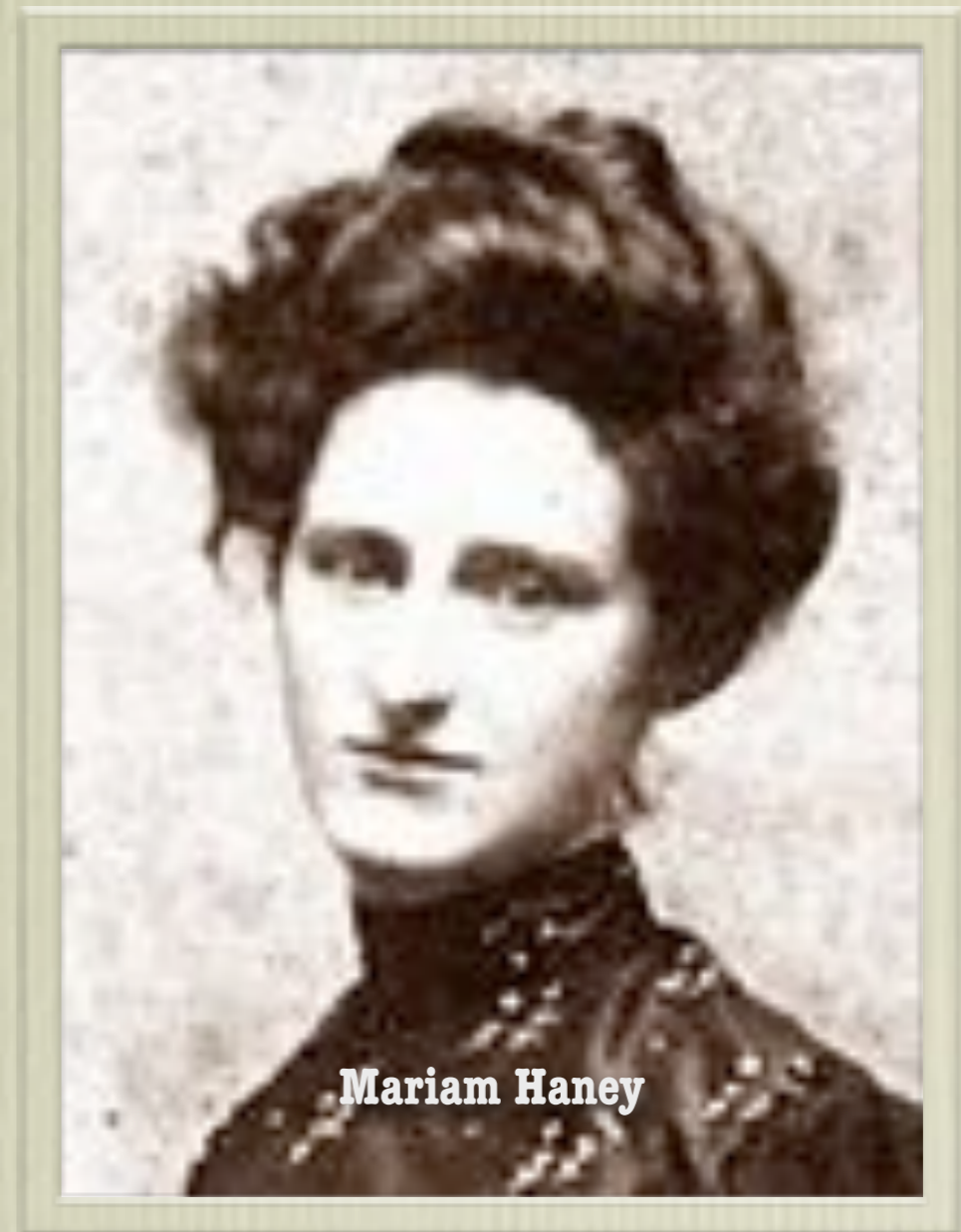
**We are arranging for a little meeting of consultation
on Monday afternoon next at 2:30 o'clock with all
those who are in town, or will be at that time, and
who are on the program. We are especially desirous
of having you with us.**

**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



Mariam Haney

The Washington Post

"To Aid Race Friendliness"

May 15, 1921, p. 21.

CONVENTION TO AID RACE FRIENDLINESS

White and Colored People to
Mingle This Week at First
Congregational Church.

