



MEDITATIONS ON

OVERCOMING

Racism

ELEVATE

*T*he evidences of discord and malice are apparent everywhere,
though all were made for harmony and union.
...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.

Bahá'u'lláh



Thou kind Lord!

O Thou Who art generous and merciful! We are servants of Thy threshold
and are gathered beneath the sheltering shadow of Thy divine unity.

The sun of Thy mercy is shining upon all,
and the clouds of Thy bounty shower upon all.

Thy gifts encompass all, Thy loving providence sustains all,
Thy protection overshadows all, and the glances of Thy favor are cast upon all.
O Lord! Grant Thine infinite bestowals, and let the light of Thy guidance shine.

Illumine the eyes, gladden the hearts with abiding joy.

Confer a new spirit upon all people and bestow upon them eternal life.
Unlock the gates of true understanding and let the light of faith shine resplendent.

Gather all people beneath the shadow of Thy bounty
and cause them to unite in harmony,
so that they may become as the rays of one sun,
as the waves of one ocean, and as the fruit of one tree.

May they drink from the same fountain.

May they be refreshed by the same breeze.

May they receive illumination from the same source of light.

Thou art the Giver, the Merciful, the Omnipotent.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

...*R*acism persists precisely because it is deeply rooted in outdated attitudes and erroneous beliefs.

Accordingly, any campaign to eradicate racism must change those attitudes and beliefs.

Although necessary, political action alone cannot offer a permanent solution.

In the Baha'i view, racism will be eliminated only when the peoples of the world are convinced of the oneness of humankind and proceed to reconstruct their lives and their societies on that basis.

The recognition of the oneness of mankind would require the abandonment of all doctrines of superiority, many of which still persist implicitly despite our preoccupation with its more obvious forms such as apartheid.

More importantly, by establishing the foundation for true co-operation, the recognition of this principle would raise civilisation to a new level.

At this higher level, no one need fear oppression, even those who were formerly oppressors.

The sharing of power and responsibility among all citizens can then be implemented without fear, through appropriate legal measures and equitable social and economic policies.

*D*ominator culture has tried to keep us all afraid,
to make us choose safety instead of risk,
sameness instead of diversity.
Moving through that fear,
finding out what connects us,
revelling in our differences;
this is the process that brings us closer,
that gives us a world of shared values,
of meaningful community.

bell hooks

Only if you perceive honour
and nobility in every human being...
will you be able to champion the cause of justice.

Universal House of Justice

*K*now ye the value of this time.

Strive ye with all your hearts, raise up your voices and shout,
until this dark world be filled with light,
and this narrow place of shadows be widened out,
and this dust heap of a fleeting moment be changed
into a mirror for the eternal gardens of heaven,
and this globe of earth receive its portion of celestial grace.

Then will aggression crumble away,
and all that maketh for disunity be destroyed,
and the structure of oneness be raised.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

*J*ustice is not limited, it is a universal quality.
Its operation must be carried out in all classes,
from the highest to the lowest.
Justice must be sacred,
and the rights of all the people must be considered.
Desire for others only that which you desire for yourselves.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

*B*e not dismayed if your endeavours are dismissed as utopian by the voices that would oppose any suggestion of fundamental change.

Trust in the capacity of this generation to disentangle itself from the embroilments of a divided society.

To discharge your responsibilities, you will have to show forth courage, the courage of those who cling to standards of rectitude, whose lives are characterised by purity of thought and action, and whose purpose is directed by love and indomitable faith.

As you dedicate yourselves to healing the wounds with which your peoples have been afflicted, you will become invincible champions of justice.

The Universal House of Justice

*W*hen we look at modern man, we have to face the fact...
that modern man suffers from a kind of poverty of the spirit,
which stands in glaring contrast
to his scientific and technological abundance;
We've learned to fly the air like birds,
we've learned to swim the seas like fish,
and yet we haven't learned to walk the Earth as brothers and sisters...

Martin Luther King Jr.



hen you love a member of your family or a compatriot,
let it be with a ray of the Infinite Love!
Let it be in God, and for God! Wherever you find the attributes of God love
that person, whether he be of your family or of another.
Shed the light of a boundless love on every human being whom you meet,
whether of your country, your race, your political party,
or of any other nation, color or shade of political opinion.
Heaven will support you
while you work in this ingathering of the scattered peoples
of the world beneath the shadow of the almighty tent of unity.
...You will be servants of God, who are dwelling near to Him,
His divine helpers in the service, ministering to all Humanity.
All Humanity! Every human being! Never forget this!
... Remember not your own limitations; the help of God will come to you.
Forget yourself. God's help will surely come!
When you call on the Mercy of God waiting to reinforce you,
your strength will be tenfold.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Let the white make a supreme effort...
to abandon once for all their usually inherent
and at times subconscious sense of superiority,
to correct their tendency towards revealing a patronising attitude
towards the members of the other race,
to persuade them through their intimate,
spontaneous and informal association
with them of the genuineness of their friendship
and the sincerity of their intentions,
and to master their impatience of any lack of responsiveness
on the part of a people who have received, for so long a period,
such grievous and slow-healing wounds.

Shoghi Effendi

*N*o one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin,
or his background, or his religion.

People must learn to hate,
and if they can learn to hate,
they can be taught to love,
for love comes more naturally
to the human heart than its opposite.

Nelson Mandela

*M*ay the eyes be opened and the ears become attentive;
may souls become resuscitated and consort together
in the utmost harmony as recipients of the same light...

May this bloodshed pass away,
this tyranny and oppression cease, this warfare be ended.

May the light of love shine forth and illumine hearts,
and may human lives be cemented and connected
until all of us may find agreement and tranquillity
beneath the same tabernacle
and with the standard of the Most Great Peace above us,
move steadily onward.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

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.

Shoghi Effendi

*B*e fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech.
Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men.
Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful,
a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed,
an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression.
Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts.
Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering,
a tower of strength for the fugitive.
Be eyes to the blind,
and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring.

Bahá'u'lláh

1. Baha'u'llah, "Tablet of Maqsúd", *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988), p.164. ↵
2. *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 116. ↵
3. Bahá'í International Community, 'Eliminating Racism', Statement to the forty-fifth session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights Agenda Item 17 (b): Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, 8 February 1989. ↵
4. bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.197. ↵
5. From the Ridván 2008 message of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world. ↵
6. *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982), no. 17, p.36. ↵
7. *Paris Talks: Addresses Given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1911* (London: Bahá'í Publishing, 1972), p. 159. ↵
8. Letter dated 9 August 2000 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice "to the Friends Gathered at the Youth Congress in Ecuador". ↵
9. Martin Luther King Jr, from a sermon delivered 27 February 1967 in San Francisco. ↵
10. *Paris Talks*, pp.38-39. ↵
11. Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), p.40. ↵
12. *Long Walk To Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (London: Abacus, 1995), p.749. ↵
13. *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 115-116. ↵
14. *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p.40. ↵
15. *Gleanings From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), no. 130, p.285. ↵

ELEVATE

For some questions which may help you kick-start conversations about this week's theme, take a look at our [Conversations document](#).

Visit the Elevate Hub to enjoy [more collections](#) of themes and [let us know](#) how they've supported you in your personal journey, or your efforts to improve the life of your community.

Copyright © 2020 Elevate. All rights reserved.