

Reflections on Race Unity:
Sharing Learnings from the Grassroots
Participant Workbook

For more information, please contact Negin Toosi or Lev Rickards
(levandnegin[at]gmail[.]com)

Today’s workshop will focus primarily on exploring the sacred writings of the Bahá’í Faith and what they have to say about race unity. In that light, we will also explore passages pulled from sociological, psychological, literary, and other explorations of the topic. Through it all, our hope is to use these materials as a basis to explore our own experiences with race and how we hope to grow as individuals, communities, and institutions in the future.

After the members of the group introduce themselves briefly, we will begin to go through these materials together. The first few times you speak, please state your name clearly so we can get to know each other.

The schedule for the day is as follows:

I. The Importance of Race Unity.....	3
II. Racial Equality and Justice.....	6
III. Racial Unity and Love.....	12
IV. The Spiritual Qualities Necessary...	19
V. Panel Discussion.....	21
VI. Practice Component.....	23

As we go through the day, you may hear or share stories that are personal and confidential or ideas that are challenging. We ask that all viewpoints be respected and that if someone shares something personal and private, that we all exercise trustworthiness and keep that information confidential. Being able to listen lovingly and respectfully is a crucial skill for the activities we will embark on today.

I. The Importance of Race Unity

We will begin our exploration of this topic by looking at some of the writings that explain its importance. We will read the quotes and answer the questions below them together, in order to reflect on the quotes at three levels: the explicit meaning of the quote, how to apply it to our lives, and the implications for society.

Our belief in the oneness of humankind

- “The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established.” Baha’u’llah
 - **Question:** What is unattainable without first establishing unity?
 - **Question:** Can humanity live in peace and security without unity?
 - **Question:** Are we living in peace and security right now?
- "At the root of all forms of discrimination and intolerance is the erroneous idea that humankind is somehow composed of separate and distinct races, peoples or castes, and that those sub-groups innately possess varying intellectual, moral, and/or physical capacities, which in turn justify different forms of treatment. The reality is that there is only the one human race. We are a single people, inhabiting the planet Earth, one human family bound together in a common destiny, a single entity created from one same substance, obligated to "be even as one soul." Baha'i International Community, 2001 Aug 31, Statement to World Conference against Racism
 - **Question:** What erroneous idea lies at the root of all forms of discrimination and intolerance?
 - **Question:** What is the reality of race?
- "Racism, one of the most baneful and persistent evils, is a major barrier to peace. Its practice perpetrates too outrageous a violation of the dignity of human beings to be countenanced under any pretext. Racism retards the unfoldment of the boundless potentialities of its victims, corrupts its perpetrators, and blights human progress. Recognition of the oneness of mankind, implemented by appropriate legal measures, must be universally upheld if this problem is to be overcome." The Universal House of Justice, 1985 Oct, The Promise of World Peace
 - **Question:** What are some of the effects of racism?
- "The third [complete freedom from prejudice] should be the immediate, the universal, and the chief concern of all and sundry members of the Bahá'í community, of whatever age, rank, experience, class, or color, as all, with no exception, must face its challenging implications, and none can claim, however much he may have progressed along this line, to have completely discharged the stern responsibilities which it inculcates." Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 22

- **Question:** What should be our immediate, universal, and chief concern?
- **Question:** Is there a point at which anyone can claim to have achieved complete freedom from prejudice and discharged the responsibilities it inculcates?
- **Question:** What are some of those responsibilities?
- **Question:** What are some of the ways we carry out those responsibilities?

Coherence

- "We are all striving to bring our thoughts and actions in line with our belief in the oneness of humankind." Ruhi Book 6, "Teaching the Cause" (Anna's Presentation)
 - **Question:** How am I bringing my thoughts and actions in line with my belief in the oneness of humankind? Why is that coherence important?
- "As you continue to labor in your clusters, you will be drawn further and further into the life of the society around you and will be challenged to extend the process of systematic learning in which you are engaged to encompass a growing range of human endeavours. In the approaches you take, the methods you adopt, and the instruments you employ, you will need to achieve the same degree of coherence that characterizes the pattern of growth presently under way." -UHJ Ridvan 2008
 - **Question:** What might systematic learning have to do with race unity?
 - **Question:** How can our approach to race unity achieve "the same degree of coherence that characterizes the pattern of growth presently under way?"

Three protagonists

- "Freedom from racial prejudice, in any of its forms, should, at such a time as this when an increasingly large section of the human race is falling a victim to its devastating ferocity, be adopted as the watchword of the entire body of the American believers, in whichever state they reside, in whatever circles they move, whatever their age, traditions, tastes, and habits. It should be consistently demonstrated in every phase of their activity and life, whether in the Bahá'í community or outside it, in public or in private, formally as well as informally, individually as well as in their official capacity as organized groups, committees and Assemblies. It should be deliberately cultivated through the various and everyday opportunities, no matter how insignificant, that present themselves, whether in their homes, their business offices, their schools and colleges, their social parties and recreation grounds, their Bahá'í meetings, conferences, conventions, summer schools and Assemblies." Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 38
 - **Question:** Where should freedom from prejudice be consistently demonstrated?

- **Question:** Where should freedom from prejudice be deliberately cultivated?

- "This is to be achieved through marked progress in the activity and development of the individual believer, of the institutions, and of the local community. That an advance in this process depends on the progress of all three of these intimately connected participants is abundantly clear." Universal House of Justice, 26 December 1995
 - **Question:** What are the three participants mentioned and how are they related?

- "Furthermore, those who enter the Faith must be integrated into vibrant local communities, characterized by tolerance and love and guided by a strong sense of purpose and collective will, environments in which the capacities of all components — men, women, youth and children—are developed and their powers multiplied in unified action." Universal House of Justice, 26 December 1995
 - **Question:** What should characterize our communities?

 - **Question:** What should happen in these environments?

- "All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization." Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 215 (CIX)
 - **Question:** What have we all been created to do?

 - **Question:** In what ways do I treat fellow community members as possessing the capacity to "carry forward an ever-advancing civilization?" In what ways do I fall short of seeing fellow community members in this light?