GATHERING IS NATION-WIDE

Negro Songs Will Be Heard.
Topics Will Cover Variety of
Pertinent Questions.

Representatives from nearly every State in the Union will be present for the first convention for amity between the colored and the white races which is to be held in the First Congregational church Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The object is to promote a better understanding of all by all and to create sentiment.

Music at the Friday morning session will include a violin solo by Joseph Douglass, "The Gypsy Song." Louis C. Gregory will give a short talk on "The New Springtime."

To Discuss Nationalization.

Dr. A. L. Locke, of Howard university, will act as chairman at the meeting Friday evening. Alfred Martin, of the Ethical Culture society of New York city, will give an address on "The New Internationalism and Its Spiritual Factors." Miss Lula Vere Childers, of the Howard University Conservatory of Music, will present the Howard university chorus in excerpts from the "Hiawatha Trilogy," by S. Coleridge-Taylor. Albert R. Vail, of Chicago, will speak on "The Radiant Century of the Passing of Prejudice."

Mountfort Mills, of New York city, will preside at the session Saturday morning. William H. Randall, of Boston, will present "A New Pathway to Universal Peace." Dr. C. Sumner Wormley will sing two numbers, "Thou Art Risen" and "The Warrior." Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, of Los Angeles, Calif., will speak on "Bible Prophecies of Universal Brotherhood."

Saturday evening, Howard MacNutt, of Brooklyn, is the chairman. Mrs. Coralle Cook will speak on "Colored Poets and Their Poetry." A few of these poems will be sung by the Howard University Glee club.

Old First Congregational Church



Archival photo courtesy of
Rev. John H. Mack (d. 2008)
April 17, 2006.

1921

First Race Amity Conference



- Held in Old First Congregational Church, 10th & G, NW, the first racially integrated church in Washington, DC.
- Estimated 1500 attended.
- All session chairs were Bahá'í.
- Alain Locke served as Session Chair on Friday evening, May 21.
- The Howard University chorus performed.
- Solo violinist Joseph Douglass, grandson of abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, performed as well.

Old First Congregational Church, 10th & G NW (1930)

"A New Commandment I give unto you that ye love one another."

—Jesus Christ.

Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races

Based on Heavenly Teachings

May 19, 20 and 21

Congregational Church

10th and G Streets N. W.

Washington, D. C.

Morning Sessions 10:30 o'clock Evening Sessions 8:30 o'clock

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 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.

"Union and harmony are the cause of the order of the world and the life of nations."

—Baha'ullah

"Exercise your rights in such a manner as not to injure another man's rights."

—Terence.

Program

Thursday Evening, May 19th

Chairman, Mr. WILLIAM H. RANDALL of Boston

Invocation..... Rev. Dr. JASON NOBLE PIERCE

Music—"Great Day of God."

Address—"The Relation of the Times to World-Wide Peace"

Ex-Senator MOSES B. CLAPP

Address—"The Radiant Century of the Passing of Prejudice"

Mr. ALBERT VAIL of Chicago

Heart Songs of a People..... Dunbar Community Singers

Mr. W. SCOTT MAYO, Director

Story of the Songs..... Mrs. GABRIELLE PELHAM

The Songs:

"Steal Away."

"See Fo' and Twenty Elders."

"I Didn't Hear Nobody Pray."

"Go Down, Moses."

"Standing in the Need of Prayer."

"Deep River."

"Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?"

Solo—"Nobody Knows"; "Bye and Bye"..... Burleigh

Mrs. HENRY GRANT

Solo—"Mammy"..... Will Marion Cook

Mrs. LENORE COOK

Friday Morning, May 20th

Chairman, Mr. ALBERT VAIL of Chicago

Address—"The New Co-operation"..... Honorable THEODORE BURTON

Address—"Racial Understanding"..... Mr. C. LEE COOK of Louisville

Violin Solo—"The Gypsy Song"..... S. Coleridge Taylor

Mr. JOSEPH DOUGLASS

Address—"The New Springtime"..... Mr. LOUIS G. GARIBOLDI

"Requite injury with kindness."

—Lao-tse

**Violinist
Joseph
Douglass**



**Abolitionist
Frederick
Douglass**

"This world of ours is one city."
—Epictetus.

Friday Evening, May 20th

Chairman, Dr. A. L. LOCKE of Howard University
Address—"Duties and Responsibilities of Citizenship"
Honorable MARTIN B. MADDEN
Music—Miss LULU VEE CHILDERS, Dean Howard University Conservatory of Music, will present the Howard University Chorus in excerpts from "Hiawatha Trilogy" by the Anglo-African composer, S. Coleridge Taylor
Address—"The New Internationalism and Its Spiritual Factors"
Mr. ALFRED MARTIN of New York

Saturday Morning, May 21st

Chairman, Mr. MOUNTFORT MILLS of New York
Prayer.....ORA GIBSON
Address—"A New Pathway to Universal Peace"
Mr. WILLIAM H. RANDALL of Boston
Vocal Solos—(a) "Thou Art Risen".....S. Coleridge Taylor
(b) "The Warrior".....Burlingame
Dr. C. SUMNER WORMLEY
Address—"Bible Prophecies of Universal Brotherhood"
Mr. AHMAD SOHRAB of California

Saturday Evening, May 21st

Chairman, Mr. HOWARD MACNUTT of Brooklyn
Address—"Colored Poets and Their Poetry"
Mrs. CORALIE FRANKLIN COOK
Music.....HOWARD UNIVERSITY GLEE CLUB
Mr. W. ROY TERRE, Director
"Just You," "Deep River," "Go Down, Moses".....Burlingame
Address—"The Solution of the Race Problem in the Orient"
JENABE FAHEL MAZANDARANI of Persia

"Do as you would be done by."
—Zoroaster

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."
—Moses.

Great Day of God

| | |
|---|--|
| Great Day of God, long looked for, Thy dawn we do proclaim. Great day when ev'ry nation Shall praise His Holy Name. Great Day of resurrection, Of unity and love, Soon bright in all its splendor Thy Sun shall shine above. | Great Day of the unveiling Of Truth's deep mysteries, When every hidden secret Of earth and sky and seas, In all their wondrous beauty, To man shall be revealed; Nor can an act or motive By man now be concealed. |
| Great day of Might and Power, Of Knowledge and of Light, No clouds of superstition Can now bedim our sight. Great Day, when God, the Father, Is known o'er all the earth, And to His whole creation Hath given a new birth. | Great Day of God, All glorious; Great Day of Peace, so blest; The thought of Thee brings gladness, And dilates every breast. Great Day of one religion, When all are understood; One faith in Life Eternal, One God, one Brotherhood. |

Patronesses

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Mrs. Ernest Bicknell | Miss Caroline L. Hunt |
| Mrs. Theodore Vernon Roynton | Miss Julia Lathrop |
| Mrs. William E. Chamberlin | Miss Gertrude MacArthur |
| Mrs. Louis Cohen | Mrs. Henry Cleveland Perkins |
| Mrs. Coralie Franklin Cook | Judge Kathryn Sellers |
| Mrs. Edward Costigan | Miss Ethel M. Smith |
| Mrs. Stephen B. Elkins | Mrs. Walter Ufford |
| Miss Mary Gwynn | Mrs. M. C. VanWinkle |
| Mrs. William Hitz | Miss Joy Webster |
| | Mrs. Laura Williams |

Committee of Arrangements

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Mrs. Eldridge Roger Boyle | Mrs. Gabrielle Pelham |
| Mrs. Charles F. Haney | Mrs. Arthur Jeffrey Parsons |
| | Miss Martha Root |

"If men could only learn the lesson of mutual tolerance, understanding and brotherly love, the unity of the world would soon be an established fact."
—Abdul Baka.

No collection will be taken at any session.