II. Racial Equality and Justice

We have broken down the broader subject of race unity into two elements: racial equality and racial unity. So often in the general public, these two discourses are separate. There is a discourse of racial justice, of equality, which addresses equal access to resources, health, education and employment opportunities; however, without setting our sights any higher, this discourse may end in a world that is basically "separate but equal." There is another discourse of racial unity -- of coming together, of loving each other, of respect. This second discourse frequently does not take into account structural factors underlying racial disparity, without which, it becomes the simple and ineffective plea, "Can't we all just get along?"

A Baha'i discourse on race must be unified - it must see racial justice/equality and racial unity/harmony as two elements of an integrated transformation in the life of society. Let us now study some quotations from the Writings and from the social sciences. We will also examine some of the challenges that make achieving justice and racial equality difficult. First we will examine two quotes about the relationship between justice and unity.

The relationship between justice and unity

- "The light of men is justice; quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among people." -Baha'u'llah
 - **Question:** What is the purpose of justice?
- "The evidences of discord and malice are apparent everywhere, though all were made for harmony and union. The Great Being saith: O well-beloved ones! The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. We cherish the hope that the light of justice may shine upon the world and sanctify it from tyranny... There can be no doubt whatever that if the day star of justice, which the clouds of tyranny have obscured, were to shed its light upon men, the face of the earth would be completely transformed." Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 217
 - **Question:** What is the relationship between justice and unity?

Reflection on Baha'i writings on justice

- "O Son of Spirit! The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbour. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behoveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes." Baha'u'llah, The Hidden Words, A#2
 - **Question:** By the aid of justice, what shall we be enabled to do?

- **Exercise:** Mark the statements that are in keeping with our new understanding of justice.
 - “The people in this neighborhood are dangerous. And besides, they're probably not interested in getting to know us.”
 - “Although my neighbors told me that this population is financially struggling and would probably not be interested in discussing spiritual matters, I want to visit them and see through my own eyes.”
 - “My friend and I saw two men driving by in a dark van. I don't want to go back to that neighborhood again.”
 - “We were visiting someone who lives across town. An older woman answered the door and explained that our friend was not home. We decided to leave. The older woman was very suspicious of us; she kept staring at us through the window.”
 - “My friends tell me that this population is very materially prosperous and would probably not be interested in talk of unity, but I want to meet them and learn for myself.”

- **Exercise:** Share a time you knew "through the knowledge of thy neighbour," and share another time when you knew through "thine own knowledge."

- “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!” Baha'u'llah, *The Arabic Hidden Words*, 68
 - **Question:** In what land should the children of men dwell?
 - **Question:** With which feet should the children of men walk?
 - **Question:** With which mouth should the children of men eat?
 - **Question:** How does detachment relate to demonstrating equality and unity?
 - **Exercise:** Mark the statement that is consistent with the belief that we were all “created...from the same dust.”
 - “Black boys get shot in this city all the time. I try not to think about it.”
 - “Black boys get shot in this city all the time. This is my community, and we each have a role to play in building a better neighborhood.”
 - “A lot of immigrants are moving into this area. Why are they burdening our institutions and our schools?”
 - “A lot of immigrants are moving into this area. I look forward to interacting with and learning from these other members of our human family.”

- "God," 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself declares, "maketh no distinction between the white and the black. If the hearts are pure both are acceptable unto Him. God is no respecter of persons on account of either color or race. All colors are acceptable unto Him, be they white, black, or yellow. Inasmuch as all were created in the image of God, we must bring ourselves to realize that all embody divine possibilities." "In the estimation of God," He states, "all men are equal. There is no distinction or preference for any soul, in the realm of His justice and equity." "God did not make these divisions," He affirms; "these divisions have had their origin in man himself. Therefore, as they are against the plan and purpose of God they are false and imaginary." Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 37
 - **Question:** What does it mean that we were all created in the image of God?
 - **Question:** Where did racial division and conflict come from?

Challenges for reaching equality

- **Beliefs about race:** "To understand why the idea of race is a biological myth requires a major paradigm shift - an absolutely paradigm shift, a shift in perspective. And for me, it's like seeing what it must have been like to understand that the world isn't flat. The world looks flat to our eyes. And perhaps I can invite you to a mountaintop or to a plain, and you can look out the window at the horizon, and see, 'Oh, what I thought was flat I can see a curve in now.' And that race is not based on biology, but race is rather an idea that we ascribe to biology." – Alan Goodman, Ph.D. http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-background-01-07.htm.
- "‘I am an African American,’ says Duana Fullwiley, ‘but in parts of Africa, I am white.’ To do fieldwork as a medical anthropologist in Senegal, she says, ‘I take a plane to France, a seven- to eight-hour ride. My race changes as I cross the Atlantic. There, I say, ‘Je suis noire,’ and they say, ‘Oh, okay—métisse—you are mixed.’ Then I fly another six to seven hours to Senegal, and I am white. In the space of a day, I can change from African American, to métisse, to tubaab [Wolof for ‘white/European’]. This is not a joke, or something to laugh at, or to take lightly. It is the kind of social recognition that even two-year-olds who can barely speak understand. ‘Tubaab,’ they say when they greet me.’” – Harvard Magazine, May-June 2008 <http://harvardmagazine.com/2008/05/race-in-a-genetic-world.html>
 - **Question:** Why is it easier for some people to believe that humans are divided into racial sub-species than to believe that humanity is one? What is the difference between race and ancestry?
- **Employment:** "Although there have been some remarkable gains in the labor force status of racial minorities, significant disparities remain. African Americans are twice as likely to be unemployed as whites (Hispanics are only marginally so), and the wages of both blacks and Hispanics continue to lag well behind those of whites (author's analysis of Current Population Survey, 2006)...A long line of research has examined the degree to which discrimination plays a role in shaping contemporary labor market disparities... For example, in a study by Bertrand & Mullainathan (2004), the researchers mailed equivalent resumes to employers in Boston and Chicago using racially identifiable names to signal race (for example, names like Jamal and Lakisha signaled African Americans, while Brad

and Emily were associated with whites). White names triggered a callback rate that was 50% higher than that of equally qualified black applicants....The role of networks in hiring practices is extremely well documented, with networks generally viewed as an efficient strategy for matching workers to employers with advantages for both job seekers (e.g., Granovetter 1995) and employers (e.g., Fernandez et al. 2000). At the same time, given high levels of social segregation (e.g., McPherson et al. 2001), the use of referrals is likely to reproduce the existing racial composition of the company and to exclude members of those groups not already well represented (Braddock & McPartland 1987). In an analysis of noncollege jobs, controlling for spatial segregation, occupational segregation, city, and firm size, Mouw (2002) finds that the use of employee referrals in predominantly white firms reduces the probability of a black hire by nearly 75% relative to the use of newspaper ads...Irrespective of an employer's personal racial attitudes, the use of employee referrals is likely to reproduce the existing racial composition of an organization, restricting valuable employment opportunities from excluded groups (see also Royster 2003, Waldinger & Lichter 2003)." - Pager & Shepherd, *The Sociology of Discrimination: Racial Discrimination in Employment, Housing, Credit, and Consumer Markets*, *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* 2008. 34:181–209