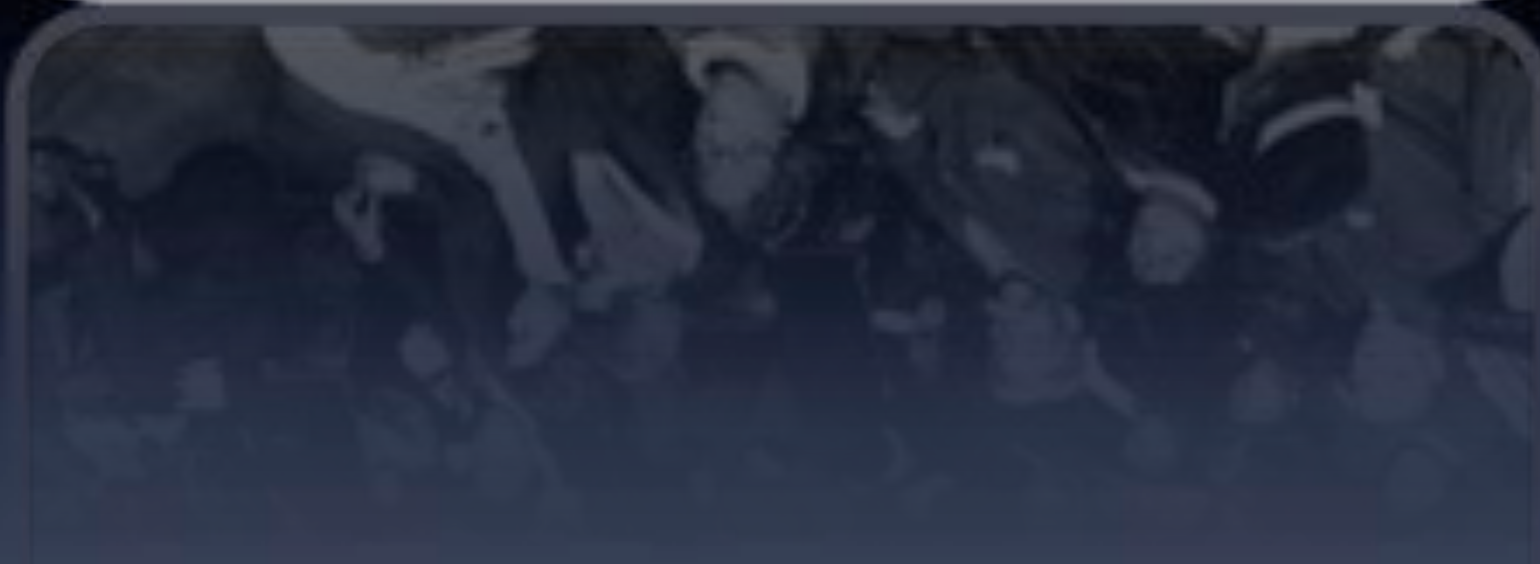
Reflections by M.F. Harris

- ❧ I attended every session, day and night ...
- ❧ Many times throughout the meetings did with much effort restrain my tears. My heart leaped and throbbed and many times almost burst within my breast.
- ❧ I am a colored man ...
- ❧ My race as a whole, I believe, is quite ready to welcome the glad day when all will be brothers. ...
- ❧ The trouble is nearly unilateral. God give us the day.”
- ❧ Source: M.F. Harris (1525 “10” St. N.W., Washington, DC), Note (May 22, 1921), National Bahá’í Archives.

1921



- No photos of first Amity Conference.
- 2nd Race Amity Conference
- Dec. 5–6, 1921
- Central High School Auditorium, Springfield, MA
- Estimated attendance: 1200.



'Abdu'l-Bahá on "Dr. Locke" & Convention

ḥaḍrat-i Daktur Lāk īn shakhs-i jalīl fī al-ḥaqīqih sazāvār-i har sitāyish ast.
taḍarru' bi-malakūt-i ilāhī mīnamāyam kih ta'yīdī makhsūṣ bi-ū farmāyad.

مستر روی و بهیم مسرملات و سرین
نفوس محترمه تأیید از نفیسات روح القدس دارند حضرت دکتور لاک
این شخص طویل فی تحقیقہ تراوار ہر ستایش است تضرع ملکوت الہی منام
کہ تأییدی مخصوص باو فرماید کانونشن سفید و سیاہ یعنی بدان کہ در استنباط
بسیار ولایات امریکہ است نماید کانونشن شما بمنزلہ مادر است سیات

confirmation from the Breaths of the Holy Spirit. His honor,
Dr. Locke—his distinguished person deserves every consideration.
I implore special confirmation for him from the Divine Kingdom.

Be thou assured that this Race Convention will also
in the future be established in the other States of America.
Your Convention is like the Mother Convention which shall give
birth to many others. If your Convention be held in the future

Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Agnes Parsons, July 26, 1921. Facsimile of Persian original from The Original Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá Collection, National Bahá'í Archives, United States. Translation from Leone Barnitz Papers, Box 17: Agnes Parsons correspondence/'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Locke: Bahá'í Race Amity Committees

- National Amity Convention Committee (1924–1925).
- Racial Amity Committee (1925–1926).
- National Bahá'í Committee on Racial Amity (1927).
- National Inter-Racial Amity Committee (1927–1928).
- National Inter-Racial Amity Committee (1928–1929).
- National Inter-Racial Amity Committee (1929–1930).
- National Racial Amity Committee (1931–1932).

1924

1932

Selected Race Amity Events

- **1924:** The third “Convention for Amity Between the White and Colored Races.” New York. March 28–30, 1924. Bahá’ís invited: NAACP; National Urban League; Committee on International Cooperation of the League of Women Voters. Speakers included Alain Locke; James Weldon Johnson (NAACP secretary); Franz Boas (Professor of Anthropology, Columbia University); Jane Addams. “Put the New York Bahá’í community ... into the forefront of Bahá’í racial amity activities for many years to come.”
- **1924:** The fourth “Convention for Amity Between the White and Colored Races” “under the auspices of the Bahai moment” was reported by J.H. Gray, "Pennsylvania: Philadelphia News." The Chicago Defender (1 Nov 1924): 6. Alain Leroy [last name missing] spoke on “Negro Art and Culture.”
- **1927:** “Convention for Amity Between the Colored and White Races.” July 1927. Green Acre, Eliot, Maine. Louis Gregory: “Dr. Alain Locke ... spoke.”
- Brochure of event lists members of the “National Inter-racial Amity Committee” including “Dr. Alain L. Locke.”
- Lectures: “The New White Man” (Devere Allen); “The New Negro,” by Prof. Leslie Pinckney Hill.
- **1932:** New York. February 27, 1932. Bahá’ís hosted an interracial banquet in honor of NAACP and National Urban League. W.E.B. Du Bois gave a short speech. According to The Chicago Defender, Walter F. White, NAACP secretary, hailed “the Bahá’í movement” as “one of the great forces of human understanding.”
- **1932:** Los Angeles. February 27, 1932. At banquet dinner, Chief Standing Bear offered a prayer and spoke of peace as a covenant among all races.

**Mordecai
Johnson,
First Black
President
of Howard
University**



**Speaks at
1927
Washington
Race Amity
Event ...**

1927

Alain Locke on Race Amity (1928)

- 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 (1921).
- On November 10 and 11 (1927) 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.
- Then followed Dr. Mordecai W. Johnson, president of Howard University, who spoke on “The Conquest of Prejudice.”
- Source: Alain Locke, “A Bahá’í Inter-Racial Conference.” The Bahá’í Magazine (Star of the West) 18.10 (January 1928): 315–316.

“Whites Entertained by Harlemites”

White Bahá'ís Guests

- “Fellowship of the races was the keynote of a two-day interracial conference of the Bahai Movement at the New York Urban League.”

Racial Barriers Fall at Conference Of Bahai Groups Over Week-End Here

Whites Entertained by Harlemites During Two-Day Stay—Sincerity and Brotherly Spirit as Path to Better Relations

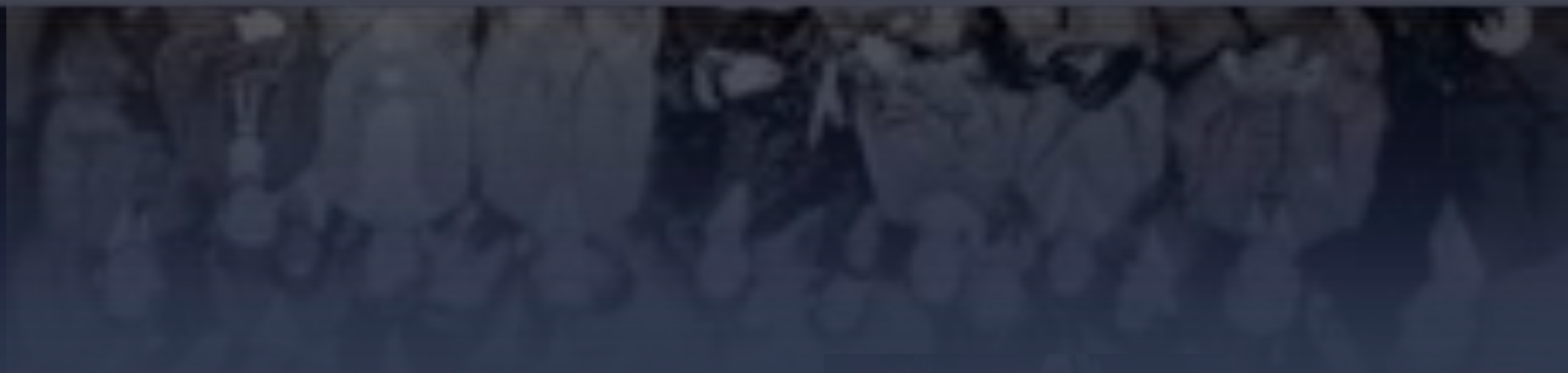
Fellowship of the races was the keynote of a two-day interracial conference of the Bahai movement here Saturday and Sunday at the New York Urban League, 204 West 136th Street. White members of the movement were the guests of Harlem members in their homes.