- **Question:** Why do referrals tend to reproduce the existing racial compositions of companies? What could change this?
- **Question:** Why might recruiters not call back a job candidate with a Black-sounding name whose resume is identical to that of a candidate with a White-sounding name? What could change this?
- **Housing:** Residential segregation by race remains a salient feature of contemporary American cities. Indeed, African Americans were as segregated from whites in 1990 as they had been at the start of the twentieth century, and levels of segregation appear unaffected by rising socioeconomic status (Massey & Denton 1993). Although segregation appears to have modestly decreased between 1980 and 2000 (Logan et al. 2004), blacks (and to a lesser extent other minority groups) continue to experience patterns of residential placement markedly different from whites.- Pager & Shepherd, *The Sociology of Discrimination: Racial Discrimination in Employment, Housing, Credit, and Consumer Markets*, *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* 2008. 34:181–209
 - **Question:** Who lives in your neighborhood? How does this impact neighborhood children's classes, feast and other activities? The Universal House of Justice, in a recent letter sent 17 May 2009 about holding neighborhood Feasts, said the following: "Dividing a local community into areas for the purpose of celebrating the Feast is not without certain challenges. In many cities around the world, for instance, people have been segregated into areas according to various factors such as race, ethnicity, and economic conditions. A Local Assembly must be mindful that barriers entrenched in the wider population are not inadvertently perpetuated in the local Baha'i community as a whole." How could you address this?
- **Education:** According to Orfield & Lee (2005, p. 18), more than 60% of black and Latino students attend high poverty schools, compared with 30% of Asians and 18% of whites. In addition to funding disparities across these schools, based on local property taxes, the broader resources of schools in poor neighborhoods are substantially limited: Teachers in

poor and minority schools are likely to have less experience, shorter tenure, and emergency credentials rather than official teaching certifications (Orfield&Lee 2005). - Pager & Shepherd, *The Sociology of Discrimination: Racial Discrimination in Employment, Housing, Credit, and Consumer Markets*, *Annu. Rev. Sociol* 2008. 34:181–209

- **Question:** What are some of the structural factors underlying the divide between rich and poor schools? What could change this?

- **Stereotypes:** Stereotype threat refers to being at risk of confirming a negative stereotype about one's group (Steele & Aronson, 1995). This term was first used by Steele and Aronson (1995) who showed in several experiments that Black college students performed more poorly on standardized tests than White students when their race was emphasized. When race was not emphasized, however, Black students performed better and equivalently with White students. The results showed that performance in academic contexts can be harmed by the awareness that one's behavior might be judged through the lens of racial stereotypes.... Furthermore, research has shown that the consequences of stereotype threat extend beyond underachievement on academic tasks. For example, it can lead to self-handicapping strategies, such as reduced practice time for a task (Stone, 2002), and to reduced sense of belonging to the stereotyped domain (Good, Dweck, & Rattan, 2008). In education, it can also lead students to choose not to pursue the domain of study and, consequently, limit the range of professions that they can pursue. Therefore, the long-term effects of stereotype threat might contribute to educational and social inequality (Good et al., 2008a; Schmader, Johns, & Barquissau, 2004). reducingstereotypethreat.org
 - **Question:** If someone feels their behavior is going to be judged through the lens of a negative stereotype, what are some potential outcomes? What could change this?

- **Wealth:** Whites possess roughly 12 times the wealth of African Americans; in fact, whites near the bottom of the income distribution possess more wealth than blacks near the top of the income distribution (Oliver & Shapiro 1997, p. 86). Given that home ownership is one of the most significant sources of wealth accumulation, patterns that affect the value and viability of home ownership will have an impact on wealth disparities overall...And yet, the emphasis on structural discrimination—as opposed to just inequality—directs our attention to the array of discriminatory actions that brought about present day inequalities. The origins of contemporary racial wealth disparities, for example, have well-established links to historical practices of redlining, housing covenants, racially targeted federal housing policies, and other forms of active discrimination within housing and lending markets (e.g., Massey & Denton 1993). Setting aside evidence of continuing discrimination in each of these domains, these historical practices themselves are sufficient to maintain extraordinarily high levels of wealth inequality through the intergenerational transition of advantage (the ability to invest in good neighborhoods, good schools, college, housing assistance for adult children, etc.) (Oliver & Shapiro 1997). According to Conley (1999), even if we were to eliminate all contemporary forms of discrimination, huge racial wealth disparities would persist, which in turn underlie racial inequalities in schooling, employment, and other social domains (see also Lieberman & Fuguitt 1967). - Pager & Shepherd, *The Sociology of Discrimination: Racial Discrimination in Employment, Housing, Credit, and Consumer Markets*, *Annu. Rev. Sociol* 2008. 34:181–209
 - **Question:** Why do racial wealth disparities matter? What could change this?

Coherence

Upon reflection, we may all discover that our thoughts and actions are not always in line with our stated beliefs. In this section we have presented a belief in justice and racial equality. When we fail to see each other as limbs of one body, even in subconscious ways, we can fall into patterns of behavior that do violence to the spirit.

- **Question:** What is it that allows us to have such different experiences of the world, and what keeps us from knowing about each other's experiences? (physical segregation, cultural separation, epistemological discounting)
- **Question:** Do I sometimes treat people of different races as less capable? Do I sometimes see myself as less capable because of my race? How are these inconsistent with my beliefs?
- **Question:** What are the challenges in working for justice and racial equality? How can our efforts for racial equality be more coherent with our beliefs about justice?