In Harlem Bahá'ís' Homes

- “White members of the movement were the guests of Harlem members in their homes.”
- “Racial Barriers Fall at Conference Of Bahai Groups Over Week-End Here.” *The New York Amsterdam News* (Nov. 12, 1930): 14.

1930

1930 Race Amity Event, New York City



Bahá'ís honor NAACP

- February 27, 1932
- Held in honor of the NAACP and New York Urban League "in appreciation," Mrs. Louie A Mathews, chairman of the racial amity committee of the Baha'i movement, announced: "of their service in the cause of justice and the protection of the Negro people."

Two Groups Observe Interracial Day Here With Banquet and Harlem Tour

Baha'i Committee Fetes N. A. A. C. P. and
New York Urban League — Columbia
Professor Leads Party Downtown

Saturday was interracial amity day in New York and Negroes and whites met on two fronts—a party of white people under direction of Treadwell Smith of Columbia University invaded Harlem, while celebrities of this section of the city journeyed to the Shelton Hotel, Lexington avenue, at Forty-ninth street, where they were banquet guests of the national Baha'i committee for racial amity. Victories for better understanding were reported from both fronts; and no casualties are listed.

The downtown meeting was held in honor of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the New York Urban League "in appreciation," Mrs. Louie A. Mathews, chairman of the racial amity committee of the Baha'i movement, announced. "of their devoted service in the cause of justice and the protection of the Negro people." Mrs. Mathews is donor of the DuBois literary prize.

There were brief talks about the value and beauty of love, friendship, and peace by speakers—fourteen of them—colored and white. Louis O. Gregory, who shared with Mrs. Mathews the duties of presiding officer; Hooper H. Harris, an attorney and leader in the movement; Mrs. Mary Hanford Ford, an active Bahá'í; and Horace Holley, editor of World Unity, joined with Mrs. Mathews in extending greetings to the guests and explaining the origin, purpose and methods of the Baha'i movement.

Response was made by W. E. B. DuBois, editor of the Crisis; William

1932

& Urban League

- Mrs. Mathews is the donor of the DuBois prize."
- "Response was made by W. E. B. DuBois, editor of the Crisis."
- "Two Groups Observe Interracial Day Here With Banquet and Harlem Tour: Baha'i Committee Fetes N.A.A.C.P. and New York Urban League." *The New York Amsterdam News* (March 2, 1932): 11.

Boston

**The Future
of Race Amity & Multiculturalism**

A faint, sepia-toned background image of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man is centered behind the text. The figure is shown in two superimposed positions, with arms and legs extended to touch the boundaries of a circle and a square.

Race Amity & “Unity in Diversity”

- In “Unity through Diversity: A Bahá’í Principle” (1933), Locke wrote:
- “What we need to learn most 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.”
- In 1944, at Hampton, Locke said this can be done, in part, by “pleading and righting the cause of any and all oppressed minorities”: “Only by broadening our social minds ... can we hope to become an integral part of the progressive movement of the world
- at large working for political, economic & cultural democracy.”
- Locke even suggested that the NAACP “change its name to the “National Association for the Advancement of American Democracy.”
- In “Cultural Relativism and Ideological Peace” (1944), Locke envisioned a series of “progressive integrations” that would take place “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.”

Discussion: Promoting Racial Amity

Discussion:

Beyond the “initial stage of cultural tolerance” that Locke speaks of, how can we promote “mutual respect, reciprocal exchange, some specific communities of agreement and, finally, commonality of purpose and action”?



**Eleanor Roosevelt
& Alain Locke (1941)**

THE END

Thank you for participating
in this Amity circle!