III. Race Unity and Love

We now turn to racial unity. In studying the following quotations, we remember that these words and exhortations are not to be taken lightly or considered superficially. There are challenges when discussing and practicing unity - in particular, the challenge to maintain a coherent vision of unity in diversity.

Reflection on Baha'i writings on unity and love

- "The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light is these words: Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. He Who is the Daystar of Truth beareth Me witness! So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth." Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 14
 - **Question:** How should we deal with one another? Why?
- "Consort with all the peoples, kindreds and religions of the world with the utmost truthfulness, uprightness, faithfulness, kindness, good-will and friendliness." Abdu'l-Baha
 - **Question:** With whom should we consort?

While unity is a pivotal concept for Baha'is, this does not imply uniformity. 'Abdu'l-Baha used several metaphors to describe unity in diversity. We examine a few below:

- "This variety in forms and coloring," He stresses, "which is manifest in all the kingdoms is according to creative Wisdom and hath a divine purpose." "The diversity in the human family," He claims, "should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord." Abdu'l-Baha quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 38
- "Consider the flowers of the rose garden. Although they are of different kinds, various colours and diverse forms and appearances, yet as they drink from one water, are swayed by one breeze and grow by the warmth and light of one sun, this variation and this difference cause each to enhance the beauty and splendour of the others. The differences in manners, in customs, in habits, in thoughts, opinions and in temperaments is the cause of the adornment of the world of mankind. This is praiseworthy... If in a garden the flowers and fragrant herbs, the blossoms and fruits, the leaves, branches and trees are of one kind, of one form, of one colour and one arrangement, there is no beauty or sweetness, but when there is variety in the world of oneness, they will appear and be displayed in the most perfect glory, beauty, exaltation and perfection.." Abdu'l-Baha, *Tablet to the Hague*, p. 13
- "... This difference and this variation, like the difference and variation of the parts and members of the human body, are the cause of the appearance of beauty and perfection. As these different parts and members are under the control of the dominant spirit, and the spirit permeates all the organs and members and rules all the arteries and veins, this difference and this variation strengthen love and harmony and this multiplicity is the

greatest aid to unity. ... Today nothing but the power of the Word of God which encompasses the realities of things can bring the thoughts, the minds, the hearts and the spirits under the shade of one Tree." Abdu'l-Baha, Tablet to the Hague, p. 13

- **Question:** Why is there diversity in the human family?
- **Question:** What are the three analogies that Abdu'l-Baha uses to describe this concept?
- **Question:** What is the only power which can unite all of humanity?

- "If you meet those of a different race and color from yourself, do not mistrust them, and withdraw yourself into your shell of conventionality, but rather be glad and show them kindness." Abdu'l-Baha quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 38
 - **Question:** When we meet those of a different race, what must we not do?
 - **Question:** When we meet those of a different race, how should we be?
 - **Question:** Describe a time you have "[withdrawn] yourself into your shell of conventionality." How could you have behaved differently?

- "I charge you all that each one of you concentrate all the thoughts of your heart on love and unity. When a thought of war comes, oppose it by a stronger thought of peace. A thought of hatred must be destroyed by a more powerful thought of love. Thoughts of war bring destruction to all harmony, well-being, restfulness and content. Thoughts of love are constructive of brotherhood, peace, friendship, and happiness." Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, p. 29
 - **Question:** What should we do if a thought of war or hatred comes?

- "The love which exists between the hearts of believers is prompted by the ideal of the unity of spirits. This love is attained through the knowledge of God, so that men see the Divine Love reflected in the heart. Each sees in the other the Beauty of God reflected in the soul, and finding this point of similarity, they are attracted to one another in love. This love will make all men the waves of one sea, this love will make them all the stars of one heaven and the fruits of one tree. This love will bring the realization of true accord, the foundation of real unity." Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, p. 180
 - **Question:** How do we attain love for each other?
 - **Question:** What will be the results of this love?

Exploration of challenges relating to cultural differences

- "I remember when we had the first Japanese pilgrim here, Shoghi Effendi said to him that the majority of the human race was not white and that the majority of Baha'is would not be

white in the future. As up until very recently the Baha'is of the world were almost exclusively white it is only natural that their virtues and their faults should have colored the Faith and its community life. It is illogical to suppose that what we have now is either mature or right; it is a phase in the development of the Cause; when peoples of different races are incorporated in the world-wide community (and in local communities) who can doubt that it will possess far greater power and perfection and be something quite different from what we have now? And yet let us ask ourselves frankly if we do not believe that what we North American Baha'is, what we Western white Baha'is have, is the real thing, practically a finished product, and it is up to the rest of the world to accept it? I think this is our mentality; it was mine up until a few years ago." Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiiyyih Khanum, Baha'i News No. 40, June 1961

- **Question:** What are some ways in which we might assume that “we” have what is right and normal, and it is up to others to accept it? In other words, how often do we use ourselves and our customs as the standard by which we view others?

- “The logic system is dichotomous. And dichotomous thinking is what governs every major institution in America... Northern European thought is what governs it. That’s not right or wrong, good or bad, it just happens to be what’s dominant... Dichotomous thinking is simply either/or. If it’s not up it’s down, if it’s not black it’s white, if it’s not right it’s wrong....Dichotomous thinking basically expedites things. In other words, you only need one set of variables or descriptors to predict the other. Things move quickly. You don’t have to spend a lot of time...
So now we have to ask ourselves – if Johnny – I’m looking at Johnny’s chart, right? And the chart shows you when Johnny should sit up, roll over, jump, sit, all the things he’s supposed to do. It’s broken up into two areas. You’ve got normal development, and dichotomously, what must you have? [Audience: “Abnormal”] Where do you want your Johnny to be? [“Normal”] That’s right, and that’s why when they tell you, “Don’t look at it, don’t bother, it’s not a big deal, every child is different,” you still look at it, because you want your Johnny to be normal. What I’m saying is that if we begin to measure everything and everybody, we begin to run into some problems because human beings don’t fit neatly in that.

They did some work specifically with Navajo children... They got a group of Indian children and they got a group of European children, about 4th grade.... They gave them a set of shapes, and they gave them one set of directions: arrange these shapes in order in 30 seconds... They went over to the European children, who were quite pleased. After 30 seconds, they had all the squares together, all the rectangles together, everything was set up and they were very happy. They went over to the Indian children who were also quite pleased. They had all the red ones together, the green ones together, all the blue ones together. Didn’t even see the shapes, didn’t even notice them. Because in their culture, color was more important than shape.

Here’s the problem. We live in a society that’s dominated by dichotomous thinking. And the test maker had an answer in mind. The test taker decided what was normal. What was the normal response? What should the children have seen? Shapes... Here this person who developed this test was European and decided that’s what you should see. But now dichotomously there are a set of children that are correct and a set of children that are wrong... So now I’ve got to tell those children, don’t I? I’ve got to go over to those children and explain to them how they did on the test. “How did we do?” Well you did a

very interesting thing, but. “You mean we got it wrong?... Well that’s the way my mom taught me, then that means my mom is wrong? Well it’s really the way my family does it, that means - Well it’s really the way our tribe does it, so that means our tribe is wrong.” And we wonder how people get to such pervasive feelings of low self-esteem among groups.” –Joy DeGruy-Leary, “Axiology”, Green Lake Baha’i Conference 1999, 15:10-20:50.

- **Question:** If we view ourselves as good, right, and normal, then if we use dichotomous thinking, where does that leave others?
- **Question:** How do the analogies that Abdu’l-Baha uses to describe humanity provide a different lens than dichotomous thinking when applied to human beings?

- The night is beautiful,
So the faces of my people.
The stars are beautiful,
So the eyes of my people.
Beautiful, also, is the sun.
Beautiful, also, are the souls of my people.
- Langston Hughes, "My People"
 - **Exercise:** Reflect on this poem and the message it conveys. How does it relate to the ideas we have been discussing?

- “Generally, when speaking with adults, we should address them by their last names, as Mr. or Ms. X, rather than assuming the familiarity of using first names. Particularly when working with older people who are from an oppressed group, such as African Americans, the familiarity of the first name might seem like an insult. For generations in the United States, White people addressed Black people by their first names [or simply “boy”] while expecting to be addressed as “Sir,” “Ma’am,” or “Miss” in return. Therefore, adult African Americans are apt to feel insulted when professionals use first names with them without prior permission.” Lisa Aronson Fontes, *Interviewing Clients Across Cultures*, p.67
 - **Question:** While this comes from a handbook for practicing clinicians, it still has applications for our interactions. What is the best way to address someone (of any culture) that you do not know?

- Mingling situations: “I have to go to a lot of rubber chicken dinners with my husband – he works in corporate America. And what is the number one question – and this is a Northern European question – that you ask an absolute stranger when you meet them? “What do you do?” ... It’s a measurement question. Now it’s not an offensive question in European culture, but it is an offensive question in most others, because everyone feels they’re being measured. And when people are constantly being told that they are less, this can be an extremely extremely offensive situation. Say if the person doesn’t have a job, then what do you say? Where do they save face? You go mingle somewhere else, and that person is humiliated. I never ask that question, I never start with it, I never lead with it. I always say, “Are you from here? Do you have family here? What do you think of this area?” That’s the kind of question, a question that’s innocuous so people can talk about it.” –Joy DeGruy-Leary, “Axiology”, Green Lake Baha’i Conference 1999, 1:16:00-1:17:10.

- **Question:** What are some other ways to start conversations with people you don't know without potentially offending them?

- “During my first few weeks in Merced, seven doctors at the Merced Community Medical Center separately mentioned the case of Lia Lee to me, but each of them told me it was not worth investigating, because her parents mistrusted Americans and would almost certainly refuse to let me see Lia's medical and legal records, or to talk with me themselves. Even if they agreed to meet with me, I was assured that I would find them silent, obtuse, and almost pathologically lacking in affect.

I was ready to be discouraged. Before I came to Merced, I had never met a Hmong, but I had received plenty of advice from anthropologists I'd read or consulted on what to do when I did. Don't raise your voice. Take off your shoes. Don't offer to shake hands with a man or people will think you're a whore. If a man offers to shake hands with you, indicate your lower status by placing your left hand under your right wrist in order to support the weight of his honored and important hand... Don't ever say no to an offer of food, even if it's chicken feet....

I was beginning to fear that the Hmong community was impenetrable when I met Sukey Waller...[whom] Bill has described as the American most locally respected by the Hmong... Sukey quickly disabused me of two notions. One was that it was necessary to walk a razor's edge of proper etiquette on either side of which lay catastrophe. She said matter-of-factly, "I've made a million errors. When I came here everyone said you can't touch people on the head, you can't talk to a man, you can't do this, you can't do that, and I finally said, this is crazy! I can't be restricted like that! So I just threw it all out. Now I have only one rule. Before I do anything I ask, Is it okay? Because I'm an American woman and they don't expect me to act like a Hmong anyway, they usually give me plenty of leeway.”

She also punctured my burgeoning longing for an American interpreter. For one thing, she informed me that even though there were thousands of Hmong living in Merced, not a single American in town spoke Hmong... So I found May Ying Xiong...She and I, by virtue of our gender and ages, constituted a low-status team. That turned out to be an advantage. I didn't need more status in the Lee home. If anything, I needed less status. Ever since they had arrived in the United States, the Lees had been meeting Americans who, whether because of their education, their knowledge of English, or their positions of relative authority, had made them feel as if their family didn't count for much....

My appointment with the Lees had been arranged by Bliya Yao Moua, one of the Hmong leaders to whom Sukey had introduced me... Within thirty seconds, I could see that I was dealing with a family that bore little resemblance to the one the doctors had described. The Lees struck me as smart, humorous, talkative, and energetic... After a few months, Foua started to address May Ying as *mi May*, dear little May, and me as *mi Anne*. At about the same time, at their request, I started calling Foua *tais* (maternal grandmother) and Nao Kao *yawm txiv* (maternal grandfather). The Lees unhesitatingly granted me access to all of Lia's records...” -Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*, pp.93-99
- **Question:** How does Anne's experience reflect justice? Feel free to refer to the earlier quotes on justice.

- **Question:** How does Anne’s experience reflect love? Feel free to refer to the earlier quotes on love.

- “Jeanne and Dr. Thomas set up a meeting... to address the problems that we [women of color] were having in MRULE. In the meeting, one of my friends revealed that during discussions people would say things to her that would push her buttons, but in order to avoid the stereotype of the angry black woman, she would stay silent. She would sit through the roundtable discussion with a smile, but go home angry. Many of the other women in the meeting agreed that they had been responding the same way, including myself. Dr. Thomas told us that we couldn’t be concerned with what stereotypes people had. “If they think that black women are aggressive, that’s their problem, not yours,” said Doc. The meeting ended on a good note. We felt that we had been heard, and now had strategies to improve the program for ourselves and others in the group. We realized that we had to speak up and be honest. Following that meeting, Dr Thomas gave a talk at Wilson about the three stages of community: pseudo community, chaos, and genuine. He let us know that as a group we were in pseudo community and that if we wanted to get to genuine community, we’d have to go through the chaos stage. We’d have to say how we really felt about things to build understanding.” -Tiffany Gridiron, “My MRULE Story: The Multi-Racial Living Experience from the Eyes of an Undergraduate”, from *Building Community Across Racialized Lines: The Multiracial Unity Project at Michigan State University* (Eds. R.W. Thomas, J. Gazel, R.L. Byard), p.98
 - **Question:** Communities are all in different stages. What is a way to ascertain if you are in a genuine community? What are some signals that you are not?

Having read the above passages, we will now reflect on the questions below more generally, to see the lessons learned from these texts.

- **Question:** What are some of the spiritual qualities demonstrated in the stories of successful relationship-building?

- **Question:** Can you think of more examples of challenges in maintaining unity?

- **Question:** We are asked to see each other as “mines rich in gems of inestimable value” - how does this contrast with many of the dehumanizing elements at work in the world today? Can you think of examples from your own life where this contrast would be evident?

- **Question:** How might the following affect unity in general, and race unity in particular?
 - visiting each other in your homes

 - meetings that strengthen the devotional character of the wider community

 - classes that foster the spiritual development of children

- groups that channel the energies of junior youth
- circles of study, open to all, that enable people of varied backgrounds to advance on equal footing and explore the application of teachings to their individual and collective lives

Coherence

- **Question:** How does my work with racial unity take a holistic view of unity and diversity?
- **Question:** How does racial unity grow out of the institute process?
- **Question:** Through the 5 Year Plan, we are learning that we all have a role to play in the development of our communities. How can racial unity and diversity permeate our work?
- **Question:** The discourse of racial justice and the discourse of racial unity have often been fragmented. How can we approach these interrelated topics in a more coherent way?

IV. Spiritual Qualities

As Nathan Rutstein once wisely noted, “One- or two-day diversity appreciation workshops every year may give the impression that some good is being done, but they won’t heal the...infection.” (Healing Racism in America, page 121). It is not enough to read and reflect on these quotes, we also need to act. In preparation, let us investigate some spiritual qualities that are pre-requisite for achieving racial unity.

Reflection on Baha’i writings referring to spiritual qualities

- “In sum, the differences in objects have now been made plain. Thus when the wayfarer gazeth only upon the place of appearance—that is, when he seeth only the many-colored globes—he beholdeth yellow and red and white; hence it is that conflict hath prevailed among the creatures, and a darksome dust from limited souls hath hid the world. And some do gaze upon the effulgence of the light; and some have drunk of the wine of oneness and these see nothing but the sun itself.” Bahá’u’lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, page 20
 - **Question:** Why has conflict prevailed among humanity?
 - **Question:** What does it mean to “see nothing but the sun itself”?
- “Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues. Without truthfulness, progress and success in all of the worlds of God are impossible for a soul. When this holy attribute is established in man, all the divine qualities will also become realized.” -Abdu’l-Baha, *Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha v2*, p. 459
 - **Question:** What is impossible without truthfulness?
 - “When I taught teachers, I always had them include real life stories... Very frequently when you go to a therapist, people are expecting folks to undress themselves emotionally. And what’ll happen with [Black and Latino] children is the moment they undress themselves, they’re going to say, “Let me see yours. I’ve shown you my scars; let me know that you recognize that you’re not undefeated either.” It’s very important for them, and it’s something that we are taught as professionals to distance ourselves from. But the reality is they’re saying, “I need to be able to trust you and know that you’re as human as I am.” But the moment you separate yourself and make yourselves perfect, Baha’is or otherwise, which we often tend to do, then, ‘I don’t want to hear from you, because I’m looking through that and I know that you have erred, and I know that you’ve made mistakes, and if you’re not big enough to admit it, I’m not dealing with you.’” –Joy DeGruy-Leary, “Axiology”, *Green Lake Baha’i Conference 1999*, 50:10-51:30.
 - **Question:** How might truthfulness relate to race unity?
- “If I love you, I need not continually speak of my love – you will know without any words. On the other hand if I love you not, that also will you know – and you would not believe me, were I to tell you in a thousand words, that I loved you.” 'Abdu’l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, p.3

- Research in psychology demonstrated that when observers watched White participants interacting with Black individuals, the White participants' explicit prejudice (the degree to which they self-reported prejudiced attitudes) was related to how verbally prejudiced they were, but their implicit prejudice (their unreported negative attitudes, assessed through a reaction time task) was related to how nonverbally prejudiced they were and to how prejudiced their Black partners thought they were. (Implicit and Explicit Prejudice and Interracial Interaction, Dovidio, Kawakami, and Gaertner)
- **Question:** Why is sincerity important in race unity?

- “Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, a Baha'i teacher in whom 'Abdu'l-Baha placed the greatest trust, once analyzed the concept of love for humanity in a talk given to a group of friends. He explained how easy it is for any one of us to sit comfortably in a house with a nice garden and say “I love humanity.” But, according to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, love only becomes real when it is tested. Only when we have fought the battles of love and have time and again been wounded for the sake of love, can we utter the sentence “I love” with authority and assurance. So, he said, a person who wants to create love within himself must test himself and see if he meets all the conditions of true love.” (Ruhi Institute, Book 6, p.32)
 - **Question:** How do we know if we truly love others?

- “A tremendous effort is required by both races if their outlook, their manners, and conduct are to reflect, in this darkened age, the spirit and teachings of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Casting away once and for all the fallacious doctrine of racial superiority, with all its attendant evils, confusion, and miseries, and welcoming and encouraging the intermixture of races, and tearing down the barriers that now divide them, they should each endeavor, day and night, to fulfill their particular responsibilities in the common task which so urgently faces them. ... Let neither think that the solution of so vast a problem is a matter that exclusively concerns the other. Let neither think that such a problem can either easily or immediately be resolved. Let neither think that they can wait confidently for the solution of this problem until the initiative has been taken, and the favorable circumstances created, by agencies that stand outside the orbit of their Faith. Let neither think that anything short of genuine love, extreme patience, true humility, consummate tact, sound initiative, mature wisdom, and deliberate, persistent, and prayerful effort, can succeed in blotting out the stain which this patent evil has left on the fair name of their common country. Let them rather believe, and be firmly convinced, that on their mutual understanding, their amity, and sustained cooperation, must depend, more than on any other force or organization operating outside the circle of their Faith, the deflection of that dangerous course so greatly feared by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the materialization of the hopes He cherished for their joint contribution to the fulfillment of that country's glorious destiny.” Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, [1937], p. 38
 - **Question:** What is required to solve the problem? Can we wait for someone else?

- “It is always important to remember that with the coming of Bahá'u'lláh the human race as a whole was summoned to recognition of its oneness, and this has launched it on a wholly new stage in its spiritual and social evolution.” The Universal House of Justice, 3 June 2007
 - **Question:** What are we now capable of?

V. Panel Discussion: "Levels of Racism, Levels of Race Unity"

We will begin by reading together the article below, based on Camara Phyllis Jones, MD, MPH, PhD, "Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale", (*Am J Public Health*. 2000; 90: 1212–1215). Each panelist will then have a few minutes to give a prepared response to the article. The remaining time will be given over to discussion among the panelists and questions from the audience. Our intention here is not to walk away with absolute solutions to these challenges, but to consult and investigate what working for race unity looks like.

Levels of Racism: A Gardener's Tale

When my husband and I bought a house in Baltimore, there were two large flower boxes on the front porch. One of the boxes was empty, so we bought potting soil to fill it. We did nothing to the soil in the other box, assuming that it was fine. Then we planted seeds from a single seed packet in the two boxes. The seeds that were sown in the new potting soil quickly sprang up and flourished. All of the seeds sprouted, the most vital towering strong and tall, and even the weak seeds made it to a middling height. However, the seeds planted in the old soil did not fare so well. Far fewer seeds sprouted, with the strong among them only making it to a middling height, while the weak among them died. It turns out that the old soil was poor and rocky, in contrast to the new potting soil, which was rich and fertile. The difference in yield and appearance in the two flower boxes was a vivid, real-life illustration of the importance of environment. Those readers who are gardeners will probably have witnessed this phenomenon with their own eyes.

Let's imagine a gardener who has two flower boxes, one that she knows to be filled with rich, fertile soil and another that she knows to be filled with poor, rocky soil. This gardener has two packets of seeds for the same type of flower. However, the plants grown from one packet of seeds will bear pink blossoms, while the plants grown from the other packet of seeds will bear red blossoms. The gardener prefers red over pink, so she plants the red seed in the rich fertile soil and the pink seed in the poor rocky soil. And sure enough, what I witnessed in my own garden comes to pass in this garden too. All of the red flowers grow up and flourish, with the fittest growing tall and strong and even the weakest making it to a middling height. But in the box with the poor rocky soil, things look different. The weak among the pink seeds don't even make it, and the strongest among them grow only to a middling height. ...Year after year, the same thing happens. Ten years later the gardener comes to survey her garden. Gazing at the two boxes, she says, "I was right to prefer red over pink! Look how vibrant and beautiful the red flowers look, and see how pitiful and scrawny the pink ones are."

This part of the story illustrates some important aspects of institutionalized racism. There is the initial historical insult of separating the seed into the two different types of soil; the contemporary structural factors of the flower boxes, which keep the soils separate; and the acts of omission in not addressing the differences between the soils over the years. ...Indeed, her assumption that red is intrinsically better than pink may contribute to a blindness about the difference between the soils.

Where is personally mediated racism in this gardener's tale? That occurs when the gardener, disdaining the pink flowers because they look so poor and scraggly, plucks the pink blossoms off

before they can even go to seed. Or when a seed from a pink flower has been blown into the rich soil, and she plucks it out before it can establish itself.

And where is the internalized racism in this tale? That occurs when a bee comes along to pollinate the pink flowers and the pink flowers say, “Stop! Don’t bring me any of that pink pollen—I prefer the red!” The pink flowers have internalized the belief that red is better than pink, because they look across at the other flower box and see the red flowers strong and flourishing.

What are we to do if we want to put things right in this garden?

Three Levels of Racism

- 1) Institutionalized racism is defined as differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by race. ...With regard to material conditions, examples include differential access to quality education, sound housing, gainful employment, appropriate medical facilities, and a clean environment.
- 2) Personally mediated racism is defined as prejudice and discrimination. ...This is what most people think of when they hear the word “racism.” Personally mediated racism can be intentional as well as unintentional... It manifests as lack of respect (poor or no service), suspicion (shopkeepers’ vigilance, avoidance, purse clutching, and standing when there are empty seats on public transportation), devaluation (surprise at competence, stifling of aspirations), scapegoating... and dehumanization (police brutality, sterilization abuse, hate crimes).
- 3) Internalized racism is defined as acceptance by members of the stigmatized races of negative messages about their own abilities and intrinsic worth. It is characterized by their not believing in others who look like them, and not believing in themselves. It involves accepting limitations to one’s own full humanity.

Questions for discussion

- 1) Do you agree that this metaphor accurately portrays reality? If not, how would you change it?
- 2) How does personal or individual racism play into institutionalized racism? Discuss the interaction between personal and institutionalized racism.
- 3) As we have seen throughout the day, the Baha’i Faith currently approaches the work of social action in terms of three protagonists: the individual, the community and the institutions. What role do you see these three protagonists playing in race unity?
- 4) What role can faith play in achieving race unity?

VI. Practice Component

In the final section of the day, we will break into smaller groups, and prepare to put into practice what we have learned when we go home to our communities. In the Dawnbreakers, that well-loved tome of early Bahá'í history, the Báb is quoted as saying:

- “The days when idle worship was deemed sufficient are ended. The time is come when naught but the purest motive, supported by deeds of stainless purity, can ascend to the throne of the Most High and be acceptable unto Him. ‘The good word riseth up unto Him, and the righteous deed will cause it to be exalted before Him.’” The Báb, The Dawnbreakers, page 93

Furthermore, ‘Abdu’l-Baha reminds us:

- “Some men and women glory in their exalted thoughts, but if these thoughts never reach the plane of action they remain useless: the power of thought is dependent on its manifestation in deeds.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Paris Talks, page 18

The first purpose of this section is to have some more intimate space to consult together about everything that has been discussed thus far. The second is to PRACTICE what we're talking about. Training to take concrete actions upon returning to our home communities is the central and most important part of the day!

Sharing a story

One practice component is that of sharing a story from the history of the Baha'i Faith with someone in your home community. Home visits are becoming a part of a healthy pattern of community life across the Baha'i world, and they are an effective way to build unity of vision by studying ideas together. The practice component for this workshop will be to return to your home community, visit someone (either a long standing friend or perhaps a new member of your community) and share a story with them that addresses race unity. We have selected three stories from the life of Abdu'l-Baha that illustrate some of the ideas we have been investigating today. With a partner, practice telling one of the stories. You are free to pick any one of the stories below, or tell a story from your own life that demonstrates something you have learned here today.

- During the visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the United States in 1912, a luncheon in His honor was given in Washington. Many noted people were invited, some of whom were members of Washington's political and cultural elite. Just an hour before the luncheon 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent word to Louis Gregory that he might come meet with Him. Mr. Gregory, an African-American lawyer, had embraced the Bahá'í Faith in June 1909 and was already one of its outstanding proponents. As the hour for the luncheon drew closer, Mr. Gregory attempted to quietly leave. He had not been invited, nor was this the sort of gathering accustomed to dining with black people. Although one might expect the capital city to be a bit more cosmopolitan, Washington was strictly segregated. Luncheon was announced, and everyone was seated. Suddenly, 'Abdu'l-Bahá arose from his place at the head of the table and looked about. He asked His host, Ali-Kuli Khan, a Bahá'í and the chargé d'affaires of

the Persian Legation, "Where is Mr. Gregory? Bring Mr. Gregory!" Mr. Khan rushed out to find him. In his absence, 'Abdu'l-Bahá rearranged the place settings, completely disturbing the settings which had been arranged in strict accordance with social protocol, in order to accommodate the new guest. When Louis Gregory was at last located and brought into the room, 'Abdul-Bahá seated him at His right, the seat of honor. He stated He was very pleased to have Mr. Gregory there, and then, in the most natural way as if nothing unusual had happened, proceeded to give a talk on the oneness of mankind. – adapted from Richard Francis, Louis G. Gregory: The Advancement of Racial Unity in America and from Dale E. Lehman, Louis G. Gregory.

- While in Paris, 'Abdul-Bahá was living in a hotel, and among those who often came to see him was a poor Black man. He was not a Bahá'í but he loved 'Abdul-Bahá very much. One day when he came to see 'Abdul-Bahá someone told him that the management did not want him to come there because he was poor and Black. They said it was not consistent with the standards of the hotel. Hearing this, the man went away saddened, but when 'Abdul-Bahá learned of this He would not accept it. 'Abdul-Bahá sent for the person who has sent the man away and told him that he must find 'Abdul-Bahá's friend and bring him back. 'Abdul-Bahá said He was not happy that His friend had been turned away. 'Abdul-Bahá said, "I did not come to see expensive hotels or furnishings, but to meet my friends. I did not come to Paris to conform to the customs of Paris, but to establish the standard of Bahá'u'lláh." – adapted from the Star of the West, vol 16, p.528
- 'Abdul-Bahá taught a very beautiful lesson about oneness to Corinne True. In 1907, Mrs. True visited 'Abdul-Bahá in the Holy Land. In those days, travel to the Holy Land was very difficult and Mrs. True found the travel even more challenging because it brought her into contact with people she was not familiar with. In Naples, she had remained on board the ship when it docked, rather than go ashore and mingle with the unfamiliar people. Later, when her ship docked in Alexandria, she was frightened of the Arabs who seemed to be everywhere. And finally, when she arrived in Haifa, she was again frightened of what, for her, were strange and unfamiliar people. 'Abdul-Bahá, in His great loving-kindness, spoke to Mrs. True about real universal love – a love that embraced even those we find unusual or seemingly unlovable. He gave her the key to such a love: "Mrs. True," He said, "when you go back I want you to look at every human being and say to yourself, 'You are a letter from my Beloved, and I must love you because of the Beloved who wrote you.' The letter may be torn, it may be blurred – but because the Beloved wrote the letter, you must love it." – adapted from Nathan Rutstein, Corrine True: Faithful Handmaid of 'Abdul-Bahá, p. 69
- You may prepare a story from your own life and share it with your partner(s).

Contributing to the discourse on race

Another aspect of putting what we have learned into practice is being able to relate the Writings to topics in our everyday conversations. If you were engaged in a discussion and these questions came up, what would you say?

- When, if ever, is it best to remain colorblind to race and ethnicity? When, if ever, is it best to celebrate multicultural differences? Do the goals of colorblindness and multiculturalism conflict with each other?
- What do you think the most difficult aspect is of being a racial, ethnic, or religious minority member? What is the most difficult aspect of being a majority group member?
- Although old-style racism and the use of racial epithets have gradually diminished in many countries, subtler forms of racism have flourished. Is this change an improvement? What is the end goal?
- If a close friend or family member were to make a prejudiced comment, would you protest? Why or why not? What about a stranger or acquaintance -- would you respond in that situation?
- Does the categorization of people always result in prejudice? What steps can we take to prevent categorization leading to prejudice?
- How will we know when we, as a society, have achieved racial equality and racial unity?